

**WE ARE WONDROUS COMRADES
A RECORD OF MY LIFE
BY DAISAKU IKEDA**

There was a time, about 30 years ago, when I often took photographs of the moon. It was my first subject as a photographer. I remember fondly how I used to press the shutter, thinking that this moon was shining down on our members as they returned home from their nighttime Gakkai meetings and activities.

The moon offers humanity a warning from its place in the heavens. “Calm the flames of foolish desire,” it tells us.

The great Buddhist poet Matrceta described Shakyamuni’s words — which were aimed at removing lust and hatred from the hearts of humanity — as being “like nectar flowing from the moon.” Years later the leading Indian scholar of the Lotus Sutra, Dr. Lokesh Chandra, compared this “nectar” — or *amrita* as it is known in Sanskrit — to the idea of soft power. He was kind enough to say, too, that I was bringing the essence of the Lotus Sutra into flower and, through my dialogues with leading thinkers around the world, causing the “rain of *amrita*” to fall.

At any rate, the world has long been missing the nectar that will truly revive humanity and nourish the human heart.

On the outskirts of the lovely city of Patna, India, is Bodhgaya, the place where Shakyamuni attained enlightenment. According to Buddhist tradition, when Shakyamuni was about to attain enlightenment, the demon Mara appeared with various weapons in an attempt to stop him. The demon is symbolic of the negative, anti-life forces within our lives. But Shakyamuni won out and became the “teacher of all humankind.” This is the famous episode of Shakyamuni’s defeat of Mara and his achievement of enlightenment.

A Buddhist text states, “As he [Mara]...fled away defeated with his following, and the great seer [Shakyamuni], the passion-free conqueror of the darkness of ignorance, remained victorious, the heavens shone with the moon like a maiden with a smile....”

If the image of the moon is one of pure-hearted devotion, the image of the sun is of powerful vitality. I remember when I got married, Josei Toda, my mentor and, in a way, father, composed a congratulatory poem for me:

*A husband and wife
Illuminated by
The rising morning sun.*

He also composed one for my wife:

*May you combine
The gentleness of the moonlight
With the strength of the Mystic Law.*

When our eldest son, Hiromasa, was born, I was with Mr. Toda. He was overjoyed at the news and wrote on a folding fan he had:

*A child is born
How joyous*

The spring moon.

It was April 28, and a hazy spring moon shone gently in the sky.

The moon has always brightened my life in its various shapes and hues.

The argument for nuclear deterrence is nothing but a delusion.

Many of those who survived the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have become Soka Gakkai members. And many of them did so specifically because they were inspired by the pacifist teachings of Buddhism and our practical activities to achieve world peace. When I hear the experiences of each of these members, I feel they have volunteered to be born into this world to carry out kosen-rufu.

Mr. Toda used to say that life is a great drama, and each of us is a Bodhisattva of the Earth, born according to our own wishes into our present circumstances. Here, we are striving to prove Buddhism's validity and advance kosen-rufu. "Have you ever heard of a Bodhisattva Sickness or a Bodhisattva Poverty? There is no such thing! We're all Bodhisattvas of the Earth!" He would say this with a resounding laugh, as he went among the ordinary people, many of whom were suffering from sickness and poverty, and encouraged them with an open, unassuming manner.

Wondrous comrades in faith working together in the garden of kosen-rufu, where all have gathered as a result of profound karmic ties — it is the ceaseless devotion of our members that has spread our movement around the world. I wholeheartedly praise the lives of noble achievement of our selfless members. That is the first thing I must write, when I put down a record of my life.

Mahatma Gandhi believed that the human spirit is stronger than nuclear weapons. He makes this insightful observation: "The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the [atomic] bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs even as violence cannot be by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through non-violence. Hatred can be overcome only by love." Gandhi's statement has much in common with Mr. Toda's declaration and the words of Dr. Linus Pauling that I quoted earlier (Nov. 12 *World Tribune*, p. 10). The argument for nuclear deterrence is nothing but a delusion.

What distinguishes Mr. Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons is that he addresses the need to combat the demonic nature within us. Conquering this demonic nature is a pressing task for all people — leaders and ordinary citizens alike. The effort of undertaking one's human revolution, or inner change, is the highest expression of soft power.

Only by ceaselessly putting into practice the principles we uphold can we achieve the Buddha land.

Mr. Toda was especially fond of the famous passage from Nichiren Daishonin's letter "Remonstrance with Bodhisattva Hachiman," in which he states: "The moon rises in the west and moves eastward, a sign of how the Buddhist teachings of India [Shakyamuni's Buddhism] spread in an easterly direction. The sun rises in the east, an auspicious sign of how the Buddhist teachings of Japan [Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism] are destined to return to the land of India" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 588). Mr. Toda often cited this passage in his writings. It was also a source of his profound conviction as a great leader of kosen-

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rufu. As his disciple, I have spent my life traveling around the world to make those words of the Daishonin a reality.

Today in India, as in other parts of the world, there are many Bodhisattvas of the Earth working for kosen-rufu. Buddhism has returned westward. Thirty-six miles south of New Delhi, we have opened the Soka Bodhi Tree Garden. Our selfless members are tending to work on the grounds, and an auditorium at the facility should be finished next year. We have planted bodhi trees for Mr. Makiguchi, Mr. Toda, every country of the world and every prefecture in Japan and ward in Tokyo. These trees are soaking up the sun and growing strong and tall into the future.

The bodhi tree is a member of the fig family. It has huge roots like a banyan that eventually grow powerful enough to crush rocks. Because it grows so large and has such a broad canopy, it is valued as a shade tree. Religious practitioners often contemplated and meditated under bodhi trees, and travelers took their rest there, too.

Bodhi trees usually stand alone. The bodhi tree at Bodhi-gaya under which Shakyamuni attained enlightenment was a huge tree, soaring to the heavens and providing abundant shade. But in our Soka Bodhi Tree Garden, we have planted a forest of bodhi trees. This has attracted local attention as a novel, interesting idea.

The bodhi tree is described in the Lotus Sutra and other scriptures as a jeweled tree, decorated with seven precious gems, which adorns a Buddha land. For example, in the “Life Span” chapter we find:

*This, my land, remains safe and tranquil,
constantly filled with heavenly and human beings.
The halls and pavilions in its gardens and groves
are adorned with various kinds of gems.
Jeweled trees abound in flowers and fruit
where living beings enjoy themselves at ease. (The Lotus Sutra, p. 230)*

When shall we see the day, through our movement for peace based on Mr. Toda’s final instructions, that the threat of nuclear weapons is eliminated? And the whole world resounds with people’s joyous laughter? Our wish is to build a Buddha land such as the Sutra describes. Only by ceaselessly putting into practice the principles we uphold can we achieve it.

The Daishonin writes: “Life is limited, and we must not begrudge it. What we should aspire to, after all, is the Buddha land” (“Aspiration for the Buddha Land,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 132). At our Headquarters General Meeting on May 3, 1958, shortly after Mr. Toda’s death, I announced a vision for the Soka Gakkai’s development of seven seven-year periods, which I dubbed the Seven Bells. I urged our members to advance toward that goal. At that time, we all read and engraved that passage from the Daishonin’s writings in our hearts.

Today, work continues on the auditorium in the Soka Bodhi Tree Garden. As in the Sutra passage “The halls and pavilions in its gardens and groves,” a forested garden “where living beings enjoy themselves at ease” will soon be completed. This is an auspicious augury of the spread of Buddhism throughout the world.

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