

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE  
TO THE SUA ENTRANCE CEREMONY, AUG. 24  
THE CASTLE OF JUSTICE WITHIN**

**‘The crucial thing is to construct yourself, to build within yourself an invincible castle of justice that will never fall or be defeated,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘In the newly started century, a new, vast and eternal struggle to create value has begun.’**

To the members of the first freshman class, whose lives are promised victory and glory, my heartfelt congratulations!

I want to welcome you and to express my most sincere appreciation to you for having chosen to study at the university that I founded. Were it possible, I should like to become the breeze that blows through the campus, the sunlight that shines there today, and to embrace and congratulate each and every one of you.

To the members of the faculty and administration, who have been so wholehearted in your devotion to the work of creating Soka University of America, always upholding the founding spirit, I ask for your continued support for the first freshman class — the young people who are our future, our hope, our very life.

To our most respected friends Dr. and Madame Arun Gandhi, and to all those friends and family members in attendance today, as university founder, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude for the warm interest and concern with which you are watching over the students’ brilliant new departure.

There is a wise Chinese maxim to the effect that planting trees is a project measured in decades, while the work of raising talented people must be undertaken with a vision that extends centuries into the future.

In founding SUA, I have been possessed by a burning, impassioned desire to foster many proud, confident leaders for world peace, people of a stature like that of majestic trees and whose efforts will benefit humanity 100, 200, 500 and 1,000 years into the future.

The members of the first freshman class are the starting point from which will grow a magnificent, towering forest of talented people dedicated to a humanistic philosophy. In this sense, each of you is truly invaluable, each of you possesses a profound mission in life.

Bathed in the bright sunlight, young California saplings grow until they cover the open earth with fresh, sparkling green. In the same manner, on this brilliantly lit hill in Aliso Viejo, an unending succession of tall, noble trees of Soka — value-creation — will grow and flourish, eventually spreading throughout the world as lush groves of hope. My heart resounds with joy and expectation when I envision that future.

**There is no greater education than adversity.**

Today is the start of a new, untried venture in education for global citizenship. On this occasion, I want to consider four themes, and in doing so I want to draw on the life and example of the great Indian poet–sage Rabindranath Tagore. The themes I want to examine are: confronting adversity; friendship based on a shared commitment to justice; mutual exchange between teacher and learner; and the full realization of one’s purpose in life. These themes are, I believe, vitally important guideposts for efforts to realize humanistic education in the 21st century.

Just 100 years ago, in 1901, a school was established in India dedicated to the ideal of

humane learning. It was built in the lovely forest setting of the Santiniketan village of peace, in Bengal.

The founder was Rabin-dranath Tagore, poet of global renown, close friend and ally of Mahatma Gandhi.

At first, there were only five students and five teachers. Yet this school was the source and origin from which was to grow the Visva Bharati, Tagore International University, which has trained and sent into the world so many people of outstanding talent.

At the time, India was still under imperial domination. Tagore rejected the prevailing modes of education then, which sought to force students into a standardized mold. He dedicated himself instead to the spiritual struggle of providing the kind of creative education in which students think for themselves, making knowledge their own through experience.

Further, Tagore courageously took the lead in sustained efforts to protect the common people from oppression and exploitation. As a result, he was subjected to various forms of harassment and persecution from those in power.

At times, his actions were misunderstood, and he was showered with mean-spirited abuse. He also suffered the tragic loss to illness of a number of his beloved family members.

Yet Tagore maintained a lioness courage and dignity. Drawing encouragement and inspiration from his students, who were filled with the joy of learning, he threw himself with ever-greater devotion into his work as an educator, a writer and a poet.

It was at this point that Tagore traveled to the United States, land of hope and freedom. He accepted lecture engagements in Chicago, Boston and elsewhere, where he spoke about India, about the nobility of the human spirit.

These lectures, drawn from the depths of his being, became the basis for the published writings that shook and moved people's hearts throughout the world. It was during this time of desperate, painful struggle that Tagore became the first Asian to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

For the poet, this exchange and dialogue with the American people was profoundly, widely significant. And here I am reminded of the fact that the father of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, as a visionary pioneer of the study of geography, saw the United States as the place where civilizations will encounter, merge and give rise to a new future civilization.

The point I am seeking to stress is that for you also, my young friends, this truth applies: There is no greater education than adversity.

The life we possess as human beings has within it the inherent capacity to transform any hardship or adversity into new flights of creativity. It is our encounters with adversity that, more than anything, enable us to draw forth and unleash this capacity.

As a great philosopher of the past writes: "Iron, when heated in the flames and pounded, becomes a fine sword. Worthies and sages are tested by abuse" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 303).

It is my sincere hope that when you find yourself confronting various trials or challenges, you will determine to make it the opportunity to develop your potential, to extend and actualize your capabilities. And I hope that you will continue to forge ahead, with youthful hope and energy, with patience and persistence. So long as you maintain a powerful, indomitable will and resolve, you will never fail to find a path forward.

I will continue always to pray with utmost intensity for each of you to successfully run the marathon of your youthful years, for each of you to be able to declare, "I have won!"

## **Nothing is stronger than friendship based on a shared commitment to justice.**

For Tagore, the greatest harvest from these struggles was the lifelong friendships that he forged with people of conscience throughout the world, with people who shared his vision and his ideals.

One of these was Mahatma Gandhi, to whom SUA has just dedicated an academic building.

While Gandhi and Tagore maintained a profound mutual affection and respect throughout their lives, their views and ways of thinking were not always in accord. At times, in fact, they engaged in spirited public debate about issues on which their opinions diverged.

But the two always concurred deeply with regard to devoting all of their efforts to the welfare of the people. And for this reason, no matter how they might publicly clash on matters of principle, the love and admiration they held for each other remained undiminished.

Tagore lived to be 80. Until the last years of his life, in order to raise funds for his international university, he continued to author dance dramas and to tour with these as producer-director. At times he himself would perform, standing with frail health on the stage.

Hearing this, Gandhi was shocked and astonished by the heroic struggles of the university founder. He sent Tagore a bank draft to cover the needed funds, expressing his sincere concern for the poet's health.

At times of adversity, nothing brings more courage than the warm words of a friend. Nothing is stronger than friendship based on a shared commitment to justice.

Again, it was Makiguchi, the father of Soka Education, who declared that those who do not have the courage to be an opponent of evil cannot be a friend to the good.

It is my sincere wish that the members of the first entering class, who have gathered in high hopes from 18 countries, will engage in free-spirited discussion and debate here on this campus; that you will challenge and encourage the very best in one another; that you will develop golden friendships that will last throughout the course of your lives.

To have good friends whom you deeply respect, to work together with them in harmony, wisdom and camaraderie—this spirit itself is the source from which you can create, starting with your immediate surroundings, a world of peace.

## **Mentor and student must learn and grow together.**

What was the educational ideal that Tagore envisaged? It is to be found in the interactions between teacher and learner. In Indian tradition, as Tagore describes, students “grew in their spirit with their own teachers’ spiritual growth.” But most of all, he was moved by “this ideal of education through sharing a life of high aspiration with one’s master.”

Teachers are, in other words, in no essential way superior to students. Mentor and student must learn and grow together. This kind of fresh, open interaction, engaging both in the fullness of their personhood, is the ideal of education. Indeed, I am convinced that in this kind of interaction is found the ultimate essence of humanistic education, which remains valid in any era, in any place.

I am reminded of the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, philosopher of the American Renaissance, who writes in his famous *Representative Men* that “Socrates and Plato are the double star which the most powerful instruments will not entirely separate.”

The Lotus Sutra, which contains the core teachings of Mahayana Buddhism, describes the mentor's aspirations for the disciple thus: "At the start I took a vow, hoping to make all persons equal to me, without any distinction between us" (p. 36).

This indicates that all people are inherently endowed with the sources of infinite wisdom, courage, fortune and virtue that characterize the Buddha. The Buddha's determination is to enable the disciple to equally manifest this same potential of life. This is a declaration of the underlying unity, or oneness, of mentor and disciple.

The mentor desires that the disciple will grow in capability to the point of eventually surpassing the mentor. Embracing a profound sense of respect for the disciple, the mentor pours his or her life's blood into the effort of fostering and training the disciple. Inspired by the mentor's faith and expectations, the disciple in turn commits to a process of open-ended growth, determined to live with the same sense of responsibility as the mentor, to develop the same expansive life-state as the mentor.

The most elevated, noble of human interactions is found in the spirit of mentor and disciple, the living pulse and breath of Soka education.

On this day, Aug. 24, at age 19, I determined that Josei Toda would be my mentor in life. From that day, I set out, as one young person, to work for the realization of world peace. At the time, I was about the same age as many of you.

My mentor's mentor, Maki-guchi, was 73 when he died in prison, following his utterly uncompromising confrontation with Japanese militarism. Although I was so beset by illness and poor health that it seemed uncertain I would live to see age 30, I am now poised to exceed the age at which Makiguchi offered his life for his convictions.

### **Each person has a purpose in life that he or she alone can fulfill.**

How greatly Makiguchi and Toda would rejoice today at the new departure of this first freshman class. All of you share profound, unfathomable bonds. Each of you possesses and is fated to fulfill a mission and mandate that is without limit.

Each person has a purpose in life that he or she alone can fulfill. A person who pursues the fulfillment of this mission to the very end, whatever the obstacles, is a true victor in life. Such a person can enjoy genuine happiness.

It is my conviction that from among you and those who follow you will emerge an endless stream of people of the highest capacity and caliber—the Mahatma Gandhis and Rabindranath Tagores of the 21st century, the Linus Paulings and Rosa Parks of the 21st century.

Without people of such talent and purpose, our efforts to build the foundations of peace for the next 10 millennia will be irrevocably delayed. It is essential that many global citizens emerge, who partake of the founding spirit of this university.

The victory of a university is determined by its students. The success of SUA depends entirely on you. I want you to join with me, with the university's faculty and staff, with people of wisdom and goodwill throughout America, with people of conscience the world over—and together achieve clear, full victory!

Makiguchi states that a single lion can do more than a thousand sheep; he urges us to be that one lion.

I, too, firm in the belief that one's strength is doubled when one embraces justice, have endured all forms of persecution and harassment. I have willingly given everything in order to set the stage for you.

The crucial thing is to construct yourself, to build within yourself an invincible castle of

justice that will never fall or be defeated. In the newly started century, a new, vast and eternal struggle to create value has begun. It has started here today.

In closing, I want to quote a poem of Tagore's that Mahatma Gandhi used to sing to himself as he walked among the people, as he walked to be with those who were struggling and suffering:

*If they answer not to thy call walk alone,  
If they are afraid and cower mutely facing the wall, ...  
open thy mind and speak out alone.*

Again, my most heartfelt congratulations! I look forward to the day when we may meet. And I thank from the bottom of my heart all those who have been so kind as to attend this historic first entrance ceremony.

Thank you very much!

*Aug. 24, 2001*

*Daisaku Ikeda  
Founder  
Soka University of America*