

## THIS BEAUTIFUL EARTH: PHOTO ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA 'NIAGARA FALLS'

Is it the sound of Earth roaring? Is it her groaning? Or is it her joyful laughter? What I heard was not the sound of water; it was thunder.

The roaring caused the ground to rumble and seemed to shake the ceiling of the blue sky. As I drew nearer, I could no longer hear what the person next to me was saying. When I looked out, I felt as if my body was going to be sucked into the gigantic down-rushing torrent.

The basin floor, some 185 feet below the falls, was invisible, shrouded in the rising mist.

The Chinese character for *waterfall* is made of a part meaning “water” and another meaning “dragon.” Like tens of thousands of writhing water dragons, the overwhelmingly powerful Niagara Falls seem to tear at heaven and earth with explosive force.

Like this king of waterfalls, people should live their lives as kings and queens —

Intense, like the waterfall;

Ceaseless, like the waterfall;

Bold, like the waterfall;

With cheerful energy, like the waterfall;

With majesty and dignity, like the waterfall;

I was in Canada in June 1981. It had been 21 years since my last visit. My 61-day trip around the world was drawing to an end. The previous year, I had been on my way to Canada. But as I was about to leave Chicago for Toronto, my flight was canceled due to engine trouble. It was a miserable turn of events. To stay on schedule, I had no choice but to cancel my visit. I later heard that my friends who were waiting to greet me at Toronto International Airport shed tears of disappointment.

That is why I was intent on creating many fond memories with my Canadian friends this time. After visiting the Toronto Community Center, I headed out with some Canadian members for this picturesque pride of Canada, Niagara Falls.

It was a fine day. We were perspiring in the afternoon sun. But the air near the falls was cool and refreshing. Depending on the wind's direction, you might get soaked by wind-blown spray as intense as any rainstorm.

The name *Niagara* means a bisected lowland. Faithful to this meaning, the Niagara River divides around Goat Island, which separates two waterfalls: the American Falls and the Canadian Falls [also known as Horseshoe Falls, pictured here]. I pointed my camera at the larger, Canadian Falls, which measure some 2,200 feet across. As I squinted into the viewfinder, I watched rainbows dance and frolic before the great curtain of water.

From where does it come? —the blue-green water that flows in a ceaseless torrent, moment by moment, hour by hour. Forty-two million gallons of water per minute. For 10,000 years and more, the water has continued to flow without a moment's respite. Is it symbolic of a torrent of life —the life force of planet Earth, which continues to pour forth, overflowing, inexhaustible. On this Earth exists such a grand spectacle, though it does not match in grandeur the cosmos of the human spirit.

To the waterfall, I called out in my heart:

Let your rumble resound in my life as it shakes the Earth's foundation.

It is a marching song of boiling currents, a symphony of majestic cataracts.

Let your storm of water fill my heart!

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Pour in your pounding, foaming, raging waters!  
But my soul, smiling calmly, will drink it all in.  
The waterfall roars!  
But I shall roar the louder!  
The waterfall surges forth!  
But even more boldly, I shall surge ahead!

*Six in a series*