

**PROOF THAT WE'RE AMONG THE PEOPLE**  
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**The awards and commendations that President Ikeda receives have a deeper significance, Ted Morino explains. They 'indicate victory for both mentor and disciple — individual and institutional victory for each of us' as well as 'attest to the openly engaging role Soka movements play within society.'**

There is news almost daily of SGI President Ikeda being recognized by various institutions and societies around the world for his works as a Buddhist leader, in peace, culture and education. Last year alone, he received 86 special commendations, 11 honorary memberships into various institutions, 11 honorary doctorate degrees from colleges and universities, and honorary citizenships in 18 cities from around the world.

How does the SGI president regard such acclaim? Is it simply a matter of personal prestige, for example? Or is there a deeper, broader significance to be considered?

He has said in the *Daisanbunmei* (Third Civilization) magazine that “all the honorary titles I have received from various nations, universities and cities are the eternal honors directed to all the fellow members who have been staking their lives on building a great rising tide of kosen-rufu. In my heart, they also have been given to my mentors, Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda. This is how I take all the awards presented to me” (Feb. 1999, p. 57).

In other words, all these awards indicate victory for both mentor and disciple — individual and institutional victory for each of us. They also attest to the openly engaging role Soka movements play within society. This increasingly engaged approach is in stark contrast with the increasingly disengaged, even isolated approach of many other Nichiren-based Buddhist schools and their efforts, the most notable being the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood under Nikken's leadership. As an institution, it is only the Soka Gakkai International that from its inception — envisioned and shaped by the successive presidents of the Soka Gakkai — claims its roots among the people and within society, reserving its honors for these roots, for each SGI member.

President Ikeda always says that each person's true happiness, whether they are SGI members or not, is the ultimate objective of his leadership. When individual happiness contributes to the betterment of society, the real purpose of Buddhism is being realized.

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