

President's Address at the 2015 Saitama University Commencement Ceremony

Dear international graduates,

As if this year's extremely hot summer followed by the continual rain was fictitious, the time takes its step forward brisk autumn season as usual. The seasonally beautiful scenery of Saitama University campus creates a special atmosphere on this graduation day, which is one and only point on the time axis. On this significant occasion, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations on your graduation on behalf of all the members of Saitama University. In addition, I sincerely express much respect to your families who have given support to you until today.

Out of 65 graduates in total, the 33 of them are from 9 overseas countries, which are Bangladesh, China, Korea, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Ukraine. Each of you has encountered various academic disciplines and got various experiences in the study process at Saitama University since you joined us with your own objectives. I am sure that you have a feeling of satisfaction now.

I am sorry to talk about my personal matter, but it was 1980, just 35 years ago, when I finished the doctoral program with Doctor of Engineering degree. Because I didn't have any confidence in my research ability, the decision of continuing study for doctoral degree was finally made by the supervisor's supportive push. Fortunately, my doctoral study showed relatively good progress, while the study process was a repeat of reaching deadlock and being troubled as a matter of course. I believe that various experiences through the process, such as looking at deadlocks from different positions and discussing troubles with my friends in different academic fields, have brought up myself significantly. I still remember that I was with a great sense of fulfillment on the graduation day.

Your case might be more or less similar to my case. You can be proud of the fact that you have successfully graduated by fulfilling the requirements of Doctoral or Master's degrees, which was not possible without your own steady efforts in your study process. Research is a repetition of challenge and failure aiming at higher things, and an act that you cannot do without passion. You must have realized the immense values in making your way of thinking more flexible and more diverse through discussions with others.

Let me talk about this issue from different viewpoint.

The society today is called knowledge society. It becomes a focal point in the society to let knowledge activate. Because a future prediction is difficult for an individual as well as for the society and an innovation is necessary for the social system, we must concentrate the human wisdom in order to break free from this severe situation. This is the reason why the modern society is said to be knowledge society.

As one of the characteristics of this knowledge society, the progress of knowledge often accompanies paradigm shift, and the judgment based on wide knowledge

and flexible thought becomes more important. It is true that getting knowledge is fun and you must have realized it at Saitama University. However, not only knowledge but also thought is important, as Japanese essayist, Mr. Shigehiko Toyama preaches in his book "Chiteki Seikatsu Shukan" (Chikumashobo, 2015). He says, "The knowledge itself is powerless but becomes powerful once the knowledge is utilized in life. Long term study at school could lead to the knowledge for knowledge." Yes. Knowledge gets a meaning only by being linked with a thought and an action for solving a problem. In other words, according to the Goethe's maxim, "Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do."

In fact, Goethe leaves another maxim in association with thought. That is, "Thinking is more interesting than knowing, but less interesting than looking." He emphasizes the importance of looking. At the same time, however, Goethe also says, "We only see what we know." pointing out the difficulty of looking. On this importance and difficulty of looking, Japanese anatomist, Dr. Takeshi Yorou mentions in his latest book "Bunkei no Kabe" (PHP Shinsho, 2015). First of all, he points out that even a scientist tends not to look at what can be seen but what he wants to see through his own filter, at a research stage of sensuously grasping an event before making it consciousness. Don't you have anything that comes to mind about this? Dr. Yorou then argues generally the importance of looking well in the field by opening one's sense before one is deadlocked by thinking with one's head.

Another feature of knowledge society is the importance of cooperating with experts in various fields without holding to one's specialized field. In other words, possible solutions for "a problem without a correct answer" are cross-cutting and various in the knowledge society where surrounding environment changes every moment. However, it is not easy to pay attention to other fields nor to accept the diversity, especially in the information-developed society. For example, there was an interesting report in the journal, Science, that the width of reference was obviously narrowed after scientific journals were made online. While you must have been deepening your specialty in the study for a degree, I hope you to intentionally peep into other fields, to widen your view, and to introduce diversity into yourself from now on. You should know the fact that a perspective of one thing is totally different by a person.

Once again, congratulations on your graduation. I do expect each of you to significantly contribute to the knowledge society as an intellectual professional in your future. Your future great success will definitely make Saitama University more powerful.

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