

## AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA WHAT IS KOSEN-RUFU?

**Remembering his mentor's death—and how his mentor dedicated his life to kosen-rufu—SGI President Ikeda asks, 'What is kosen-rufu?' He answers: 'It is the strengthening of the forces of the Buddha.... It means expanding the network of people who are dedicated to good and will fight for that cause with all their might from beginning to end.'**

The season has arrived once again when the Youth Cherry Tree in front of the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, is in full bloom.

Each year, as spring approaches and my thoughts turn to the imminent blossoming of the cherries, April 2, the anniversary of my mentor's death, comes round again.

When a human being confronts the death of the most important person in his life, when he gazes at the lifeless body, he grieves, he bestirs himself, and he is ready for anything.

Even after the memorable ceremony 42 years ago on March 16, 1958, Josei Toda continued to issue directives on organizational matters from the Rikyo-bo lodging, where he was residing during his stay at the head temple. His physical condition, however, deteriorated further.

On March 26, aware of his decline, he instructed his physician, a disciple and fellow Soka Gakkai member: "Please don't tell my family about my failing health. If you do, they will only worry, and it will serve no useful purpose. I know what's happening to me. Just contact them after I have died. It's meaningless to simply cause them worry. This is the theory of value."

Because of Mr. Toda's insistence, we were unable to notify his family about his condition until March 30. On that day, Director Satoru Izumi and I went to see his family in Tokyo and, after discussing the situation with them, it was agreed that we would have Mr. Toda hospitalized.

In the middle of the night, a little after 2:00 a.m. on April 1, Mr. Toda left the head temple and traveled from Numazu Station to Tokyo by train, occupying a sleeper berth. He was unable to get up, so we moved him as he was, resting in his bedding. Immediately after arriving at Tokyo Station early in the morning, he was admitted to the Nihon University Surugadai Hospital in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward.

The following day, April 2, learning that his condition had improved somewhat, his disciples rejoiced. But at 6:45 that evening, Mr. Toda's son delivered the news to me by phone at the Headquarters that his father had died.

Thus the curtain closed on the turbulent life of the 58-year-old Josei Toda, a great leader of kosen-rufu. To this day, I cannot describe the shock I felt on my mentor's death—it was as if the sun had set for all eternity, never to rise again.

Strangely, when the news came, all the directors and leaders of the young men's and young women's divisions were gathered at the Headquarters, the main bastion of the kosen-rufu movement. The all-important unity that the organization would need after Mr. Toda's death was right there.



When I think about it, Mr. Toda's every word and action was a final injunction designed

to instruct and guide us, his disciples, so that we could carry on the work of kosen-rufu when he was gone. His every word and action was our training for the future.

On March 22, a meeting of the top Soka Gakkai leaders had been held at the Rikyo-bo lodging. The leaders knelt in a semicircle around Mr. Toda, who sat up on his futon. His words, wrung out from the very depths of his being, flashed through the room like lightning: “The Soka Gakkai is my life. It must always remain an organization of pure faith that exists to accomplish kosen-rufu. We must never stand by and let our precious organization be polluted by impure hearts and minds!” All who heard that mighty lion’s roar can still hear it vividly to this day.

Mr. Toda was always saying that the Soka Gakkai was more important to him than his own life. During World War II, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai’s first president, was persecuted and thrown in prison by the military authorities. There, he eventually died. Many Soka Gakkai leaders abandoned their faith, and the organization crumbled to dust.

When Mr. Toda was released from prison on July 3, 1945, a few short weeks before the end of the war, he burned with the desire for revenge. He wanted revenge against the evil of authority that had killed his mentor in prison and plunged countless people into the depths of unspeakable suffering.

He knew that if he fought in earnest to achieve kosen-rufu, the three obstacles and four devils, as well as the three powerful enemies, were bound to arise in great number to hinder him. But if the Soka Gakkai were as weak and spiritless as it had been during the war, if it quailed and trembled before opposition, he would never avenge his mentor’s death.

He had to build an organization of people whose resolve and commitment would remain unshaken, irrespective of the great persecution and oppression that they might face. And he was determined to foster champions of justice who would be willing to put their lives on the line to fight staunchly against evil and injustice, never flinching at the fiercest storms.

This was the magnificent vow of Mr. Toda, who had transcended the fear of death.

People gathering together aimlessly, without purpose, cannot summon the necessary determination and power to effect true change. Consequently, they cannot hope to triumph in the struggle between the Buddha and negative forces. Mr. Makiguchi always used to say, “Rather a single lion than a thousand sheep!”

Looking into the darkness of the distant future, gazing at the unknown that lay far beyond the present, Mr. Toda personally began to raise, with painstaking care, one genuinely committed disciple after another. He went on to forge them into outstanding leaders of matchless inner strength, who would display their potential to the fullest, no matter how dark the times they faced in the Latter Day of the Law.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, “Nichiren’s followers are like roaring lions” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 997). He also says, “Although Nichiren and his followers are few, because they are different in body, but united in mind, they will definitely accomplish their great mission of widely propagating the Lotus Sutra” (WND, 618).

Embodying the Daishonin’s words, the SGI is an organization of individuals with lion-like courage, united together in strong solidarity—an organization with a noble mission to fight against the many unscrupulous, treacherous people who exist in this world. And to never be defeated by them. That is why the SGI has inherited the Buddha’s will and decree, and is thus uniquely qualified to carry out the goal of kosen-rufu, which no one else has achieved.



What is kosen-rufu? On one level, it is the strengthening of the forces of the Buddha, who act in accord with the Buddha's intent and decree, as they fight resolutely against the evils of hatred, trickery and intrigue. It means expanding the network of people who are dedicated to good and will fight for that cause with all their might from beginning to end.

When Mr. Toda became second Soka Gakkai president on May 3, 1951, he proclaimed that he would accomplish a membership of 750,000 households. At that time, the Soka Gakkai membership was only 3,000. When they heard this ambitious plan to increase the membership 250-fold, the members were stunned—they couldn't believe their ears.

However, achieving a valiant force of 750,000 households was a goal that Mr. Toda vowed in his heart to realize without fail to lay the eternal foundation for kosen-rufu in Japan. And in just under seven years, he reached his goal.

A month after Mr. Toda's death, High Priest Nichijun spoke of the profound significance of the number 750,000: "I believe that in the Latter Day of the Law, the Soka Gakkai, with President Toda in the vanguard, summoned them [the Bodhisattvas of the Earth] forth. In other words, I believe President Toda called forth these people in the number of 750,000, representing the five or seven characters of Myoho-enge-kyo."

I can't help but regard the achievement of a membership of 750,000 households as the purpose for Mr. Toda's appearance in this world. But Mr. Toda saw the accomplishment of this lifelong goal as just another step in his journey.

He kept his eyes ever fixed on the future, always moving toward it, never stopping for a moment. His most profound desire was to eliminate misery from the face of the earth, because worldwide kosen-rufu—that is, happiness and peace for all humanity—is the Buddha's command.

In December the year before he died, just before achieving his goal of 750,000 households, he said to me, "Our next goal is 2 million!" On Feb. 10, 1958, the day before his birthday, his goal had grown: "Do you think you can accomplish a membership of 3 million households in the next seven years?"

"Yes," I replied without hesitation, "I will do it. I feel even more determined!"

A short time later, in March, he told me happily that he had dreamt he had gone to Mexico. "Daisaku," he said, "the world is your stage. Go out into the world."

In accord with my mentor's wishes, on becoming third Soka Gakkai president, I opened the door to worldwide kosen-rufu. And in November 1962, I attained the membership goal of 3 million households. The moment that was reached, I raised my sights to an even higher achievement: "Next, 6 million households!" And four years later, in 1966, I achieved that goal.



Succeeding in one's struggles fills one with a sense of joy. Losing leaves one miserable. Therefore, if you're going to make an effort, it's important that you strive to succeed. Accomplishing one challenge is the departure for the next.

Mr. Toda was a great mentor dedicated to propagating the Law; he was a great leader. It was crucial, therefore, that his disciples also rise up as champions of kosen-rufu.

With that resolve, I have endured the unending onslaughts of the three powerful enemies, and I have won unprecedented victory for the Soka Gakkai. Nichiren Daishonin and all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout time and space are praising my efforts. Mr. Toda is smiling down on me, happy to see what I have accomplished. Nothing gives

me greater joy.

Be that as it may, the stage of kosen-rufu is vast, boundless. The world is waiting for us. The people of future ages are waiting for us.

My brave comrades! Let us advance! United with fresh determination, let us further strengthen our invincible force of lions and make the 21st century one in which truth and justice prevail!