

the practice set forth in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in order to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime is the only means to conquer the darkness and delusion that are the fundamental source of human evil, and cultivate true independence, construct a solid self, and achieve a state of life of boundless happiness and peace of mind. Attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime thus becomes the fundamental purpose of an individual's life.

The significance of attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime from the collective perspective

The Lotus Sutra is the king of sutras, the direct path to enlightenment, for it explains that the entity of our life, which manifests either good or evil at each moment, is in fact the entity of the Mystic Law. If you chant Myoho-renge-kyo with deep faith in this principle, you are certain to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. That is why the sutra states, 'After I have passed into extinction, [one] should accept and uphold this sutra. Such a person assuredly and without doubt will attain the Buddha way.' Never doubt in the slightest. (WND-1, p. 4)...

'If you think the Law is outside yourself, you are not embracing the Mystic Law'

To chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is to commune with the Mystic Law. It is a Buddhist practice for fusing our lives with the Mystic Law. At the same time, it is a battle to conquer the inner darkness that prevents this fusion from taking place. When we vanquish this darkness of illusion and ignorance through faith and



become one with the Mystic Law, the infinite power of this great law unfolds in our lives. Such is the immeasurable benefit of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with a seeking spirit in faith is the essence of the practice of chanting established and propagated by Nichiren Daishonin. 'It is the heart that is important', (WND-1, p. 1000) the Daishonin asserts. When it comes to chanting, therefore, we should above all strive to summon forth courageous faith to overcome illusion without being defeated by the three obstacles and four devils.

Making the cause and effect of attaining Buddhahood the core and inmost essence of our lives

Myoho-renge-kyo is the name of the ultimate mystic truth, and Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the name of the life-state of Buddhas who embody and reveal this truth. Thus when we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with a seeking spirit in faith, the infinite

benefit of Myoho-renge-kyo unfolds in our lives. This is what it means to bring forth the world of Buddhahood.

At work here is the principle of 'cause and effect in a single moment of life', in which faith is the cause and manifesting the life-state of Buddhahood is the effect. When we continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo through times of both suffering and joy while striving for the happiness of ourselves and others, we can make the cause and effect for attaining Buddhahood – which are themselves contained within the practice of chanting – the core and inmost essence of our lives. When we do so, the indomitable state of Buddhahood emerges within us. This is the meaning of 'attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime'.

In his treatise 'The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind', the Daishonin states, 'Shakyamuni Buddha, who has attained perfect enlightenment, is our own flesh and blood. His practices and the resulting virtues are our bones and marrow.' (WND-1, p. 365) He explains that to embrace

Myoho-renge-kyo is in itself attaining enlightenment.² The power of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo enables us to actualise cause and effect in a single moment of life – that is, faith (cause) leading to the manifestation of our Buddhahood (effect).

Considered in this light, our voice chanting daimoku is the ‘voice of unshakeable faith and seeking spirit’ that demolishes the inner darkness of ignorance and illusion and sweeps away obstacles and devilish functions. It is also the courageous ‘lion’s roar’ that issues forth from the Buddhahood we have revealed as a result of our daimoku.

The chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is not only the ‘voice of faith’ of ordinary people; it is also the ‘voice of Buddhahood’. For that reason, we should always try to chant resonant daimoku with a vibrant and vigorous rhythm like that of a galloping horse.

It can also be said that chanting daimoku is an action by which we affirm that we ourselves are inherently entities of Myoho-renge-kyo. It represents a struggle to return to our true, original selves and tap the innate life-force that we have possessed from time without beginning...

The Mystic Law and incomplete teachings

Even though you chant and believe in Myoho-renge-kyo, if you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but an inferior teaching. ‘Inferior teaching’ means those [Buddhist teachings] other than this [Lotus] sutra, which are all expedient and provisional. No expedient or provisional teaching leads directly to enlightenment, and without the direct path to enlightenment you cannot attain Buddhahood, even if you practise lifetime after lifetime



for countless *kalpas*. Attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime is then impossible. Therefore, when you chant *myoho* and recite *renge*, you must summon up deep faith that Myoho-renge-kyo is your life itself. (WND-1, p. 3)

Given daimoku’s profound meaning, we must always remember when we chant that Myoho-renge-kyo is our life itself. If we lose sight of this point, then no matter how much daimoku we may chant, we will have departed from the practice of chanting taught by Nichiren Daishonin.

Therefore, in ‘On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime’, the Daishonin says in stern warning, ‘Even though you chant and believe in Myoho-renge-kyo, if you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but an inferior teaching.’ (WND-1, p. 3) ‘Inferior’ here means ‘incomplete’. The Mystic Law is the ultimate truth that is perfect and complete; in contrast, an incomplete teaching sets forth only a partial truth.

The above passage contains a profound philosophy that overcomes one of the serious pitfalls that religion tends to succumb to. It also embodies

a crucial philosophy of faith for attaining genuine happiness.

Religion is generally held to be a universal endeavour to connect the human being to the infinite, absolute and divine. While this is in a sense true, it seems that many religions from the outset postulate a separation between the secular and the divine, and between human beings and gods or Buddhas, and thus seek to bridge that gap.

The Daishonin, however, regards teachings of this kind that view the absolute or divine as separate from human beings as incomplete, citing as an example the provisional, pre-Lotus Sutra teachings expounded by Shakyamuni. These teachings do not set forth the principles or practice that enable ordinary

² Embracing Myoho-renge-kyo is in itself enlightenment: The Mystic Law is the fundamental Law by which all Buddhas throughout the three existences attain enlightenment. Nichiren Daishonin perceived the Mystic Law in his own life and manifested it in the concrete form of the Gohonzon, the object of fundamental devotion. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith in this Gohonzon constitutes the practice of observing one’s mind in order to attain Buddhahood by perceiving the Mystic Law within one’s own life. This is the principle of ‘embracing the Gohonzon is in itself attaining enlightenment’.

people to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. Rather, they espouse that one must first undergo innumerable *kalpas* of austere practice before enlightenment can be gained.

In the provisional, pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, a virtually insurmountable gulf exists between Buddhas and ordinary people. Only a very small handful of exceptional practitioners who, after having undergone austerities for countless *kalpas*, can even attempt to reach the goal of enlightenment. Moreover, according to these teachings, it is inconceivable for someone who has become a Buddha to go back to being an ordinary person. As a rule, the world where Buddhas dwell is not this strife-filled *saha* world where ordinary people reside. Buddhas and ordinary people are completely separate. Therefore, as long as such a divide exists between the world of Buddhahood and the nine worlds (the realm of ordinary beings), there is really no way for all people to attain enlightenment. In this worldview, ordinary people and the idealised Buddhas are poles apart, thus leaving ordinary people with no option but to aspire for salvation through the assistance or intervention of such Buddhas...

Summoning forth and manifesting the Buddha nature

...The power of such strong, determined daimoku calls forth the Buddha nature in all living beings. Not only does the Buddha nature of Brahma and Shakra and of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe manifest, but those chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo are also able to sever the chains of fundamental darkness and illusion and reveal their own Buddha nature. In other words, it is the power of our voices chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo that

connects our lives with the Mystic Law pervading all phenomena of the three thousand realms.

In his writing 'Letter to Niike', the Daishonin further explains the significance of chanting daimoku through the famous analogy of a mother bird and an egg. He says that the chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is 'like the warmth of the mother bird'. (WND-1, p. 1030) At first there is nothing inside the egg but liquid, but as a result of being warmed by the mother bird, the beak, eyes and feathers are formed. Eventually, the baby bird breaks through the shell and hatches, and is soon flying into the sky like its mother. In this analogy, the substance within the egg represents the Buddha nature of living beings, while the mother bird represents the Buddha who leads others to enlightenment. The chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is at once the 'voice of faith' of ordinary people and a function of the life-state of Buddhahood.

The most important admonition that the Daishonin makes with regard to attaining enlightenment through chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is that we must not view the Law as something outside ourselves. If we think the Law exists externally, then we are reverting to the kind of divide between Buddhas and ordinary people found in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings.

Perceiving that one's own life is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo

The daimoku of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo has immeasurable beneficial power. Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, described the infinite power of the Mystic Law as follows: 'It is like lying sprawled on your back in a wide-open space looking up at the sky. All that you wish for immediately appears. No

matter how much you may give away, there is always more. It is never exhausted. Try and see if you can attain this state of life.'

Indeed, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo can be likened to a 'wish-granting jewel'. How can we develop the boundless state of life that enables us to bring forth the necessary strength when it's needed? President Toda often used to say, 'If you really want to achieve such a state of life, you have to fight with every ounce of your being for the Lotus Sutra, for kosen-rufu!'

It is the spirit to strive forever together with the Buddhas of the three existences and with Brahma and Shakra – wherever one might find oneself in the universe – to actualise a world of happiness and peace dedicated to value-creation, by helping people overcome misery and misfortune and the sufferings of birth, ageing, sickness and death. Such was the vast and untrammelled spirit of my mentor.

Throughout everything, Mr Toda steadfastly continued to seek the Law that exists nowhere but within our own lives. And he stressed the importance of living true to oneself. His starting point was his profound realisation in prison that the Buddha is life itself and his awakening to his identity as a Bodhisattva of the Earth.

He also often spoke of the spirit of faith we need in order to perceive the Mystic Law within us, saying, 'You have to be resolved that Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is your own life!' or 'Propagating the Mystic Law in the Latter Day means firmly believing that your life is nothing apart from Nam-myoho-enge-kyo!' This is the spirit that the Daishonin teaches when he says, 'When you chant *myoho* and recite *rengo*, you must summon up deep faith that Myoho-enge-kyo is your life itself.' (WND-1, p. 3) •

‘Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land’ and kosen-rufu

Study material part 5

From the SGI Study Department series, ‘The Basics of Nichiren Buddhism for the New Era of Worldwide Kosen-rufu’, extracts from *SGI Newsletter* No. 9379

Nichiren Buddhism is a teaching that enables people to transform their life-condition and develop a state of absolute happiness in the course of this lifetime. In addition, through such a profound inner transformation in each individual, it aims to achieve peace for society as a whole.

Nichiren Daishonin sets forth the principle for realising peace in his treatise ‘On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land’.

‘Establishing the correct teaching’ means promoting faith in and acceptance of the correct teaching of Buddhism as the foundation for people’s lives and making the Buddhist teaching of respect for the dignity of life the fundamental motivating principle of society. ‘For the peace of the land’ means realising peace and prosperity in society as well as safety and security for all individuals in their daily lives.

In addition to indicating the nation as a political institution centring on the ruling authorities, the ‘land’ in ‘On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land’ refers, on a deeper level, to the basis of people’s daily lives and sustenance. In that sense, it refers not only to the social structure formed by human beings, but also the land itself – the natural environment.

Nichiren Daishonin’s belief that the people are the central presence in the land may perhaps also be discerned in his frequent usage, in the original manuscript of ‘On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land’, of the Chinese character for ‘land’ (also,



A discussion meeting

HIDEO KATO

'country' or 'nation') written with the element for 'people' inside a rectangular enclosure, rather than the characters using the element for 'king', or that suggesting a military domain, inside a rectangular enclosure, which were more commonly used.

The Daishonin also wrote, 'A king sees his people as his parents' ('Offerings in the Snow', WND-2, p. 809), asserting that those in power should make the people their foundation. He further warned that rulers who 'fail to heed or understand the afflictions of the populace' will fall into the evil paths (cf. 'On the Protection of the Nation', WND-2, p. 92).

While 'On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land' was written to realise peace in Japan at that time, its underlying spirit is to achieve peace and security for the people and, further, to actualise peace for the entire world and happiness for all humanity into the distant future.

The Daishonin wrote this treatise and remonstrated with the ruling authorities out of his wish to put an end to the sufferings of the people of his day. He was showing, through his own example, that practitioners of Buddhism must not content themselves with a Buddhist practice that consists solely of praying for their own enlightenment. Rather, basing

themselves on the principles and spirit of Buddhism, they must actively engage in seeking solutions to the problems and issues facing society.

In 'On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land', Nichiren Daishonin wrote, 'If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquillity throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?' (WND-1, p. 24).

The self-centred attitude exemplified by averting one's gaze from society's problems and withdrawing into a realm of religious faith alone is sternly repudiated in Mahayana Buddhism.

The Soka Gakkai today is engaged in efforts to resolve global issues in the areas of peace, culture, education and human rights, based on the principles and ideals of Nichiren Buddhism. These efforts, too, directly accord with the principle and spirit of 'establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land' articulated by the Daishonin.

Kosen-rufu

The aim of Buddhism is to share and spread the correct teaching that embodies the Buddha's enlightenment, to guide all people towards attaining the life-state of Buddhahood and to realise peace and prosperity for all humanity.

SGI in society

Discussion meetings and *shakubuku* are key activities that SGI members carry out based on 'establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land'.

For that reason, Shakyamuni Buddha states in the Lotus Sutra, 'After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it [this teaching] abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa [the entire world] and never allow it to be cut off, nor must you allow [negative forces such as] evil devils, the devils' people, heavenly beings, dragons, *yakshas*, *kumbhanda* demons, or others to seize the advantage!' ('Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King', chap. 23, LSOC, p. 330).

This passage states that in the 'last five-hundred-year period' – meaning this present period of the Latter Day of the Law – the Mystic Law should be 'spread abroad widely' throughout the entire world. ('Spread abroad widely' here is a translation of the Chinese characters pronounced 'kosen-rufu' in Japanese.)

In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha also entrusts the mission of widespread propagation, or kosen-rufu, in the Latter Day of the Law to the Bodhisattvas of the

SGI in society

Exhibitions to raise awareness around human rights, nuclear abolition and sustainable development are also activities in society based on 'establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land' and aim to make the Buddhist teaching of respect for the dignity of life the fundamental motivating principle of life.



An SGI-exhibition

ON THE NOW

Earth who, as his disciples from the unimaginably remote past, are the bodhisattvas who have thoroughly forged themselves.

During the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, countless multitudes of such bodhisattvas emerge from the earth. Led by Bodhisattva Superior Practices, they vow to propagate the Mystic Law, the essence of the Lotus Sutra, after Shakyamuni's passing.

Shakyamuni in turn predicts that after his death these Bodhisattvas of the Earth will appear in this suffering-filled world and, like the sun and the moon, illuminate the darkness of people's lives and lead them to enlightenment.

Kosen-rufu is the fundamental spirit of Nichiren Daishonin

In exact accord with the aforementioned passage of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin strove to spread the great Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in the evil age of the Latter Day, while enduring numerous life-threatening persecutions. The Daishonin refers to the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law, or kosen-rufu, as follows:

The 'great vow' refers to the propagation of the Lotus Sutra [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo]. (OTT, p. 82)

If Nichiren's compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity, for it has the beneficial power to open the blind eyes of every living being in the country of Japan, and it blocks off the road that leads to the hell of incessant suffering. ('On Repaying Debts of Gratitude', WND-1, p. 736)

When I, Nichiren, first took faith in the Lotus Sutra, I was like a single drop of water or a single particle of dust in all the country of Japan. But later, when two people, three people, ten people, and eventually a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, and a million people come to recite the Lotus Sutra [chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] and transmit it to others, then they will form a Mount Sumeru of perfect enlightenment, an ocean of great nirvana. Seek no other path by which to attain Buddhahood! ('The Selection of the Time', WND-1, p. 580)

From these passages we can clearly see that achieving kosen-rufu, the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law, is the fundamental spirit of Nichiren Daishonin.

The Daishonin also repeatedly urged his followers to dedicate their lives to kosen-rufu, attain

Buddhahood, and actualise the principle of 'establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land'.

The Soka Gakkai – making kosen-rufu a reality

The Soka Gakkai is a harmonious gathering of Buddhist practitioners who have inherited and carry on the Daishonin's spirit, spreading the Mystic Law just as he taught in his writings.

The Daishonin wrote, 'If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth.' ('The True Aspect of All Phenomena', WND-1, p. 385) The Soka Gakkai, which has spread the Mystic Law in the same spirit as the Daishonin, is the organisation of Bodhisattvas of the Earth fulfilling the mission of kosen-rufu.

Until the appearance of the Soka Gakkai seven hundred years after the Daishonin's death, no one had been able to widely spread the Mystic Law. It is the Soka Gakkai that has made the predictions of Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin a reality.

This is proof that the Soka Gakkai is the organisation that has emerged to carry out the mission of kosen-rufu, acting in accord with the Buddha's intent.

The Soka Gakkai is making kosen-rufu a reality, spreading the Mystic Law throughout the entire world, just as the Lotus Sutra teaches. •

The history of the Soka Gakkai

Study material part 6

From the SGI Study Department series, ‘The Basics of Nichiren Buddhism for the New Era of Worldwide Kosen-rufu’, extracts from SGI Newsletter No. 9822, and all of SGI Newsletter Nos. 9872 and 9905

In this chapter, we will examine the history of the Soka Gakkai by learning about the accomplishments of its three founding presidents, who dedicated their lives to kosen-rufu, and the spirit of mentor and disciple they shared.

The Lotus Sutra is the scripture that makes clear Shakyamuni Buddha’s intent, the real purpose of his teachings. The intent of the Buddha is that all people bring forth the wisdom of Buddhahood that has always been inherent within them and establish unshakeable happiness for themselves and for others, creating the basis for peace throughout the world.

The Lotus Sutra describes those who strive to actualise this intent of the Buddha as bodhisattvas of the true Mahayana teaching. They do so by struggling against all kinds of obstacles to achieve a profound transformation in their own lives and the lives of others. Such bodhisattvas, the sutra teaches, appear in the age called the Latter Day of the Law, after the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha. They work to spread the Lotus Sutra throughout the entire world and thereby realise the Buddha’s purpose, a process we call kosen-rufu, the widespread propagation of the sutra’s teaching. The bodhisattvas who shoulder this mission are called the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

The leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who appear in the Lotus Sutra is named Bodhisattva Superior Practices. Nichiren Daishonin awakened to his mission to fulfil the role of Superior Practices in the Latter Day, taking as his own the great desire and vow for kosen-rufu described in the sutra – the Buddha’s will and mandate. He stood up to actualise that will and established the fundamental teaching and practice for freeing all people and all of society from suffering throughout the Latter Day. For this reason, the Daishonin is known as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

publishing project, and collaborated in every aspect of its production, including organising and editing Makiguchi Sensei's notes into a manuscript and dividing the content into chapters.

The publisher's imprint listed Tsunesaburo Makiguchi as the author, Josei Toda as the publisher and printer, and the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai ('Value-Creating Education Society', the predecessor of the Soka Gakkai) as the publishing house. This was the first time the name Soka Kyoiku Gakkai had appeared in public, and for this reason the day of the work's publication, 18 November, is celebrated as the day of the Soka Gakkai's founding. [Editor's Note: After the society was virtually destroyed by the militarist government, as will be explained below, Toda restored and renamed it the Soka Gakkai.]

Soka means 'creation of value'. The purpose of education and the purpose of life are the pursuit of happiness, and the name Soka expresses Makiguchi Sensei's thinking that the creation of value is integral to building happiness.

The conception of the word Soka itself came about in the course of a discussion between the two innovative educators. We could say that the birth of the Soka Gakkai, then, was itself a crystallisation of the united spirit of mentor and disciple...

Challenging Japan's militarism

The militarist government, in its reckless rush to expand its war footing with State Shinto³ as its spiritual pillar, endeavoured to coerce uniformity of thought among Japan's populace. It placed Soka Kyoiku Gakkai discussion meetings and other activities under surveillance by the Special Higher Police, which was

responsible for investigating so-called thought crimes.

At the time, the government was pressuring citizens to visit and offer prayers at Shinto shrines and to enshrine and worship talismans to the Sun Goddess, the mythical progenitor of the imperial lineage. In June 1943, the priests of Nichiren Shoshu, in fear of government repression, delivered to the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai the following request: 'Why don't you accept the Shinto talisman?' The request was made to Makiguchi Sensei in the presence of the high priest.



Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda at the time when the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai was founded

The posture of Nichiren Shoshu in accepting the government's demand to enshrine the talisman to the Sun Goddess constituted complicity in slander of the Law (slander of the correct Buddhist teaching). It was a violation of the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and his successor Nikko Shonin, from whom Nichiren Shoshu claimed lineage. Makiguchi Sensei adamantly refused to accept the Shinto talisman, and the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai thus persisted in upholding the Daishonin's teaching and example of strictly admonishing slander of the Law.

On 6 July, Makiguchi Sensei, while visiting Shimoda in Izu, Shizuoka Prefecture, and on the same day Toda Sensei, in Tokyo, were taken into custody by detectives of the Special Higher Police. Ultimately, 21 leaders of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai were arrested on suspicion of committing lese-majesty (the crime of violating the dignity of the Emperor) and violating the Peace Preservation Law.⁴

All those arrested were subjected to coercive interrogation, and most of them abandoned their faith. In the end, only Makiguchi Sensei and his trusted disciple Toda Sensei resisted, persisting in their faith. Makiguchi Sensei even explained the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism to the prosecutors and judges who questioned him. Both refused to buckle under the pressure of authority and persevered in upholding the right and just principles of Buddhism.

On 18 November 1944, at the age of 73, Makiguchi Sensei passed away at the Tokyo Detention Centre due to malnutrition and the weakness of age. Coincidentally, the day of his death was the anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding.

Throughout his life, he had lived and practised as the Daishonin taught in his writings, never

³ State Shinto: A national religion established and promoted by the government after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 under the emperor system of Japan. The militarist government used it as a means to put the people under its thought control. Worship of the Sun Goddess was its tenet.

⁴ Peace Preservation Law: Enacted in 1925 and completely revised in 1941, this law was used to suppress thought in the name of protecting the Japanese 'national polity' and preserving peace. The law provided for harsh punishment of persons found to be in violation, including the death penalty.

hesitant to risk his life to do so. He lived as a noble pioneer who revived in modern times the Daishonin's spirit of propagating the Mystic Law to lead the people from suffering to happiness.

Toda Sensei's awakening in prison



An isolated cell in Tokyo prison

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While in prison, Toda Sensei, in addition to exerting himself in chanting daimoku, from early 1944 began to read the Lotus Sutra and ponder it deeply. In the process, he achieved an awakening – a realisation that ‘the Buddha is life itself’.

As he continued to chant and engage in profound contemplation, Toda Sensei also became aware that he himself was a Bodhisattva of the Earth who had been present at the Ceremony in the Air described in the Lotus Sutra and who was entrusted with the widespread propagation of the sutra's teaching in the age after Shakyamuni Buddha. Thus, in November 1944, he awakened to the deep conviction that ‘I, Toda, am a Bodhisattva of the Earth’, whose mission it was to accomplish kosen-rufu.

Through the profound awakening he experienced in prison, Toda Sensei developed an immovable

conviction in the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism, and resolved that it was his personal mission to ensure their propagation worldwide. The awakening that Toda Sensei had experienced while in prison became the primary inspiration behind the revival of Buddhism in the modern age and the powerful progress of the Soka Gakkai as a religious group dedicated to the accomplishment of kosen-rufu.

At a memorial service for Makiguchi Sensei after the war, Toda Sensei addressed his departed mentor:

In your vast and boundless compassion, you let me accompany you even to prison. As a result, I could read with my entire being the passage from the Lotus Sutra: ‘Those persons who had heard the Law dwelled here and there in various buddha lands, constantly reborn in company with their teachers’ (LSOC, p. 178). The benefit of this was coming to know my former existence as a Bodhisattva of the Earth and to absorb with my very life even a small degree of the sutra's meaning. Could there be any greater happiness than this?⁵

This passage from ‘The Parable of the Phantom City’ (7th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra teaches that the bond between mentor and disciple is such that they will always be born together in a Buddha land, in a place where they will strive together to save people from suffering.

While most of those persecuted by the authorities discarded their faith, Toda Sensei's words express his sincere appreciation and resolve to repay his debt of gratitude to his mentor under any circumstances. In them, we catch a glimpse of the strength of this bond of mentor and disciple.

The time of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda



Josei Toda in the Soka Gakkai headquarters, April 1956

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On 3 July 1945, Josei Toda emerged from prison, having endured two years of life in confinement, and stood up alone to carry on the will of his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, for the accomplishment of kosen-rufu. As general director of the Soka Gakkai, he began immediately to undertake the reconstruction of the organisation, which was in a state of ruin.

The people of Japan at the time were in the pit of despair, reeling from the destruction brought on by the war and the turmoil of its aftermath. State Shinto, which had been forced upon the populace, was now being repudiated, along with other beliefs and values espoused by the militarist government. Yet no new source of hope was to be found.

⁵ Translated from Japanese. Josei Toda, ‘Makiguchi Sensei Sankaiki ni’ (On President Makiguchi's Third Memorial) in *Toda Josei Zenshu* (The Collected Works of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbun-sha, 1983), vol. 3, p. 386.

Toda Sensei was convinced that Nichiren Buddhism alone constituted a spiritual principle powerful enough to lead the people away from suffering and confusion, and he stood up with a great wish and vow to spread its teachings widely. The organisation's goal would be not only to carry out educational reform, but to accomplish *kosen-rufu*, that is, peace throughout the world and happiness for all people. In line with that purpose, he amended its name from Soka Kyoiku Gakkai ('Value-Creating Education Society') to Soka Gakkai ('Value-Creating Society'), and began again to hold discussion meetings and travel to outlying regions to offer guidance in faith.

Encounter between mentor and disciple – Toda Sensei and Ikeda Sensei meet

In 1947, Toda Sensei met young Daisaku Ikeda, who would later become the third president of the Soka Gakkai (and then president of the Soka Gakkai International).

Ikeda was born in the district of Omori, in Tokyo's Ota ward, on 2 January 1928.

He grew up at a time when Japan was plunging into war: He was nine years old at the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937),⁶ and thirteen at the outbreak of the war with the United States in the Pacific theatre of the Second World War (1941). As the war intensified, his four older brothers, all in the prime of their lives, were drafted into the military and sent into battle. To help support his family, Ikeda worked at a munitions factory. Suffering from tuberculosis, however, he spent his early youth in physical distress, thinking deeply about the questions of life and death.

When his eldest brother, Kiichi, had returned home temporarily from the battlefield, he described how much misery the war was causing the people of Asia. In addition, his family had been forced from their home, which burned in the air raids. Through these accounts and experiences, he had become bitterly aware of war's injustice and tragic cruelty.

After the war, the family learned that the eldest brother, who had been sent back to the battlefield, had been killed in combat in Burma (today Myanmar). Witnessing his mother's deep sadness on learning

Nichiren Daishonin's writing 'On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land'. When Toda had finished lecturing, Ikeda asked him a series of questions, including 'What is the correct way to live?', 'What is a true patriot?', 'What is the meaning of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*?' and 'What do you think about the Emperor?'

Toda's answers were clear and well-reasoned, and infused with the deep conviction he had gained through his struggles against Japan's militarist government and during two years of unjust imprisonment. As he listened, the



Josei Toda and Daisaku Ikeda, March 1958

of her son's death, young Ikeda's sense that war was evil, a crime against humanity, strengthened and deepened. Searching for clear answers to the question of how to live, he delved into works of literature and philosophy.

It was in the midst of this quest that, on 14 August 1947, he attended his first Soka Gakkai discussion meeting. There he encountered the man who would become his lifelong mentor, Josei Toda.

At the meeting that evening, Toda Sensei was delivering a lecture on

young Daisaku Ikeda was struck with the sense that he could trust everything this man had said.

Ten days later, on 24 August, Ikeda began his practice of Nichiren Buddhism. At the time, he was 19 years old, and Toda Sensei, 47.

In April the following year, he enrolled in night classes at Taisei Gakuin (later, Tokyo Fuji University).

⁶ The war that began in 1937 as a Japanese invasion of China and ended with the Second World War defeat of Japan in 1945.

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In September, he began to attend Toda's lecture series on the Lotus Sutra. Taking Toda Sensei as his mentor, he deepened his study and understanding of Buddhism and vowed to live his life for the sake of kosen-rufu.

And in January 1949, he started to work at Toda's publishing company as the editor of a magazine for boys.

The shared struggle of mentor and disciple to rebuild the Soka Gakkai

In July 1949, the Soka Gakkai launched publication of its monthly magazine, the *Daibyakurenge* ('Great White Lotus'). The inaugural issue carried an essay Toda Sensei had written, entitled 'The Philosophy of Life'. Later, Toda's businesses, which had been struggling amid the effects of Japan's chaotic post-war economy, faced dire financial setbacks, and on 24 August 1950, he announced his intention to step down from his position as Soka Gakkai general director.

On that occasion, young Ikeda asked him, 'Who will be my mentor from here on?' to which Toda Sensei replied, 'Though I've caused you nothing but trouble, I am your mentor,' affirming the unbreakable bond of mentor and disciple.

As Toda's disciple, Ikeda exerted himself fully to settle Toda's business affairs, solving the financial crisis. He resolved deeply in his heart to make it possible for Toda Sensei to take full leadership as president of the Soka Gakkai.

Ikeda had decided to stop attending night school so that he could fully support his mentor. But in response, Toda Sensei told him that he would personally instruct him and provide him with a broad education surpassing any he could obtain from a university. This private instruction, known as 'Toda University', continued for nearly a decade, until the year before Toda's death.

Amid this intensive struggle, Toda Sensei discussed with his most trusted disciple his vision for the future. This included the establishment of the organisation's newspaper, *Seikyo Shimbun*, to wage a battle of the written word for the sake of kosen-rufu, and the founding of Soka University. Both of these institutions came into being as a result of such dialogues between mentor and disciple.

Inauguration of the second president

Having overcome his business troubles, Toda Sensei agreed, in response to requests from many members, to take on the position of Soka Gakkai president. His inauguration as the organisation's second president took place on 3 May 1951, and on that occasion he declared his vow to achieve a membership of 750,000 households.⁷ There were only about 3,000 members at the time, and no one could believe it was possible to achieve the goal Toda had stated.

Before his inauguration as president, Toda Sensei implemented a restructuring of the Soka Gakkai organisation. He instituted a chapter-based

system as a foundation for future development and refreshed the organisation's preparedness to take on the challenge of kosen-rufu.

Prior to his becoming president, the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper commenced publication on 20 April. Its inaugural issue carried the first instalment of Toda Sensei's serialised novel *Human Revolution*, which he authored under the pen name Myo Goku.⁸

'Human revolution' refers to the process by which, through the practice of Nichiren Buddhism, each individual achieves a transformation of their state of life, eventually leading to a transformation in the destiny of all humankind. Upholding the principle of human revolution based on his philosophy of life, President Toda endeavoured to spread Nichiren Buddhism as a teaching accessible and applicable to all people today.

Also, immediately after his inauguration, President Toda established in succession the women's division, the young men's division and the young women's division.

At the same time, in the beginning of 1952, on Toda Sensei's instruction, Ikeda became chapter advisor to the Soka Gakkai's Kamata Chapter in Tokyo, and led an effort that resulted in 201 new households joining during the month of February. This represented a breakthrough, far surpassing the monthly membership increases achieved by any chapter until then, and became known as the historic February Campaign. It marked a

⁷ In those days the Soka Gakkai's membership was indicated by the number of households.

⁸ The name Myo Goku derives from Toda's prison experience, during which he had awakened (*go*) to the essence of Buddhism, the mystic truth (*myo*) of nonsubstantiality (*ku*).



Daisaku Ikeda encourages members with the calligraphy 'Courageous Struggle', May 1956

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turning point, after which the Soka Gakkai's progress towards achieving its membership goal of 750,000 households accelerated rapidly.

Toda Sensei had been planning to publish a collection of Nichiren Daishonin's writings. He knew this would be indispensable to the correct study and understanding of the Daishonin's teachings and, therefore, progress towards *kosen-rufu*, the widespread propagation of Nichiren Buddhism.

Toda Sensei asked the accomplished Nichiren scholar Nichiko Hori (1867-1957) to take charge of the compilation and editing. In April 1952, marking the 700th observation of the Daishonin's establishment of his teaching, the *Nichiren Daishonin Goshō Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin) was published. From that time on, every Soka Gakkai member used this book to earnestly study Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, and the spirit to base everything on the Daishonin's writings was established throughout the entire Soka Gakkai.

Battle against the devilish tendencies of power

In April 1955, the Soka Gakkai ran its first candidates in local assembly elections. It took this step based on the spirit of 'establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land', which the Daishonin espoused in the course of his struggle for the people's happiness and a peaceful society.

In 1956 in Kansai, Ikeda inspired a remarkable increase in propagation, and in May the Osaka Chapter achieved an unprecedented membership increase of 11,111 households in just one month. In the House of Councillors election held in July that year, a candidate running in the Osaka district, whose campaign Ikeda had led, was elected, defying all predictions to the contrary.

It was an outcome so astonishing that a major daily newspaper in Japan reported it under the headline, 'What was thought impossible has been achieved!'

Three candidates endorsed by the Soka Gakkai had been elected to the House of Councillors, and from

then on the organisation became a focus of attention as a group with growing social influence. At the same time, vested powers and interests began to attempt unjustly to impede the organisation.

In response to these attacks, Ikeda fought resolutely to protect the Soka Gakkai members. In June 1957, when the Yubari Coal Miners Union in the city of Yubari, Hokkaido, acted unjustly to suppress Soka Gakkai members' religious freedom, he went there immediately to address the issue. Declaring that the Soka Gakkai would adamantly oppose these abuses, he strove diligently to achieve a solution. (This became known as the Yubari Coal Miners Union Incident.)

On 3 July, immediately after leaving Yubari, Ikeda was unjustly arrested by the Osaka Prefectural Police (in what became known as the Osaka Incident). In April that year (1957), the Soka Gakkai had run a candidate in a by-election to fill a vacant House of Councillors seat in the Osaka electoral district, and some members involved in the



Josei Toda astride a platform, supported on the shoulders of the youth division members, at Taiseki-ji, the head temple, Kosen-rufu Day, 16 March 1958



Josei Toda delivering his Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons on 8 September 1957

campaign had been charged with violating election laws. Ikeda, as the person responsible for the election campaign, was baselessly accused of orchestrating the illegal activities.

3 July is the same date on which, in 1945, Toda Sensei was released from prison. Years later, Ikeda Sensei referred to this in a *haiku* poem, writing, 'On this day of release and of imprisonment [3 July] are found the bonds of mentor and disciple.'

For 15 days, Ikeda was subjected to harsh interrogation, during which the prosecutor threatened, 'If you don't confess your guilt, we will arrest President Toda.' Toda's health had by that time become very frail, and going to jail would have surely led to his death.

To protect his mentor's life, Ikeda confessed to the charges for the time being, resolved to prove his own innocence later in court. On 17 July, he was released from the Osaka Detention Centre.

For the next four and a half years, Ikeda Sensei waged an ongoing court battle, and finally, on 25 January 1962, he was pronounced not guilty on all charges. The prosecutor affirmed the court's decision, declining the option to appeal.

Entrusting kosen-rufu to successors

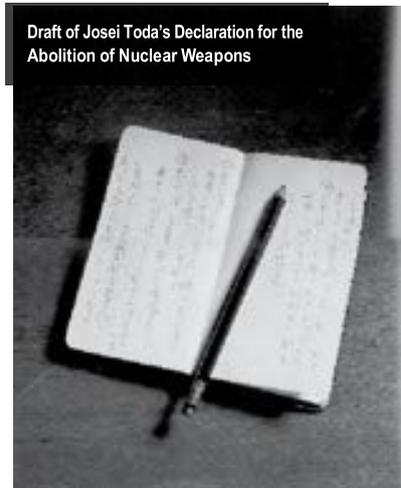
On 8 September 1957, Toda Sensei delivered his 'Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons',⁹ which would become the start and keynote of the Soka Gakkai's peace movement.

In it, based on the Buddhist principle of the sanctity and dignity of life, he identified nuclear weapons as a devilish creation that threatens to usurp humanity's inviolable right to live, calling use of such weapons an act of absolute evil.

In December 1957, the Soka Gakkai reached its membership goal of 750,000 households, which Toda Sensei had vowed to achieve. And in March the following year, it completed and donated the edifice called the Grand Lecture Hall at the Nichiren Shoshu head temple, Taiseki-ji. There, on 16 March, six thousand young people from around Japan, led by Ikeda, gathered for a ceremony in which Toda Sensei entrusted them with every aspect of kosen-rufu. On that occasion, President Toda declared, 'The Soka Gakkai is the king of the religious world!'

This day, 16 March, on which these young successors were

Draft of Josei Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons



entrusted with the great wish and vow for kosen-rufu, came to be called 'Kosen-rufu Day' in the Soka Gakkai and the SGI.

On 2 April 1958, Toda Sensei passed away, having completed all he had set out to accomplish. He was 58. Basing himself on the awakening he achieved while in prison, he had rebuilt the Soka Gakkai and constructed an immovable foundation for the future of kosen-rufu.

⁹ 'Nuclear Weapons' in the title can more literally be translated as 'Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs', for this was the common term for nuclear weapons in Japan at that time.

The time of Daisaku Ikeda, third Soka Gakkai president and SGI president

After Josei Toda's death, Daisaku Ikeda, in the newly established position of general administrator (since June 1958), took full responsibility for the management and leadership of the Soka Gakkai, and on 3 May 1960, was inaugurated as the organisation's third president.

In his speech on that occasion, he said, 'Though I am young, from this day I will take leadership as a representative of President Toda's disciples and advance with you another step towards the substantive realisation of kosen-rufu.'¹⁰ With this, his first 'lion's roar' as president – made on the same date that Toda Sensei had been inaugurated as president in 1951 – a new period of great development for the Soka Gakkai began.

On 2 October that year, President Ikeda left Japan for North and South America, the first step in a journey to spread the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism around the world. In January 1961, he visited Hong Kong, India and other destinations in Asia, and that October he travelled to Europe, initiating a surge of progress towards worldwide kosen-rufu.

In this way, Ikeda Sensei opened a substantive path towards achieving the 'westward transmission of Buddhism' and the spread of the Mystic Law throughout the entire world, which Nichiren Daishonin had predicted.

In 1965, under the pen name Ho Goku,¹¹ he began writing the novel *The Human Revolution*, which would be serialised in the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper and would eventually



Daisaku Ikeda departing for North and South America from Tokyo, October 1960

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extend to 12 volumes. His purpose in doing so was to correctly transmit the history and spirit of the Soka Gakkai to future generations.

In the preface to the novel, he conveys its main theme: '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.'¹²

The Human Revolution portrays the efforts and struggles of the three founding presidents of the Soka Gakkai as they strove to build a foundation for the happiness and peace of humankind.

Ikeda Sensei has continued to chronicle the Soka Gakkai's history in *The New Human Revolution*, a 30-volume novel also serialised in the *Seikyo Shimbun*.

A movement for peace, culture and education

The Soka Gakkai is an organisation that fosters young people who will contribute positively to society.

Toda Sensei said that when kosen-rufu advances, numerous capable individuals will emerge, playing important roles in various fields of society. He further expected that the Soka Gakkai would one day become

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an important mainstay for the flourishing of peace and culture for all humankind. To that end, he insisted that it must become an outstanding educational movement, one that can raise people capable of fulfilling their mission.

In order to actualise that vision, the Soka Gakkai under the leadership of Ikeda Sensei has promoted a growing movement for peace, culture and education grounded in Buddhist principles, thereby making great contributions to society.

In response to his proposals, the Soka Gakkai has created a number of specialised groups or divisions, including those for educators,

¹⁰ Daisaku Ikeda, *The Human Revolution* (Santa Monica, CA: World Tribune Press, 2004), Vol. 2, p. 1971.

¹¹ In *The New Human Revolution*, Ikeda reflects on his choice of Ho Goku as pen name as follows: 'Mr Toda used the pen name Myo Goku; I will use Ho Goku. Combining the first part of each name creates *myoho*, or Mystic Law. *Goku* means to awaken to the truth of non-substantiality. The *myo* of *myoho* refers to the world of Buddhahood, and *ho* refers to the other nine worlds. *Myo* is also awakening or enlightenment, while *ho* is fundamental darkness or delusion. Based on this principle we can say that *myo* corresponds to mentor and *ho* to disciple.' (Vol. 9, p. 13)

¹² Daisaku Ikeda, *The Human Revolution*, Vol. 1, p. viii.

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scientists and academics, artists, writers and authors, and members with international experience and interests, as well as physicians and medical professionals. As the organisation has developed a wider range of activities, it has established groups for business professionals, those involved in agriculture and fishing, residents of remote islands, and those involved in community activities and support. It has also founded institutions dedicated to scholarship and the arts such as the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, the Min-On Concert Association and the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum.

To establish a political movement devoted to serving ordinary people and society in Japan, an independent political party known as Komeito was established in 1964 with the support of Soka Gakkai members.

Ikeda Sensei also established a system of educational institutions to actualise Mr Makiguchi and Mr Toda’s philosophy of value-creating pedagogy, or Soka Education. It includes kindergartens, elementary, junior and senior high schools, a junior college, universities and graduate schools. Among these are Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School

(opened in 1968) in Kodaira, Tokyo, Soka University (1971) in Hachioji, Tokyo and Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High School (1973, as Soka Girls’ Junior and Senior High School) in Katano, Osaka. In 2001, Soka University of America opened in Orange County, California.

At the same time, Ikeda Sensei was broadening his efforts to conduct dialogues focused on peace, culture and education on a global scale.



On 8 September 1968, he announced a proposal for the normalisation of relations between Japan and China.¹³ And beginning in May 1972, he engaged in dialogues with the renowned British historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975). Their conversations spanned 40 hours over a two-year period. This marked the start of a series of dialogues and exchanges with influential leaders and thinkers.

In 1974 and 1975, at the height of the Cold War between the East and West and with China and the Soviet Union also in conflict, President Ikeda initiated successive visits to China, the Soviet Union and the United States, engaging in talks with their top leaders in order to open paths to peace and friendship.

On 26 January 1975, Soka Gakkai members representing 51 countries and territories gathered on the Pacific island of Guam for the establishment of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), appointing Ikeda Sensei as its president.

Starting from around 1977, as the Soka Gakkai was making great strides towards worldwide kosen-rufu, priests at branch temples of Nichiren Shoshu began repeatedly making unfounded accusations against the organisation. This came to be known as the first priesthood issue. Behind this was an alliance formed of priests and former leaders who had betrayed the Soka Gakkai. They plotted together to sever the bond of mentor and disciple – that is, between Ikeda Sensei, the leader of the movement for kosen-rufu, and the members – with the goal of controlling the Soka Gakkai for their own aims.

Ikeda Sensei strove to find a solution to the problem in order to protect the members from these attacks and in hopes of restoring harmony between the priesthood and laity. He found the only feasible way to do so was for him to step down as Soka Gakkai president. In April 1979, Ikeda Sensei did so, taking the title ‘honorary president’.

¹³ At the time, there were no official diplomatic relations between the People’s Republic of China and Japan, so technically the two countries were still in a state of war, and anti-China and anti-communist sentiment was widespread in Japan. Ikeda’s call for normalisation of relations was based on his belief that peace with China was fundamental to the stability of the Asian region and that the reintegration of China into the international community was essential to world peace. His proposal helped establish the groundwork for negotiations leading to the normalisation of diplomatic relations in 1972 and a Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978.



SGI President Ikeda encouraging members at the opening ceremony of Taplow Court Grand Culture Centre, May 1989

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A succession of awards and honours

Beginning in 1983, Ikeda Sensei has issued a 'Peace Proposal' every year on 26 January, in commemoration of SGI Day, the anniversary of the SGI's establishment. These proposals are valued highly by many around the world.

He has also delivered more than 30 lectures at universities and academic institutions around the globe, while the number of dialogues he has conducted with leading world thinkers, heads of state, cultural figures and university deans and presidents exceeds 1,600. More than 70 of these dialogues have been published in book form. Among them, the dialogue with Professor Toynbee has been issued in some

30 languages, gaining wide praise as a 'guidepost for global culture' and 'a textbook for humanity'.

These dialogues, which connect different cultures and faiths, have helped deepen exchanges among peoples and build mutual understanding and solid bonds among those dedicated to good.

In 1995, the SGI Charter was adopted, making clear the principles of humanism the SGI stands for, and in 1996, the Toda Peace Institute (formerly Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research) was founded, focusing on the legacy of the teachings and principles of Josei Toda.

In response to the SGI's efforts for world peace and activities for culture and education, public parks and streets bearing the names of Presidents Makiguchi, Toda and

Ikeda have appeared in localities throughout the world. Ikeda Sensei has continued to have honours and awards conferred upon him by nations, municipalities and educational institutions. These include national medals, honorary doctorates and professorships and honorary citizenships from numerous cities and counties.

The new era of worldwide kosen-rufu

In the midst of this global progress, in 1991 the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood took the extreme measure of excommunicating the millions of members of the Soka Gakkai throughout the world. (This and related events are known as the second priesthood issue.) The Soka Gakkai strictly admonished this act perpetrated by a corrupt

priesthood, which amounted to a grave slander of Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings and betrayal of his intent.

Having triumphed over the schemes of the priesthood, the Soka Gakkai has ushered in a new era in the history of worldwide kosen-rufu. Its members are practising Nichiren Buddhism in 192 countries and territories, where they have garnered widespread trust and praise for their steady efforts to contribute to society based on the spirit of Buddhist humanism.

In November 2013, a new edifice, the Hall of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu, was completed in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, as part of the Soka Gakkai Headquarters complex.

In his dedication on the monument displayed in the entrance lobby of the Hall of the Great Vow, Ikeda Sensei wrote, ‘Kosen-rufu is the path to attaining



The Hall of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu, Tokyo, Japan

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universal peace and prosperity. It is our great vow from time without beginning for the enlightenment of all people.’

Members from across Japan and around the world gather at the Hall of the Great Vow to do gongyo and chant daimoku. United in their vow to achieve kosen-rufu, they pray to the Soka Gakkai Kosen-rufu Gohonzon, which bears

the inscription ‘For the Fulfilment of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu through the Compassionate Propagation of the Great Law’, and start anew with fresh determination.

Through the efforts of the Soka Gakkai, Nichiren Buddhism now shines as a great source of hope throughout the world, like a sun illuminating all humankind. •

Commemorative dates of the Soka Gakkai

Date	Events
26 January	1975. The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is founded in Guam. Daisaku Ikeda is appointed its president.
16 March	1958. Josei Toda entrusts the fulfilment of the great vow to achieve kosen-rufu to his successors, the youth, and to Ikeda in particular.
3 May	1951. Toda is inaugurated as second president. 1960. Ikeda is inaugurated as third president.
3 July	1945. Toda is released from prison after enduring two years in confinement. He embarks on the reconstruction of the Soka Gakkai. 1957. Ikeda is unjustly arrested by the Osaka Prefectural Police (known as the Osaka Incident).
2 October	1960. Ikeda departs Japan for North and South America, taking the first step towards worldwide kosen-rufu.
18 November	1930. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s work <i>Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei</i> (The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy) is published, an event regarded as the Soka Gakkai’s founding.

The Soka Gakkai – Nichiren Shoshu split

Study material part 7

From the SGI International Office of Public Information website, www.sokaissues.info/home/nichiren-shoshu-split.html

In 1991, Nikken Abe, the high priest of the Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist sect, excommunicated Soka Gakkai, its largest affiliated lay organisation. Tensions between Soka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood had in fact existed almost from the inception of the lay organisation in 1930.

Different worlds

In the view of religious sociology scholars, the split was ultimately inevitable. As Bryan Wilson and Karel Dobbelaere state in their 1994 book, *A Time to Chant*, 'Soka Gakkai is a mass movement, outgoing, lay in spirit, and dedicated to making Nichiren's teachings effective and practical in the everyday modern world. The Nichiren priesthood is essentially locked into an ancient ritualistic and quasi-monastic system, concerned to preserve its authority and jealous of its monopoly of certain sacred teachings, places and objects.' They comment that the priesthood has distrusted the very modernity of Soka Gakkai, '...a movement of revitalisation, adapted to modern conditions, pursuing from the outset a policy of expansive growth, and quickly acquiring an international clientele and orientation.'¹

Soka Gakkai has always stressed the egalitarian nature of Nichiren's teachings: that Nichiren Buddhism enables every individual, whether priest or lay believer, to develop his or her own, innate Buddha nature. It has also stressed social engagement based on the bodhisattva ideal of taking action for the happiness of others towards the creation of a peaceful global society. Nichiren Shoshu, on the other hand, has been more concerned with preserving traditional rituals, with a focus on the priests as intermediaries who are seen to be on a higher spiritual

¹ Bryan Wilson [fellow emeritus of Oxford University] and Karel Dobbelaere [Sociology and Religion Department chair of the Catholic University of Leuven], *A Time to Chant: The Soka Gakkai Buddhists in Britain* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1994), 233, 243.



The main head temple building (Sho-Hondo) opened in 1972, built with donations from some 8 million people worldwide

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level than lay believers. In this sense it could be said to have lost sight of the original purpose and social mission of Buddhism.

The roots of the conflict

Differences came to the fore during the Second World War when Nichiren Shoshu attempted to force the lay organisation to enshrine the talismans sanctioned by the State Shinto system which was used by the militarist government as a means of sanctifying Japan's war effort. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first president of Soka Gakkai, and his associate Josei Toda, who later became the second president, refused and, as a result, they were banned by Nichiren Shoshu from visiting the head temple. Makiguchi and Toda were later imprisoned by the government for their dissenting views, and Makiguchi died in prison. Wilson and Dobbelaere comment on this incident, writing, 'Gakkai members... could uphold their own first two presidents as more ardent than the priests in protecting the true faith.'²

Working together

In the devastation of post-war Japan, Soka Gakkai

enthusiastically propagated Nichiren Buddhism and rapidly increased its membership. Despite having been disappointed with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood's compromise with the wartime militarist government, Soka Gakkai sought to develop better relations with the priesthood for the sake of the progress of Nichiren Buddhism and continued to support them – in the hope that they would help promote the common goal of establishing peace and happiness for the people. Soka Gakkai's support for the priesthood included restoration of major buildings at Nichiren Shoshu's head temple premises, construction of a new main head temple building and donation of land and a total of 356 branch temples.

Authoritarian attitude

Unfortunately, nevertheless, the priesthood, while benefitting enormously from the dramatic progress of Nichiren Buddhism pioneered by Soka Gakkai, demonstrated numerous signs of corruption and authoritarianism. When Soka Gakkai members challenged these attitudes and called for reform, the priesthood only became more adamant in

Spiritual independence

The split of the SGI from the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood is sometimes referred to as our 'spiritual independence'.

From at least the time of the first priesthood issue (1977-1979) onwards the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood behaved in an increasingly authoritarian way towards the Soka Gakkai and SGI members, restricting their activities and even subjecting them to persecution. This culminated in the events of the second priesthood issue, with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood excommunicating all SGI members in 1991. After the split, the SGI, under the leadership of SGI President Ikeda, was free to carry out all kinds of activities in society for peace, culture and education, and greatly expanded its membership through 192 countries and territories across the world. In a way, the split enabled the SGI to fully manifest itself as a completely egalitarian lay movement and world religion in which authoritarianism is not tolerated.

Study Department

² Ibid., p. 233.



By 1999, Nichiren Shoshu had demolished the Sho-Hondo and chopped down hundreds of cherry trees donated by members

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enforcing the subordination of Soka Gakkai members.³ The more Soka Gakkai grew, the more the priesthood displayed this attitude.

Excommunication

The clergy's move towards excommunication started in late 1990 when they launched a campaign of criticism against Daisaku Ikeda, president of Soka Gakkai International. The priesthood stated at the time that they saw Ikeda as an unfit leader with heretical views. When Ikeda publicly praised Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy', for example, he was criticised for extolling Christianity.

Japan scholar Daniel Metraux comments that it became 'apparent that the head temple felt that Soka Gakkai had become too powerful...'⁴ Metraux attributes this friction to Soka Gakkai's interpretation of Nichiren Buddhism as expounding the fundamental equality of all people. In this respect, lay believers are apt to regard the role of a priest as being no more or less important than that of the laity.

Demolition

A 1991 letter addressed to Soka Gakkai by Nichiren Shoshu High

Priest Nikken Abe asserted that statements by Soka Gakkai regarding the equality of priests and laity constituted 'an act violating the doctrine'.⁵

In 1991, Nichiren Shoshu, refusing requests from Soka Gakkai for dialogue, excommunicated the lay organisation. The priests went so far as to cut down hundreds of cherry trees on the grounds of the head temple that were a gift from the organisation. They also destroyed the main head temple building itself, a structure internationally praised for its architecture that had been funded almost entirely by the donations of Soka Gakkai members.

Liberation

While the excommunication served as further fodder for the scandal-mongering Japanese tabloid media, Soka Gakkai experienced the excommunication as liberation. For one thing, the priests had viewed interfaith dialogue and cooperation as 'heretical'. Soka Gakkai has thus become freer to express its faith in modern terms.

While its basic Buddhist practice of reciting the Lotus Sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-

renge-kyo has not changed, since 1991 Soka Gakkai has released itself from its previous religious formalism, and more vigorously pursued its promotion of social engagement and interfaith dialogue. •

- 3 For example, Hammond and Machecek write, 'In statements regarding the relationship of lay members to the priests, made early in 1990, Ikeda asserted that the teachings of Nichiren were more authoritative than those of the priests. The priests, in turn, argued that such criticism of the priesthood was slander against Buddhism, and ordered Soka Gakkai to submit an explanation and apology. Soka Gakkai, in response, asked for dialogue with the priesthood about the issue, which the priesthood refused, demanding again a written apology.' Phillip E. Hammond [D. Mackenzie Brown professor of religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara] and David W. Machecek [lecturer in religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara], *Soka Gakkai in America: Accommodation and Conversion* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1999), pp. 20-21
- 4 Daniel A. Metraux [professor and Asian Studies Department chair at Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, Virginia, USA], 'The Soka Gakkai: Buddhism and the Creation of a Harmonious and Peaceful Society' in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed., Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 391.
- 5 *Soka Gakkai Kaisan Kankokusho* ('Remonstrance to the Soka Gakkai to Disband'), sent by Nichiren Shoshu, dated 7 November 1991.

