

The Ultimate Struggle

What kind of life should we choose to lead? One of selfish interests defined only by social standing or fame? Or one dedicated to benefitting all humanity?

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech upon accepting the Abdumomunov Award from the Kyrgyz Republic in Tokyo, Sept. 19. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the SGI Youth Peace General Meeting, attended by members from 51 countries and territories.

The distinguished Kyrgyz writer Toktobolot Abdumomunov (1922–92) wrote with great lyricism: “O Earth! You turn ceaselessly, never resting, embracing so many joys and so many sorrows. Sadness, joy, folly, wisdom, forbearance, betrayal, sincerity, cruelty, and life and death — all of these you gather in your embrace as you turn.”

It is certainly true that during even the brief hour in which this gathering is being held, our blue Earth continues to move on its inexorable path through the universe, spinning on its axis at a speed of 1,000 miles per hour while revolving around the sun at the tremendous speed of 66,000 miles per hour.

The universe and all life are in motion; they are dynamic. Youth, too, is another name for ceaseless, dynamic activity.

What kind of life should we choose to lead, then, on this vibrant, ever-moving, never-resting planet that is our stage? Abdumomunov urges: “Let us not think, act or concern ourselves with selfish interests, with social standing or fame, but always quest and work ungrudgingly for the billions of our fellow human beings and for the future of humanity itself.” What a noble call to dedicate ourselves to what is right and good! Working to benefit all humanity is also the goal of the SGI.

Today, outstanding youth leaders from 51 countries and territories, who are taking active responsibility for the world’s future, have gathered here in this hall in that very same spirit. You are all exponents of a profound life-philosophy, who are challenging and surmounting the sufferings of life and death, the ultimate struggle of all human beings. I am very aware of the many difficulties you have had to overcome in these hard economic times to make this trip to Japan. I humbly accept this most distinguished culture award, together with all of you, my dear young friends from around the world.

I wish to express my deepest appreciation for this great honor to President Amangeldy Kerimbaev of the Kyrgyz State Philharmonic Society, a leading protagonist in the promotion of his country’s performing arts. Thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule to be here with us today. Again, please accept my most heartfelt welcome.

Earlier, the members of Kyrgystan’s renowned Kambarkan Fold Ensemble presented us with a sublime performance of music and song. As we listened to those serene, timeless strains, our hearts were transported so that we seemed to be gazing up at the towering silver peaks of the Tien Shan mountain range soaring into the clear blue skies. We also experienced the thrill of galloping across the vast grass steppes of the Silk Road on white steeds and sitting by the shoreline of a magical lake under a night sky filled with stars, talking with dear friends.

That poetic spirit, that shared answering response or appreciation transcending nationality or race evoked by a beautiful song or work of art, is the fundamental source of

Title: The Ultimate Struggle

Subject: World Tribune 10/09/98 n.3212 p.1 WT981009p01 09/19/98

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 09/19/98 Developing Guidance Humanism Messages News President Speeches Struggle Ultimate Yourself

world peace.

There is a famous Kyrgyz expression: “Social position is like melting ice, but art is an enduring gem in the people’s hearts.” The mightiest rulers, proud of their power and authority, melt away like ice when the sunlight of the people’s justice shines on them. On the other hand, artists — no matter how unknown and uncelebrated — who impart joy and hope are true champions of beauty who illuminate the hearts of humanity with indestructible light. That is why I have been promoting cultural exchange and why I always welcome visiting emissaries of the arts with the greatest esteem and veneration.

Let us take this opportunity to demonstrate once again our gratitude and respect to President Kerimbaev and all the musicians and dancers of the Kambarkan Folk Ensemble by giving them a rousing round of applause.

Struggles for Power Destabilize the World

We are living in a period of radical change. On the international level, relationships based on power and profit — that is, ties forged only in the interests of governments or economics — are no longer sufficient to create a stable world. This makes me all the more certain that ties based on culture — broader and more enduring relationships forged through people’s heart-to-heart interactions as human beings — will become the solid foundation for lasting peace, even though it may appear to be a slow and time-consuming route.

I also believe that the spiritual solidarity of youth who possess a firm and unshakable philosophy of humanism is an indispensable element in securing stability and peace for our world.

‘Think Globally, Act Locally’

We are very fortunate to have with us today Dr. Hazel Henderson, the internationally acclaimed author and futurist who has devoted her life to pioneering grass-roots movements to effect reform. Dr. Henderson firmly believes that the world will be changed not by national governments or giant corporations but by a third power — the power of an awakened citizenry. In that spirit, Dr. Henderson has expressed great hopes for the activities of the SGI youth division.

The famous watchwords of the Club of Rome, “Think globally, act locally,” which became a standard for the world peace movement, were actually conceived by Dr. Henderson amid her own struggles. I fondly remember discussing this wonderful slogan with Dr. Aurelio Peccei, the Club’s founder. It has much in common with the Buddhist belief that the accomplishment of great goals starts with our earnest efforts in our immediate environment.

Dr. Henderson did not receive the usual university education, and I have heard that, as a result, she has borne the brunt of much scorn and arrogance from mainstream economists and academics, who asked, “How can you expect a housewife to understand economics?” She has also been fiercely attacked for her pioneering ideas and her courageous words and deeds in defense of the weak and oppressed. But through everything she has demonstrated an unbeatable spirit, standing up to and fighting back against all obstacles and attacks.

She has discoursed and debated with many world-famous scholars and thinkers. She is also very close to former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev and his wife, Raisa. Her advice to Mr. Gorbachev three years ago, when there were rumors that he was considering a return to Russian politics, is very well known. She told him to the effect: Don’t allow yourself to be confined to one small nation; you must act as a world citizen and be active on a much broader scale!

Title: The Ultimate Struggle

Subject: World Tribune 10/09/98 n.3212 p.1 WT981009p01 09/19/98

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 09/19/98 Developing Guidance Humanism Messages News President Speeches Struggle Ultimate Yourself

In her acceptance speech on receiving the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century's Global Citizen Award [1996], Dr. Henderson declared, "Let us keep that spark of divinity we all carry within us shining brightly as we continue working to shape wiser, more just and loving societies."

I invite you to join me in a warm round of applause for Dr. Henderson, in appreciation and praise for her noble ideals and fine achievements.

Redirecting Our Gaze at Life Itself

The Soka Gakkai was founded in November 1930, a time when the world was thrown into turmoil by the Great Depression. Life was hard, we had lost our philosophical bearings, and the world situation was growing worse every day — a time not unlike what we are experiencing today.

Most of Japan's political, intellectual and religious leaders of the day were caught up in the whirlpool of chaos and confusion and could only look on stunned, powerless to effect any change. They lost their composure and self-confidence, and, if they reacted at all, it was only to make a lot of empty noise. In his treatise *The System of Value-creating Education*, founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi delivered a sharp rebuke. Never before, he said, had society's leaders so completely lost their ability to lead. Even worse, education, which should provide a sound philosophical basis, was paralyzed and withered. It had no power to help people face the crisis. This, declared Mr. Makiguchi, was the fundamental cause for the sickness of society. In other words, it wasn't the government or the economy that was deadlocked but humanity that was deadlocked. Mr. Makiguchi's analysis was brilliant.

Before all else, he insisted, we must return to the most fundamental starting point, in other words, redirect our gaze to life itself. And we must commence by instituting humanistic education that taps and develops the infinite life force and potential of human beings. The only solution to the world's crisis, he decided, was to cultivate large numbers of young men and women committed to value-creation, who would work for the people's welfare and triumph over the volatile times they lived in. That was Mr. Makiguchi's prescient vision.

Today, far too many of society's leaders think only of themselves and make no effort to nurture and educate their juniors. But you are different: you are the youth of the SGI. The darker the end-of-the-century gloom may become, please shine all the more brightly as beacons lighting the way ahead, for your local communities, your countries and your regions.

Abdumomunov wrote: "What legacy will you leave behind you when you die? You can of course leave behind such things as forests, houses and roads — these are all fine legacies. But the best legacy of all is leaving behind excellent successors." I am truly most fortunate to have such wonderful successors as all of you across the globe, and I wish to proudly introduce you to leaders the world over! I am very happy to be able to say that, even in faraway Kyrgystan, one of our young SGI members, a graduate of Soka University, is working hard in his chosen field of education.

President Ikeda then introduced the young man to whom he was referring — Hironori Ito, who interpreted for the Kyrgyz guests on stage during the award presentation.

Future Struggles

The beautiful song "Sary Ozok" (The Golden Steppes) performed by our guests earlier was based on a work by the famous Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov, a dear friend of mine.

Title: The Ultimate Struggle
Subject: World Tribune 10/09/98 n.3212 p.1 WT981009p01 09/19/98
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: 09/19/98 Developing Guidance Humanism Messages News President Speeches Struggle Ultimate Yourself

I will never forget a statement Mr. Aitmatov made in our dialogue: “The future is a never-ending battle against evil. We must never forget this for a single day. Educating young people means preparing them to do battle with this evil.”

Please remember that all of your noble efforts to champion justice and work for the welfare of humanity — many of you, I know, juggling multiple roles and responsibilities and doing the work of several people — and all of the valuable training you are receiving in the process will become the driving force for victory in the coming century. All of your efforts ultimately bring benefit to your own lives.

“To live means to cope, to contend and keep level with all sorts of circumstances, many of them difficult.” These are the words of Dr. Henderson’s mentor, the world-renowned economist Dr. E.F. Schumacher (1911–77) who proposed the idea of “Buddhist economics.”

Let us promise one another that, in that same spirit, we of the SGI will continue to triumph over every obstacle and lay a bright and cheerful song of joy, an ode to peace and paean to the people’s victory for the world in the new century.

The Great Always Stand Alone

In closing, I will share some maxims with the members of our youth division. First, there are the words by the English poet Lord Byron: “Adversity is the first path to truth.”

The hero of Cuban independence José Martí said: “Put your faith in the best people and triumph over the worst.”

Mahatma Gandhi observed: “The greatest men of the world have always stood alone.”

Let these be our mottoes as well!

“Happiness is the fruit of the great tree of suffering,” declared Victor Hugo. And with these words of José Martí — “All together, for the sake of all” — I close my speech today.

Thank you very much.

WT