

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S DEC. 9 SPEECH—PART 1 LET'S WIN IN EVERYTHING IN 2000!

'I congratulate you all on the imminent start of the year 2000,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'Please wage a decisive struggle and be victorious in all your endeavors!'

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 40th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting and the 10th Saitama Prefecture General Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Dec. 9.

To my fellow members around Japan and the world, thank you for all your tireless efforts this year! The Brass Band just gave us a magnificent performance. One of the tunes they played was "Katiusha," a famous Russian folk song. Composed in 1939, it sings of the true love of a young woman waiting for the return of her sweetheart, a soldier serving in the border defense at the beginning of World War II. The girl's name is Katiusha, a popular, well-loved Russian name. Matvei Blanter, the renowned Russian composer of folk songs, wrote the music.

My sincere thanks to the Brass Band!

We shouldn't settle for mediocrity.

The Roman philosopher Cicero declares, "A home without written works is like a person without a soul." I have been fond of this saying since my youth and have cited it often. Always having good books on hand at home, I feel, is far more important than having a television or a personal computer.

Dr. Rustan Rakhmanaliev, chair of the World Committee on Awarding the Chingiz Aitmatov Gold Medal and Prize, is a leading authority on written works. Of late, there has been a grave decline in print culture—specifically in literature and good books—not only in Japan but also around the world. Despite this prevailing trend, Dr. Rakhmanaliev and his wife Natalia Musina, the Committee's Information and Analysis Department director, have been involved in publishing. More than 220,000 copies of their published works have been printed to date. They are outstanding guardians of print culture and champions of creativity.

Kyrgyzstan's beautiful capital of Bishkek is home to a magnificent library named after the esteemed Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov. Many young people gather at the library and study enthusiastically. They also enjoy spectacular views of the snowcapped peaks of the Tien Shan Mountain range in the distance.

When he visited the Soka University campus, the first place Dr. Rakhmanaliev wanted to visit was its libraries. His focus shows how astute he is.

There is a quiet, picturesque tree-lined avenue leading from the front of the Aitmatov Library in Bishkek. It is named after a young poet who died a martyr: Kasym Tynystanov. He was a champion of culture, who fearlessly spoke out for truth, who unflinchingly fought and died for justice during Stalin's dictatorship. I want all of you to be courageous champions, too. Champions of humanity! Champions of kosen-rufu!

What is the purpose of your life and faith, if, as a youth, you simply lead humdrum, uneventful lives and die without ever having achieved anything worthwhile? You shouldn't settle for mediocrity.

Title: Let's Win in Everything in 2000!

Subject: World Tribune 01/01/00 n.3275 p.6 WT000101p06 Hachioji, Tokyo, Japan 12/09/99

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 12/09/99 Attitude Behavior Encouragement Everything Gakkai Guidance Hachioji Ikeda Japan an Leadership Messages Poetry President Quarter Soka Speeches Spirit Tokyo Tribune World Youth+more...

Tynystanov studied in Dr. Rakhmanaliev's homeland, Uzbekistan. Later he was arrested and imprisoned on false charges. Proclaiming that future generations would, without fail, uncover the truth of his innocence, the young poet courageously went to his death. He was executed by a firing squad in 1938, at age 37.

The world over, great leaders and reformers are fighting for what they believe in, ready to lay down their lives. I have also fought with this resolve.

This is the fundamental spirit of the Soka Gakkai. This is the spirit of the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda.

This is the spirit that lies at the core of my being. What I fear is this rigorous spirit of selfless dedication gradually fading or clouding among our members.

Tynystanov wrote the following lines in "O, Youth!":

*Youth, rise up!
Youth, ponder deeply!
Do not spend your time in vain;
Open your eyes,
Advance surefootedly
Toward the future,
Grit your teeth and march forward,
Show a path for the suffering people
To whom no one has yet extended a hand,
Bring forth wisdom,
And with a bright smile and buoyant spirits,
Let joy shine forth from your hearts.*

What an inspiring poem! Since my youth, I have cherished and recited many poems in my heart. In my younger days, I sometimes recited poems to my friends at night school.

President Toda often said: "The impassioned calls of youth are what galvanize other youth." "Youth attract other youth."

Today, youth division representatives from around Japan are gathered here. I congratulate you all on the imminent start of the year 2000, which we celebrate with the theme "Raising the Curtain on the 21st Century—The Year of Youth." Please wage a decisive struggle and be victorious in all your endeavors! This is the true spirit of youth.

To prevail over setbacks is the hallmark of a genuine Buddhist.

My esteemed Dr. Rakhmanaliev, Madame Musina and Committee Secretary Abdimutalibzhan Amankulov: It is with great pride and joy that I accept this immensely significant Chingiz Aitmatov Gold Medal, which you have conferred on me today. I humbly accept it as a symbol of the golden triumph that will adorn the lives of all my beloved fellow SGI members—without a single exception—throughout eternity.

Gold has profound meaning in Buddhism. Gold cannot be destroyed by fire nor washed away or broken down by water. Similarly, a person who embraces a philosophy of genuine substance can lead a golden life that nothing can dent or destroy, regardless of the hardships and obstacles encountered along the way. This is what Buddhism teaches.

Lead a golden life! This is the ultimate purpose of Buddhism and of life.

Congratulations to the hardworking Saitama members on the holding of your triumphant general meeting! My deep appreciation and congratulations, too, to my dear

fellow members from Yamanashi and Waka-yama, and also to the stalwart members from Fujinomiya [where the head temple is located], who have all traveled long distances to be here today. In addition, I sincerely welcome the group of Thai members, who are in Japan to participate in a training course, and all the other SGI members visiting from a total of 12 countries.

I hope that, as SGI leaders, you will always show the greatest consideration when greeting fellow members: shaking their hands, offering encouragement and reaching out to embrace them with warm, pleasant words.

I express my appreciation again to our uncrowned heroes, the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper deliverers—representatives of whom are here today—for their unceasing devotion. Thank you very, very much.

Delivering newspapers is hard, unglamorous work. Many might consider it the most undesirable job around. But it is thanks to the sincere members who take on this onerous task that we can receive and read the *Seikyo Shimbun* each day. You, our uncrowned heroes, are infinitely noble and precious. Please be on guard against accidents, and take good care of your health.

Morning is a refreshing, exhilarating time; the air is clean. Please advance on the path of your mission with pride and good cheer, confident that making the rounds of your neighborhood or community is a wonderful way to keep fit and healthy.

And last but not least, I welcome with all my heart Baseball Hall of Fame inductee Orlando Cepeda, his wife, Mirian, and his close friend Tony Dorsey, an SGI district leader in San Francisco. Mr. Cepeda finally realized his dream of making it into the Hall of Fame. He has won!

A life in which one fails to triumph over difficulty is a sad thing. To prevail over problems and setbacks is the hallmark of a genuine Buddhist. It is the essence of life. People throughout Japan and the world heartily applaud Mr. Cepeda's victory.

I want to share the words of an ancient philosopher of Central Asia that have been passed down for a thousand years: "Forge close ties with pure-hearted people. Shun base-hearted people, lest you become tainted with their baseness."

The Lotus Sutra also exhorts us, "Thrust aside evil friends and associate with good companions" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 78). This is the fundamental path to happiness in life.

Dr. Rakhmanaliev has been an insatiable reader since his youth, devouring countless edifying books on all manner of subjects, from all eras and cultures. He doesn't have time to read books or magazines published by the gutter press.

Dr. Rakhmanaliev has also made a point of going out to meet first-class people in all realms of society and learning from them with a sincere, humble seeking spirit. This spirit is truly admirable. In stark contrast, unfortunately, many Japanese lose their humility and quickly grow arrogant.

I understand that Dr. Rakhmanaliev's father taught him this spirit to humbly learn from first-class people. His father told him: "If you want to become a scholar, then go to a successful scholar and ask him how to become one." He taught his son to seek advice and guidance from people who were actually active in a given field, and that he should listen with his own ears and look with his own eyes.

This resonates with Mr. Makiguchi's advice: "Never judge something you don't know anything about."

(To be continued in the Jan. 14 issue)

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

The Soka Gakkai Spirit

From This Speech:

The world over, great leaders and reformers are fighting for what they believe in, ready to lay down their lives. I have also fought with this resolve. This is the fundamental spirit of the Soka Gakkai. This is the spirit of the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda. This is the spirit that lies at the core of my being. What I fear is this rigorous spirit of selfless dedication gradually fading or clouding among our members.

- 1) SGI President Ikeda says that “the world over, great leaders and reformers are fighting for what they believe in....” Who are some examples of this that come to mind?
- 2) President Ikeda is defining the Soka Gakkai spirit here. Why do you think it’s important to him to convey this spirit to us of fighting for what we believe in, even at the cost of our lives?
- 3) How did the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents live with this spirit?
- 4) How has President Ikeda lived with this spirit?
- 5) Why do you think President Ikeda fears “this rigorous spirit of selfless dedication gradually fading or clouding among our members”?