

Introduction

Soka University is the pillar of global peaceful coexistence.

Soka University is the eyes of life-affirming value creation.

Soka University is the great ship of the solidarity of global citizens.

In May 1972, one year after Soka University was established with the mission of becoming the highest seat of learning for human education, at the invitation of British historian Arnold J. Toynbee and his wife, Veronica, I commenced a dialogue with the scholar at his apartment in London. As we examined the multitude of issues facing humanity and discussed potential prospects for the 21st century, both Professor and Mrs. Toynbee expressed profound understanding of the ideals upon which Soka University had been founded and offered high hopes for its success.

One day while we were in the process of conducting our dialogue, I visited Veronica Toynbee's alma mater, Cambridge University, and the day after our discussions had concluded, I likewise visited Professor Toynbee's alma mater, Oxford University. They were both genuinely pleased to learn of these visits, and their enduring affection for their respective alma maters was apparent.

I received a warm welcome from the leaders and students of both universities, and experienced firsthand their rich histories and traditions dating back to the 12th and 13th centuries. I vividly remember saying to those accompanying me at that time, "The first 50 years are crucial for Soka University. Let's press ahead, firmly focused on 50 years from now!"

That time has now arrived, and we are celebrating this triumphant and glorious 50th anniversary of the establishment of Soka University as the highest seat of learning for human education.

My greatest joy is that I am able to report the astounding growth and development of Soka University over these 50 years to Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founder of Soka education, and to my mentor, Josei Toda.

I would also like to express my most profound respect and gratitude to all those who have dedicated their youth and their ongoing efforts throughout their lives to join with me in founding Soka University, this great bastion of learning.

The arduous efforts of all these noble individuals—our students and graduates, their parents and guardians, the faculty and staff, and all those who

have supported the university's development—united in their commitment to the founding spirit of Soka University over the past 50 years have culminated in producing three shining treasures. I would like here to reconfirm these three treasures and entrust to you the next 50 years toward the centennial, as well as the university's future in the 22nd and 23rd centuries.

A font of compassion

The first of these treasures is the inexhaustible font of compassion that is human education.

On November 18, 1930, Mr. Makiguchi, together with his beloved disciple Mr. Toda, introduced Soka education to the world. Their unwavering aim was to ensure the happiness of all children. At the time, a nationalistic education system promoted by the militarist government prevailed in Japan. It was in this environment that Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda set forth, motivated solely by their great compassionate determination that the young people before them should lead lives of supreme happiness and that not one of them should be abandoned to fall into misery and misfortune.

Soka education is based on a profound educational philosophy of trust in and respect for all human beings, rooted in the conviction that all people inherently possess the wisdom to create supreme value and that the aim of education is to open the door to that wisdom, reveal it and awaken people to it, enabling them to incorporate it into their lives. All those who have inherited this spirit and worked to establish our people's university, who have encouraged and cherished our students, are eternally etched in the depths of my heart.

When the land on which the university was to be built was still strewn with rocks and the stumps of trees, dedicated volunteers worked hard to help clear the site. I will never forget the unsung efforts and warm-hearted sincerity of all those who, having been denied the opportunity to pursue their own education because of World War II, so generously contributed to the establishment of our fortress for the peace of humankind.

The university has also been embraced by the prayers and support of the parents who worked tirelessly to send their precious children to Soka University whatever the cost, continuing to watch warmly over them, as well as by our fellow members in Hachioji City and throughout Japan and the world who have encouraged youth in their communities to consider applying.

Our faculty and staff, who with a shared commitment have courageously strived to uphold Soka University's founding spirit, have forged a proud tradition of putting students first in every respect, treasuring the students as if they were their own children.

Professor Toynebee opined that everyone who has received professional training or higher education should take an oath akin to the physician's Hippocratic Oath—a vow to put the abilities and knowledge they have acquired through their education to use in the service of others.

The principle of paying one's gratitude forward pulses particularly strongly through Soka University with its credo that universities exist to benefit those who are themselves unable to attend them. This beautiful cycle of receiving and repaying encouragement and support is an endless, uninterrupted chain. The spirit of passing on the same warm encouragement and training one has experienced at Soka University to one's friends, to the younger students and to the people with whom one interacts throughout one's life is vibrantly alive.

Since the university's early years, alumni have worked to open the way for those who follow, assisting them in attaining professional qualifications and finding employment after graduation, striving to nurture their juniors to achieve even greater success than their own. There could be no more beautiful or gratifying example of love for one's alma mater than this.

I am also reassured to see alumni, starting from the very first graduating classes, joining the faculty and staff and playing pivotal roles at the university, adopting my spirit as their own and putting the students first at all times.

Since my youth, I have committed to heart the following words, which apply perfectly to human education: "If a tree is deeply rooted, its branches and leaves will never wither. If the spring is inexhaustible, the stream will never run dry. Without wood, a fire will burn out. Without earth, plants will not grow."

I am absolutely convinced that as long as the compassionate stream of love, trust and encouragement and the dedication to study together with youth flows over the earth cultivated by Soka education, a great forest of capable individuals will flourish and untold flowers and fruits of peace and culture will be produced.

The sun of creative life force

The second treasure is the sun of creative life force that can triumph over

all adversity.

At the time Soka University was established, the very nature of universities was being fundamentally challenged, and there was even a movement in society campaigning for their dissolution. In stark contrast, the establishment of Soka University was an attempt to pioneer a new horizon for human education. At the same time, in a world divided by the East–West antagonism of the Cold War and the quagmire of the Vietnam War, the new university held high its founding spirit to usher in the dawn of an era dedicated to building peace.

Even before the university opened, I was fully prepared for an onslaught of distorted attacks based on prejudice and speculation. The pioneer students in those early years of the university confidently confronted those fierce winds and studied with a spirit of invincible determination to achieve justice, forging the unadulterated strength to repel all such assaults.

Dr. René Dubos, the globally acclaimed microbiologist, expressed high hopes for Soka University’s human education, just as Professor Toynbee had done. Born in the first year of the 20th century, Dr. Dubos spent his career fighting against infectious diseases and other illnesses and famously coined the maxim “think locally, act globally.”

Dr. Dubos declared: “Man must struggle to adapt himself to the ever changing environment. . . . It is the fate of all living things, and it is indeed the law and the very essence of life.”¹

His words resonate powerfully with the meaning that Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda infused into the words “value creation” (Jpn *soka*), the dedication to bravely respond to every challenge with which one may be confronted, and to create new value in the process.

In the lyrics to the Soka University song that we all have sung so many times, are the words:

For whose sake do we study the way of humanity?

For whose sake do we build a fortress of peace?

For whose sake do we seek the truth of life?

¹ René Dubos, *The Torch of Life: Continuity in Living Experience* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), p. 101.

With unwavering sense of purpose in working for the happiness and welfare of the people, our alumni have bravely challenged the problems and hardships of their youth and of the world in which they live, causing the sun of their creative life force to rise. That light has only been strengthened and deepened by the establishment of the Division of Distance Learning and the opening of Soka Women's College.

Mr. Makiguchi wrote his insightful *Jinsei chirigaku* (The Geography of Human Life) in his youth, and Mr. Toda was also young in years when he composed his groundbreaking arithmetic textbook *Suirishiki shido sanjutsu* (A Deductive Guide to Arithmetic). It is no exaggeration to say that the shining creativity and uniqueness of Soka education can be traced back to those two works.

Soka University students—cheered on by the towering figures of such eminent intellects of human history as Leonardo da Vinci and Marie Curie, calling to them across time and space—have energetically revealed an outstanding creativity in their studies and research, their participation in cultural activities and sports, their contributions to society and participation in student government.

At times of natural disaster such as the Kobe earthquake (1995) and the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami (2011), Soka University alumni have selflessly reached out to stand by the victims, demonstrating resilience and imparting hope for the recovery of devastated communities. Exhibiting strength at times of economic instability and finding solutions in every area of endeavor, the alumni have earned copious praise, including public recognition for their fortitude in the face of adversity.

Holding aloft the banner of Soka humanism and contributing to society with courage, sincerity and perseverance in every community and country, in every field and profession, these living examples of the Soka principle of human revolution are brightly illuminating the chaotic darkness of our times. They have earned the respect and trust of all people, young and old, and stand as proof of a towering people's university.

Soka University has overcome numerous hurdles over the past 50 years. For example, following the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic at the beginning of 2020, classes were replaced with online teaching to protect the health and safety of the students, and new possibilities for university education are presently being explored together with our international students

from around the world. No matter what new obstacles may arise in our path, let us continue to triumph over them through mutual support and encouragement.

Making the sun of the creative life of all humanity shine brilliantly, it is my great wish that we will all strive together to become the cradle of a new renaissance.

A network of global citizenship

The third treasure is our vast network of global citizenship that unites humanity.

“Universities are among the most permanent of human institutions.”² These are the words of Charles William Eliot, one of the great presidents of Harvard University, where I have on two occasions had the opportunity to deliver lectures.

I agree completely with Eliot’s assertion. I would, however, like to add a further statement underlining the crucial significance of universities, in consideration of our beloved international students who have chosen to study here: “Universities are the most universal and strongest of human institutions forging bonds among people.”

During the Cold War period, Soka University played an important role as an educational and cultural bridge between the peoples of Japan and China, Japan and the Soviet Union, China and the Soviet Union, Japan and Cuba and the United States and Cuba, transcending ideologies and social systems. Today Soka University is an international exchange partner with universities in more than 60 countries and territories, from neighboring South Korea and other nations in Asia, to Oceania, North and South America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

As the founder of Soka University and as the disciple of Josei Toda, who, in the aftermath of World War II, was among the first to promote the concept of global citizenship, I have forged deep ties of friendship and trust with more than 400 universities around the world. I entrust all of these ties to Soka University.

The university’s global mission and responsibility have been recognized through its designation as a Top Global University by the Japanese government. Soka University is also a member of the United Nations Academic Impact

² Richard Norton Smith, *The Harvard Century: The Making of a University to a Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), p. 45.

program, and as such is actively engaged in advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Soka University is dedicated to building and limitlessly expanding a network of global citizens that transcends all national, ethnic, cultural and religious differences—a network of young people united in mutual trust and respect, learning together and inspiring one another, based on the fundamental universal principle of the dignity of life.

Precisely because of the deep divisions and tensions threatening humanity today, I hope that Soka University will build an indivisible educational union while fortifying its ties with the Soka schools, Soka University of America and all its sister schools and institutions worldwide. I am deeply convinced that the key to achieving peace is to be found in advancing this cause steadily and resolutely, step by step.

A renaissance of happiness and peace

I would once again like to express my deepest gratitude to all who have chosen to study at Soka University today.

As the Buddhist scriptures state: “If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present”.

You, the admirable youth of Soka, unflinching even in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, brim with pride and an awareness of your mission as young founders of the university to rival your forebears, exerting yourselves in new inquiry and value creation and shining as the hope of students around the world. The inspiring examples of all of today’s students epitomize the glory of these 50 years of Soka University’s existence, and at the same time promise its endless future victory.

I will always cherish the memory of the first Soka University graduation ceremony. On that occasion, I called on the students to make a vow to forever remain connected in their hearts, in the spirit of the passage in the Lotus Sutra that declares that “the assembly at Eagle Peak has not yet dispersed.”

At all times and in all places, fellow Soka students—Soka mentors and disciples—will be united as one. I will always be praying earnestly for the health, progress and happiness of Soka University students, who are my very life.

From the perspective of the vast and endless future, the 50th anniversary is just the beginning. The light of Soka education shines far into the future, growing ever brighter like the saying “From the indigo, an even deeper blue”; its true value is yet to be discovered.

My dear Soka University students, alumni who are one with me, may you vibrantly and dynamically lead lives of contribution and victory, together with me throughout eternity!

A renaissance
of happiness and peace
on Earth—
You, the suns of Soka,
illuminate the people.

Let us sing our beloved Soka University song together and make it resound in our lives.

Daisaku Ikeda
Founder