

**SGI President Ikeda's Essay
The Deepest of Commitments
By HO GOKU**

Recalling the 1951 inauguration of Josei Toda as president of the Soka Gakkai: "True unity is the joint struggle of courageous individuals who share and put into action the stand-alone spirit," writes SGI President Ikeda, under the pen name of Ho Goku. "In such unity lies the key to achieving the unprecedented undertaking of kosen-rufu."

That day, an intrepid lion arose. On May 3, 1951, Josei Toda was inaugurated as the second Soka Gakkai president. A mighty roar for the propagation of Buddhism — for the sake of world peace and the happiness of all humanity — reverberated across the land: "I will give my life for the propagation of Buddhism! I vow to convert, through my own efforts, 750,000 households during my lifetime!"

He did not say, "through our efforts." He said, "through *my* own efforts."

When the inauguration was over, the members lifted Mr. Toda up off the ground and began to toss him in the air in jubilation. They did so with such enthusiasm that his glasses almost fell off.

I immediately rushed over to support and guard him in the bustle. I vowed to protect my mentor, who was indispensable to the kosen-rufu movement, under any circumstances. I can still vividly remember the weight of his body on my hands as I supported him that day.

Mr. Toda never relied the least bit on others. Katsutane Baba, who was chapter leader of Tokyo's Tsukiji Chapter during the early days of our movement, once wrote in the *Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai study magazine: "When President Toda saw how slow our progress was, he exploded at the leaders: 'If you're not serious about achieving kosen-rufu, just quit and get out! We don't need any cowards here. Tomorrow, just attach a flyer describing the benefits of the Gohonzon to a hundred dogs, and let them loose in Tokyo! I'll take care of the rest of kosen-rufu by myself!'"

Determined to carry on the work of this great mentor, I rose up resolutely as his disciple. Many other young people followed my example and did the same, one after another, giving proof to our mentor's call. "Youth, just one of you stand!" he cried. "A second and a third will definitely follow!" Under the inspired leadership of Mr. Toda, the youth provided the impetus for achieving a membership of 750,000 households.

Unity is not just huddling together in a cozy flock or leaning on one another for support. True unity is the joint struggle of courageous individuals who share and put into action the stand-alone spirit. In such unity lies the key to achieving the unprecedented undertaking of kosen-rufu.



Mr. Toda's dearest wish was for the appearance of young people to whom he could entrust the mission of kosen-rufu when he would no longer be here. He frequently sang "Song of Comrades," and when he came to the lines "I do not begrudge my life / But where are the young flag bearers?" he would look at me with a piercing gaze.

His look seemed to say: "I am counting on you after I am gone. Do you understand?"



The beautiful blue sky seemed to stretch on forever. Two years had passed since Mr.

Toda's death. On May 3, 1960, I was inaugurated as the third Soka Gakkai president. From that moment on, I charged ahead without stopping, braving raging winds and storms, embracing in my heart the Daishonin's vow: "This I will state. Let the gods forsake me. Let all persecutions assail me. Still I will give my life for the sake of the Law" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 174). Nor did I ever forget the words of my mentor: "Kosen-rufu can be achieved without fail if there is just one young person willing to give his or her life to this cause."

Day after day, I endured tremendous difficulties and persecutions, but I always led our movement undaunted, regarding persecution as the highest honor.

The Soka Gakkai was under heavy fire from all sides when May 3, 1970 — my 10th anniversary as president — came around. It was the same thing with May 3, 1979, a day that was to have marked the start of my 20th year as president....

A few days prior to May 3, 1979, I resigned the presidency and became honorary president of the Soka Gakkai. Behind this were the schemes of a group of conspirators — a union of treacherous members and priests who wished to drive me out and, once the Soka Gakkai had no true leader for kosen-rufu, to manipulate the organization for their own profit.

The Soka Gakkai Headquarters General Meeting on May 3 that year was held at the Soka University gymnasium, taking place in the midst of a firestorm of insult and defamation that can only be described as pure madness. The top leaders of the Soka Gakkai could not conceal their uncertainty and anxiety. They were hesitant and restrained in their applause for me — out of fear of incurring the displeasure of the priests present.

It was a sad sight indeed. No, it was pitiful.

When I left the gymnasium after the meeting and made my way along a pathway outside to another building, a group of women's division members called out to me, "Sensei!" Some of them had children with them. It was clear that they had been waiting for some time. There were tears in their eyes.

"Thank you!" I said. "I hope you are all well!" I waved vigorously to them and called out, encouraging them with all my might. And I thought: "Now, who will protect members such as these good people? Who will work for their happiness? What will happen if cruel and heartless animals dressed in priestly robes begin to dictate to these people?"



I did not return to the Soka Gakkai Headquarters at Shinanomachi after the meeting but went directly to the Kanagawa Culture Center. I had decided that I would begin a new struggle from that Yokohama facility, which commands a view of a peaceful harbor stretching out to the rest of the wide world.

On May 5, picturing my mentor's face, I wrote down my pledge as a piece of calligraphy. I wrote the single word "Justice."

In the margin next to it, I wrote, "I will carry the banner of justice alone."

I knew that my real struggle was only beginning. Whatever circumstances I found myself in, I would fight resolutely. Even if I was alone.

I firmly resolved in the depths of my being that I would triumph — in the true spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple.



Almost two decades have gone by. The citadel of Kanagawa on that day remains as fresh

and vivid in my mind as if it were yesterday: The harbor stretching out to the world. Lovely Yamashita Park, filled with people strolling about, enjoying the scenery. The gallant forms of the Soka Group members racing to and fro, their hearts filled with a quiet, yet unshakable resolve.

My vow that day, to take the lead in opening the second chapter of the kosen-rufu movement — to draw the sword of the Law, the jeweled sword of faith, and with it cut through all adversity and triumph over evil without fail — was the deepest of commitments.

Today, people around the world have great hopes for the SGI and are warmly supporting and applauding our endeavors.

May 3 is when a brilliant rainbow breaks through the dark storm of intrigue and deceit and shines in the vibrant hues of victory and glory. It is the day we who champion the noble cause of kosen-rufu set out anew on our journey along the indestructible golden path of Buddhism that extends throughout eternity.

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