

SGI Australia

Introductory Study Course

Session 3 & 4



Human Revolution
&
Kosen-rufu

Session Three

Engaging in the Mentor's Vision



Aim

To inspire dialogue on the role of the mentor in providing a compass for living a purposeful, creative and joyful life.

The efforts made towards our individual growth through human revolution, which enables the collective growth of society in the form of *kosen-rufu* are the most noble actions that we can take towards living a creative and purposeful life. It is this commitment to the betterment of self and society in all aspects of our lives that will result in a joyful life. Sustaining this strong sense of commitment is not easy, and in fact is only sustainable when we have clarity of purpose.

Clarity of purpose is found in the mentor-disciple relationship. There is a direct relationship between such clarity and the strength of the mentor-disciple relationship. This statement may seem far-flung. When at sea, a ship without a compass will inevitably lose its way. Even were it to travel only one degree off course, it would never reach its destination. Our life is as if we are at sea. In all directions, we are met with the horizon of ocean and sky. Like a ship needs a compass to steer its course, we need a mentor to allow us the clarity to set a direction in life. The mentor, through his total belief in humanity, lives his

life seeking to encourage every person to fulfil his or her potential. In this sense, the mentor represents the compass of clarity, which we can use to develop our lives continuously.

From this perspective, a mentor is not a figure to be admired from afar or put on a pedestal. A mentor in Buddhism provides a model of how to live a life of creative expression for the sake of the happiness of all humanity. The mentor is one who exhibits the courage of their conviction in the possibility of consistent, creative transformation through action. Their proof shows the potentially unlimited expression of a person who seeks to be a disciple and provides clear direction for the pursuit of living based on compassion, self-mastery and conviction. The mentor-disciple relationship is not one forced on others. Rather the appreciation of this relationship will allow us to expand our own capabilities and potential continually.

The oneness of mentor and disciple is based on profound shared commitment where we, as disciples, realise the vision of the mentor through dedicating ourselves to work for the happiness of each individual. The depth of confidence we have in appreciating and enacting the oneness of the mentor-disciple relationship determines the sustainability of our faith and therefore our ability to conduct human revolution. When we challenge to read and take to heart President Ikeda's guidance, we open our life to his vision and hope for humanity. Working with the same spirit as the mentor within the community of believers is the cause for fulfilling the vision for *kosen-rufu*. This continuous struggle to fulfil the mentor's vision is what guarantees a life of clarity as we learn to treasure each individual in our environment. Through this practice we can overcome our tendency to separate our self and the environment, which often limits our expression and rather, arrive at an untainted view that celebrates life in all its myriad forms. Every moment we have the opportunity to improve our ability to appreciate and reveal the limitless potential that exists in our life. In this we create harmony based on our desire for the happiness of others without separating it from our own.

The mentor's vision is that each individual shines with such brilliance so as to become a great leader in society – one who contributes to the happiness of all. The mentor's achievement shines through the harmonious unity of the disciples as they share our joys and struggles.

All the while, we are growing and gaining confidence that *kosen-rufu* is being achieved through our courage to challenge our daily life. When we engage in the mentor's vision, we expand our own lives and our heart opens to possibilities otherwise unimaginable. This is how Buddhism manifests in society and faith manifests in daily life. However, it is natural, through the course of our life, that we should come to points where we would lose determination and find our life seems to drift, when human revolution is not our focus, praying becomes difficult, and happiness seems far away. When such circumstances arise and we find all sense of clarity gone, it is important to reengage with the mentor and his vision by reading and enacting his guidance, sharing experiences of faith and challenging ourselves in SGI activities. In this way, we make the mentor's vision our own and, combining this with sincere prayer, we are in fact making the ultimate cause for our happiness.

The mentor-disciple spirit is the life-blood of Nichiren Buddhism, and is the life-blood of the Soka Gakkai. President Ikeda's life has proven his role as mentor in the current age. The exact spirit of Nichiren Daishonin as the mentor of life has been inherited by the three presidents of Soka Gakkai – Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda and Daisaku Ikeda, and is exemplified in the shared purpose and unity of members of the SGI. Without appreciation of spirit of the oneness of the mentor and disciple, humanity's most profound support network, that is "the community of [Buddhist] practitioners", cannot exist. This is because the mentor-disciple relationship challenges us to open our hearts. Through challenging to open our hearts to others, we gain confidence in ourselves.



Study Materials

Mentor and Disciple in Buddhism Share The Bond of Struggle For The Happiness of Humanity

Ikeda: In the path of mentor and disciple, too, the awareness of the disciple is primary. The response of the mentor depends on the strength of the disciple's seeking spirit, sense of responsibility and determination.

That said, the Buddha industriously teaches and guides his disciples over past, present and future, never abandoning any of them. He educates them and embraces them in his mercy. It seems to me that the Buddha's immense compassion is the main point the *Lotus Sutra* seeks to convey.

The disciples believe in and seek out the mentor, and the mentor protects and trains the disciples. The mentor, ultimately, does not abandon even disciples who have forgotten their pledge. This most beautiful of human bonds is the relationship of mentor and disciple in Buddhism.

In Buddhism, mentor and disciple are comrades advancing together towards the common objective of *kosen-rufu*, towards the creation of a world where Buddhist ideals and principles are widely embraced. The mentor-disciple relationship is an extension of the kind that exists between those with greater experience in life or in faith and those with lesser. In one sense, mentor and disciples stand face to face. Yet on a more fundamental level, mentor and disciple are comrades standing side by side.

Suda: At Mr. Makiguchi's third memorial in November 1946, President Toda said:

In your vast and boundless mercy, you took me with you even to prison. Thanks to that, I could read with my life the *Lotus Sutra* passage. "[they]

dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, constantly reborn in company with their teachers." As a result of that benefit, I could understand the true meaning of the teaching of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth and could, albeit only dimly, grasp the meaning of the *Lotus Sutra* with my life. What great happiness is this!

Ikeda: When we become aware of the indestructible bond of mentor and disciple, limitless power wells forth. Our lives well with boundless hope, infinite mercy and inexhaustible wisdom.

Learning of this supreme bond of mentor and disciple in "Phantom City," Shakyamuni's disciples finally recalled their own original aspiration, and their fundamental mission. In doing so, they finally entered the path of attaining Buddhahood.

(All above excerpts from *Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, Vol 2, pp. 138- 141)

The Path of a Disciple is One of Unflagging Seeking Spirit and Unceasing Gratitude

Tsunemitsu Nakada was then introduced as the young men's division leader. Nakada was 21 years old and from the Kansai Region in Japan, having only arrived in Mexico three months earlier. He had joined the Soka Gakkai at the age of nine together with his parents. At the time, his father had been suffering ill health, which had placed a strain on the family. After graduating from junior high school in Osaka, Nakada spent some time as a live-in clerk at a store before finding a job in the parts department of a major appliance manufacturer.

It was Shin'ichi's editorial in the *Daibyakurenge* (August 1961) entitled "Youth, Become World Leaders!" that had piqued Nakada's interest in travelling overseas. His determination to get out and see the world grew stronger day by day, but when he spoke to others about it, they laughed at him and called it an empty dream.

Almost every night after returning home he would read "Youth, Become World Leaders!" aloud and chant *daimoku* in earnest to encourage himself.

Then, one day, a friend asked him if he was interested in working at an appliance manufacturer in Mexico. Though Nakada could speak neither Spanish nor English, he immediately jumped at the offer. His heart leapt with joy, and he felt the power of having faith in the *Gohonzon*.

And that was how Nakada had come to Mexico three months earlier. But now that he was actually living here, he found everything, starting with his lack of language ability, to be a challenge. Mexico City was 2,200 metres (7,217 feet) above sea level, and he became winded and dizzy if he ran for even a short distance. In addition, the company he was working for was on the verge of collapse and couldn't even pay its workers their full salaries. His living quarters was a storage shed in the company president's home. He wished he could return to Japan, but he didn't have the fare, so he considered taking a job on a cargo ship in order to get home.

The only thing keeping Nakada in Mexico was Iwadata's announcement that President Yamamoto would be visiting the country that coming August. And now, at this discussion meeting, Nakada had been appointed Mexico Chapter young men's division leader. He stood up when Kiyoshi Jujo called out his name, but he couldn't hide his uneasiness. "I don't have a solid foundation for my life here in Mexico and I can't speak the language," he thought, wondering if it was really all right for him to accept the responsibility.

Nakada's doubts didn't last long, however. He realised that the reason he had been given a leadership position was because others had high expectations for his future potential. "What matters now," he thought, "is the action I take to live up to these expectations."

Kiyoshi Jujo next announced that three districts – Azteca, Tacuba, and Latin America – would be established within Mexico Chapter, followed by the introduction of the men's and women's division leaders for those districts.

Nakada was filled anew with fighting spirit. Since departing Japan he had strongly wished to devote

himself to *kosen-rufu* in Mexico. Doing so, he understood, meant demonstrating the validity of the Daishonin's Buddhism by becoming successful in society. Nakada had neither social position nor personal wealth, but what he did possess was a burning passion to dedicate his life to *kosen-rufu*.

His invincible struggle began from the day of the discussion meeting. Praying wholeheartedly to become strong to fulfil his mission, he threw himself into his work. But his employer went out of business, and he was forced to find a new job, this time at an automobile repair shop. He built a reputation of hard work and trust there and would later go on to establish an automotive parts dealership of his own.

A person who makes a firm determination to work for *kosen-rufu* is strong. From such determination are born wisdom, life-force, success, and victory in life.

Having concluded all of his announcements, Jujo said, "President Yamamoto asked me to relay to you that due to an important meeting with High Priest Nittatsu, he is unable to attend this discussion meeting, but he sends you all his best regards. He also asked me to give you the following message, 'In the realm of faith, all are equal. Instead of making distinctions based on how long or short one has been practising the Daishonin's Buddhism, I hope you will all advance together in unity centred around your chapter leader. The true spirit of Buddhism is found in working together in friendship and harmony. Mexico has tremendous future potential and, with the Olympics coming up in three years, it is certain to become an even greater focus of world attention. I would like to suggest that you make a goal of having a membership of 500 people three years from now. What do you think?'"

(New Human Revolution, vol 10, Chapter 2 *Winds of Happiness* p125-127)

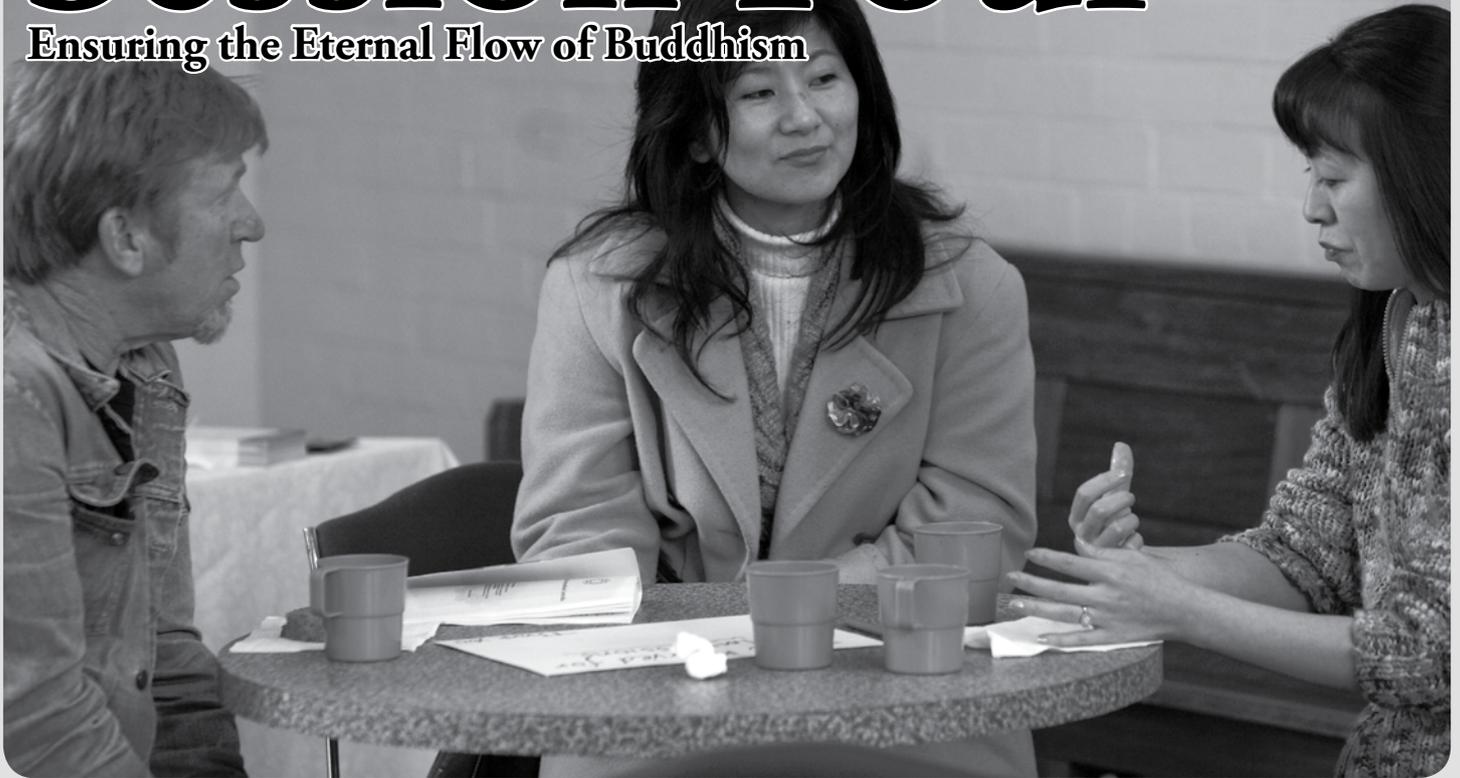
Keypoints:

- ❁ The disciples believe in and seek out the mentor; the mentor protects and trains the disciples.
- ❁ The mentor and disciple relationship is the most significant and beautiful of human bonds and ensures the ongoing spiritual evolution of humanity.
- ❁ The bond of mentor and disciple allows boundless hope, infinite mercy and inexhaustible wisdom to well up in our life.
- ❁ We choose our mentor; our mentor does not choose us – it is not an authoritarian or hierarchical relationship, it is based on a profound spiritual bond and shared commitment.
- ❁ Our struggle for *kosen-rufu* is revealed through our attitude at work, in our family, with our friends in faith and in the group discussion meeting.
- ❁ A firm determination and commitment for *kosen-rufu* builds strength, wisdom and life force, enabling us to express Buddhahood in our daily life and conduct our human revolution.



Session Four

Ensuring the Eternal Flow of Buddhism



Aim:

To inspire dialogue about the significance of sharing the same purpose and believing in the unique potential of each individual for the creation of peace.

The true sense of self-development is enacting the ideal of peace consistently and sincerely in our daily life. This is what gives us the confidence to always express our lives selflessly. The Soka Gakkai with its mission to promote the individual human revolution, celebrating the uniqueness of each individual without celebrity, hero worship or hierarchy, is the very image of this ideal. Through the commitment to the vow of *kosen-rufu*, or peace through the happiness of each individual, the Soka Gakkai celebrates diversity and promotes individual victory as the victory of the collective.

When society or humanity becomes abstract to the individual, it allows a separation that distorts the human experience and detaches us from the impact of our actions on others. “In abstract love for humanity one almost always loves no-one but oneself.” (Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, trans. Constance Garnett London:William Heinman, 1913, p. 457). In this quote Dostoevsky expresses the need for the interaction

with others to be real and personal in order for us to develop compassion. The SGI provides a space, amidst the troubled world in which we live, to personalise our commitment to realising a bright future for humanity while maintaining a perspective that encompasses humanity without abstraction. This is possible by enacting the vow of *kosen-rufu* that drives our human revolution through care of, and belief in, the individuals we are interacting with in our immediate environment.

The key is in opening our heart to the tremendous potential of the universe residing in our own life. Humanity can be said to be a microcosm of the great universe itself. Life contains unlimited creative potential and this is apparent to the Buddha. This potential is awakened through determinant efforts for the sake of other's happiness based on prayer – the heartfelt devotion to life's unlimited potential as depicted in the Gohonzon. Like humanity, life need not be abstracted as something that is happening to us or is occurring elsewhere. Rather we are life and we possess all of the potential for growth and change that is manifested in the universe. This universal law is expressed and revealed in the recitation of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

We become powerless when we isolate ourselves from others by perceiving ourselves as separate and helpless to effect change or make deep connections. It is similar to abstracting humanity and the environment from our individual self. In contrast, when we recognise and activate the truth that our life is the same life that pulses throughout the universe simultaneously, our life resounds with the power to transform all challenges to wonderful benefit. The way to activate this power is by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to the Gohonzon, and enacting the mentor's spirit through our behaviour in every aspect of our life. The terms selflessness or selfless devotion may seem distant ideals for most of us. However, this does not necessarily mean a rarefied person who behaves perfectly in every circumstance without thought of self. It indicates an aspirational way of living that ensures constant self-reflection and re-determination. This is possible within the community of believers that is the SGI – the organisation that exists solely to keep us connected to this aspiration.

The following quotes challenge us to realise our potential and this course allows us the opportunity to discuss how we are able to manifest this potential in our daily lives.

Study Materials

The Heritage of Buddhism Pulses In Our Lives When, United, We Make Efforts to Advance Kosen-rufu

The heritage of Myoho-enge-kyo is not just there for ourselves. All people are entities of Myoho-enge-kyo, and as such can partake in the heritage for attaining Buddhahood. To accomplish this is *kosen-rufu*, the great wish or vow of the Buddha. And it is made a reality by the harmonious community of practitioners who are united in faith toward that shared objective.

(Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life, Instalment 13, *Indigo*, April, 2008)

Our individual life span is limited, but if disciples of successive generations inherit the mentor's fundamental spirit of striving for *kosen-rufu* and continue to act together toward that goal as an organised body, they will exhibit the eternal lifeforce of a Buddha working continuously to guide all living beings to enlightenment.

The Soka Gakkai shines with the great light of compassion, dispelling the darkness of people's suffering and imparting hope and courage. It speaks out with the lion's roar for the sake of truth and justice, intrepidly vanquishing evil and wrongdoing. It has unshakable conviction in the power of faith to transform *karma* and create happiness for oneself and others. It possesses harmony based on the spirit of "many in body, one in mind" and embodies an indestructible citadel of mentor and disciple – both of which assure victory over any onslaught of the three obstacles and four devils. There can be no doubt that the heritage of faith for attaining Buddhahood pulses dynamically in the lives of the mentors and disciples of Soka, flowing on eternally without interruption across the three existences.

(Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life, Instalment 8, *Indigo*, September, 2007)

*As Fellow Members We Are All Noble Individuals
Who Posses A Unique And Lofty Mission*

The discussion meeting is like a great river, and all activities are like tributaries that flow into this river. Activities to broaden the circle of friends in society and meetings of various kinds for faith and study all contribute to the great river of the discussion meeting. This broad and deep river, created by the confluence of these myriad streams, flows into the ocean of the century of the people. On its banks, vast fertile plains of human culture will produce rich fruit of many kinds.

The heart of the SGI is found in the discussion meeting. President Toda said, “The first president [Tsunesaburo Makiguchi] would be the first to arrive at the meeting place. When someone else arrived, he would engage the person in discussion. When a second person came, he would speak with the two of them, and when a third came, he would talk with those three, instructing them in all matters with the greatest kindness and courtesy.” He also once said, “It’s fine even if there’s just one person [at a meeting]. The important thing is that we earnestly and energetically explain the teaching, relate our experience to that one person, and wholeheartedly discuss *kosen-rufu* and life. Even if there are just two people, if they each go home from the meeting with a sense of joy and fulfilment from having discussed the Gohonzon and inspired one another, then it’s a success. If three people come to a meeting, you should consider it well attended.

We shouldn’t badger people to attend the meeting simply to get a good turnout; the thing is to connect with one another on the level of the heart. Discussion means one-to-one dialogue. It is essential, therefore that each person be treasured. This is the key to generating a rhythm of lively, successful discussion meetings.

We don’t speak of the “tradition” of the discussion meeting simply because the pattern of holding such meetings has continued for many years. Rather, with the discussion meeting as the central focus of our activities, we have striven to treasure each person;

this spirit to value and respect the individual is the tradition of the SGI. The SGI has unceasingly encouraged people in their ordinary yet valiant struggles. This is the tradition of the discussion meeting.

(*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, “The Purpose of “Bestowal of Prophecy” is to Enable all People to enter the Path of Absolute Happiness” p. 94)

Dialogue brings people together. And Buddhism – a philosophy of respect for the sanctity of life – is spread through such dialogue. Dialogue requires courage, as well as genuine human warmth that accepts and respects others. It also calls for the wisdom and passion necessary to create understanding and sympathy.

One’s skill in engaging in dialogue can be considered as an indication of one’s abilities in general. Through striving to carry out dialogue, we are able to polish and elevate our lives.

On January 28, 1975, following the establishment of the SGI at the First World Peace Conference in Guam, Shin’ichi Yamamoto returned to Japan. He had been away for about three weeks, having visited Los Angeles, New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Hawaii before flying to Guam. Back in Japan, Shin’ichi attended the Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting and other events, while making a special effort to engage in dialogue with diplomats, leaders of various fields, and journalists.

“The world’s future depends upon our ability to promote dialogue.” This observation was made by Dr Felix Unger, president of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, with whom Shin’ichi would later publish a dialogue.¹ Dialogue can change the times and transform human destiny.

On 1 February, Shin’ichi visited the American Embassy in Tokyo and reported to Ambassador James Day Hodgson about his successful visit to the United States in a conversation that lasted about an hour. The next day, he held a discussion with Japan Society in New York President Isaac Shapiro that covered a variety of topics, including the relationship between

¹ Daisaku Ikeda and Felix Unger, *Ningenshugi no Hata wo: Kanyo, Jih, Taiwa, The Humanist Principle—Tolerance, Compassion, and Dialogue*, Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Philosophy, 2007. Available in Japanese only.

language and culture. On February 6, Shin'ichi met with John Roderick, Tokyo correspondent for the Associated Press. They spoke about the importance of global disarmament and Shin'ichi's proposal for a United Nations of Education.

On February 12, Shin'ichi met and talked with former Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato (1901–75). Shortly after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1974, Sato invited Shin'ichi to see the award at his earliest convenience. But since Shin'ichi was scheduled to leave for the United States on January 6, their meeting had been delayed until February.

Sato offered to pay Shin'ichi a visit at his home, but Shin'ichi felt it was inappropriate to welcome such an eminent guest at his humble residence, so he arranged to have the meeting at a nearby Japanese restaurant. Shin'ichi brought his wife Mineko along to meet the former Prime Minister, who was accompanied by his wife. Sato wore a suit and a green necktie, and his hair was somewhat long, imparting a youthful impression.

When Shin'ichi congratulated him on his Nobel Peace Prize, Sato said, "Thank you. I really wanted to show it to you, which is why I've been so eager to get together." They began to converse over the meal. Sato remarked, "On my way back from the award ceremony, I stopped in the Soviet Union and met with Soviet Premier Aleksey Kosygin (1904–80). It was a significant encounter. We didn't discuss the territories disputed between Japan and the U.S.S.R., but we did have a friendly conversation that lasted about an hour.

"During our discussion, Premier Kosygin said, 'when you return to Japan, please give my best to Soka Gakkai President Yamamoto. I just had a very meaningful exchange with him.'"

Shin'ichi nodded, "Oh, really? When I met with Premier Kosygin on my trip to the Soviet Union last September, I spoke quite frankly with him."

Shin'ichi then explained that he had told Kosygin that most Japanese were fearful of the Soviet Union and that changing that impression was imperative. He

had also suggested to the premier that if the U.S.S.R. wished to gain the understanding of the Japanese people, it needed to reach out much more broadly, to conservative political leaders and others, instead of just engaging with pro-Soviet politicians and groups in Japan.

Sato was widely regarded as a staunchly pro-U.S. leader. The fact that he had met with Kosygin may have been an indication that the Soviet premier had taken Shin'ichi's advice to heart.

Courageous dialogue has the power to expand sympathy and understanding and to change the world.

(The New Human Revolution, Vol 21 Ch 2 "People's Diplomacy" 1–2)

Keypoints:

- 🌸 The mystic law is the supreme law that permeates all human life and the universe simultaneously.
- 🌸 The purpose of Buddhism is to enable all people to reveal the Mystic Law in their life and feel absolute happiness through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.
- 🌸 The Soka Gakkai shines with the great light of compassion, dispelling the darkness of peoples' suffering and imparting hope and courage. The discussion meetings are opportunities for one-to-one dialogue at the level of the heart.
- 🌸 An organisation's true strength lies only in the harmony of its members.
- 🌸 "Courageous dialogue has the power to expand sympathy and understanding and to change the world."
- 🌸 "One's skill in engaging in dialogue can be considered as an indication of one's abilities in general."