

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S OCT. 24 SPEECH—PART 2 SO THAT YOU SPARKLE

SGI President Ikeda says that ‘when we turn our focus away from our small, egoistic selves and devote our energies to working for the welfare of others and society..., we can polish the mirror of our lives, so that it sparkles.’

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Oct. 24.

In the international community, Singapore is without a doubt a nation built on talent, a nation leading the way to the dawn of the coming century.

SGI-Singapore General Director Ong Bon Chai and Young Men's Division Vice Leader Lim Poh Lye are with us today, as are a number of precious students from Singapore studying at Soka University. I want to share the honor I have received today with my fellow SGI members in Singapore, who are exerting themselves as model citizens in their communities.

When I visited the Soka Kindergarten in Singapore four years ago, the adorable young children there—global citizens of the 21st century—welcomed me with a song. They sang first in English and then in Chinese, demonstrating their fluency in both.

Speaking of languages, my wife and I are filled with praise for the activities of the young women's division International Group members, sublime emissaries of world peace who are working hard in the international arena. I want to congratulate them on the group's 20th anniversary! You are all champions of intellect dedicated to kosen-rufu. You are all wondrous individuals with an important mission.

I thank Mr. David Tay for his kind words earlier. I feel his praise for my photographs is far too generous. Mr. Tay is a true artist, whose work has been recognized by such organizations as the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain.

While Mr. Tay's photographs are those of an honors student in photography, mine are those of a dropout! But even as a dropout, I believe that if my photographs can give others confidence and hope, and contribute to the development of culture, then they have worth, humble as they may be.

Culture is important, but many forms of culture are expensive or require a lot of time and trouble. Photography, however, isn't very expensive or time consuming. Everyone can participate in this form of culture with relative ease. I take many of my photographs while traveling from one appointment to the next by car. The art of photography is, I think, the most accessible, democratic form of popular culture there is.

Mr. Tay has described photography as “a mirror that reflects the photographer's character.” I think it is true that photographs are a mirror of the inner depths of the photographer's life, a sort of visual image of the individual's personal philosophy.

Buddhism also often compares our lives to a mirror. When the mirror of our lives is dirty, dull or distorted, we cannot apprehend reality as it is. But when we turn our focus away from our small, egoistic selves and devote our energies to working for the welfare of others and society, based on the fundamental Law of the universe, we can polish the mirror of our lives, so that it sparkles.

The mirror of the Mystic Law reflects the wonder of all phenomena in the universe,

revealing all things just as they are, in their true forms. It also reflects past, present and future, the pulsing rhythm of the law of cause and effect, as events present themselves moment by moment, just as they are.

The essence of Buddhism is that this mirror perfectly reflects the voices of all things—even those that emit no audible sound. That is why it is important for us to carry out our human revolution, diligently polishing the mirror of our lives, our minds, day after day, based on the Mystic Law.

In photography, every moment counts. Concentration is absolutely necessary. As the Austrian-born master of this art, Ernst Haas, a photojournalist renowned for his innovations in color photography, says: “The photographer never has a second chance. He must always approach his work with the creative drive to blaze a new trail.” There is never a second chance. You cannot let the moment escape.

For me, photography is a battle.

To win is a wonderful feeling.

When I was a young man of 28, I went to Yamaguchi Prefecture, a place I have come to love dearly. I went there to spearhead a propagation campaign, to open the way for the development of the kosen-rufu movement there.

Why were we able to achieve the record-breaking advances we did at that time? We fought with the spirit that the moment would never come again. I built a strong foundation in Yamaguchi through a struggle based on the oneness of mentor and disciple.

I triumphed. I achieved things that no one can rival—in every place that I worked for kosen-rufu. I hope all of you will do the same. I don’t care what it is, but do something. Achieve something that will make others express their admiration.

It is a wonderful feeling to win. It’s fun. You feel proud.

Losing is sad. People make fun of you. The purpose of your faith, of your life, is to win.

Challenging oneself constitutes winning.

To commemorate the opening of the SGI-Singapore Culture Centre last August, we held a joint photography exhibition with the Photographic Society of Singapore. One of the most widely praised works was Mr. Tay’s *Scaling New Heights*. I am happy to have been presented a print of that work today: A brilliant red carp is leaping with tremendous power. The photograph captures the moment it leaps up a sparkling waterfall. This is a masterpiece among masterpieces.

Mr. Tay has caught the beauty of life’s dynamism with perfect precision, clarity and warmth. The leaping carp, filled with life, is a symbol of challenge.

The same is true of people: those who are challenging themselves or fighting hard in some endeavor are beautiful, noble. The lives of those who fail to strive or challenge themselves stagnate, and others can see it.

Challenging oneself in itself constitutes winning. Whatever the final results may be, the fact that you are fighting hard right now is itself happiness, victory and glory.

A Buddha is a person who refuses to succumb.

There is a steep waterfall called Dragon Gate found along the Yellow River in China. An ancient fable states that any carp that successfully climbs those falls will turn into a dragon. This fable is even quoted in Nichiren Daishonin’s writings (“The Dragon Gate,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 249). Mr. Tay’s photograph is like a

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great masterpiece of Chinese painting depicting the fabled Dragon Gate and a carp attempting to scale it.

Speaking of the Yellow River, the “Dialogue With Nature” exhibition of my photographs is currently being shown in the city of Xi’an, which is located on the banks of this river. [The exhibition has now been shown in 47 cities in 27 countries].

The Daishonin used the fable of the Dragon Gate to encourage a young follower: The waters of the Dragon Gate fall as swiftly as an arrow. Fishermen gather at the waterfall basin and cast layer after layer of nets. Eagles, tigers and other wild beasts lie in wait, trying to catch the fish who dare to climb the falls. Yet the carp who meet and survive all these challenges become mighty dragons.

The same is true of people, the Daishonin tells us. Those who fight bravely against all enemies, who fight tenaciously amid persecution and attack, who triumph over every obstacle, will attain Buddhahood. Those who encounter persecution for the sake of kosen-rufu and triumph over it will become Buddhas.

What is a Buddha? When some people hear the word *Buddha*, they immediately think of statues or images of Buddhas. But Mr. Makiguchi, while in prison, proclaimed with great conviction to his prosecutors that a Buddha is a person who refuses to succumb to even the most powerful enemy. A Buddha is a person who attains the highest ideal as a human being.

Our theme for next year is “Raising the Curtain on the 21st Century—The Year of Youth.” The year 2000 is also the Year of the Dragon in Chinese tradition. I was born in the Year of the Dragon.

I hope that the Yamaguchi youth, the YWD International Group and all youth division members will take the lead in climbing the waterfall of the new century, doing so with bright joy and hope! Please create a magnificent personal history, so that you can exclaim, “Life is wonderful!”

In closing, I offer my sincere prayers for the continued success of the PSS, the eternal prosperity of Singapore and the good health and long life of Mr. Tay and everyone here today.

Tomorrow is a full moon. Buddhism compares a bodhisattva, on the way to becoming a Buddha, to the moon on the night before it reaches fullness (MW-1, 227). Now the moon is waxing, approaching its fullness. The first photographs I took were of the moon—the full moon.

My young friends, whose hearts shine with the luminous moonlight of health, intellect and wisdom: May you move forward unerringly on the right path like the sun and the moon, with dignity, patience and perseverance. May you triumph without fail!

Thank you very much!

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

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What Is a Buddha?

From This Speech:

What is a Buddha? When some people hear the word *Buddha*, they immediately think of statues or images of Buddhas. But first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, while in prison, proclaimed with great conviction to his prosecutors that a Buddha is a person who refuses to succumb to even the most powerful enemy. A Buddha is a person who attains the highest ideal as a human being.

- 1) How would you define the word *Buddha*?
- 2) What do your friends think of when they hear the word *Buddha*?
- 3) President Makiguchi said that “a Buddha is a person who refuses to succumb to even the most powerful enemy.” How does refusing to succumb make one a Buddha?
- 4) If “a Buddha is a person who attains the highest ideal as a human being,” what, in your opinion, is the highest ideal a human being can attain?
- 5) What ideals are you trying to attain in your life? What is the highest ideal you are shooting for?
- 6) How has your idea of what a Buddha is changed during your Buddhist practice?

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