

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JUNE 29 SPEECH—PART 1 ADVANCING ON THE PATH OF SOKA

**‘What is this path on which we are advancing?’ SGI President Ikeda asks. ‘It is the path of Soka—a path that will flourish forever.’**

*Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 47th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall, in Hachioji, June 29.*

Let me begin by sharing the words of the great American poet Walt Whitman in *Leaves of Grass*:

*But we’ll make race a-time upon the seas—a battle-contest  
yet! bear lively there!  
(Our joys of strife and derring-do to the last!)*

Both Buddhism and life are struggles to the very end. In another poem, Whitman extols:

*We are powerful and tremendous in ourselves,  
We are executives in ourselves, we are sufficient in the variety  
of ourselves.*

To fear nothing and depend on no one—this resonates with the Soka Gakkai’s creed.

### **Disciples give their mentor’s words meaning.**

Tomorrow, June 30, is the anniversary of the Soka Gakkai student division’s founding. I offer my humblest congratulations to all our student division members—the leaders of the 21st century—including everyone who has graduated from the division’s ranks over the years. You are all so important because the Soka Gakkai’s future rests in your hands.

At the inaugural meeting of the student division back in 1957, Mr. Toda said, “I want half of you to become company directors and the other half to earn doctorates.” He had the highest hopes that each student division member would become a leader of the next generation.

I took this utterance of Mr. Toda completely to heart, and I vowed to encourage and foster capable young people. I vowed to work to produce an infinite number of doctors in all fields of learning. I prayed fervently to accomplish this and threw myself wholeheartedly into the challenge.

While there were foolish leaders who didn’t really listen to Mr. Toda’s words or who forgot them, I took his each and every word very, very seriously. If the disciples do not carry out their mentor’s words, they render them empty and meaningless. Then, they are only masquerading as disciples.

As the Buddhist doctrine of a single life-moment encompassing 3,000 realms teaches, our fundamental attitude or inner resolve can transform anything.

Thus, it all comes down to whether we have the spirit to deeply make the vision and intent of our mentor our own—no matter how casually the mentor’s words may have been shared. It all comes down to keeping them shining brightly in our hearts like diamonds and

polishing them constantly, as we endeavor to make them a reality. This is the solemn path of mentor and disciple.

### **Soka education is becoming recognized by educators the world over.**

I founded the Soka junior and senior high schools. [The Tokyo school opened in 1968 and the Kansai school in 1973.] When they were established, the schools had no reputation or track record, and some people ridiculed them.

But over the years, they have produced a steady stream of doctors in the widest variety of fields: doctors of medicine, of engineering, of science, of agriculture, of pharmacology, of dentistry, of economics, of political science, of law, of literature, of linguistics and of peace studies. Some 106 graduates of the Soka junior and senior high schools have attained doctorates. Eighty-nine of them are from the Tokyo school, and the remaining 17 are from the newer Kansai school. The schools are sure to produce many more doctoral degree holders in the future.

These schools have achieved such wonderful results in an amazingly short time. Behind this is the promise I made to my mentor as his disciple to realize his vision. The mentor–disciple relationship must not be taken lightly.

The richly humanistic education at the Soka schools, which is focused on nurturing students' unique strengths, is becoming recognized by educators the world over, many of whom have visited our schools in Tokyo and Kansai.

The other day, I received a report from the leaders of SGI-Venezuela. According to them, Venezuelan Minister of Education, Culture and Sports Hector A. Navarro Díaz said that, as part of the ministry's short-term study tours abroad for high school students this year, he wishes to have a student friendship delegation visit the Soka junior and senior high schools and meet with their students.

Dr. Navarro and his wife, Caribay Urbina de Navarro, visited the Soka schools last year. In his recent meeting with the SGI-Venezuela representatives, Dr. Navarro fondly recalled his warm meeting with our students, which made him eager to expose young Venezuelans to the value-creating education of the Soka schools.

*President Ikeda met with Dr. Navarro in July 1999 in Tokyo, at which time the minister presented him with the Order of Andrés Bello, Venezuela's highest cultural award, given to individuals who have made remarkable contributions to peace, culture and education.*

### **Let us establish SUA as a world center of learning.**

Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo is now accepting applications for the freshman class entering in August 2001. [The campus will be officially opened on May 3, 2001.]

The university has received a tremendous response from students already attending top U.S. universities as well as talented high school students who have already been accepted by other fine colleges. Applications for study at SUA next year have begun to pour into the admissions office. I am grateful to SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima for his strong support of the university.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that the White House Millennium Council has recently designated a trail circling the Aliso Viejo campus as a Community Millennium Trail. Congratulations! As part of the celebrations of the year 2000, walks and trails around the United States are being officially recognized, and the SUA trail is the first to be designated in Orange County.

The university's Millennium Trail is exactly a mile long. Passing over gently rolling hills, the trail offers a wonderful view of the surrounding countryside and towns. On June 3, a celebration was held to commemorate the trail's official recognition as a Community Millennium Trail with SUA receiving a certificate and message signed by First Lady Hillary Clinton.

In addition, a local TV station has introduced SUA to its viewers on a number of separate occasions, a reflection of the community's high expectations for the university. One of the reports says, "Rising from the hills of Aliso Viejo..., the construction site of Soka University is quite impressive and, when completed, promises to be one of the most beautiful campuses in California."

The United States will be a focus of the new century, and I want to establish a fine educational institution, a world center of learning, there. This is my wish and my determination as the university's founder.

### **The Buddha is 'the one who opens the way.'**

A path, a way. I recently composed a poem for the Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High School titled "The Katano Path." [The school is located in the city of Katano.]

What is this path on which we are advancing? It is the path of education dedicated to fostering people of rich humanity and wisdom. It is the path of friendship, the path of comrades, committed to reaching out and bringing people together. And it is the path of philosophy where people strive to help one another develop and grow. It is the path of Soka—a path that will flourish forever.

Our Buddhist practice, too, constitutes the path or way leading to the attainment of Buddhahood. The Lotus Sutra describes the Buddha as "the one who opens up the way" (see *The Lotus Sutra*, p. 98). We are opening the way to happiness, to peace and to kosen-rufu. The more we open these paths, the more we expand our state of life, the more we increase our good fortune and the more we increase our benefit. That is why it is so important that we don't let ourselves be defeated.

To open the path of kosen-rufu without begrudging one's life—this is the spirit of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, of courageous champions of faith. Let us of the SGI boldly open a path that will endure a thousand and 10,000 years, just as the Daishonin instructs. Together let us build a magnificent highway along which our noble movement for kosen-rufu can advance even more dynamically!

There is a saying in Korea, a nation to which Japan owes a great cultural debt, that "the mighty last less than a decade." That is, high-handed, authoritarian leaders, no matter how exalted a position they may hold, never prosper for more than a decade. They are destined to fall. These are indeed words of wisdom. All the glories of worldly power are ultimately doomed to fade into oblivion. Those who run roughshod over others come to a pitiful end.

What is it, in contrast, that never fades or dies? It is strong faith. It is the Mystic Law.

*To be continued in the Aug. 11 issue*

## **TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS OPENING UP THE WAY**

From This Speech:

Our Buddhist practice constitutes the path or way leading to the attainment of Buddhahood. The Lotus Sutra describes the Buddha as “the one who opens up the way” (see The Lotus Sutra, p. 98). We are opening the way to happiness, to peace and to kosen-rufu. The more we open these paths, the more we expand our state of life, the more we increase our good fortune and the more we increase our benefit. That is why it is so important that we don’t let ourselves be defeated.

- 1) What is the Buddhahood that we are seeking through Buddhist practice? How would you explain Buddhahood to a friend who is not familiar with this Buddhism?
- 2) Why do you think that the Lotus Sutra describes the Buddha as “the one who opens up the way”?
- 3) What is good fortune? What good fortune do you feel you have in your life now? What do you see as benefit in your life right now?