

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S OCT. 24 SPEECH—PART 1 THE POWER OF CULTURE

**SGI President Ikeda says that ‘the power of culture—the force that links human hearts across differences of race, nationality and religion’ will change human history in the new century.**

*The following is part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Oct. 24.*

To the Yamaguchi Prefecture members: Thank you for coming from so far away. Congratulations on your commemorative leaders meeting!

And congratulations to the young women's division International Group on your commemorative general meeting!

Many thanks, too, to the members of the YWD Fuji Chorus.

And thanks to the representatives of the Business Professionals Division who have gathered here from all over Japan!

The members of the YWD International Group have presented me with a collection of quotes by poets from around the world. I thank you for this gift!

Today, I want to introduce these words of the ancient Roman philosopher Seneca: “Manliness gains much strength by being challenged.” And this statement by Henrik Ibsen, the great Norwegian dramatist: “The man who stands alone is the strongest.” Since such wisdom strikes a chord with the teachings of Buddhism, I share these words with you today.

Today, Oct. 24, is U.N. Day. On this day in 1945, the “Parliament of Humanity” was inaugurated. This was just a little more than three months after that momentous day of July 3, when our mentor Josei Toda was released from prison, where he had been held by the Japanese militarist authorities, and began his struggle as an invincible hero for truth and justice.

Mr. David Tay, president of the Photographic Society of Singapore, who is with us today, was born the same year that the United Nations was founded—and, coincidentally, in July of that year, the month of Mr. Toda's release from prison. Mr. Tay is a gentleman of outstanding caliber who, like the United Nations, has spent his life working to achieve a culture of peace. The United Nations, as you may be aware, has designated 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace.

What will serve as the fundamental force for taking humanity from this 20th century of war into the 21st century of peace? This is a question of the gravest consequence for humankind. The answer is the power of culture—the force that links human hearts across differences of race, nationality and religion. This unifying power of culture represents a brilliant light of hope for all 6 billion members of the human family.

### **Nichiren Shoshu praised barbarous actions by the Japanese military.**

During World War II, Japan invaded Singapore and occupied it for three years and eight months, subjecting it to the cruelest oppression. Tens of thousands of people are said to have been slaughtered in the Japanese army's massacres. The Japanese military brutally tortured the people of Singapore, even destroying hospitals. What barbarity!

Japanese military authorities went on to suppress the culture of Singapore, requiring people to use Japanese, setting the local time to match Tokyo time and forcing the State Shinto religion on them.

Nichiren Shoshu praised and supported these barbarous actions. The high priest at the time, Nikkyo — who later burned to death in a fire — flattered and fawned on the military authorities, publicly declaring the Japanese invasions of Singapore and other Asian countries proof of “the invincible power of the Japanese Army, Navy, and Air Force.”

The high priest also traveled to different parts of Japan performing religious ceremonies for the victory of Japanese forces. And each time he did so, he expected the believers in each area to host sumptuous banquets in his honor. These facts are clearly recorded in the internal records of Nichiren Shoshu.

In contrast, the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda respectively, were outraged at the deplorable cowardice and corruption of the priesthood and chose the path of martyrdom for their beliefs.

### **The SGI is creating a culture of peace that respects and upholds the sanctity of life.**

The SGI utterly rejects violence and the destruction it causes. Our organization is creating a culture of peace that respects and upholds the sanctity of life; it is an unparalleled champion of justice and truth. In this respect, I look on photography as part of my spiritual struggle, not as a hobby.

Most esteemed President Tay: It is with deep appreciation and a solemn sense of responsibility that I accept the award of Honorary Life Membership in the prestigious Photographic Society of Singapore. The PSS has some 1,200 members. During the half-century since its establishment in 1950, it has made tremendous contributions to international exchange through the art of photography, a visual poetry of peace.

I am also aware that your society has contributed greatly to heightened awareness of environmental issues, care for the elderly, the education of youth and local development. Mr. Tay has stood at the forefront of activities for the promotion of culture and education, and acted as a linchpin for an alliance of many different peoples. On behalf of this assembly, I express our deepest respect for him and his endeavors.

Today, members all the way from Yamaguchi Prefecture — a region renowned for producing people of outstanding ability and talent, and for ushering in the dawn of modern Japan — are gathered here in high spirits. Yamaguchi Prefecture, then known as the Choshu domain, was the birthplace of the innovative thinker and educator Yoshida Shoin, who was instrumental in preparing the way for the Meiji Restoration and who, for this reason, is regarded as the father of Japan’s modern era.

The day before the authorities executed him for his anti-government activities, Shoin wrote: “Though I may die in the fields of Musashi [modern-day Tokyo], I will leave behind the Japanese spirit.” He was perfectly willing to die for his beliefs. One of the greatest struggles in my youth also took place in Yamaguchi Prefecture.

*Yoshida Shoin was a young scholar and educator of the late-Edo period. He showed academic brilliance from an early age. Talented youth, many of whom went on to become leading activists of the age, flocked to study under him. His involvement in anti-government activities led to his arrest. He was sent to Edo (present-day Tokyo) for trial and there executed at age 29. After his death, a number of former students played key roles in over-*

*throwing the Tokugawa military government and carrying out the Meiji Restoration, which led to Japan's opening and the start of its modernization along Western lines.*

Yamaguchi Prefecture is also a pioneering region in photography. The first person to do a translation of a European technical manual on wet-plate photography, which was published in 1860, had close ties to this area of Japan: Nakajima Jihei of the Choshu domain. The 19th-century photographic portraits of Takasugi Shinsaku and other revolutionary figures who studied at Shoin's school are well known to many Japanese people.

*(To be continued in next  
week's issue)*

## **TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS**

### **A Century of Peace**

#### **From This Speech:**

What will serve as the fundamental force for taking humanity from this 20th century of war into the 21st century of peace? This is a question of the gravest consequence for humankind. The answer is the power of culture — the force that links human hearts across differences of race, nationality and religion. This unifying power of culture represents a brilliant light of hope for all 6 billion members of the human family.

1. SGI President Ikeda says that culture is the “fundamental force” that will change a century of war into a century of peace. How do you think that culture can do that?
2. How would you define *culture*? And what is the “power of culture”?
3. How, as an individual, do you see yourself contributing to culture?
4. Do you have any ideas about how the SGI organization can contribute to culture more?
5. Besides culture, what other forces are there for making the 21st century a century of peace?
6. Imagine it's the end of the 21st century of peace...what things do you think will have happened in human history?