

**SGI President Ikeda's Essay**  
**Sharing Our Faith**  
**By DAISAKU IKEDA, SGI President**

*Conviction and sincerity will open our friends' hearts, SGI President Ikeda tells us. 'The important thing is to be determined, positive, optimistic, and to never stop challenging ourselves,' he says, 'no matter what the circumstances. Let's be invincible optimists!'*

Propagation is the life-blood of religion. A religion without propagation efforts has abandoned the basic function of religion — to reach out to people and help them. President Toda declared that the Soka Gakkai is an organization for propagating Buddhism. In doing so, he was declaring the Soka Gakkai's mission: to spread the principles of true humanism and to realize happiness for all humankind and peace on Earth.

### **How Can I Teach Buddhism to Friends?**

When I visited Soka University last autumn, I had an opportunity to talk at length with some of our student division members. One of them said to me, "I am having a hard time introducing Buddhism to my friends." He was deeply troubled by this, and I was impressed by his seriousness. Here he was worrying about how he could teach Buddhism to his friends and thereby plant the seed of happiness in their lives. What a fine, noble thing to be concerned about!

With the greatest respect for him, I encouraged him with all my heart: "Everything is hard in the beginning. This is only more true of propagating Buddhism, which the Gosho describes as the most difficult of all difficult things.

"When I was young, my efforts were really just trial and error, but they became the foundation for future success. The important thing is to be determined, positive, optimistic, and to never stop challenging ourselves, no matter what the circumstances. Let's be invincible optimists!"

I will never forget his face as he nodded with a smile.

Five months later, he reported happily that he had been successful in introducing another person to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I was so happy to hear that; I was happy because of his sincerity.

### **Resolve To Bring One More Person to This Faith**

When I look back, the first person who began to practice the Daishonin's Buddhism through my introduction was a teacher at an elementary school in Ota Ward. This happened just a short while after I began working at Mr. Toda's company. Up to then, I had spoken about Buddhism with several of my friends. Mr. Toda had even met with one of them and talked with him about Buddhism. But so far none had taken faith and begun to practice.

I was so frustrated that I searched very hard for the best ways to talk about Buddhism with others. I prayed wholeheartedly, and I continued to propagate the Daishonin's teachings, each time with the firm resolve to bring one more person to this faith. I can't begin to measure what valuable experience and training this gave me.

How overjoyed I was when I finally convinced someone to embrace the Daishonin's Buddhism! I could never describe my elation in words. I decided that I would thoroughly look after that person and make sure that my friend triumphed in life. I had the elementary school teacher come to my home every morning, and we did gongyo and read the Gosho together before going to work. I also remember how I used to stop by after work to teach my friend gongyo.

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The advancement of kosen-rufu lies in the repetition of patient, painstaking efforts to awaken one friend after another to faith in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. This is true Buddhist practice.

When Mr. Toda became the second president of the Soka Gakkai and made his vow to attain a membership of 750,000 households, I pledged: "Mr. Toda is my mentor in propagation. As his disciple, I vow to become a true champion of propagation." And having made that pledge, I threw myself wholeheartedly into this challenge, creating the groundswell for unprecedented propagation in Kamata, in Bunkyo, in Osaka, in Yamaguchi.

I remember one discussion meeting at which all of the seven or eight young men in attendance decided to join the Gakkai. I told them that Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism was the only way to absolute happiness, and I earnestly assured them that I wanted them to accept those teachings only because I wanted each of them to have the best lives possible.

Such conviction and sincerity will open our friends' hearts and make them receptive to our message.

### **Today, True Dialogue Is Lacking**

Propagation must always take place in the context of deepening friendship and earning the trust of others. Today we live in an age in which there are superficial discussions, but true dialogue is lacking. Propagating the Daishonin's Buddhism, however, is a true dialogue — a stimulating sharing, based on consideration and concern for our friends, as we invite them to walk with us on the path of true and complete happiness.

Genuine Buddhist dialogue is discussing such crucial matters as the true values of life, what is right and wrong, based on our daily lives and our personal experiences. This is the ultimate practice of humanism, and this is propagating Buddhism. At the same time, propagating the Daishonin's Buddhism, which involves teaching others the most fundamental solution to sufferings, is the ultimate act of altruism as well as the fastest way for us to do our human revolution and break out of the shell of our ego.

### **Propagation Is Our Noble History and Joy**

Those who propagate Buddhism are the true disciples of the Daishonin, those who have inherited his spirit. Nikko Shonin praised all who courageously propagated the Daishonin's teachings, declaring: "You should revere a teacher of the Law who engages in its propagation as a sacred priest, even though he may be your junior" ("Twenty-six Admonitions of Nikko," *Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618). And the benefits attained by those who propagate the Law are boundless and immeasurable.

Out of our single-minded concern for the happiness of others and our ardent desire to attain world peace, we have held high the banner of kosen-rufu and continued to shed the compassionate light of Buddhism throughout the world, undeterred by slander or abuse. This is the proud and noble history of the Soka Gakkai. In the "Song of Indomitable Dignity," there are the lines: "Today and again tomorrow / The march of propagation advances / Our ardor surges." How true. Here, unbeaten by any trials or tribulations, lies the pulse of momentous vitality, the source of supreme joy.

Today once more, our great and lofty dialogue to propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism rings through the clear autumn sky.

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