

For Our Wonderful New Members—Part 4 [of 5]

Soka Religious Revolution—Blazing a Great Path of Humanism to Unite All People

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Hello everyone. I hope you are keeping safe and healthy as we continue to advance kosen-rufu in the midst of the worldwide challenge of the coronavirus. We have been so fortunate to receive continuous encouragement from Ikeda Sensei, and to have been able to celebrate the 60th anniversary of his inauguration on May 3. Congratulations!

Thank you for your compassionate efforts to encourage your fellow members and friends, and for being the pillars of your families and communities. We owe a great debt of gratitude those who are working in the health care professions and essential services. You are “protectors of life” with “the lofty spirit of hope,” as described in Sensei’s poem dedicated to nurses. All the people who are working to keep life and society functioning are great heroes.

July 3 is the Day of Mentor and Disciple, and July is the month of youth: the founding anniversaries in 1951 of the young men’s division on July 11 and the young women’s division on July 19.

In this very significant month we will study the fifth and final lecture of the series “For Our Wonderful New Members.”

The first four lectures teach us the essential spirit of practice for self and others, and of uniting with our mentor to realize the great wish of the Buddha for the enlightenment of all people.

The final lecture of the series “For Our Wonderful New Members” is titled **Soka Religious Revolution—Blazing a Great Path of Humanism to Unite All People**. President Ikeda makes the following statement to begin the lecture:

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda declared: “Kosen-rufu is a religious revolution to enable people around the world to become happy.”

The “revolution” he called for is one free from the violence and bloodshed often associated with the word. Rather, it was an expression of his extraordinary determination to help each person achieve true happiness through their own human revolution and contribute to the realization of a peaceful society. Mr. Toda stressed this point to us, his youthful disciples, on numerous occasions.

Religious revolution is nothing other than human revolution. It starts with the inner transformation of each person’s life.

The aim of Buddhism is to enable each person to change their karma or destiny and bring forth power and potential that is as vast as the universe itself. The human revolution of a single individual can change the world. This, Mr. Toda taught me, is the essence of genuine religious revolution.

In writing my two serialized novels, *The Human Revolution* and *The New Human Revolution*, I made this message of my mentor that I embraced as my own the 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.” (NC, p.30)

The Soka Gakkai was established in order to return to the teachings and spirit of Nichiren Daishonin, aimed at enabling people to discover their innate Buddhahood, overcome their sufferings, and attain absolute, unshakable happiness.

The original spirit of Buddhism was that religion should serve the people, not that people should serve religion. Shakyamuni achieved this revolution, but over the centuries it was lost and Buddhism reverted to empty formality and authoritarianism. Nichiren Daishonin reignited the original spirit and began the great undertaking of kosen-rufu, appearing at the time of the Latter Day of the Law, when the Buddha’s correct teaching had all but perished. The Buddhism of the people is the teaching of Nichiren Daishonin, which opens the way for all people to attain Buddhahood.

The Soka Renaissance was the struggle in the latter part of the 20th century in which the authoritarian priesthood attempted to subjugate the members of the Soka Gakkai, in direct opposition to the humanistic teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. This authoritarianism existed before the establishment of the Soka Gakkai, sometimes showing itself in subtle ways, but ultimately revealing its true colours in 1979 and at the close of 1990, as described in *The New Human Revolution*, Volume 30. For this reason, President Ikeda describes the Soka Renaissance as inevitable. He states:

The Soka Gakkai's struggle to break free from the fetters of authoritarianism and make the dignity of each individual shine enabled it to spread its wings and soar into the world as the humanistic religious movement people everywhere had been earnestly seeking.

Today, in this new era of worldwide kosen-rufu, our noble members throughout Japan and around the globe, firmly united in purpose, are achieving wonderful victories through their human revolution, directly contributing to the growth of our movement.

And now, many new Bodhisattvas of the Earth, linked by deep karmic ties, have joined our ranks with fresh resolve at this significant time as we set forth energetically toward our 90th anniversary in 2020. (p. 31)

The first Gosho passage, from "The Three Kinds of Treasure," was written to Shijo Kingo, one of Nichiren Daishonin's most devoted and trusted disciples. It reads:

The heart of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings is the Lotus Sutra, and the heart of the practice of the Lotus Sutra is found in the "Never Disparaging" chapter. What does Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's profound respect for people signify? The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being.

Respectfully.

The wise may be called human, but the thoughtless are no more than animals. (WND-1, 851-52; "The Three Kinds of Treasure")

The story of Shijo Kingo and his relationship with Nichiren Daishonin fills us with the deepest of emotions. The Daishonin cared for and was devoted to his beloved disciple, and Shijo Kingo cared for and was devoted to his beloved mentor. Shijo Kingo was an ordinary man, who sometimes lost his patience and sometimes made mistakes; but he sincerely followed Nichiren Daishonin's guidance without fail, and was prepared to offer his life to protect his mentor and fellow disciples. In our study meetings, let's read together this part of their epic story so we might feel the genuine heart of mentor and disciple, united for the sake of humanity.

The quoted Gosho passage embodies the most important point of Buddhism and the attitude of a practitioner. Sensei explains:

Why did the Daishonin go so far as to declare that Shakyamuni’s “behavior as a human being” was the purpose of his appearance in this world? It was no doubt because he himself embodied the philosophy of respect for life and all people that pulses vibrantly in the Lotus Sutra.

The Lotus Sutra teaches that all people possess the Buddha nature. As such, all are equal and the life of each person is infinitely respectable. That is why, despite being showered with curses and abuse, and attacked with sticks and stones by arrogant people, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging continued to believe in them and show them respect. As a result, he received the benefit of the “purification of the six sense organs,” transformed his karma, and attained the expansive life state of Buddhahood.

In other words, to always act respectfully toward others, no matter who they are, out of an unwavering belief in the Buddha nature of all people—that behavior is itself the fundamental cause for attaining Buddhahood. (NC, p.32)

The combination of warm support and encouragement for each person, and the steadfast determination to fight against negative forces that cause people to suffer—this, he asserts is the model of behavior set forth by the Daishonin and being carried on today by the mentors and disciples of the Soka Gakkai.

President Ikeda quotes the well-known passage from the Gosho “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”: “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, 24). Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, he has repeatedly used this quote. He states in the lecture:

In that spirit, we bravely rise to the challenge of doing our human revolution and transforming society.

We believe in the limitless potential of each individual.

We deeply treasure the person in front of us.

And we together demonstrate our immense capacities... Let us proudly tell others that this is the modern religious reformation we have undertaken to break free of empty formalism and authoritarianism. (p. 33)

Nichiren Daishonin submitted “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” to Hojo Tokiyori on July 16, 1260. This July marks the 760th anniversary of the Daishonin composing this important treatise.

The final Gosho passage, from “On the Buddha’s Prophecy, reads:

The moon appears in the west and sheds its light eastward, but the sun rises in the east and casts its rays to the west. The same is true of Buddhism. It spread from west to east in the Former and Middle Days of the Law, but will travel from east to west in the Latter Day. (WND-1, 401; “On the Buddha’s Prophecy”)

President Ikeda states:

This worldwide spread of the Daishonin’s Buddhism of the sun, with its teaching of respect for all people, is essentially what is meant by the statement that “[Buddhism] will travel from east to west in the Latter Day.” (NC, p. 33)

It was President Toda’s conviction that The Soka Gakkai appeared at the time for the widespread propagation of Buddhism. In the summer of 1951, the year he was inaugurated, President Toda wrote an article titled “The History and Conviction of the Soka Gakkai” in the monthly study journal, *Daibyakurenge*, referring to the quoted passage from “On the Buddha’s Prophecy.” In it he declared:

Having encountered this auspicious time, we of the Soka Gakkai have made a great vow of selfless devotion and stood up with the powerful conviction that we must engage in a momentous effort to spread the Mystic Law. How fortunate we are to advance on this path that leads to Buddhahood and allows us to savor the joy of living! (p. 34)

President Toda explained that the Daishonin’s prediction of the “westward transmission of Buddhism” means actualizing kosen-rufu in Asia and the rest of the world, a mission he entrusted to the youth. It was President Toda’s successor, Daisaku Ikeda, who, at the age of 32, took on the momentous task of realizing his mentor’s vision and the Daishonin’s will. He states:

Immediately after I, his devoted disciple, was inaugurated as third Soka Gakkai president (in 1960), I began my journey for worldwide kosen-rufu, Mr. Toda’s photograph tucked into my breast pocket. I visited countries around the world, chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as if to permeate the ground in every place I went to call forth Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

Today, in every corner of the world, people are revitalizing their lives through their Buddhist practice and the beneficial power of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Their humanistic behavior is touching those around them, while the joy they experience through their practice is spreading, inspiring others to stand up in faith as well. This exemplifies the “benefit of the fiftieth hearer” in a continuous chain reaction of joy as Buddhism is spread from one person to the next. Our movement of human revolution is actual proof of the religious reformation we are carrying out in today’s world. (p. 34)

We are the beneficiaries of Sensei’s efforts, the real extent of which we can hardly imagine. It is our mission to carry on and expand kosen-rufu in our own society. President Ikeda describes the widespread recognition among leading thinkers that the Soka Gakkai has emerged as the living embodiment of the teachings and actions of Nichiren Daishonin. They have noted that “our religious reformation has been a process of severing the chains of the authoritarian, dogmatic, and closed-minded Nichiren Shoshu priesthood and establishing spiritual independence, through each member standing up with lion-like strength and courage.”

Throughout the world, including here in Canada, the movement of Soka humanism is growing. Sensei ends his lecture with the following powerful encouragement:

We have entered an age when our humanistic behavior is contributing positively to the realization of peace and a more humane world. Our movement of Soka humanism is shining ever more brightly upon the stage of the 21st century. The victory of each one of you, my trusted friends, in achieving your own human revolution, is the victory of the Soka Gakkai, which is illuminating humanity as a world religion. Let us continue moving forward in our shared struggle of mentor and disciple based on the unity of “many in body, one in mind,” and embrace the world with the great light of our Soka Renaissance! (p. 36)

Let’s make each of our study meetings a humanistic forum, where everyone can share how we have been inspired and are applying what we are studying. Let’s encourage our Future Division members—the Young Phoenix Group and the Young Lions Group—to also participate in our study and discussion meetings. Let’s ask these precious “ambassadors from the future” for their suggestions on how we can make our meetings engaging and encouraging for everyone. The time for them to be on the forefront is now, for they are the future leaders of kosen-rufu.

Thank you very much.