

Session 13 – September

Worldwide Kosen-rufu and the Soka Gakkai: The History of the Soka Gakkai

3. 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 May 3, 1960, was inaugurated as the organization'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 toward the substantive realization of kosen-rufu."¹ 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 October 2 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 traveled to Europe, initiating a surge of progress toward worldwide kosen-rufu.

In this way, Ikeda Sensei opened a substantive path toward 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,² he began writing the novel *The Human Revolution*, which would be serialized in the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper and would eventually 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."³ *The Human Revolution* portrays the efforts and struggles of the three founding presidents of the

¹ Daisaku Ikeda, *The Human Revolution* (Santa Monica, CA: World Tribune Press, 2004), Book 2, p. 1971.

² 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).

³ Daisaku Ikeda, *The Human Revolution*, Book 1, p. viii.

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 serialized in the *Seikyo Shimbum*.

A Movement for Peace, Culture, and Education

The Soka Gakkai is an organization that fosters youth 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 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 actualize 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 specialized groups or divisions, including those for educators, scientists and academics, artists, writers and authors, and members with international experience and interests, as well as physicians and medical professionals. As the organization 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 actualize 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 September 8, 1968, he announced a proposal for the normalization of relations

between Japan and China.⁴ 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 January 26, 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 toward worldwide kosen-rufu, priests at branch temples of Nichiren Shoshu began repeatedly making unfounded accusations against the organization. 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.”

A Succession of Awards and Honors

Beginning in 1983, Ikeda Sensei has issued a “Peace Proposal” every year on January 26, 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

⁴ 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 anticommunist sentiment was widespread in Japan. Ikeda’s call for normalization 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 normalization of diplomatic relations in 1972 and a Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978.

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 honors 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 practicing 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 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 Fulfillment 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.

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Commemorative Dates of the Soka Gakkai

Date	Events
Jan. 26	1975. The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is founded in Guam. Daisaku Ikeda is appointed its president.
Mar. 16	1958. Josei Toda entrusts the fulfillment of the great vow to achieve kosen-rufu to his successors, the youth, and to Ikeda in particular.
May 3	1951. Toda is inaugurated as second president. 1960. Ikeda is inaugurated as third president.
Jul. 3	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).
Oct. 2	1960. Ikeda departs Japan for North and South America, taking the first step toward worldwide kosen-rufu.
Nov. 18	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.

[To be continued]