

# SGI Newsletter

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## *President Ikeda's Study Lecture Series*

### **THE BUDDHISM OF THE SUN—ILLUMINATING THE WORLD**

#### **Key Passages from *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings***

#### **[7] “The Teacher of the Law” Chapter**

#### **The Great Vow of Kosen-rufu Is the Heart of the Soka Gakkai**

We of the Soka Gakkai have inherited a great vow from our first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and his successor and second president, Josei Toda. It is the unprecedented, grand mission of kosen-rufu—to spread throughout the world the Buddhism of the Sun established by Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, and work for the happiness and peace of all humanity. That vow is the very heart of the first three Soka Gakkai presidents and their disciples. We have chosen to be born in this world to realize that noble mission, eagerly joining this gathering of Bodhisattvas of the Earth [that is the Soka Gakkai].

#### **May 3 Is the Starting Point of the Soka Gakkai**

On May 3, 1980, while in my beloved Kansai, I inscribed a calligraphy featuring the date “May 3” in large characters. In the margin next to it, I wrote in smaller characters:

May 3, 1951.

May 3, 1960.

May 3, 1979.

May 3, 1983.

May 3, 2001.

—This day [May 3] is the starting point of the Soka Gakkai.<sup>1</sup>

As long as I live—no, for all eternity—I will never forget the first date in that list, May 3, 1951. It was the day that Mr. Toda became the second Soka Gakkai president and the Soka Gakkai cast off its transient aspect and revealed its true identity as a harmonious community of Bodhisattvas of the Earth. On that day, it launched a great struggle to realize kosen-rufu by compassionately spreading the Mystic Law.

On the second date—May 3, 1960—I became the third Soka Gakkai president and, at the age of 32—one in spirit and action with my mentor—took leadership with the determination to advance our movement another step toward the substantive realization of kosen-rufu.<sup>2</sup>

The third date—May 3, 1979—was the culmination of the first Seven Bells,<sup>3</sup> seven seven-year cycles marking the Soka Gakkai’s development since its founding [in 1930]. It was during the first priesthood incident, and I began to take leadership for worldwide kosen-rufu even more actively as president of Soka Gakkai International (SGI).

The fifth date—May 3, 2001—marked the beginning of a new century, the summit of hope we’d been aiming for, signaling the start of the second Seven Bells. It was also the day that Soka University of America (SUA) opened with the mission of fostering bright young people who would work to create peace for the global human family.

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<sup>1</sup> Now mounted as a hanging scroll, this calligraphic work features the Chinese characters for “May 3,” written in bold and vivid strokes down the center. In the right margin, the following dates are inscribed: May 3, 1951 (Josei Toda’s inauguration as second Soka Gakkai president); May 3, 1960 (President Ikeda’s inauguration as third Soka Gakkai president); May 3, 1979 (the Headquarters general meeting at which President Ikeda formally stepped down as third president, following his resignation on April 24); May 3, 1983 (reflecting President Ikeda’s determination to open the way for the fresh development of the Soka Gakkai within the next three years); and May 3, 2001 (aiming for the first May 3 of the 21st century). Below this is inscribed the date May 3, 1952 (the day President and Mrs. Ikeda were married). This list of dates is then followed by the words: “This date [May 3] is / the starting point of the Soka Gakkai. / Inscribed on May 3, 1980. / My heart serene and tranquil. / Palms pressed together. / Daisaku.”

<sup>2</sup> The substantive realization of kosen-rufu: This refers to propagating the Daishonin’s teaching of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws in society. In other words, it is establishing happiness, peace, and security in the real world based on the Mystic Law, through each individual carrying out their personal mission as a Bodhisattva of the Earth.

<sup>3</sup> Seven Bells: The first series of Seven Bells are seven consecutive seven-year periods in the Soka Gakkai’s development from its founding in 1930 through 1979. On May 3, 1958, shortly after President Toda’s death (on April 2), President Ikeda, then Soka Gakkai youth division chief of staff, introduced this idea and announced targets for subsequent seven-year periods. On May 3, 1966, President Ikeda spoke of a new series of Seven Bells that he envisaged unfolding in the 21st century.

The fourth date—May 3, 1983—exactly four decades ago, marked the 32nd anniversary of the Soka Gakkai’s new beginning under Mr. Toda’s presidency. Nichiren Daishonin was 32 when he proclaimed his teaching for the first time [on April 28, 1253], the starting point of his lifelong struggle to spread the Mystic Law undeterred by hardship or persecution. Reaching that milestone of 32 years, the Soka Gakkai, with pure and resolute faith, vowed to advance boldly to write a new history for the Buddhism of the people.

### **A Day We Renew Our Efforts for Kosen-rufu**

May 3 is the starting point for Soka mentors and disciples as they carry on the Daishonin’s great selfless struggle to spread the Mystic Law.

Our journey of mentor and disciple continues as we surmount and triumph over all trials and obstacles.

May 3 will forever be a day of fresh departure. Year after year on that day, having fought our hardest, we set off anew in our march for the victory of the people. As long as we of the Soka Gakkai base our lives on the great vow for kosen-rufu, we can bring forth limitless wisdom, courage, and life force to strive and win in everything.

In *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, the Daishonin states: “The ‘great vow’ refers to the propagation of the Lotus Sutra [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo]” (OTT, 82).

True bodhisattvas choose to appear in an evil age to fulfill that great vow, actively taking their place at the forefront of society in this suffering-filled world. They are the “teachers of the Law” we will learn about in this installment.

From “The Teacher of the Law” (10th) chapter,<sup>4</sup> the focus of the assembly of the Lotus Sutra changes entirely. Up through the previous chapter, “Prophecies Conferred on Learners and Adepts,” the focus has been on Shakyamuni revealing that the practitioners of the two vehicles (the voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones) can in

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<sup>4</sup> From “The Teacher of the Law” (10th) chapter, Shakyamuni’s audience shifts from the voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones to the bodhisattvas, and the subject shifts from the attainment of enlightenment by the disciples during his lifetime to how to propagate the Lotus Sutra in the evil age after his passing. The chapter reveals that the Lotus Sutra is superior to all other sutras and stresses the unsurpassed nobility of those who embrace it in that latter age. Many important Buddhist principles and concepts are presented in this chapter, including voluntarily assuming the appropriate karma; serving as envoys of the Thus Come One; the three categories of preaching (the sutras that Shakyamuni Buddha has preached, now preaches, and will preach); encountering even greater hatred and jealousy as practitioners of the Lotus Sutra in the age after Shakyamuni’s passing than during his lifetime; and the three rules of preaching (also three rules of the robe, seat, and room).

fact attain enlightenment [something denied to them in earlier sutras].<sup>5</sup> As a result, the three vehicles (the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings expounded for the voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas) are merged within the one vehicle teaching of the Lotus Sutra. In “The Teacher of the Law” chapter, the focus shifts to spreading the Mystic Law in the Latter Day, the evil age after Shakyamuni’s death. First, Shakyamuni explains the importance of the teachers of the Law, who take on the task of propagating the Lotus Sutra, and details their practice and conduct.

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## **Chapter Ten: The Teacher of the Law**

### ***Sixteen important points***

#### **Point One, concerning “the teacher of the Law”**

The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings says: . . . Now Nichiren and his followers, who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, are the greatest among the teachers of the Law. (OTT, 81–82)

## **The Dual Aspects of the Teachers of the Law: Seeking the Way and Guiding Others to Enlightenment**

In discussing the teachers of the Law, the Daishonin first states that he and his followers, who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, are the foremost teachers of the Law.

“Teacher of the Law” (Jpn. *hosshi*) is a translation of the Sanskrit *dharmabhanaka*. *Dharma* means the Law and *bhanaka* refers to someone who recites or preaches the teachings. In the Lotus Sutra, anyone can qualify as a teacher of the Law, with no distinctions between clergy and laity, men and women. This is a perfect description of a bodhisattva.

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<sup>5</sup> The persons of the two vehicles refers to the voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones who, in the sutras prior to the Lotus Sutra, are depicted as unable to attain Buddhahood and constantly criticized by Shakyamuni because they are concerned solely with their own enlightenment and lack compassion for others. In the theoretical teaching (the first 14 chapters) of the Lotus Sutra, however, the principle of “three thousand realms in a single moment of life” is articulated, and for the first time the practitioners of the two vehicles receive predictions of their future enlightenment.

“The Teacher of the Law” chapter presents two aspects or roles of the teachers of the Law: first, they make the Law their teacher and guide in life, and second, they act as teachers, sharing with others the Law they have awakened to. The former is the aspect of seeking the way, benefitting oneself by striving for enlightenment, and the latter is guiding others, benefitting others by showing them the way to enlightenment. To focus solely on one’s own enlightenment is to lack compassion for others, as exemplified by the practitioners of the two vehicles (voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones). On the other hand, focusing solely on benefiting others can lead to hypocrisy and arrogance. Only when the two exist together, in a complementary fashion, can genuine humanity blossom.

The teachers of the Law dive among the people and tirelessly share the greatness of Buddhism. As the word “teachers” implies, they are spiritual leaders.

The Daishonin declares: “Now Nichiren and his followers, who chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, are the greatest among the teachers of the Law” (OTT, 82).

True to these words, we of the Soka Gakkai, who today chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, the essence of the Lotus Sutra, are bringing forth the wisdom, compassion, and courage needed to contribute positively to society. We are great teachers of the Law in the direct lineage of Nichiren Daishonin.

### **Being Born in an Evil Age through the Power of Our Vow**

A noteworthy feature of “The Teacher of the Law” chapter is its description of bodhisattvas abandoning the immense pure rewards they have gained through their practice and being reborn in an evil age to preach the Lotus Sutra. It is a noble course they have chosen out of their wish to enable all living beings to attain enlightenment. Great Teacher Miao-lo<sup>6</sup> called this “voluntarily assuming the appropriate karma,”<sup>7</sup> referring to how, through the power of their vow to save all living beings, these

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<sup>6</sup> Miao-lo (711–782): Also known as Great Teacher Ching-hsi, after his birthplace. A patriarch of the T’ien-t’ai school in China. He is revered as the school’s restorer. His commentaries on T’ien-t’ai’s three major works are titled *The Annotations on “The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra,”* *The Annotations on “The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra,”* and *The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight.”*

<sup>7</sup> Voluntarily assuming the appropriate karma: This refers to bodhisattvas who, though qualified to receive the pure rewards of Buddhist practice, relinquish them and make a vow to be reborn in an impure world in order to save living beings. They spread the Mystic Law, while undergoing the same sufferings as those born in the evil world due to karma. This term derives from Miao-lo’s interpretation of relevant passages in “The Teacher of the Law” (10th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra: “Medicine King, you should understand that these people voluntarily relinquish the reward due them for their pure deeds and, in the time after I have passed into extinction, because they pity living beings, they are born in this evil world so they may broadly expound this sutra” (LSOC 10, 200).

bodhisattvas appear in this suffering-filled saha world<sup>8</sup> and vigorously work to spread the Mystic Law.

This ultimate bodhisattva practice can be said to characterize the Bodhisattvas of the Earth,<sup>9</sup> who appear subsequently in the “Emerging from the Earth” (15th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, and, as the envoys of the Thus Come One,<sup>10</sup> dedicate their lives to spreading the Mystic Law in the evil age after his passing.

In *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, the Daishonin proclaims: “The persons who ‘are born in this evil world [or age]’ are Nichiren and his followers” (OTT, 82). In other words, Nichiren and his followers are the bodhisattvas who have made a vow to “voluntarily assume the appropriate karma.”

In these bodhisattvas’ hearts resonates the proud and joyous declaration: “United by the bonds of mentor and disciple, we have chosen to be born together in this world, in this evil age, through our shared vow!”

The mentors and disciples of Soka have in the present age been forging ahead dynamically to achieve worldwide kosen-rufu. Countless members around the globe have joyfully recounted their experiences of “voluntarily assuming the appropriate karma” and transforming karma into mission. They have shown how great is the human revolution of a single individual and what an unending source of hope and inspiration it can become.

The Lotus Sutra says that those who embrace the sutra “freely choose where they will be born” (LSOC10, 202). We are all born now in the Latter Day of the Law, here in the land, place, time, and circumstances of our choosing to fulfill our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth. When we awaken to our great vow from the infinite past, the meaning of our lives changes completely. All our sufferings are transformed into our mission because we are all, without exception, bodhisattvas who have made a vow.

We conduct activities overflowing with the joy that each of us is an “envoy of the Thus Come One” described in “The Teacher of the Law” chapter, “dispatched by the Thus Come One and carrying out the Thus Come One’s work” (see LSOC10, 200).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Saha world: This world, which is full of suffering. Often translated as the world of endurance. In Sanskrit, *saha* means the earth; it derives from a root meaning “to bear” or “to endure.” For this reason, in the Chinese versions of Buddhist scriptures, *saha* is rendered as endurance. In this context, the saha world indicates a world in which people must endure suffering.

<sup>9</sup> Bodhisattvas of the Earth: The innumerable bodhisattvas who appear in the “Emerging from the Earth” (15th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra and are entrusted by Shakyamuni with the task of propagating the Law after his passing.

<sup>10</sup> Thus Come One: One of the ten honorable titles of a Buddha, meaning one who has come from the realm of truth. This title indicates that a Buddha embodies the fundamental truth of all phenomena and has grasped the law of causality spanning past, present, and future.

<sup>11</sup> “The Teacher of the Law” (10th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra states: “If one of these good men or good women in the time after I have passed into extinction is able to secretly expound the

“Representatives of the Thus Come One” are now emerging everywhere around the world.

### **Kosen-rufu Begins with One-to-One Dialogue**

The term “teacher of the Law” may give the impression of someone who speaks before large audiences, but the Lotus Sutra clarifies that this is not necessarily the case. It states that someone who shares Buddhism with even one person is an envoy of the Thus Come One.

Whether we speak of spreading the Mystic Law or guiding people to enlightenment, both begin with touching the heart of the person right in front of us. All people are inherently worthy of supreme respect because they possess the Buddha nature. No one deserves to be disparaged or treated disrespectfully. That is why one-to-one dialogue and small gatherings are so important.

On May 3, 1951, when Mr. Toda became Soka Gakkai president and vowed to realize a membership of 750,000 households, he also declared that kosen-rufu would be achieved through one-to-one, face-to-face dialogue.<sup>12</sup>

Always doing our utmost to treasure each person, we have fostered individuals to stand up with us for this noble cause.

In *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, the Daishonin goes on: “Now Nichiren and his followers, who now chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, are the true envoys” (OTT, 83). We, the members of the Soka Gakkai earnestly chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and persist in dialogue to help one person after another form a connection with Buddhism. We are therefore the true envoys of the Thus Come One.

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**Point Seven, on the robe, the seat, and the room in the passage  
“Medicine King, if there are good men and good women who, after  
the Thus Come One has entered extinction, wish to expound this  
Lotus Sutra for the four kinds of believers [monks, nuns, laymen,  
and laywomen], how should they expound it? These good men and  
good women should enter the Thus Come One’s room, put on the**

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Lotus Sutra to one person, even one phrase of it, then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. He has been dispatched by the Thus Come One and carries out the Thus Come One’s work” (LSOC10, 200).

<sup>12</sup> Translated from Japanese. See Josei Toda, *Toda Josei zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda), vol. 3 (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1983), p. 431.

**Thus Come One’s robe, sit in the Thus Come One’s seat, and then for the sake of the four kinds of believers broadly expound this sutra” [LSOC10, 205].**

. . . Now Nichiren and his followers, who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, are fulfilling these three rules of preaching represented by the robe, the seat, and the room in each moment of their lives.

The robe is the robe that is “gentle and forbearing” (chapter ten), as well as that which is referred to in the passage that says, “We . . . will put on the armor of perseverance” (chapter thirteen, Encouraging Devotion).

As for the seat, if one devotes oneself to the practice without begrudging one’s life, then it becomes the seat of “the emptiness of all phenomena [having cut off attachment to one’s transient status]” (chapter ten).

The room is so called because one dwells in “pity and compassion” (ibid.) when one expounds the teachings. It means to have the kind of concern that a mother has for her child. And are we not fulfilling these three rules of preaching in each moment of our lives? (OTT, 84–85)

### **The Three Rules of Preaching: The Robe, the Seat, and the Room**

Next, we will look at a section in *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings* about the three rules of preaching, also known as the three rules of the robe, seat, and room.<sup>13</sup> The word “rule” here has the meaning of “direction,” “way,” or “guideline.” How should the good men and women—namely, the teachers of the Law—who practice the Lotus Sutra in the time after the Buddha’s passing go about preaching the

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<sup>13</sup> Three rules of preaching: Also, known as the three rules of the robe, seat, and room. Three essentials for propagating the Lotus Sutra in the evil age after Shakyamuni Buddha’s death mentioned in “The Teacher of the Law” chapter of the sutra. Shakyamuni declares: “If there are good men and good women who, after the Thus Come One has entered extinction, wish to expound this Lotus Sutra for the four kinds of believers [monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen], how should they expound it? These good men and good women should enter the Thus Come One’s room, put on the Thus Come One’s robe, sit in the Thus Come One’s seat, and then for the sake of the four kinds of believers broadly expound this sutra. The ‘Thus Come One’s room’ is the state of mind that shows great pity and compassion toward all living beings. The ‘Thus Come One’s robe’ is the mind that is gentle and forbearing. The ‘Thus Come One’s seat’ is the emptiness of all phenomena” (see LSOC10, 205).



sutra for the sake of others? The three rules of the robe, seat, and room—richly human metaphors—serve as a guide for doing this.

In the passage right before the one we are studying, the three rules of the robe, seat, and room are correlated with the three bodies of the Buddha—the Dharma body, the reward body, and the manifested body.<sup>14</sup> The Daishonin says that when we put the three rules into practice, we acquire the characteristics of the three Buddha bodies, including the virtues of truth, wisdom, and compassion. And he declares: “Now Nichiren and his followers, who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, are fulfilling these three rules of preaching represented by the robe, the seat, and the room in each moment of their lives” (OTT, 84).

The three rules of the robe, seat, and room are presented after the Buddha warns: “Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?” (LSOC10, 203). It is only to be expected that spreading the correct teaching in the evil age after Shakyamuni’s death will provoke persecution. Persecution befell the Daishonin numerous times, just as the sutra passage states, including nearly being executed during the Tatsunokuchi Persecution.<sup>15</sup> He endured all this to teach and spread the great Law for the enlightenment of people into the eternal future of the Latter Day of the Law. We, too, must never give up or give in, whatever difficulties we may face. That resolute spirit is what defines a proud disciple of Nichiren Daishonin.

Buddhism means being victorious. We cannot brave and overcome the storms of opposition with only halfhearted resolve. That is why the “robe” we must don comprises “the robe that is gentle and forbearing” and “the armor of perseverance” (see OTT, 85).

The “seat” means being ready to “devote oneself to the practice without begrudging one’s life” (see OTT, 85) amidst the raging waves of the real world and advancing fearlessly in the face of the devilish nature of arrogant authority. The “room” refers to compassion resembling the “concern that a mother has for her child” (OTT, 85) and also the strength to protect all from harm.

May 3 this year [2023] marks the 35th anniversary of Soka Gakkai Mothers Day. How happy the Daishonin would be to see the great solidarity of Soka women of all

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<sup>14</sup> Three bodies: Three kinds of body a Buddha may possess. They are the Dharma body, the reward body, and the manifested body. The Dharma body is the fundamental truth, or Law, to which a Buddha is enlightened. The reward body is the wisdom to perceive the Law and is called so because a Buddha’s wisdom is considered the reward derived from ceaseless effort and discipline. And the manifested body is the compassionate actions the Buddha carries out to lead people to happiness.

<sup>15</sup> Tatsunokuchi Persecution: On September 12, 1271, Nichiren Daishonin, who was under arrest for false charges, was taken in the middle of the night to be secretly executed at Tatsunokuchi, but the attempt failed.

ages, “friends in the orchid room”<sup>16</sup> (see WND-1, 23), filled with respect for the dignity of life!

### **Soka Gakkai Members Are Creating “Orchid Rooms of Compassion”**

The three rules of the robe, seat, and room always reminds me of the dialogue between the host and guest in the Daishonin’s treatise “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land.”<sup>17</sup>

Both deeply troubled by the natural disasters afflicting the land and bringing suffering to the people, the host and guest find in each other someone to share their thoughts with and naturally sit down to talk together. As their conversation progresses, the guest reacts angrily to the host’s criticism of the Pure Land (Nembutsu) teachings and stands up to leave, but the host, with a calm smile, urges him to stay and patiently explains the reasoning and truth underlying his remarks. His anger eased, the guest once again listens receptively.

Here, the host warmly embraces the agitated guest with “the robe that is gentle and forbearing,” carrying on a dialogue that is honest, open, and free from prejudice. In so doing, he creates an “orchid room of compassion,” pervaded by empathy for those who are suffering.

The spread of such dialogue based on the three rules of the robe, seat, and room throughout Japan and around the world will build a solid foundation for realizing the Daishonin’s ideal of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land.” This is not a goal for the far-distant future; it is being actualized now where our members, “the greatest among the teachers of the Law” (OTT, 82), engage in vibrant, ongoing dialogue.

### **Sharing Buddhism in Daily Life**

This year marks 80 years since the arrest and imprisonment of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, our first and second presidents, by Japan’s wartime militarist

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<sup>16</sup> “A friend in the orchid room” indicates a person of virtue. The implication is that the company of a virtuous person works as a good influence, just as one is imbued with fragrance on entering a room filled with orchids.

<sup>17</sup> “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”: A treatise of remonstrance that the Daishonin submitted to Hojo Tokiyori, the retired regent but still the most powerful figure in Japan’s ruling clan, on July 16, 1260. It takes the form of a dialogue between a host and a guest, regarded as representing Nichiren Daishonin and Hojo Tokiyori, respectively. In it, the Daishonin predicts that, unless the correct teaching of the Lotus Sutra was followed, the country would in the near future suffer the calamities of internal strife and foreign invasion—the only two calamities among the “three calamities and seven disasters” that had not yet assailed Japan.

authorities [in July 1943]. Despite the harsh conditions of their incarceration, neither ever lowered the banner of dialogue for “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land.” Mr. Makiguchi turned his interrogation sessions into opportunities for discussing Buddhist philosophy, and Mr. Toda introduced Nichiren Buddhism to his prison guards.

This unflinching determination to chant and spread the Mystic Law no matter what the circumstances embodies the practice of the three rules of the robe, seat, and room. Let us follow the examples of our great mentors Presidents Makiguchi and Toda and continue to work for kosen-rufu, never slackening our efforts in the slightest.

When we earnestly and sincerely share Buddhism with others, we “lodge in the same place as the Thus Come One” (OTT, 83).<sup>18</sup> The teachers of the Law are always together with the Buddha.

In *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, the Daishonin cites a commentary that states: “Morning after morning we rise up with the Buddha, evening after evening we lie down with the Buddha. Moment by moment we attain the way, moment by moment we reveal our true identity”<sup>19</sup> (OTT, 83).

The teachers of the Law embody, teach, and promote Buddhism unceasingly in the course of their daily lives. For this is the way to eternal happiness.

### **Spiritual Inspiration Forges Capable Individuals**

The day after we joyfully celebrated May 3 four decades ago (in 1983), I went to Hikawa, on the western edge of Tokyo, with a group of young people. I had fond memories of the area since, many years earlier, I had accompanied Mr. Toda there for an outdoor training session of the young men’s division Suiko-kai (Water Margin Group).<sup>20</sup>

I said to the young people with me: “Events in the course of our movement for kosen-rufu may seem small, but as time passes they will gain deeper, greater, and eternal significance. This gathering today, and all of you here, are certain to shine in the eternal history of kosen-rufu.”

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<sup>18</sup> “The Teacher of the Law” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states: “You should know that these people will lodge in the same place as the Thus Come One, and the Thus Come One will pat them on the head with his hand” (LSOC10, 204).

<sup>19</sup> From a commentary by Fu Ta-shih (497–569), a lay Buddhist in China who won the respect of Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty, himself a devout Buddhist. He was not only an earnest practitioner of Buddhism, but also a great philanthropist.

<sup>20</sup> Suiko-kai (Water Margin Group): A young men’s division training group formed by second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda. It was named after the ancient Chinese epic novel *The Water Margin*, which the group studied.

I was filled with conviction. Even the mighty Ganges River began from a single drop of water. Because the great vow that lies at the heart of our Soka movement is genuine, I knew that our youth, and indeed all our members, would stand up in times of adversity by encouraging and inspiring one another. I knew they would form a mighty river of capable individuals who would eventually change the times and the world.

The teachers of the Law depicted in the Lotus Sutra are in fact bodhisattvas aflame with the great vow for kosen-rufu. They actively go out among the people and engage in dialogue to create a more peaceful world for all and pave new ways forward. One such person can become a spiritual support for many others in their community. The radiance from each of their lives can make society a brighter place and inspire others.

We, the Soka teachers of the Law, have the great mission to widely communicate to the global family of humankind the Lotus Sutra's message of respect for all people and harmonious coexistence. It is our job to build a new age in which each person shines with dignity and blooms beautifully in their own unique way in accord with the principle of "cherry, plum, peach, and damson" (see OTT, 200).

### **Now Is the Time to Stand Up Joyously!**

Each May 3 over these many years, I have prayed with renewed determination: My fellow members, Bodhisattvas of the Earth! All our youth, who are our shared hope! Stand up joyously and dynamically! Become an ever-flowing mighty river of capable people who usher in a century of life! And expand even more our brimming tide of global citizens dedicated to creating happiness and peace!

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