

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S GUIDANCE ON MAY 3 AND THE SEVEN BELLS THE DAY WE START FRESH

May 3 is the day 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. (May 15, 1998, *World Tribune*, p. 9)

At a May 3, 1958, general meeting, SGI President Ikeda first shared how the Soka Gakkai's history to that point could be divided into seven bells—seven seven-year periods from 1930–79. And on May 3, 1966, President Ikeda shared his vision of a second set of seven bells—a new history for the Soka Gakkai beginning on May 3, 2001.

From 'The Human Revolution,' volume 12

Shin'ichi Yamamoto [Daisaku Ikeda] knew that Josei Toda had often mentioned that “the Soka Gakkai should advance a major step every seven years.” He also remembered Toda saying, “Let's sound a bell every seven years to mark our progress toward kosen-rufu. Let's aim to strike seven bells!”

[Just prior to the May 3, 1958, general meeting,] Shin'ichi tried to recall what had happened in the Soka Gakkai's history each seven years since its inception.

The organization had originally begun as the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Society for Value-Creating Education), founded by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda on Nov. 18, 1930. Then, seven years later, in 1937, it had kicked off its activities in earnest with a formal inauguration ceremony being held to mark the occasion. Seven years further on, on Nov. 18, 1944, President Makiguchi had died in prison. And seven years after that, on May 3, 1951, Josei Toda had become the Soka Gakkai's second president. Finally, after seven more years, having completely fulfilled all of his lifelong objectives, Toda had passed away.

This mysterious pattern moved Shin'ichi deeply and he pondered its significance:

If the Soka Gakkai's first bell for kosen-rufu had tolled in 1930, with the organization's initial formation, then the ringing of the fourth bell—the fourth seven-year period—would now have come to an end. If this was the case, then the forthcoming spring general meeting should initiate the loud and clear sounding of the fifth bell.

Within the ensuing seven-year period, he would see to it that a membership of 3 million households was achieved without fail, as President Toda had envisioned. The goal for the seven years following that—the period of the sixth bell's tolling—would in all likelihood be to achieve a membership of 6 million households. After that, they would have to realize the construction of the Sho-Hondo—the Grand Main Temple in which the Dai-Gohonzon would be enshrined—by 1972, the beginning of the seventh bell. This seventh bell, Shin'ichi mused, would finish tolling 21 years from now, in 1979, signaling the completion of a total of seven seven-year periods. By that time, he vowed, he would make kosen-rufu in Japan a tangible reality. This completion of seven bells would also mark the dawn of the full-fledged worldwide spread of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Shin'ichi

would then be 51. If his health would just hold out, then a new century, with all of its grand possibilities, would be awaiting him.

Shin'ichi's hopes and dreams for kosen-rufu were infinite. As he envisaged the brilliant future ahead of them, Shin'ichi decided to share his ideas for the Soka Gakkai's future goals, based on the concept of Seven Bells that Toda had so often spoken about, at the upcoming general meeting. He couldn't help sensing that his own lifetime mission lay in realizing these long-range goals.

Many Soka Gakkai leaders were senior to him. Nevertheless, he had been unable to find anyone among his comrades whom he could rely on as a solid pillar for the future of kosen-rufu.

On this day, Shin'ichi made an entry in his diary, his heart pounding with excitement: "May 3, that significant day, is just around the corner. Will this be the day on which I effectively take leadership of the Soka Gakkai? My heart is heavy—a pressing weight. I will powerfully strike the Fifth Bell. I will fight—to prove my mentor's greatness to the world. I will advance straight ahead. Resolved to exert my all, overcoming onslaughts of obstacles and hindrances. I am now beginning the most essential period of my youth" (February 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 42).

From SGI President Ikeda's Dec. 14, 2000, speech

People around the world are waiting for the vibrant sound of the bell of peace that will signal the dawn of a new century, a new millennium. A weak, doleful sound will not rouse people. What we need are the clarion tones of the bell of philosophy, which will awaken all people to the supremely noble entity of life that lies dormant within them.

Where are the bells that will gather people together in harmony and unity, and lead them in the direction of peace, hope, happiness and prosperity? Where are the powerful, dynamic, thrilling reverberations of joy? Thinking men and women around the world have begun to seek them in the SGI's resonant bells of humanism.

As you know, we have advanced over the years in the rhythm of the Seven Bells, ringing a new bell every seven years. The number seven corresponds to the seven characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The first Seven Bells started in 1930—the year the Soka Gakkai was founded—and continued through 1979. And from next year, 2001, having passed the milestone of the Soka Gakkai's 70th anniversary, we begin the second Seven Bells, which will continue through 2050.

At a representatives conference on May 17, 1997, in Kansai, I shared the following grand vision for our movement in the 21st, 22nd and even 23rd centuries:

- That, during the second Seven Bells in the first half of the 21st century, we will secure the foundation for peace in Asia and throughout the world.

I have prayed and continued to make steady, patient efforts to achieve this. My recent trip to Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong was another step toward realizing this vision for the 21st century.

- That, during the third Seven Bells in the second half of the 21st century, we will see the philosophy of the sanctity of life established as the spirit of the age and the world.

- That, during the fourth Seven Bells in the first half of the 22nd century, an indestructible foundation for world peace will be laid.

• That, based on that foundation, during the fifth Seven Bells in the second half of the 22nd century, we will see the brilliant flowering of an age of humanism.

When that happens, we can move on to the sixth and seventh Seven Bells. From the middle of the 23rd century, when in 2253 we celebrate the 1,000th anniversary of the establishment of Nichiren Dai-shonin's teaching, a new phase in our movement will begin. (Feb. 2 *World Tribune*, p. 6)

MAY 3, 1951

When Josei Toda became second president of the Soka Gakkai on May 3, 1951, he proclaimed that he would accomplish a membership of 750,000 households. And in just under seven years, he reached his goal.

The day of "casting off the transient and revealing the true" for the Soka Gakkai was May 3, 1951, when Josei Toda became the second Soka Gakkai president.

At that time, President Toda made his great declaration, vowing to achieve a membership of 750,000 households. In response to his impassioned call, the entire membership of the Soka Gakkai became filled with the great awareness: "We are Bodhisattvas of the Earth!" "We are the true followers of the original Buddha!"

Around that day, President Toda said many times: "Looking back, from around the spring of 1943, President Makiguchi was always saying that the Soka Gakkai 'has to cast off the transient and reveal the true.' Unless we actualized the principle of 'casting off the transient and revealing the true,' he said, something was wrong with us. Everyone just stood around perplexed, not knowing what to do."

In the end, Mr. Toda carried out President Makiguchi's spirit. The bond of mentor and disciple is the key to "casting off the transient and revealing the true."

We are all children of the original Buddha. There is not one of us who does not have an important mission to fulfill. There are no members of the SGI who do not possess the true identity of a Bodhisattva of the Earth. (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 2, pp. 58–59)

MAY 3, 1960

When Daisaku Ikeda became third president of the Soka Gakkai on May 3, 1960, he proclaimed that he would accomplish a membership of 3 million households. And in less than three years, he reached his goal.

From 'The Human Revolution,' volume 12

An explosion of joy and a storm of applause rocked the auditorium [on May 3, 1960]. It was the day—the moment—they had all been waiting for. Now, in reply to their long and cherished hope, before them stood their new president, Shin'ichi Yamamoto [Daisaku Ikeda]. The air was filled with anticipation of a great, fresh surge of progress toward kosen-rufu. Hearts pounding with excitement, the members silently awaited Shin'ichi's words:

"Though I am young, from this day I will take leadership as a representative of President Toda's disciples and advance with you another step toward the substantive realization of

kosen-rufu....”

His voice resounded with strength and dignity. It was a lion’s roar, signaling a new dawn for the spread of the Law. The members’ applause, expressing their desire to share in this struggle, echoed through the auditorium like surging waves of joy. The moment marked a powerful new departure into the vast and open seas of world peace and human happiness. (June 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 42)