

President's Speech

March 25, 2014 Graduation Ceremony and Graduate School Commencement Ceremony

Creating harmonious diversity in our global society

First of all, please permit me to extend my sincere congratulations to each and every one of you on reaching this day, the day on which you complete your studies at your respective schools and in your professional degree programs. As the president of Osaka University, I'd like to heartily congratulate you on your efforts. I also would like to express my admiration for your parents who supported your achievement of these goals.

Today you're graduating from Osaka University with an advanced degree. You must be filled with expectations for what lies ahead. You have gained experience in classes, laboratories, clubs, and social activities at Osaka University. My hope is that whatever goal you aim for you will become reliable leaders in that field and make use in the world of the knowledge and skills you've cultivated at Osaka University. I hope you will contribute to the future of Japan as well as the development of human society and improved welfare. I hope you believe you have the ability to be active in the world as leaders. I also hope you will move in society with grace and responsibility.

Global society

What does being active in the world as a person of the world mean? We can look at the long history of humanity from many view points. Civilization, emerging in locations such as Mesopotamia and the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the Nile River, the Indus River, and the Yellow River, has made great progress, flourishing through the ages, and spreading throughout the world. Politics, economy, and cultures originally limited to local areas have expanded globally through relationships of exchange, cooperation, subordination, and dominance with other regions.

During that time the centers of politics, economy, and culture have changed. For example, with regard to economy, Asia, particularly China and India, was the center of the world for a long time. According to the British economist, Angus Maddison, the Asian share (China, India, Japan, and Southeast Asia) accounted for about two thirds of the world GDP from the 16th century to the early modern period. Around the beginning of the 19th century, just after the Industrial Revolution in the U.K., Asia's share of the world GDP was over 50 percent. During that time, innovative technologies such as papermaking, printing, the compass, and

gunpowder were invented and greatly influenced human development. It's historically true that these technologies developed in China and in the Muslim world of West Asia.

Later, immigration to the New World, trade spanning the Atlantic Ocean, and increasing industrialization caused the share of Europe and the U.S. to become a major segment of the world GDP. That share rapidly increased and surpassed 50 percent and reached almost 80 percent after WWII under US hegemony. At the same time, Asia's share of the world GDP dropped to below 20 percent. However, thanks to the economic recovery referred to as the "The East Asian Miracle" that has continued since the 1970s, Asia's share of the world GDP has rebounded to 40 percent and is expected to surpass 50 percent again in the very near future. (*Global History viewed from Asia*, AKITA Shigeru, Minerva Shobo Publisher, 2013)

From this economic aspect alone, one can see the world is dynamically changing every second. Such a change is not limited to economic activities -- politics and military power are capable of changing even national borders on a global scale. At the same time, religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism have spread to other areas and transformed them. These differences in economic systems, political systems, military power, and religions have arisen, changed, and influenced each other, resulting in the complex international society of today. Ethnic conflicts taking place in our world stem from problems often rooted in history and it will take time to solve such problems.

Furthermore, environmental problems, the energy crisis, and food problems further complicate things. Infectious diseases also have had a great impact on human history. These problems are not separate problems and are often closely related to one another, having a vast influence on economic activities, politics, and military affairs. We cannot explain the swift collapse of the Aztec and Inca Empires that had enjoyed prosperity for a long time without noting the impact of the infectious disease smallpox spread by hundreds of Spanish troops. Before the arrival of the Europeans, there had been no smallpox in the North and South America. People in those areas had no immunity to smallpox so the disease became a great threat to their survival.

Economic prosperity and population growth lead to climate change, environmental problems, energy crises, and food problems. The opposite is true. These problems have a great impact on economic activities. Currently, national borders count only in the worlds of politics and military matters. Thanks to global economic activities and improvements in transportation, people travel around the world and information spreads immediately through

the internet. Even politics sometimes has effects beyond national borders. National borders are becoming history.

We are now living in such a world. People refer to the world today as a global society. Well then, what is a global human being? What characteristics are being sought in the global human being that society now needs? We even hear the phrase “global standard.” So then, what is globalization?

Pitfalls of globalization

As I mentioned earlier, human beings’ activities have rapidly shifted from “uniformity” to “diversity” during our long history. There are diversities in language, culture, race, and religion. Through the global-scale economic activities and human interaction associated with these activities, the stage for people’s activities has rapidly shifted from one of uniformity to one of diversity. Problems such as global warming, the energy crisis, food supply, world population, and infectious diseases have multiple causes and it’s difficult to find solutions.

The more we see things from a global perspective, the more intricately-intertwined things appear. It has become impossible to ascertain the essence of things without considering a variety of factors. Many conflicts arise from diversity in human society. In our time when people are active on a global stage across national borders, diversity leads to conflict in society. In this sense, diversity is a big obstacle to global society. Conflict has increased the need for uniformity, the need for global standards.

However, in actuality, diversity itself is a source of a spiritually rich human society and an essential factor for future development. Humans have made progress because of diversity and because of it, humans have gained the ability to overcome obstacles and make further progress in the future. For example, currently English may be helpful in global business activities; however, as history shows, the global language has always changed. Also, language is just a means for assisting economic activity and only a part of the whole. It is just a communication tool. As language recognition software embedded in smartphones becomes further developed, language barriers may become history.

The phrase global standard evokes the feeling that globalization is homogeneity. Actually, in today’s global society, English is an important common language. We are under pressure to think of things on a global scale and thus the phrase 'global standard' was born. In essence, this means that things basically should be uniform, made according to global standards. Galápagos syndrome, at the other end of the spectrum, is a term which refers to

product types developed in isolation of a globally available product, and is often mentioned as a symbol of failure. It seems to me the flow of globalization moves in the opposite direction to that of human history, which moves from uniformity to diversity. Can this be right? I wonder.

Creating harmonious diversity

In order to live in a global society, not homogenizing through established global standards, but understanding, respecting, and maintaining diversity is important. Additionally, positively supporting diversity and using it for the creation of innovation is needed. In other words, I believe only the creation of harmonious diversity can maintain peace in global society and create innovation in economic and social activities. I wonder if this will lead to the further development of human society. In global society, intricately coexisting with diversity, what is required I think is not globalization, homogeneity of things, but the creation of "harmonious diversity."

Osaka University where you have studied is a center of scholarship. Osaka University has conducted research to ascertain the true essence of things and made efforts to cultivate personnel who will possess the ability to find the essence of what is true in multiple fields. By making use of its strength as a comprehensive university, Osaka University has provided students with opportunities to acquire a variety of world-class scholarship. For example, regarding language education, Osaka University provides courses in 25 languages and leads in fields of research and education in Asian languages.

The new role of universities in our global society in the 21st century is the creation of harmonious diversity. In global society it's important to overcome barriers produced by diversity while maintaining that diversity. Universities impart "scholarship," a kind of language common to all humankind. Academic scholarship and art both have the power to overcome barriers. Exchange among humans by means of academic learning, scholarship, makes it possible to achieve two contradictory things: the maintenance of diversity and overcoming barriers caused by diversity. In this way, universities can contribute to the globalization of society through the creation of harmonious diversity. As you are graduates of Osaka University, you will play a great role in global society.

Live harmoniously and prosper

How should we prepare ourselves to create harmonious diversity? I think it's important to recognize and respect diversity, in other words, to have mutual understanding and mutual

respect for different cultures. To this end, we need to understand other people's ways of looking at things and feelings. We must be open-minded. Thus, both the "foreign" and "self" components need to coexist in time and place. For that purpose, one must know one's self. If one cannot love one's self, how can such a person understand and respect other people?

I think being able to live together harmoniously with others is essential for people who will be active in global society. For nations and people with different cultures and religions to live in harmony and prosper, it's critical to understand others and respect them. Based on such a way of thinking, people will be able to live together harmoniously. This is a necessary frame of mind for people living in a global society. To this end, it's necessary that they know themselves, love their country Japan, understand and respect their own culture. If one cannot love one's self and one's nation and not be proud of such, how can such a person understand and respect other people, other nations?

For any organization and human, the present condition of the organization or the human comes from their roots. Their experiences are handed over as a kind of DNA. When speaking of future, you cannot neglect them. All of you share a common history that you studied at Osaka University. Being graduates of Osaka University, you will be viewed as persons selected from society and you will have the responsibility to give back to society accordingly. To know yourselves, you need to know Osaka University. So, what is Osaka University where you have studied? Let's think about the Osaka University that has become and will remain an important part of your life.

The root of Osaka University: Tekijuku

Thanks to the enthusiastic support of the citizens of Osaka, then president of Osaka Prefectural Medical University and the second president of Osaka University, KUSUMOTO Chozaburo (you may recognize his name from the Kusumoto Awards that are given to outstanding students in this graduation ceremony), then governor of Osaka Prefecture SHIBATA Zenzaburo, and other university personnel, Osaka Imperial University was founded in 1931 with two schools, Medicine and Science. It was the 6th imperial university and the first president was NAGAOKA Hantaro.

However, our university's roots actually reach back to Tekijuku, a private "place of learning" founded in 1838 by the doctor and scholar of Western sciences OGATA Koan who worked to save people with then state-of-the-art knowledge. Tekijuku's open academic culture and forward-looking spirit gave birth to Osaka Prefecture Medical School and,

eventually, to today's Schools of Medicine and Science at Osaka University. In 1933, Osaka Industrial University merged with Osaka University, becoming the current School of Engineering.

When the School of Law, Economics, and Letters was established following the end of World War II, collections of books regarding traditional Chinese and Japanese learning possessed by Kaitokudo, a "place of learning of Chinese and Japanese studies" for merchants and founded by merchants in Osaka in the late Edo Period, were passed on to Osaka University. These book collections were symbolic of the original scholarship and the "Osaka spirit" that our university inherited with these tomes.

With the introduction of the new education system, the School of Law, Economics, and Letters was divided into the School of Letters and the School of Law and Economics, setting up a structure for our current comprehensive university. Osaka University continues to grow under the motto "Live Locally, Grow Globally." After going through transitions such as the legal status change to that of a national university corporation in 2004, the merger with Osaka University of Foreign Studies in 2007, Osaka University now represents our country as a genuine comprehensive university.

Let me explain about Tekijuku, one of the roots of Osaka University. More than 1,000 students came to Tekijuku from all over Japan and studied day and night. The students included FUKUZAWA Yukichi who served as a school chief and founded Keio University in his later days, HASHIMOTO Sanai who was killed at the age of 25 in the Ansei Purge, SANO Tsunetami who found Hakuaisha, the predecessor of the Japan Red Cross, OMURA Masujiro who created a modern military system for the Meiji government, OTORI Keisuke who diplomatically confronted the Western powers, and IKEDA Kensai who served as the first dean of the Faculty of Medicine at The University of Tokyo built in 1877. Thus, Tekijuku produced persons who were active as leaders in various fields before and after the Meiji Restoration. Tekijuku played a major role in the modernization of Japan in the early Meiji Period.

In Osaka University where you have studied, Tekijuku's spirit of "responsible ethics, concern for people, for society," the aspirations of young people who have studied here, the Osaka merchants' passion for scholarship and their eagerness to build an imperial university in Osaka, these have been handed down to you from the earlier generations. Our future depends on you young people.

Society asks you to fulfill your responsibilities as leaders in a variety of fields, and for the further promotion of inquiring minds in basic and applied research as a part of intellectual creative activities nurtured at Osaka University. You who have studied and conducted research at Osaka University can achieve this goal. Just as our predecessors who studied at Tekijuku brought new perspectives to Japan during a period of stagnation at the end of Edo Period, I want you to aspire to be leaders on the path of the 21st century.

Osaka University's aspiration: World Tekijuku

2031 marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of Osaka University. Osaka University's greatest aspiration is to become one of the world's top 10 research universities by our 100th anniversary in 2031, to become a "Tekijuku to the world." This year, the first year as the "World Tekijuku," we are proceeding with the reform of our organizations and systems as well as OU members' consciousness in order to realize this dream in 2031. Just as happened at Tekijuku at the end of the Edo Era, I hope you will now fly from Osaka University and be active in a variety of fields in the world. I want you to carry with pride your graduation from Osaka University.

I hope you will keep in mind that you graduated from Osaka University in 2014, the first year as the "World Tekijuku" and you will reach the top of mountains in your own way so that you can make your dreams come true. Achieving dreams is difficult. That's why they are called dreams, an ideal. A dream is not reality and cannot be achieved easily. So it's only too easy to think that achieving a dream is impossible and, thus, give up. However, if we hold on to our dreams and continue to make every effort to achieve them, one day, someday, those dreams just might come true.

Dreams are meant to be achieved.

Please hold to this throughout your long lives.

Allow me to close by wishing you all good fortune. May each of you live a long life filled with health and happiness. My sincerest congratulations to you all!

March 25, 2014

Toshio HIRANO
President of Osaka University