

Congratulatory Address: The 48th Soka University / The 34th Soka Women's College Entrance Ceremony

John Varghese

Respected President Yoshihisa Baba, distinguished members of the faculty, Professor Mukesh Williams, coordinator of the St Stephens- Soka exchange programme, and my dear students.

Good morning to all of you!

I bring you greetings from St Stephen's College, Delhi.

I thank you for this generous offer of asking me to come here for the Entrance Ceremony as your Chief Guest. I am honoured and grateful for the privilege that you have bestowed upon me.

St Stephen's College and Soka University have had a quarter century of exchange programmes and partnership. Today, when I stand here before you I stand on the strength of that collaboration and friendship. Both our institutions represent certain values that have made each of our institutions unique. At Soka you have exemplified the gentleness and humanitarian values that characterize your students; at St Stephen's College we stand for excellence and service which has been the hallmark of those who have gone out of College and made a difference to the world. Together, I think we have made a positive impact on the world. And we must not stop there.

It is important that every generation of learners that come out from institutions like Soka and St Stephen's College help the world become a better place. It is not only important but it is our duty. It is possible for one man or woman to change the world - but if we join hands together, we can do it faster, and make a huge difference in transforming the world.

Today is a very important day in the life of Soka University. We have an opportunity to welcome into the University young people who are keen on preparing themselves for the future. To all of you, I say "*Welcome!*"

You must have joined the University for several reasons - to acquire knowledge, to gain wisdom, to get a degree, because your friend has also joined the University... there could be several reasons why you have decided to join Soka. Irrespective of which of those reasons, here

John Varghese (Principal St.Stephen's College: University of Delhi)

is the primary reason why, I think, Soka welcomes you into its fold: Soka University wants you to change the world.

I know this is the real reason why Soka welcomes you. I know it because that is exactly why we too, welcome the best students to St Stephen's College. As world class institutions we have a purpose to fulfill. In the words of your wise founder, the gentle and renowned scholar Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, you must bring peace to the world and that peace must come from within.

To all of you who are looking up to Soka I tell you that yes, you must change the world and like your founder says, change must begin from inside, from within. The world needs change – as a global community we need a change in our outlook, a change in our priorities, a change in how we understand growth. The world needs that change and that is embodied in you – the young people of tomorrow.

How do we bring about change? By building up inner strength. That is what institutions like Soka and St Stephen's are good at. At Soka you will, in the course of your study here, get to learn not only about subjects – but more importantly about yourself. It can be a wonderful time when you discover things about yourself in the company of great authors, as you interact with your teachers, as you mingle with friends, as you spend time with your own self – every opportunity is an opportunity for growth. Inner growth. And you must be aware of it.

So, when your assignment requires you to spend time with great authors from around the world, consider that an opportunity to interact with the finest minds in the world. Engage with them – be that a historian talking about events in the past, or a scientist talking about how phenomena have certain guiding principles. Engage, engage, engage. Interact with all of them.

When you deal with your teachers, observe them. They have much to offer: it may be in the manner of their speaking, it may be in the way they offer advice, it may even be in the manner in which they give you penalties. But they offer you a great opportunity to build your own inner capabilities.

When you are with your peers have good, clean fun. Let your enjoyment be something that you can relish and share with your children twenty-five years from now.

Once you realise the many opportunities that you have, you will understand how much has gone into your education. Please look around you and you will see that many young people have not been able to come to Soka for an education. For many reasons; but you have. Therefore, you have a greater responsibility. You must work for not just yourself, but also for those who are unable or could not join this University. You owe it to them. You owe it to your families. You owe it to yourself.

Soka and St Stephen's college have an inherent value system that we seek to imbibe in every young man and woman who enters our institutions. Those values are simplicity, dedication to

excellent work and a commitment to serve society.

My dear young friends, as you begin your life in Soka, I wish you all the peace, success and joy that comes from those three values.

I once again thank the Soka University, President Baba, Professor Mukesh Williams and all those who have made my visit here possible.

Thank you.