

A Religion of Human Revolution—Part 3

The Vow—The World Needs Young People of Conviction and Integrity

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Hi everyone, welcome to our October study podcast. This month we will study Part 3 of President Ikeda's lecture "A Religion of Human Revolution" which is focusing on our vow.

Kosen-rufu is a grassroots movement and spiritual struggle, based on the Lotus Sutra's philosophy of the dignity of life and respect for all people. The aim is, through dialogue, to achieve world peace and the happiness of humanity.

Youth are the main protagonists in this effort. When young people who have made a great vow for peace become a unifying force for change, the times will move without fail in a positive direction.

President Ikeda is committed to the lofty goal of kosen-rufu, challenge his human revolution, and walk the supremely noble path of mentor and disciple. In following our Mentor, making a lofty vow in one's youth is something that will become a treasure for one's whole life. The challenge to fulfill this vow creates incalculable value.

Now please listen to the first Goshō passage from "The Opening of the Eyes", in which Nichiren Daishonin declares his great vow.

I will be the pillar of Japan. I will be the eyes of Japan. I will be the great ship of Japan. This is my vow, and I will never forsake it! (WND-1, 280–81; "The Opening of the Eyes")

The words "pillar," "eyes," and "great ship" are profound expressions arising from Daishonin's immensely compassionate wish to enable all people to attain enlightenment and he made this declaration while in exile on Sado Island.

The Daishonin's vow is not meant for Japan only but for worldwide kosen-rufu by first saving the country where people's lives were most clouded by slander of the Law, where the darkness of the Latter Day of the Law was deepest. His assertion to never forsake his vow is also a resounding declaration that he has triumphed over all

devilish functions in the midst of life-threatening persecutions.

In modern times, Presidents Makiguchi and Toda engraved this vow of the Daishonin in their hearts and carried out kosen-rufu in the Latter Day of the Law. The Soka Gakkai has been a Buddhist organization based on this vow and directly connected to the Daishonin.

President Ikeda discusses the members in Japan during the time of President Toda. In those days, the Soka Gakkai was disparaged by Japanese society as “a gathering of the sick and poor.” Despite their situations, those who took faith in Nichiren Buddhism, however, did not passively seek relief from their own problems but they prayed for the happiness of others and took action to benefit others and society, becoming the pillar, the eyes, and the great ship of the society. This is the greatest proof that Nichiren Buddhism is the religion of human revolution, and the genuine example of a religion that exists for the happiness of human beings, which is so needed in the 21st century.

President Ikeda also shares his own experience. He says,

In the days when I was supporting Mr. Toda with his business challenges, I was also a young men’s division group leader. I viewed every aspect of the Soka Gakkai as my own personal mission. I would agonize, ponder, and chant about how best to advance kosen-rufu, and then take action with all my might.

President Ikeda took on the mission to serve as a central pillar, always asking himself what his mentor would do in any given situation. By sharing his own experience, President Ikeda encourages us to do the same.

The “great vow” is the profound wish of the Buddha to enable all people to attain enlightenment and free all people from suffering. In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni’s original disciples, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, share Shakyamuni’s vow for kosen-rufu from the remote past. Standing up with the same vow as one’s mentor and striving to propagate the Law and encourage others in order to realize happiness for oneself and others—that is the essence of the “great vow.” That vow, which is the very heart of Buddhist compassion, is upheld by all people deep in their lives. The call to “make a great vow” is also a call for each of us to awaken to the vow or fundamental wish that exists in the depths of our life.

When we devote our lives to the great vow for kosen-rufu, we can achieve a great human revolution. When we base ourselves on the Mystic Law and strive together with the Soka Gakkai and our fellow members, we can positively transform all

hardships and adversity and realize brilliant victories without fail.

We will now review the following passage from “The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra.”

Now, at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, I, Nichiren, am the first to embark on propagating, throughout Jambudvīpa [the entire world], the five characters of Myōhō-renge-kyō, which are the heart of the Lotus Sutra and the eye of all Buddhas. . . . My disciples, form your ranks and follow me, and surpass even [such outstanding disciples of the Buddha as] Mahākāśyapa or Ananda, [and such great Buddhist teachers as] T’ien-t’ai or Dengyō! (WND-1, 764–65; “The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra”)

In this passage, the Daishonin calls out to his disciples to courageously join in the great struggle to advance kosen-rufu throughout the world in the Latter Day of the Law.

In another writing [“The True Aspect of All Phenomena”], the Daishonin declares: “Nichiren alone took the lead in carrying out the task of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth” (WND-1, 385). The courage to “take the lead” is the spirit of Nichiren Buddhism. We must be prepared to first stand up ourselves with firm resolve and take decisive action if we wish to truly become the Daishonin’s successors.

Hardships provide us the opportunity for human revolution. When a single dedicated practitioner of the Lotus Sutra takes action for kosen-rufu, it will awaken others around to follow suit.

President Ikeda quotes President Toda’s “Guidelines for Youth”, in which he entrusted the youth division members with the mission of creating a new age. He says:

In the struggle to spread Buddhism in the corrupt age of the Latter Day of the Law, you should seek to win the Daishonin’s praise as valiant young champions. For a person of wisdom, to be praised by fools is a disgrace, whereas to be praised by the Daishonin is the highest honor in life.

Directly connected to the Daishonin, let us courageously reach out to others in dialogue to spread our great philosophy of peace and humanism that people all over the world so desperately long for.

Before closing, I would like to point out that October and November are significant

months. In October, we have the 57th anniversary of President Ikeda's first visit to Canada in 1960 (October 11 - 13); and in November we have the Soka Gakkai Founding Day (1930) on November 18. These significant dates serve to remind us of our mentor's relentless effort in worldwide kosen rufu. I hope through this month's study we will all share in the same vow as our mentor's and be united to actualize the spirit of shakubuku leading to world peace and the happiness of humanity. Thanks very much.