

Very good evening,

It's my great honour to express my deepest gratitude for having an opportunity to share the tonight's pleasant time, welcoming many participations by excellencies, dignitaries, celebrities, and friends. I have long been seeking this honourable opportunity to co-organise the Japanese traditional art at this esteemed place, the Ismaili Centre. First, I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Ismaili Centre, especially to Vice President Mr. Aziz Merchant, and Mr. Akbar Verjee, Diplomatic Relations.

Tonight, I can see a lot of flowers in our guests side. What's this mean? In Japanese saying, when we find out a beauty aura, we say there are flowers. In front of me, strong beauty auras are radiated away, because so many beautiful ladies are here. No? Definitely, the hall is full of strong beauty auras. Today is a very nature of the arrangement of flowers blooming beautifully both on the stage and from your guests side.

Ikebana, originally since more than a thousand years ago, like every flower arrangement around the world, it was instituted from ceremonial meanings to dedicate the seasonal flowers to divine, closely linked to a religious ritual. Then, it was starting to flourish in the sixteenth century, as a way of extending our heartfelt hospitality to the distinguished guests, by decorating with natural beauties. In the meantime, in samurai era which ended the 19th century, Ikebana was one of samurai's accomplishments to develop their mind discipline. Cutting a live flower decisively requires a stable and clear state of mind which is inevitable for samurai to swing a sharp sword.

So, having originated from such holy status and developed through a samurai accomplishment, many Japanese men have no sense of gift flowers to ladies. For me, I have never presented any flower to ladies in my life. I'm saying it, not because my wife is here. It's true I as a typical Japanese have not presented flowers to ladies. So, I have an advice. First for gentlemen, a flower gift would be the most effective way to convey your earnest message to a Japanese lady. For ladies, if you receive a flower gift from a Japanese gentleman, you can trust him, because he must have had enormous determination behind the scene.

Ikebana is a kind of Japanese heart and soul. As Ikebana is to develop the mind discipline, we say when we practice for thousands times, it becomes a great skill; and, if we practice another thousands more, it becomes the art of discipline. For practices, we should devote our highest effort faithfully and politely with every courtesy. Japanese art and culture always require to begin with paying courtesy, and end by paying courtesy. Consequently, it may contribute the peaceful harmonious nature in the world. This clearly represents the virtue of Japanese tradition. And, this harmonious virtue would be along with the same goal of the Ismaili Centre, which seeks the variety of gathering co-existing harmoniously.

I hope you will enjoy tonight's beauty hands-on experience with developing your mind discipline.