

Old Friends Reunite in New Delhi
Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER
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Deepening the bonds of an enduring friendship, SGI President and Mrs. Ikeda visited Sonia Gandhi, the widow of the Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, and her family at her home this evening.

President Ikeda's friendship with the Gandhi family began 12 years ago when he and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi first met in Tokyo. The SGI president reminisced about that meeting. "We had a truly memorable discussion," he said. "It was a cold day, but Prime Minister Gandhi seemed to warm the room with his very presence. I will never forget that occasion.... He possessed courage, intellect and a strong sense of justice. I was confident that this youthful leader of the great nation of India would be a champion for peace who paved the way for the rest of the world to follow. Rarely has the world mourned the loss of someone so greatly as it did your husband. But Rajiv Gandhi continues to live on within your heart and that of Priyanka [their daughter] and the rest of your family. I believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that you and your family will enjoy wonderful fortune and victory in your lives."

Mr. Ikeda, who arrived in India on Oct. 16, also talked with Mrs. Gandhi about the success of the photographic exhibition "Rajiv Gandhi: An Intimate Vision" in Japan, which opened at the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum in April 1996. More than 330,000 people viewed the exhibition.

Through the exhibition, President Ikeda said, many people in Japan have learned of Rajiv Gandhi's greatness, warmth and humanity. The SGI leader shared a number of comments that had been made to him by dignitaries who had seen the photographic display:

- "The photographs taken by Rajiv Gandhi are alive. They have a soul-stirring depth. Viewing them is like watching a magnificent canvas unfolding."
- "One is left with the unmistakable impression that people of extraordinary ability also possess extraordinary artistic sensitivity. Every photograph is the brilliant crystallization of the photographer's personality and the spirit of India, and each has profound depth."
- "Simply brilliant! The photos capture the living essence, artistry and intellect of Rajiv Gandhi. We are offered a glimpse of the man within the youthful leader of the people who strove to guide his country into the 21st century. A most moving experience."

Mrs. Gandhi said that hearing details from him in person, she was touched and moved again by how enthusiastically the exhibition had been received.

Mr. Ikeda also presented Mrs. Gandhi with a poem titled "Shine Eternally, Mother's Victorious Sun!" which he had written in her honor.

In the poem, President Ikeda writes in part:

*The sublime flame of love for humanity
lit by India's lion
burns brightly on
in you and in the next generation!*

*There can be no doubting
that history
will greet with thunderous applause
the triumphal song*

*of this family
who lives for what is just and right.*

Mrs. Gandhi is the chairperson of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, one of the organizations that has invited the SGI leader to India. Mr. Ikeda said he hoped that she would take good care of her health for the sake of her family, India and the entire world.

Mrs. Gandhi said that each time she met President Ikeda she was always deeply moved by his warmth and consideration.

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