



Soka University of America

1 University Drive / Aliso Viejo, California 92656-4105 / Telephone 949 480-4000, Fax 949 480-4001 / www.soka.edu

Aliso Viejo Campus

Calabasas Campus

Gandhi Hall Dedication

Message on the Dedication of Mohandas and Kasturba Gandhi Hall

Daisaku Ikeda, Founder

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 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.

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.

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.

August 23, 2001

Daisaku Ikeda
Founder
Soka University of America