

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SEPT. 16 SPEECH EDUCATION IS THE LONG-TERM SOLUTION

'To combat violence and terrorism, the only viable, fundamental, long-term solution is education,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'There is no other alternative but to educate people on the loftiest humanitarian values and views of life in order to establish a foundation of peace and stability for humankind in these times of tumultuous change.'

SGI President Ikeda's speech at the Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School's 21st Century Alumni Meeting, held at the school's gymnasium in Kodaira, Tokyo, Sept. 16.

Congratulations on this Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School's 21st Century Alumni Meeting!

Happy are those who have a "home of the heart" and a "citadel of intellect and mission." Returning there to refresh themselves, they once again start out on new challenges and journeys. Such people possess a great, ever-youthful spirit. Don't you agree? [Applause.]

Thank you all for coming back to your alma mater. Nothing makes the founder of a school happier than to see former students return to their alma mater, and today I am very happy indeed. I feel like a parent welcoming his or her children back home.

In anticipation of today's meeting, yesterday and again this morning I looked through your handsome graduation photographs. I must say, some of you seem to have changed a good deal since then! [Laughter.] Anyway, I deeply appreciate the tremendous efforts you have made to gather here today, from every corner of Japan and 16 countries and territories around the world.

Are there any alumni here from the United States? Thank you so much for coming. Let me offer my sincere condolences on the terrible tragedy that took place there on Sept. 11. I have received many reports on the situation. Thank you for joining us today under such difficult circumstances.

And is there anyone from Africa? Thank you for coming from so far away. Your travel expenses must have been considerable. Thank you!

In addition, we have many alumni from countries and territories in Europe, Asia and Oceania joining us today. I thank all the alumni here for keeping your promise to celebrate this reunion! [On the occasion of the 2nd Glory Festival held at the Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School on July 17, 1969, President Ikeda proposed to the students of the 1st and 2nd graduating classes that they all meet again in the first year of the 21st century. Each successive class has made this commitment. Attending the Sept. 16 gathering were alumni from the 1st through 18th graduating classes.]

I am keenly aware of how earnestly you are all striving in your daily lives, undaunted by the difficulties encountered in the midst of society's turbulence. In praise of your vigorous efforts, I have decided that a record of the names of all in attendance today should be kept for posterity at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo.

As alumni, you share bonds pervaded by mission, joy and friendship unparalleled in the world. Please confidently advance with that pride.

Educators around the globe are now praising the Soka schools.

The famous Swiss educator Johann Pestalozzi called the past graduates of the school he founded his friends, his brothers and sisters. He also called them the school's founders. The students of his school's first graduating classes had enrolled in a newly established, as-yet-unknown institution.

Studying hard under Pestalozzi's guidance, they joined with him in building the foundation of a school that would contribute to world peace. He therefore had a special fondness and regard for those graduates.

I understand his feelings very well. I say to the alumni of the 1st and 2nd classes of the Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School, as well as those from the 3rd through 18th classes: While proudly upholding the school's founding spirit, you have boldly blazed new trails into the world, with sincerity and patience, for all those who follow after you.

It is a clear, indisputable fact that educators around the globe are now praising the Soka schools as some of the best and finest in the world. I want to address all of our alumni here today, with the highest respect and appreciation, as my friends, my brothers and sisters, and the great founders of our Soka schools!

Love for humanity is the noblest principle in life.

Distinguished guests from the Sakha Republic and Soka Ikeda College of Arts and Science for Women, as well as Sethu Bhaskara Matriculation Higher Secondary School in India: My wife and I, together with my precious successors, the Soka schools alumni, humbly accept these unsurpassed honors you have bestowed upon us. There could be no greater joy than this. Thank you very, very much. [Just prior to his speech, President Ikeda was awarded an honorary citizenship from Khangalas District in the Sakha Republic and the Mahatma Award from Soka Ikeda College of Arts and Science for Women. In addition, Sethu Bhaskara Matri-culation Higher Secondary School conferred the titles of honorary founder and honorary principal on Mr. and Mrs. Ikeda, respectively.]

Shortly before his death, the Russian literary giant Leo Tolstoy wrote a letter to India's spiritual leader, Mahatma Gandhi. In this letter, which could be read as an injunction for posterity, Tolstoy wrote powerfully of the absolute unacceptability of the use of violence, from the standpoint of the noblest principle in life — love for humanity.

He strongly encouraged the youthful Gandhi, stating that Gandhi's promotion of nonviolent action was the most important movement in the world, and that he foresaw a time when people all over the globe would join in this effort for peace.

We, too, have been walking that true, great path.

A beautiful song of Sakha that extols the importance of friendship for peace contains these lines:

*Peace, a wonderful word,
The peoples of the world strain to hear,
As if a hymn.
When millions of hearts join together,
Those who start wars of ruin will surely quiver.*

Now is the time to rouse a broad consensus around the world for peace and dialogue.

Young leaders from Brazil, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Venezuela and Canada are here with us today as our guests. In addition, the members of the Central

Executive Committee of SGI-Korea are in attendance, making our meeting a model of world peace. Where else can you find a school that can hold an alumni reunion of world citizens that is so international and wonderfully humanistic?

In an island-country like Japan, there still stubbornly persists a narrow-minded, self-centered way of thinking, embodied in the feeling that as long as the members of our group or country are safe, we need not worry about anyone else. I think it is therefore no exaggeration to say that, even from the perspective of this international school reunion, our Soka schools are spearheading an unprecedented revolution.

Our Soka alliance is so noble that there are bound to be malicious, foolish people who will be envious and heap unfounded abuse on us. But please remember that this is just an opportunity for us to grow stronger and greater as human beings.

We must bring about a century that upholds the dignity of life.

I have received many earnest messages and keen analyses from thinking people around the world concerning the recent terrorist attacks in the United States. What is the point on which they all agree? There are a number of short-term measures that may be implemented to combat violence and terrorism, but the only viable, fundamental, long-term solution is education. There is no other alternative but to educate people on the loftiest humanitarian values and views of life in order to establish a foundation of peace and stability for humankind in these times of tumultuous change. We must strive to bring about a century upholding the dignity of life, a century predicated upon humanistic education.

Mr. Sethu Bhaskaran and the faculty members of India's Soka Ikeda College of Arts and Science for Women, who are here with us today, have dedicated their lives to the sacred undertaking of education, establishing a school committed to bringing together all the peoples of the world through the poetic spirit, philosophy and wisdom. The flowering of the ideals of Soka Education in India, timeless land of the spirit, through the efforts of these noble educators is a source of unrivaled inspiration, hope and joy. My profound gratitude to them once again.

I remember Sakha's President Mikhail Nikolaev telling me proudly during our meeting three years ago that one-third of the country's budget was allocated to education. I told President Nikolaev that I was confident that, over the course of history, Sakha—a nation committed to basing its development on education—was sure to flourish with a new brilliance as a land renowned for its talented people. One of the youthful leaders destined to shoulder Sakha's promising future is Nicolai Baramygin, first deputy head of administration of Khangalas District, who is with us today. Mr. Baramygin, incidentally, also attended my meeting with President Nikolaev.

SUA students have determined to create world peace for the sake of the Sept. 11 victims.

Classes have started with the students' great enthusiasm at SUA. What is currently the most popular spot on campus? It is the library's 24-hour Study Room, open to students at any hour of the day or night. Students are studying arduously there, encouraging one another based on profound friendship.

On the night of the shocking Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the students decided on their own initiative to hold a special candlelight vigil by the Peace Fountain on campus. I heard that many people from the local community joined them for this occasion.

At that time, the students declared their determination to become people who would contribute to world peace, for the sake of the many victims of the tragedy. The event provided an opportunity for members of both the SUA and local community to share their grief, sorrow and hope with one another.

Articles on the vigil appeared in a major regional newspaper on two successive days. SGI-USA members have kindly sent copies to me.

Each verse of the Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School's song, which you have sung so many times, asks a question: "Why do we cultivate wisdom?" "Why do we cherish the people?" "Why do we strive for world peace?" These are crucial questions that all of you have asked yourselves in your youth and throughout your lives.

I want to affirm the proud fact that the SUA students are carrying on this tradition. The noble spirit to ask oneself these fundamental questions is also powerfully stirring the hearts of the American people. Your alma mater, Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School here in Kodaira, is the eternal starting point of Soka Education, which is spreading throughout the world and will bloom and develop for a thousand—no, 10,000—years.

Worldly pretensions, celebrity and fame are but fleeting illusions.

I am happy to announce that we now have 111 doctorates among our Soka schools alumni. And there are reports that this number will be increasing.

In addition, as of this autumn, I have received 111 honorary doctorates and honorary professorships from educational institutions around the world. Including those that have been announced but not yet presented, the number rises to 132. All of these academic honors are due to you, the outstanding Soka schools alumni. Thank you so much!

We can also count among our Soka schools alumni 140 physicians, 58 university instructors at both Soka University and other universities, 462 teachers at the elementary and secondary levels, seven members of national parliament, 20 members of regional government assemblies, 60 attorneys and lawyers, 60 certified public accountants, 21 licensed tax accountants, 21 journalists, 16 bank branch managers, 3 airplane pilots and 14 Soka Gakkai vice presidents. In addition, our present national young men's and young women's leaders in Japan are both Soka schools graduates.

In every field of society, our Soka schools alumni are striving with determination and courage—they are winning in their lives. As the founder of the Soka schools, nothing could make me happier. And I am certain that they will continue to live noble lives of earnest endeavor.

With respect to the depth of the vow of mentor and disciple, the strength of one's commitment to justice and one's inherent greatness as a human being, it is clear that worldly pretensions, celebrity and fame are but fleeting illusions.

The members of the Hoei-kai, a group of business managers who are Soka schools graduates, while bravely battling in these difficult economic times, have continued to nobly, sincerely support their alma mater and SUA for the sake of the students who are their successors. Filled with deep appreciation and respect for your selfless generosity, my wife and I press our palms together in reverence toward all of you.

Living a great life means moving forward, no matter what happens.

Rabindranath Tagore, the eminent Indian poet who also founded his own school, wrote, "Man's freedom is never in being saved troubles, but it is the freedom to take trouble for his own good, to make the trouble an element in his joy." To make trouble an element of

joy—this is the spirit of a lion.

I heard that in Sakha's Khangalas District, which today made me an honorary citizen, there is a street named after a hero, Konstantin Neustroev-Ursik. He was a young champion who gave his life in a revolution to liberate the people some 120 years ago. Tolstoy depicted him in one of his novels.

I think that Neustroev-Ursik's last words have much in common with the Soka schools spirit: "I was an ordinary worker. But I never betrayed my banner. I believe in this banner. And I raise the banner of victory on high!"

The refusal to betray—this is the difference between a virtuous person and an unscrupulous, base person.

Come then, let us summon again the eternal youthful passion with which we will forever sing our school song and lead victorious lives free of all regret! Let us live with courage and determination, like lions!

Retreat is defeat. To always advance, to continue moving forward, no matter what happens—that is a great life.

I sincerely pray for the eternal peace and prosperity of the honorable Republic of Sakha and for the infinite glory and development of the Soka Ikeda College of Arts and Science for Women, and Sethu Bhaskara Matriculation Higher Secondary School, both of which are precious members of our Soka family in India.

Let us promise to meet again in September 2005, the 75th anniversary of Soka Education, in as high spirits, good health and triumph as we have today.

Until then, I hope you and your families will stay in good health. I will wholeheartedly pray for you. Thank you all very much.