



OUR DISTRICT

Shining Star District is born in Phoenix.

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Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA 90401 and at additional mailing offices
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: SGI-USA Subscribers, 606 Wilshire Blvd., PO Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-9907

No. 3362

\$2.00

SEPTEMBER 7, 2001

DISTRICT SPECIAL ★ DISTRICT SPECIAL ★ DISTRICT SPECIAL



Photo by ROBERT EVANS

SUA Welcomes First Class

By JAMIE LIPTAN
STAFF WRITER

On Aug. 24, on the beautiful new Aliso Viejo, Calif., campus of Soka University of America, the 120 members of the university's first entering undergraduate class were officially welcomed in a joyous entrance ceremony.

Nearly 1,000 people filled the school's gymnasium for the event, which included a keynote speech by Dr. Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, a performance by renowned Jazz flautist Nestor Torres and words by Hiromasa Ikeda, a vice president of the SGI and son of the university's founder, SGI President Ikeda.

Addressing the new students, Dr. Alfred Balitzer, SUA's dean of faculty, said: "We are gathered here today because of one person — Daisaku Ikeda. Never forget that it was his vision and commitment that made SUA possible. Now is the time to respond to the founder by getting an education, by discovering that spark that makes us human so that you can demonstrate to the world what you have learned and become at SUA."

The first class of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo enjoy the university's first entrance ceremony, Aug. 24. The 120 students hail from 18 countries and territories.

PLEASE SEE SUA, 3

WINNING TOGETHER IN THE DISTRICT

In our monthly district special, the national leaders of SGI-USA discuss how to propel our districts forward in the new century, focusing on the organization's three goals of decreasing the size and expanding the number of districts, entrusting youth with district leadership and propagating Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

In the discussion, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima recalls that SGI President Ikeda

once compared the SGI organization to "an orchard, in which each district is like a single fruit tree, while the fruit represents each individual. Without the tree, there would be no fruit. Similarly, he said that the real basis of the organization is each district that composes it; when a district is formed and becomes fully functional, kosen-rufu in that area will grow in leaps and bounds."

Please see pages 4-5 for the full discussion. WT



Photo by JEAN PRITCHARD

Matilda Buck (right) attends a recent Pacific Palisades District meeting.

DISTRICT SPECIAL ★ DISTRICT SPECIAL ★ DISTRICT SPECIAL

What's Our Perspective Toward Objects From Other Religions?

Q&A ON FAITH

By TED MORINO

SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT
SENIOR ADVISOR

Q How can I encourage a member who is wondering what to do with objects from a different religion?

A Before answering this question directly, I would like to address some basics. Buddhism teaches that happiness lies in developing our innate Buddhahood while at the same time cherishing our individuality. It also teaches that one source of suffering is our



undue attachment to what is shallow and incorrect.

Nichiren Daishonin refuted the Buddhist schools of his time out of his awareness that their teachings twisted the Buddha's intent and guided the people away from the heart of the Lotus Sutra. They were in fact preventing people from culti-

vating their human potential.

While using the name of Buddhism, the major schools of the Kamakura period of Japan were actually propounding teachings that in one way or another ran counter to the Lotus Sutra's intent to allow all people to fully realize that they are essentially Buddhas and to manifest their Buddha nature.

For instance, the Pure Land sect (Nembutsu) leads its followers to abhor the reality of this world and yearn for an imaginary paradise after death. Such belief ultimately deprives one of hope and weakens one's life force, leading one to abandon developing one's full human potential in this life.

Slander in Buddhism is to deny the original intent and spirit of the Buddha as ex-

pressed in the Lotus Sutra and crystallized in the Daishonin's teachings. The mere act of possessing objects of other religious schools or traditions does not in itself constitute slander. We should make this point clear, first of all.

Practically speaking, we can view people's attitudes toward religious items in two ways: First, if they attribute to such items a power over their lives, they probably need to change their attachment to the religious belief or thought that compels them to do so. To help them do so is the practice of *shakubuku*. We need to encourage them to positively practice the Daishonin's Buddhism to the point where they are no longer undermining their own power.

Secondly, if they feel the object is valuable to them as a work of art, cultural trea-

sure or family heirloom, they may choose to keep it. In any case, the person who possesses such items is the one who should judge what to do with them.

The mere possession of a religious object does not determine either one's happiness or unhappiness. Buddhism focuses on people's life-conditions as the determining factor. SGI President Ikeda thus states, "Following the same path as the Buddha means accepting and upholding the Lotus Sutra; that is, to engrave in one's life the Buddha's spirit as revealed in the Lotus Sutra and to live in accord with that spirit" (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 2, p. 98).

Buddhism is called "the inner way" because it encourages self-examination. In other words, Buddhism encourages us to polish our lives to the extent that we can clearly know what we should hold on to and what we should let go of. In this vein, Nichiren Daishonin states, "It is the heart that is important" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1000). **WT**

The 'Problem' of Faith

Buddhism in a New Light

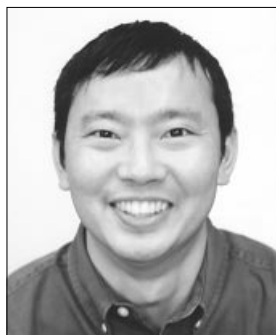
Soka Spirit Dialogue for the District

By SHIN YATOMI

SGI-USA VICE STUDY DEPARTMENT LEADER

The Soka Spirit movement is a gold mine of opportunities to learn more about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. The basics of faith are now cast in new light, revealing their deeper meaning—with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood's views as points of contrast. For this reason, our understanding of the temple issue will naturally translate into a clearer view of our faith, into greater joy and benefit from our practice.

The meaning of faith, for example, once required a simple explanation, such as: We believe in the Gohonzon. Many of us assumed that it was impossible to have wrong faith in the correct object of devotion; faith, as long as placed in the Gohonzon, was a matter of strong or weak, not of right or wrong, we believed.



Now, thanks to the priesthood, we are learning that what matters is not only what we believe in but also *how* we believe in it, that what people sometimes think of as "faith" in the Gohonzon can be a problem.

Regarding the significance of the Gohonzon, the Daishonin states, "Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 832). Interpreting this passage, the priesthood asserts: "The Gohonzon to which he refers is not the correct object of worship which one should worship. The Gohonzon to

which he refers is the life of the Buddha nature endowed within our bodies" (*Refuting the Soka Gakkai's "Counterfeit Object of Worship": 100 Questions and Answers*, p. 56). The priesthood here separates the object of devotion from our inherent Buddha nature; in other words, the Gohonzon to which we pray and the ultimate reality of our lives are two different things, so the priests say.

The priesthood's view of faith, however, contradicts the Daishonin's teaching as he admonishes us, "When we revere Myohō-enge-kyō inherent in our own life as the object of de-

otion, the Buddha nature within us is summoned forth and manifested by our chanting of Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō" (WND, 887). Those who follow the priesthood's teaching say that they believe in the Gohonzon, yet the way they do is the exact opposite of what the Daishonin teaches. The innermost reality of their prayer—whether they are conscious or unconscious of it—is: "The Gohonzon is all-powerful and worthy of respect, but I'm nothing, except in as much as I receive blessings through my faith in its power." Whoever prays this way grows dependent, passive and weak; he or she remains insecure and frustrated because they are separate from the solution to their suffering and thus out of con-

trol over their own existence.

In contrast, true faith in the Gohonzon is to believe in the unconditional value of our lives as the Daishonin encourages us: "You, yourself, are a Thus Come One who is originally enlightened and endowed with the three bodies [of a Buddha]. You should chant Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō with this conviction" (WND, 299–300).

Our faith in and reverence for the Gohonzon, therefore, must be reflected back to ourselves—as faith in and reverence for our own lives. Our innate Buddha nature is the object of our fundamental respect as it is represented in the Gohonzon; it must be recognized, cherished and praised daily through our prayer. Any form of self-disparagement, therefore, should have no place in our faith, in our prayer.

To see our own supreme potential and respect ourselves—despite our momentary appearance or the opinions of others—is of far greater significance and much more difficult than to humble ourselves before some omnipotent entity. This is why true faith requires courage. But every bit of courage we exert to praise our lives will be richly rewarded with hope and freedom. **WT**

Food for Thought:

• The problem of faith is often the problem of motivation. Do you sometimes pray out of fear and anxiety that you are essentially helpless in your circumstances?

• In your prayer, are you begging while disparaging yourself (passive/authoritarian*) or are you determined to win while praising yourself (active/free)?

* Of the attitude to seek identity and comfort in the relationship of submission and domination. Neither the one who submits nor the other who dominates is free because they are dependent on each other to verify their existences.

SHINING STAR DISTRICT, PHOENIX

SHINING STAR DISTRICT IS BORN



By KATHLEEN GREGORY
PHOENIX CORRESPONDENT

On July 13 in Phoenix, Shining Star District was born. The district members celebrated with a birthday party, complete with a cake, a star-shaped *pinata* and lots of happy people.

Due to geographical distances and concerns about inconveniencing members, and after much dialogue, one district split into two. There were feelings of loss, confusion and definite resistance. Four members were asked to take responsibility for the new district.

They were interviewed and appointed district leaders to work together as a team.

Some of the new district's members were new friends, some old and some not. Some were excited, some determined and some in crisis. It took well over a month of chanting, visiting, encouraging and more chanting to get to July 13. Despite all the struggle, the members were able to share a most joyous celebration filled with laughter, different languages, food, favorite Goshu quotes and determinations for the future.

The new leaders are working hard and chanting to resist old habits and ways of thinking to grow into the best people they can be by practicing for themselves and others. The members of Shining Star District are excited to make their new district what they want it to be and to meet the needs of all. **WT**



Photo by KATHLEEN GREGORY

Members of Shining Star District in Phoenix celebrate their new district, July 13.

FROM SUA, I

"I have total faith in the principle of humanism and in the power of culture and education to make positive changes in my country," declared Gonzalo Obelleiro of Argentina, one of five students to share their determinations on behalf of the first class. "In that respect, the mission of Soka University of America is enormous in meaning. You can imagine my pride and gratitude in being a member of this first class."

SGI Vice President Ikeda

traveled to the ceremony on behalf of his father, whose message was also read (see p. 6). In his own remarks, Vice President Ikeda said: "The opening of this campus has garnered interest from many in the media and society at large. I believe this is proof of the fact that the vision of an education based on humanism, initiated by the father of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, responds to the needs of the 21st century."

"This campus was not built with the wealth of any single millionaire," he continued, speaking to the students. "SUA is the crystallization of the sincere hearts of many, many ordinary people, who stand together with the ideals of Soka education. Without their support, not even a single nail in the classrooms or tile in the dining rooms could have been purchased. Many of these millions of supporters never went to college and

you will probably never meet them. You may also not meet the thousands of people who were involved in the construction of this campus. Can you visualize the faces of the people who worked and sweated under the glaring sun to make this campus ready for your grand start?

"Soon after Soka University opened in Japan, my father repeatedly encouraged the first class of students to become creative people. It requires

imagination to be creative. The power of imagination enables you to feel compassion for others, which is something selfish egotists can never do. This kind of imagination cannot be born out of knowledge or empty theory. Please always remember to ask yourself for what you are studying."

The first class, which includes students from 18 countries and territories, began classes on Aug. 27. **WT**



The World Tribune (692-720) is published weekly by the SGI-USA, 606 Wilshire Blvd., PO Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-9907; (310) 260-8900; FAX (310) 260-8910; E-mail: wt@sgi-usa.org SGIUSBS@aol.com

Periodical Postage Paid at Santa Monica, CA, and at additional mailing offices. Return To: SGI-USA Subscriptions, 606 Wilshire Blvd., PO Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-9907
Subscription Rates (subject to state taxes) \$15 for Three Months; \$28 for Six Months; \$50 for One Year; \$85 for Two Years; \$125 for Three Years

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Victory Over Violence Conference Sept. 27-30

(note date change)

Conference goals:

- To deepen our understanding, confidence and commitment to fulfilling SGI President Ikeda's vision for the world through social engagement efforts for peace.
- To give all participants the resources and knowledge to promote VOV activities in a variety of settings.
- To create a vision for the future of VOV.

Who should come?

- SGI-USA members taking leadership for VOV or who are interested in VOV — all four divisions are invited with an emphasis on promoting youth.
- SGI-USA members socially engaged or interested in philanthropy, peace work, international relations, community relations and other related fields.



Upcoming conferences at the FNCC:



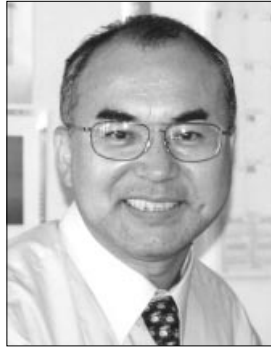
Thai/Cambodian/Vietnamese Language Conference	Sept. 13-16
Mentor and Disciple Relationship Conference	Sept. 20-23
Victory Over Violence Conference	Sept. 27-30
Spanish/Portuguese Language Conference	Oct. 4-7
Chinese Language Conference	Oct. 11-14
Women's Division Conference	Nov. 1-4
Culture Department Conference	Nov. 8-11

For more information: Please contact your region leader or your SGI-USA zone office for details on how to sign up for a conference. You may also visit the SGI-USA Web site at www.sgi-usa.org.

NATIONAL LEADERS DISCUSS FOCUS OF ACTIVITIES

The District: Growing, Nurturing and Winning

The following discussion was held recently among the SGI-USA national leaders, focusing on the organization's three goals of district expansion, appointing young men's and young women's district leaders, and propagating Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Participants include General Director Danny Nagashima, Women's Leader Matilda Buck, Men's Leader Tariq Hasan, Youth Leader James Herrmann, Young Women's Leader Wendy DeSouza and Young Men's Leader Steve Mortan.



Danny Nagashima



Matilda Buck



Tariq Hasan

Danny Nagashima: During my visits to many cities in recent months, I have been focusing on three main goals for our movement: developing and expanding the number of districts in the SGI-USA, so that each member can have quality care in their faith and practice; giving young men and young women the opportunity to take responsibility as district leaders; and sharing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with others and helping them take faith.

I recall that on his very first journey outside Japan in 1960, in order to help build the foundation of kosen-rufu in the United States, SGI President Ikeda formed several districts, first in Honolulu, then in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle and Chicago.

At that time he compared the organization to an orchard, in which each district is like a single fruit tree, while the fruit represents each individual. Without the tree, there would be no fruit. Similarly, he said that the real basis of the organization is each district that composes it; when a district is formed and becomes fully functional, kosen-rufu in that area will grow in leaps and bounds.

Matilda Buck: I believe that our SGI-USA districts are unique in history. Imagine—neighborhood gatherings, held regularly, on a small scale, where ordinary people are able to express their spirituality, find encouragement from their peers and study profound Buddhist teachings—these are our districts. The reason that I decided, almost 30 years ago, to attend SGI-USA meetings regularly and eventually become a

group leader was because I saw that the district was the place I could truly live a contributive life with my Buddhist practice.

Steve Mortan: Many young men tell me stories of how their districts are growing in size. Some districts are even bigger than chapters. I can't help but think of the overwhelming effort that our district leaders are constantly giving to help each and every member develop their faith.

It reminds me of my first year of teaching high school, when I had five classes of 40 students each. Each day I struggled with how I could give the proper attention to each one of my students. I was hoping to split my classes, and have another teacher teach the other half of students. The very next year, I was given two classes of only 20 students in each of them. It was wonderful. I could give my all to helping each student. In the end, it was the students that benefited from this change.

Matilda: We may have a tendency to feel more secure if we have a large meeting, but the best ones I attend are small enough to engage most of the members in dialogue. The congregation model, where a large group just listens to one or two people, does not encourage many people. That is why I think it's wise to break up into smaller districts.

James Herrmann: In discussion with youth leaders across

America, we decided that to support the SGI-USA's goal of district expansion we would focus on appointing district level leadership. By the end of the year, we have made it our objective to have young men's and young women's district leaders in every district.

Tariq Hasan: When it comes to appointing leaders, I often hear there are not enough people available. Although this may be true in some cases, I believe that more often than not

'Sometimes we may wonder, "How can I propel my life forward right now?" I believe if we embrace these three clear goals of propagation, entrusting youth and expanding the number of districts, we can have a personal victory.'

— Matilda Buck

we probably do have people who can step up to the responsibility if given the opportunity.

SGI President Ikeda has said: "Capable people definitely exist. The question is whether leaders can find them. ... Ultimately, the ability to find capable people depends on whether we can see others' strengths. And the only way to do this is to develop our own life condition" (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 117). I believe that "many capable people exist" is especially true about our youth division.

James: I was recently invited to attend a district meeting. I was told there were no youth there,

and the district leaders asked me to come and encourage them about this. I asked them, "How can I support you?" I spoke with the district leader many times over the next few months. We talked about propagation. We chanted. We wracked our brains to think about how we could find and encourage youth.

Finally, when the district leader called to confirm the meeting date, he said there would be youth there. When I arrived at the meeting, there were 10 guests—most of them in their teens and 20s! What I learned was that through making a determination, praying and taking action, anything is possible.

Tariq: I was appointed a young men's district leader when I was 23 years old after one year of practice. I was a scary looking person. I am sure that if I looked like that today, I would not be appointed anything. I did not have much experience in faith, but grappling with how to take care of the members made me expand my life in a hurry.

Most importantly, my men's division and women's division leaders were always there to give me advice. I believe it is so important for the men's division to have this relationship with the youth. Youth is a time of great dreams tempered by great anxiety and upheaval. If the men's division can be true older brothers to the youth, helping give them the opportunity to grow without being

judgmental and gaining their trust so that they can seek them out for advice, then our youth can continuously grow and ensure the future of Buddhism.

Whenever someone questions whether or not a certain youth should be appointed to a position due to their lack of experience or perceived capability, I always smile inside and think about my seniors in faith who took a chance with me.

Steve: In my teens, I sometimes wondered why my district leaders would invest so much time into helping people who were not always interested in practicing Buddhism. Now I see the fruits of their efforts, as many of those members they supported are becoming victorious in their lives. It really clarifies what it means to take action as a disciple of President Ikeda.

Being a young men's district leader made a lifelong impression on me. It was the first time I realized how difficult it is to care for other people, encourage them and together awaken to our shared mission of kosen-rufu. I had to develop myself, so I sought out President Ikeda as my example. Slowly but surely, I began to expand my capability.

Wendy DeSouza: In the past 10 years, I have lived in San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Chicago and Los Angeles. In many of these places, I was either an official or unofficial young women's district leader. Since I was moving around so much for college, the men's and women's district leaders always made me feel included and gave me responsibility. I was even appointed a district leader in Ghana.



James Herrmann



Wendy DeSouza



Steve Mortan

I didn't have a lot of training, and I was very disorganized. Yet I did my best to home visit members and share my own experiences in faith. To be honest, without my district "home," I would not have been able to make it through some very tough times living on my own in a new place.

James: In some cases, youth themselves may be reluctant to take on district leadership. But President Ikeda is wholeheartedly encouraging us to take the lead in our districts, to create an oasis of hope and genuine dialogue where all members can be nourished. Even if some of them feel they can't do it, all they have

to do is try. As President Ikeda has said: "Resolving to do something in the first place is proof that you are progressing. Even if you have the tendency to make a determination but only stick to it for two or three days, it is O.K., as long as you keep refreshing that determination" (*Discussions on Youth*, vol. 1, p. 51).

Wendy: Reflecting on my experiences in the district, I would say that I learned three key points, which are also my determinations for this year: In faith, put the mentor-disciple relationship first; in study, put Nichiren Daishonin's writings first; in action, put visiting members first.

Danny: In this new century, I would like to return to the spirit of propagation and emphasize the basics of faith, practice and study—all for the sake of ourselves and others. The Daishonin writes: "Now in the Latter Day of the Law, the daimoku that Nichiren chants is different from that of previous ages. It is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo encompassing practice for oneself and for others" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1022).

In July, on a plane to the island of Tonga, I had a wonderful talk with a Christian minister sitting next to me about life and philosophy. I felt that the dialogue really expanded both our perspectives. Through this kind of heart-to-heart talk, we can surely share our confidence in our

practice and feel the challenge and joy that result from these sincere exchanges. President Ikeda has said: "'You've done well. You were able to plant the seed of Buddhahood in your friend's heart. That's a splendid thing.' So saying, you should praise and encourage one another" (*My Dear Friends in America*, p. 77).

Matilda: The Daishonin's Buddhism is dynamic—dynamic in self-transformation and in helping others to practice. In "Letter to Jakunichi-bo," he says, "Nichiren's disciples and lay-believers should realize the profound karmic relationship they share with him and spread the Lotus Sutra as he does" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 994). So if we want to experience true and maximum benefit, we will introduce others and help them practice Buddhism.

The district is where we bring our friends, and how they are greeted will form an indelible impression. A district that is focused on supporting newcomers will become a happy place. Prayer is really important. If everyone could chant that a guest will be able to begin the practice, imagine the support this gives to the member who brought the guest.

I think we need to be bold in asking if a newcomer would like to try chanting. Maybe their sponsor is very busy or new themselves, but there are many people in the district that could help teach this person gongyo—others could offer a ride, etc. The main point is the united focus.

James: I was very inspired to read President Ikeda's message to all of us on May 3. He wrote: "The Daishonin also states, 'I entrust you with the propagation of Buddhism in your province' (WND, 1117). In light of these words, we each have a unique and noble mission that has been entrusted to us by the Daishonin to ensure the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law in our respective communities and regions" (May 11 *World Tribune*, p. 11).

To me, being "entrusted" means taking personal responsibility. It means that we ourselves feel personally responsible for the objective. Based on this message, I believe that we should take personal responsibility for the "widespread propagation of the Mystic Law in our respective communities."

If young people truly determine the future of society, then it is young people who must

take the lead in teaching other youth about Buddhism.

Steve: For many young people, myself included, it takes courage and determination to share our practice. Our Family Youth Festivals and the Victory Over Violence campaign can create a warm atmosphere of dialogue. With so much violence in society, the youth of SGI-USA are making efforts to reach out in their communities to share this philosophy. With the support of men's and women's division members, each of these activities is a warm, welcoming space for dialogue and exchange.

I want to see the youth flood these activities with our friends and boldly lead a new era of propagation in the 21st century.

Wendy: When I think of propagation, I don't think about campaigns. I think of my father. My sister and I made a determination for our father to start practicing this year. Even though he did not support our practice for more than two decades, he has recently been very receptive, asking many questions. A few months ago while visiting my sister, he decided to read *The Buddha in Daily Life*, and was so encouraged by it that he asked my sister if he could keep it "as a reference."

What I want more than anything else is for my father to become happy. I want to transfer this same feeling to everyone I meet who is seeking this practice.

Matilda: Sometimes we may wonder, "How can I propel my life forward right now?" I believe if we embrace these three clear goals of propagation, entrusting youth and expanding the number of districts, we can have a personal victory.

In one sense these are organizational goals, but we are the organization. We have real power in our lives when we pray and act with the same intent as the Daishonin. President Ikeda tells us that we have the powerful identity and mission of Bodhisattvas of the Earth—bodhisattvas whose core is Buddhahood. When we chant from that perspective, we can find the wisdom and courage to transform our lives and our society.

So Buddha is as Buddha does. When we take the action that will ensure these goals, we are taking responsibility for kosen-rufu. That puts us in dynamic harmony with our mentor's work and the Daishonin's intent. That's power! **WT**

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FROM SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S AUG. 24 POEM

THE GREAT CITADEL OF

—Commemorating Aug. 24,
SGI Men's Division Day
By Shin'ichi Yamamoto [the name SGI
President Ikeda uses for his character in
the *Human Revolution* novels.]

*A new century
Dawns.*

*A new age
Begins.*

*Champions of fresh
construction
Rise to action.*

*We
Climb the mountain of peace
And supreme happiness.
Stirring trumpets
Sound a glorious paean
In praise of peace,
In praise of life's majesty.*

*My friends who have lost
a beloved wife!
My friends who have lost
a beloved child!*

*And also
My friends who have fallen ill
And are battling valiantly against
their illness!*

*My friends, noble emissaries of
the Buddha!
Knowing that patience
is compassion,
You continue to strive selflessly
for kosen-rufu
Amid your own hardships
and sufferings.*

*Each of you
Has a mission.
Each of you
Has a track record
of victory.*

*Please etch deep in your heart
The fact that I am always with you
As your true comrade in faith!*

*Transcending the age of hatred,
Let us together exercise our talent
For setting an example for the world
By presenting an actual framework
For a new culture
In the new century!*

*Dismantling the internal elements
Of the immature culture
That has led humanity to war,
Let us together build
A magnificent new culture
Based on lofty ideals
That spring from a life-affirming
philosophy!*

*In so doing,
We may face a series
Of tense struggles
Unprecedented in scale.*

*But
No matter how people
With base and malicious hearts
May try to crush us,
Our fair and just spirit
Will never waver.*

*The more
Our enemies
Attack us,
The more our lives are infused
With invincible spirit,
Burning stronger and higher;
The more certain it is
That our brilliant struggle
Will be adorned in resounding
victory.*

*My mentor, Josei Toda,
frequently said to me:
"Benefits come naturally
After waging a struggle
for the Law.
It is foolish and
unreasonable
To expect them
beforehand."*

*And only after you
have triumphed
Through bitter
struggles,
Will the satisfaction
of victory shine
And enfold your life in
its radiant light.*

*My friends,
You must not
Make this life
You were born into
Meaningless.*

*A crown alone
Does not make one a monarch.
Only when you yourself
Fight and win
Will you be accorded the crown
Of a champion in life.*

*My friends,
Never let yourselves be dragged away
To the gallows of defeat,
Think of the raging waves
of persecution
As but an instant on the way
To great and magnificent happiness!*

*My friends!
My friends!
Do not lead sad lives
Bereft of joy and vitality!*

*Do not be swayed
By the unfounded criticisms of society,
But know
That every accolade
Adorns your life with unsurpassed
honor
As bright as the shining sun!*

*We are entities of the Mystic Law!
No matter how
Spiteful criticism
May swirl around us,
No matter how
Malodorous attacks
May try to rend our spirit,
Our commitment to justice and truth
Remains steadfast.*

*We shine brilliantly,
As we make our way undefeated
Through this human realm
Pervaded by immense darkness.
We will leave behind
A beautiful memory free of regret
For the eternal future.*

*My friends,
Let us win without fail!
We must win without fail!*

*Though your line of work
May be filled with difficult challenges,
Do not let them defeat you!
Though you may encounter
Deranged attacks,
Do not be afraid!*



RESOUNDING VICTORY

*Mirthless and terrible,
The evil
Cannot survive
In a pure world of hopes and dreams
Under the serene light of
the full moon.*

*Illuminated by that moon,
Hearts open wide,
Giving voice to our souls,
And performing a great symphony
Of joy and hope,
We return
To our eternal great citadel,
Step by step,
Bright,
Brave and positive,
And filled with jubilation.*

*What were we born
Into this world
To accomplish?
What is the purpose
Of our appearance
In this world?*

*When we say farewell
To this world,
Our great lives of mission
Will close in brilliant splendor
Brighter than the brightest sun,
Bringing hope and inspiration to all.*

*No matter how the years may pass,
Do not forget to stay young at heart!
Never grow old in spirit!
Always remember
That herein lies
The secret to eternal youth
Free of regrets.
The rulings of cause and effect
Are fair and impartial above all.*

*Let us arise!
Indeed,
We must arise!
We must advance
And fight!
And
We must win!*

*My friends,
From your hearts
Cast out the word fear,
Erase the word cowardice,
Banish the word despair!*

*The Ukrainian poet
Lesya Ukrainka said:
"What is there to be gained
By crying over this
persecution-rife world?
We cannot afford to back down.
Therefore, we must fight!
We must realize a bright new age."*

*Today, again,
The sun shines brightly
above your heads,
Protecting and illuminating you
As if you were precious gems.*

*My friends,
With firm determination
And deep prayer,
Live and fight
To the end,
Until you can behold
The gratifying banner of victory
That lies on the far side
Of a fierce struggle.*

*Our struggle
Is not one
Merely to enable us
To enjoy our lives today.
It is a struggle
To enable us
To enjoy our lives for many ages
to come—
No,
For all eternity.*

*You have endured.
I have endured.
You have won.
I have won.
You have no regrets.
I have no regrets.*

*The lives
Of we who live out
This human existence together,
Sharing
Supreme fulfillment
And infinite value,
Are everlasting.
This is
The law of Buddhism,
An ironclad principle.*

*Therefore,
When it is time for us
to be reborn again,
Let us be reborn together.
Let us strive and
win together,
And again adorn
another act
In the drama of
our eternal
lives*

*In victory.
Let us win
And shake hands firmly,
Celebrating our triumph!*

*A new, glorious advance
Has once again
Begun!*

— With my prayers for your
successful endeavors, happiness
and longevity.
Praise to the men's division in
each country!

Aug. 14, 2001



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



The Class of 2005 is introduced at the entrance ceremony at SUA, AV on Aug. 24.

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 Rabindranath 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 li-

onesque 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, Makiguchi, 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

SUA, Calabasas Welcomes 8th Class

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI



The members of the 7th and 8th classes of Soka University of America's graduate program at the school's Calabasas, Calif. campus pose for a commemorative photo with SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda. On Aug. 21, a reception was held to welcome the eight members of the 8th class, who hail from all over the world. Vice President Ikeda said that the campus represents 'the beginning of Soka education in the United States, a great source of pride for my father, the founder of SUA.'

'Ikeda Collection' Is Donated to SUA

Photo by ROBERT EVANS



On Aug. 23, SGI President Ikeda donated 2,618 volumes from his personal collection to the Daisaku and Kaneko Ikeda Library at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo. Representatives of the first freshman class of SUA attended a donation ceremony for the 'Ikeda Collection' with SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda, representing his father, who emphasized the founder's hope that the students will make full use of the collection's books. Library Director John Sheridan said he hoped that the students would enjoy the collection as a humbling experience, in that all these volumes show us we can never learn everything there is to know; and an inspiring experience, in that each student can add something to the great body of knowledge represented by the collection.

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

EXPERIENCE — LARRY JONES, FORT SMITH, ARK.

USING PRAYER TO WIN

Larry Jones learns the power of chanting for his students with determination.

Five years after I started practicing Buddhism, I began teaching in my hometown of Fort Smith, at Northside High School and have continued for the last 25 years. By the mid-1980s I took on the assignments of teaching Advanced Placement classes and coaching the school's academic Quiz Bowl competition team.

I found both activities exciting because they gave me more than just a calendar to complete.

The AP classes involved getting students ready to take a College Board exam at the end of the year. The Quiz Bowl competition involved preparing students for tournaments where they would answer questions with difficulty levels approaching college graduate curriculum. Each year, both programs measured the success of our efforts in an immediate sense by pass/fail and win/loss.

However, when competing, I did not wish to teach students merely how to defeat others. The challenge was to inspire students to develop themselves to the best of their own abilities and measure that against an ultimate standard of excellence. I would often share passages from *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* and SGI President Ikeda's guidance to inspire them.

At different times of the year, the time commitment would be so consuming that I would worry about not being able to attend many SGI-USA meetings. I was reassured by several of my leaders that I should consider my commitments to the school programs as my arena where I can fight for kosen-rufu and fulfill my mission. My job in education was not competing with my time for SGI-USA activities, but rather the avenue to demonstrate actual proof and spread the humanistic ideals of our faith.

Since we've started the Quiz Bowl program, we have won eight state championships and numerous other regional titles. It was after our first state win and visit to the national tournament in Chicago in 1988, that I completely rethought my approach to teaching. I realized how much more could be learned if teachers would be



Larry Jones

willing to put out the effort and trust the capabilities of students.

I revamped my lecture classes and initiated a thorough Quiz Bowl training program starting at the first of the year rather than waiting until spring. I realized that a nationally competitive team could not be built in one year; it takes at least three. I also learned the value of older team members setting the right example.

I have been very fortunate that my wife, Aida, is completely supportive. My son, Neil, who grew up watching Quiz Bowl teams train over the years at our house, eventually played on the team, helping us to place eighth nationwide.

In 1993, our school won the national tournament. While it was clearly due to our training and preparation, it was also due to the enthusiasm of a few devoted team members. Once they were gone, it was difficult to build a team with their same commitment. I believe this was due to my complacency in ex-

pecting future members to be automatically as dedicated. I had to learn what it meant to seek out and build capable people and keep the legacy alive.

Fortunately, there were some very enthusiastic students each of the following years, who took to heart the dream of being champions. I would share the statement of Ted Williams of the Boston Red Sox who was known to say that he trained so hard because he wanted folks to someday say of him "there goes the best there ever was."

In 1999, having worked harder than ever before, we placed second in the state competition. After raising such a united and dedicated group, I was deeply disappointed, but we were still eligible for entering the national tournament. It was at this time that I received an e-mail from the Memphis Community Center with guidance on the power of chanting. It came at a perfect time. It was not just that I wanted a victory; I wanted these students to be rewarded.

The guidance was perfectly suited for the challenge before us. It read: "We are not asking the Gohonzon or the Mystic Law or some Buddha to grant our wishes. Such an attitude places us in a subservient position, relying on powers outside ourselves for an answer. Buddhist prayers are an expression of our own innermost determination that 'I will make this happen.'" Another passage stated, "Chanting with confidence is a conscious effort to overcome our tendency to doubt or worry, in order to make our prayers more effective.



Larry Jones (back left) and his students at the site of their final match at Lake Forest College in Lake Forest, Ill., May 30.

Confidence, in many respects, is synonymous with and an expression of our faith."

Armed with this type of prayer our team that year was able to place fifth nationally. Younger team members began immediately attacking the next year with profound scholarship and last year we won the state and were sixth in the nation. Again I had chanted intensely with the type of prayer to "overcome the tendency to doubt or worry" and "I will make this happen." We lost to the team that won first by just one-and-a-half questions.

Starting again this year, the next generation of Varsity players, inspired by the examples set by the former senior members, firmly determined to win the state and national finals. I was determined to use the correct attitude of prayer to bring home this victory. I was often moved to tears when I saw the dedication to the goal and legacy that these students exhibited. The older alumni also felt that their dream was still alive in this year's lineup.

Each of the final days of the national tournament, I was beset

with thoughts of doubt and compromise that I fought back with prayer. I worried at times about the impression we left with the teams we beat so badly, but then was later touched when they came to us and said that they would root for us against the final opponents because when we played them, we showed them respect. I could feel the confidence of my prayer as each final game unfolded. Even when scores were very close I was confident we would win. Under pressure, our team seemed unable to forget anything or make a mistake. And, indeed, the students left the tournament this year as National Champions.

Over the years, I have come to deeply appreciate how much happiness and opportunity has come my way as a result of my Buddhist practice. It has helped me find a sense of mission and been the enthusiastic drive behind not just my teaching but my role in the community and my family.

This latest Quiz Bowl championship was not only a victory for the current students, but also to former students, one of which said of this year's team, "There goes Ted Williams!" **WT**

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the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'JEWELLED SWORD'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 2, PARTS 35-36

'Shin'ichi Yamamoto was deeply pained whenever he heard of the priests' shameful behavior or of the injurious remarks of Hokkeko members. He communicated these incidents to the school's administration, strongly urging that something be done to discipline those priests, but there were no signs of change.'

Soka Gakkai members had suffered immeasurably before matters had reached the point that a directive had to be issued by the high priest.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto had received various complaints from members about the priests' behavior. In one case, a Soka Gakkai member was bringing a friend whom he had introduced to the practice to his local temple to receive the Gohonzon. They ran into some congestion on the road caused by a traffic accident and ended up being just a few minutes late. When they arrived, however, they were refused conferral, even though the priest was just sitting inside watching television.

Some priests complained that because of all the new people Soka Gakkai members were introducing, they were always busy performing Gohonzon-conferral ceremonies and had no chance to relax. Others did not like the fact that Soka Gakkai members used the temple for their meetings, and a few would not open the doors to the altar enshrining the Gohonzon when Soka Gakkai members used the temple's main room.

How frustrating it was for these Soka Gakkai members, who were working so hard for the happiness of others, to be taken to task by the priests for introducing new people and for holding meetings! Some priests even made such outrageous remarks as: "The Gakkai is always talking about elections and culture, but those things have nothing to do with faith. Instead of conducting all those unrelated activities, Gakkai members should stick to their temples and listen to the guid-

ance of the priests. They're just a bunch of lay-people, after all."

These priests seemed not to make any attempt to understand the intent of the Daishonin, who sought to save the suffering people of the world, nor did they appear to have the least desire to propagate Buddhism widely. As a result, they could not grasp the significance of any of the Soka Gakkai's activities. The behavior of the priests was also a serious problem. There were numerous accounts of priests who did not perform gongyo, or who spent every night out drinking and carousing.

There were also members of the Hokkeko who spoke ill of the Soka Gakkai. The Hokkeko began as groups of lay believers affiliated with their respective local Nichiren Shoshu temples. But a year earlier, in July 1962, they had been organized into a nationwide organization called the National Hokkeko Federation. Up until then, Hokkeko members had received virtually no guidance in faith and were hardly aware of the importance of working for kosen-rufu. Many Nichiren Shoshu followers of old did not even know how to do gongyo, let alone did they introduce others to the practice. What is more, the activities of each local organization were conducted independently of the others. This left room for people seeking to line their pockets to exploit the practice and members by moving from temple to temple forming local Hokkeko organizations and placing themselves at the head.

There was a growing movement within Nichiren Shoshu, stimulated by the Soka Gakkai's tireless efforts to



Illustration by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

realize kosen-rufu in accord with the Daishonin's wish, to reorganize and strengthen the Hokkeko. This is what led to the formation of the National Hokkeko Federation. Many members of the Federation looked on Soka Gakkai members as newcomers and strongly felt that as longtime practitioners of the school they deserved special respect. They were also displeased by the fact that society in general now identified Nichiren Shoshu with the Soka Gakkai.

Some were openly jealous of the Soka Gakkai and slandered it repeatedly. "All you hear," they would say, "is Gakkai this and Gakkai that, but Gakkai members are all new to our faith. We are on a different level, because our families have belonged to Nichiren Shoshu for generations."

Another criticism was that the efforts of Soka Gakkai members to introduce others to the practice had brought a lot of "low-class" people into Nichiren Shoshu. Soka Gakkai members bore up under such remarks, continuing to single-mindedly fulfill their mission to bring happiness to others and work for kosen-rufu.

Shin'ichi was deeply pained whenever he heard of the priests' shameful behavior or of the injurious remarks of Hokkeko members. He communicated these incidents to the school's administration, strongly urging that something be done to discipline those priests, but there were no signs of change. This did not surprise him, however, since a number of the unfortunate reports that he

heard from Soka Gakkai members were about the escapades of senior priests themselves.

On July 8, Shin'ichi attended the opening ceremony for the Soka Gakkai's Fujinomiya Community Center in Shizuoka Prefecture. This center would be an important base of operations for the Soka Gakkai's 3-million-member general pilgrimage to the head temple scheduled to start from April the following year to celebrate the completion of the Grand Reception Hall. When they arrived at the center, Shin'ichi and the leaders traveling with him met with newly appointed Shizuoka Headquarters Leader Ritsu Ohyama and other leaders in the area.

Ohyama was also vice-leader of the pilgrimage department, which meant he had frequent contact with the priests and knew very well what was going on at the head temple. He looked troubled as he spoke: "This is the home base of the head temple, and there are a lot of Hokkeko members whose families have been Nichiren Shoshu followers for generations. Many of them criticize Soka Gakkai members, saying that we are too confident for 'newcomers.'

"Yet they do not even do gongyo, and go so far as to say that they will attain Buddhahood simply by living within earshot of the head temple's bell."

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1963.

The World TRIBUNE SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE SUA GANDHI HALL DEDICATION, AUG. 23

TAKING ON THE CHALLENGE OF PEACE

'How much can a single person contribute to the cause of peace?' SGI President asks. 'I urge each of you to seek the answer to this quest, as you take on the challenge of nonviolence and the inner reformation of the self, in a way most true to yourself.'

Dr. Arun Gandhi and Madame Sunanda Gandhi, whom I wholeheartedly respect; the Honorable Supervisor Thomas Wilson of the County of Orange and the Honorable Mayor Carmen L. Vali of the City of Aliso Viejo, who have rendered so much support and encouragement; the first freshman class of Soka University of America, all of you whom I treasure; members of the distinguished faculty, in whom I place the utmost trust; ladies and gentlemen:

Please accept my congratulations on the dedication of the Mohandas and Kasturba Gandhi Hall and, as the founder of Soka University of America, my gratitude to the guests who have taken time from their demanding schedules to celebrate this occasion with us.

Today, we dedicate at SUA an academic facility named after the champion of humanity whose life and work shine without peer, Mahatma Gandhi, and his wife—an occasion for which I know of no greater honor and joy.

We owe this honor to the esteemed Dr. Arun Gandhi. His gracious understanding of and generous support for the founding spirit of this institution enabled this building to be crowned with his grandparents' names. I find it significant that SUA should be so blessed, that the great name of Gandhi, whose noble life is our example and our goal, should be associated with this school, where bright, eager students will gather to cultivate wisdom and character.

A maxim in the East holds that the virtue inherent in an entity is revealed by its name. I



Dr. Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, speaks at the dedication ceremony for the Gandhi Hall classroom building at SUA, AV, Aug. 23. During his remarks, Dr. Gandhi said: 'With the dedication of this building, my grandfather has finally fulfilled his desire to come to the United States.'

pray and trust that the students who study at the Gandhi Hall will blossom as the Mahatma Gandhis of the 21st century, their contributions lasting throughout history.

A great human revolution in a single individual will enable a change in all humankind.

Last summer at Soka University in Tokyo, I welcomed Dr. Gandhi and his family to share in a most engaging discussion on the noble life of Mahatma Gandhi. We discussed one dramatic struggle of nonviolence in which Gandhi, who set out to resolve a bitter dispute between Hindus and Muslims, walked through countless hamlets to engage the villagers in dialogue after dialogue—without regard for his safety, to win peace in the end.

Having watched his grandfather work, Dr. Gandhi has come to believe that the efforts of even a single person can bring peace to the world. Young Arun was thus able to feel for himself the full weight of Mahatma Gandhi, a man who invariably led the way in tackling every challenge, no matter how daunting, setting forth the forces that would bring about meaningful change. It was these acts of bravery, taken on his own initiative and serving as an example for all to emulate, that moved the hearts of many and drew the might of world

opinion behind his cause, ultimately altering the course of human history.

"A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind." This is my lifelong conviction and theme, which I inherited from the founder of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who carried out his own struggle of nonviolence and died a martyr in prison in Japan during the same era in which Gandhi lived. It is my hope that the SUA freshman will also stand alone as pioneers to blaze new trails into this Century of Life.

How much can a single person contribute to the cause of peace? I urge each of you to seek the answer to this quest, starting from Gandhi Hall as your point of departure, as you take on the challenge of nonviolence and the inner reformation of the self, in a way most true to yourself.

Dr. Arun Gandhi holds that to follow in the footsteps of the great forerunners of peace and justice means to succeed their indomitable spirit. I wholeheartedly concur. Dr. Gandhi and Madame Sunanda Gandhi join us today as champions of human rights who carry forward the very spirit of Gandhi himself, tireless in their intrepid struggle against all forms of violence in

the modern world. To welcome today these two individuals of such stature, who stand as the worthiest of role models, is a golden honor that shall be cherished for all time in the annals of this institution. Later today, Dr. Gandhi will be delivering a lecture for which I, on behalf of all of us at SUA, wish to express the utmost gratitude.

The disciple's sheer depth of spirit determines victory.

My lasting hope is for every freshman, over the next four years, to learn from the philosophy and deeds of Mahatma Gandhi, to draw upon the boundless wisdom and courage of this great man and to develop into global citizens who work to better the future of humanity.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who transplanted Gandhi's spirit of nonviolence here in America, stood in awe and admiration of the greatness of what Gandhi had wrought. He had galvanized all of India through the power of philosophy with less than 100 faithful disciples, a force that, while lacking in quantity, was exceptional in quality.

Sheer numbers do not determine victory. The sheer depth of spirit of the disciple determines it.

The first 120 students who have gathered here from every corner of the planet are the best drawn from the finest. For the sake of those who are to follow in your footsteps at SUA, I hope all of you will advance in joy and harmony through the power of wisdom, friendship and unity. And I ask that you found a magnificent tradition of success at SUA that Mahatma Gandhi himself would bless with that remarkable smile of his, the one that has inspired so many for so long.

"When the inner lamp burns," Gandhi once observed, "it illumines the whole world." And further, "If we do not give up our ideal, the ideal will never forsake us." I close this message of congratulations by dedicating these words, which are among my favorites of Gandhi's, to my beloved members of the first freshman class. And finally, I pray for the continued good health and well-being of all here today.

Thank you very much.

Aug. 23, 2001

Daisaku Ikeda
Founder

Soka University of America



Gandhi Hall, named after Mohandas and Kasturba Gandhi, is a classroom building on the Aliso Viejo campus of Soka University of America.

Photos by GREGORY NAKASUJI