

## FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR FOUNDING SPIRIT DETERMINES EVERYTHING

Greetings to the readers of *Living Buddhism*: As you may have heard, twenty-two new Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo faculty members have begun their preparations for the school's historic opening. The eighteen buildings of the Aliso Viejo campus are rapidly nearing completion and the official dedication on May 3, 2001. The faculty members have gathered to develop the policies and curriculum for the first class of one hundred students, who will begin their education on August 24, 2001, in just eleven months.

I often speak of Soka University of America, and I am moved by the response. Everywhere I go, I meet young people with great passion and a strong desire to attend this magnificent new institution of higher learning, and I meet many parents with high hopes for this school. I am also moved by the enthusiasm of those who will not attend themselves or send their children. Yet have shared their excitement about the opening of the university. Pioneer members have tearfully expressed great pride that May 3, 2001 will be marked by the opening of Soka University in the United States. Throughout the country, people have expressed their determination through prayers, scholarship contributions and best wishes. I truly believe that the members of SGI-USA are united in their determination to assist in the success of this university.

In his recent poem to the SGI members in the United States, "Soar—Into the Vast Skies of Freedom! Into the New Century!" President Ikeda expresses his hopes for this school. In one stanza, he referred to students who will be entering this university.

*Gazing out upon the waves  
of a monarch Pacific Ocean,  
carrying the burden  
of the hopes and expectations  
of the centuries,  
its construction has been matched  
by innumerable voices  
raised brightly in song,  
by an unending array  
of young people ascending  
that vibrant hill in Orange County.*

In less than one year, one hundred young people will become the first class of this institution. Those students are the beginning of an "unending array" of humanity who will ascend "that vibrant hill in Orange County." This "unending array" refers to people from different cultures, ethnic and racial backgrounds, from the United States and from all over the world, who carry the "hopes and expectations of the centuries," charged with the task of becoming leaders of humanism and pacifism.

October 15 is the early admission deadline. It is hard to believe that this moment—the opening of this school and the arrival of these students—is actually about to happen.

SUA does not belong simply to Southern California nor is it being built solely for the sake of those who will attend. This university is a treasure for all of us in the SGI-USA, and its opening marks the beginning of a new era.

It also marks the completion of a dream that began forty years ago. It is no coincidence, I think, that the first application deadline for this new school—October 15—is also the fortieth anniversary of the formation of the first Soka Gakkai chapter established outside of Japan.

As you know, October is the fortieth anniversary of SGI President Ikeda's first international journey. The first steps of the worldwide propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism were taken in the United States. I know that, throughout the country, many of you are commemorating this date with various events.

Our American Buddhist organization is only forty years old. Many of those precious pioneer members who built this organization are still with us. In President Ikeda's recent poem, he discussed how the journey he undertook forty years ago was to fulfill a promise to President Toda. Establishing Soka University—in Japan and in the United States—was also a direct product of the relationship and collaboration between mentor and disciple.

I have been thinking of the spirit of new beginnings, the founding spirit and what comes from it. All great institutions had a beginning; all long and proud traditions were at one time new and unknown.

In the seventeenth century, the Puritans fled religious persecution and settled in Massachusetts. In 1620, about one hundred people arrived in Plymouth on the Mayflower and vowed to establish a shining "City on a Hill," an expression of their belief in God and the role of humanity on Earth. In 1636, sixteen years later, Harvard College was established to train a new generation of ministers to serve as stewards of the vision that the original founders had.

Harvard University was based on Christianity. In the succeeding three-and-a-half centuries, this institution exerted tremendous influence on the life and culture of our nation and, indeed, the entire world. It far exceeded the hopes and expectations of the original Puritan founders. Yet it was their dream to raise successors that was the seed of this mighty institution. The spirit at the time of founding determines much.

We are fortunate to be here at the founding of another great educational institution. The Soka Gakkai International is gradually becoming known throughout society as an organization dedicated to the development of the individual and the establishment of a culture of peace and nonviolence. This is due to the efforts of each and every one of you.

President Ikeda has been preparing for this moment for the past forty years. Soka University of America is a dream passed on from mentor to disciple. And as the dream was passed from the Soka Gakkai Presidents Makiguchi to Toda, then from Toda to Daisaku Ikeda, I believe that he is now passing this dream on to all of us. We are the stewards of this great dream; we are the ones to whom the future of SUA, and its great future for America and the world, is entrusted.

Thank you all very much for your tremendous sincerity and effort.

Daniel K. Nagashima  
SGI-USA General Director