

The History of the Soka Gakkai

(1) The Founders of the Soka Gakkai

The Soka Gakkai has its origins in the mentor-disciple relationship that existed between the organization's first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and its second president, Josei Toda.

Makiguchi was born on June 6, 1871, in a small port community on Japan's northwest coast, in what is today Kashiwazaki City, Niigata Prefecture. He spent much of his youth studying and working in Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost major island. At eighteen, he entered a teachers' training facility and, after graduating, became an elementary school teacher.

While a student, Makiguchi had developed a deep interest in geography. As a teacher, he continued to refine his ideas on the subject and on how best to teach it. In 1901, he left Hokkaido for Tokyo, and two years later published his first major work, *The Geography of Human Life*. In it, he rejects the traditional method of studying geography through rote memorization. He instead offers a systematic approach to education based on the relationship human life shares with nature and society.

Before becoming principal of Tosei Elementary School in 1913, Makiguchi worked a variety of jobs editing educational periodicals, teaching foreign students, developing textbooks and establishing correspondence courses for young women unable to receive a formal education.

On February 11, 1900, Josei Toda was born on Japan's central west coast in what today is Kaga City, Ishikawa Prefecture. Two years later, his family moved to the west coast of Hokkaido to Atsuta Village. After graduating from Atsuta Higher Elementary School (equivalent to middle school), he studied independently while working, eventually obtaining a provisional teaching license. In June 1918, Toda became an associate elementary school teacher.

Josei Toda Encounters His Mentor

Between 1913 and 1932, Makiguchi refined his educational theories and their practical applications while continuing his career as a principal. He advocated community studies in which students learn about and appreciate their communities. And he pursued ways to assure that disadvantaged children received equal opportunities in education, going beyond the classroom to care for his students. He bought lunches, for example, for students who couldn't afford their own and, on cold days, welcomed them with hot water to warm their hands.

In 1920, Toda visited Tokyo, where he was introduced to Makiguchi. The two discussed at length Japan's future as well as educational practice and research. A short while later, Toda moved to Tokyo and taught at Nishimachi Elementary, where Makiguchi was principal. Toda worked with and supported Makiguchi for the next twenty-three years.

The Value-Creating Education Society

Toda followed his mentor to Mikasa Elementary School. Then in 1923, when Makiguchi was transferred to his next school, Toda established Jishu Gakkan, a private preparatory school for students taking the competitive middle school examinations. Here, Makiguchi freely pursued his research and developed his educational theories.

When Makiguchi encountered Nichiren Buddhism, he saw that the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin resonated deeply with his ideals. In 1928, at fifty-seven, Makiguchi converted to Nichiren Buddhism. Toda followed suit.

Fully supporting Makiguchi's goal of publishing his educational theory, Toda edited and organized Makiguchi's years of notes on his educational research, practices and experience. Toda even invested his own funds to publish Makiguchi's work.

On November 18, 1930, with Toda's dedicated assistance, Makiguchi published the first of four volumes of *Soka kyoikugaku taikei* (The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy). Tsunesaburo Makiguchi is listed as the author, Josei Toda, the publisher, and the publishing entity as "Soka Kyoiku Gakkai" (Value-Creating Education Society)—the predecessor of the Soka Gakkai (Value Creation Society). This publication date is also considered the day of the Soka Gakkai's founding.

Makiguchi in this work uses the word *soka*, which means value creation—a term derived from discussions between Toda and Makiguchi. Soka encompasses Makiguchi's long-developed theory that the purpose of education and of life is to create happiness, and in order to do that one must know how to create value. He writes: "We begin with the recognition that humans cannot create matter. We can, however, create value. Creating value is, in fact, our very humanity. When we praise persons for their 'strength of character,' we are really acknowledging their superior ability to create value."¹

Practicing Nichiren Buddhism

In 1937, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai began meeting regularly as an organization of educators who supported the theory of Soka education. But it quickly extended membership to noneducators and developed into an organization of people of diverse backgrounds and occupations. Their common interest lie in applying the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism to transforming their lives and Japanese society.

Eventually, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai became a society of lay practitioners of the Nichiren Shoshu school. However, instead of depending on priests as other lay Buddhist organizations did, Makiguchi and Toda were fully responsible for running all meetings and giving guidance in faith. The Soka Gakkai was, from its inception, an organization of lay believers not restricted by the priesthood's formalities.

Since its establishment, the practice of Soka Gakkai members has been based on the original intent of Nichiren Daishonin and of Buddhism itself: helping people realize genuine happiness through practice and faith, and striving for the peace and prosperity of society. In the 1930s and early 1940s, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai grew steadily. Through propagation efforts, discussion meetings in members' homes and occasional larger gatherings, it reached a membership of about three thousand households.

A Battle Against Militarism

By the mid-1930s, the Japanese government had begun placing restrictions on its citizens as a way to enforce support of its war effort. It aimed to strengthen public solidarity and nationalism by requiring citizens to uphold the state religion, Shinto, and its belief in the divinity of the Emperor and the nation. Makiguchi and Toda attracted official scrutiny by refusing to compromise the humane

principles of Nichiren Buddhism and by pointing out the erroneous thinking, rooted in Shintoism, that was leading the country into war. The repressive Special Higher Police began to keep Soka Kyoiku Gakkai discussion meetings under surveillance.

By early 1940, religious organizations faced increasing pressure to uphold Shinto and incorporate it into their beliefs. In June 1943, Nichiren Shoshu priests, fearing government sanctions, accepted a Shinto talisman and instructed the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai leaders to direct its members to do the same.

The priests' actions directly contradicted the intent of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin. Instead of courageously protecting the Buddhist Law, they compromised it in deference to the Shinto belief system invoked to promote war. In fact, the priesthood publicly praised Japan's declaration of war on the United States and Great Britain.

In contrast, despite mounting pressures, Makiguchi and Toda refused to accept the Shinto talisman and resolutely upheld Nichiren's spirit to protect the correct Buddhist teaching.

On July 6, 1943, Makiguchi was arrested while attending a discussion meeting in Izu. On the same day, Toda was arrested in Tokyo, along with twenty-one other Soka Kyoiku Gakkai leaders. They were charged with treason and violating the Peace Preservation Law, which targeted dissent against the government. Among those arrested, only Makiguchi and Toda refused to compromise their beliefs throughout the intense interrogations.

President Toda's Profound Awakening

In prison, Makiguchi continued to share Nichiren Buddhism even with his interrogators, pointing out the error of Japan's religious and war policies. Never submitting to their demands, he upheld his conviction in Nichiren Buddhism with his entire being.

Toda's greatest concern was for his elderly mentor. He prayed fervently: "I'm still young. My mentor is seventy-three. Please, if they'll release him even one day sooner, let me take the blame for both of us."²

From early 1944, Toda earnestly chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in his jail cell, repeatedly reading the Lotus Sutra. He pondered the meaning of a passage that perplexed him in the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra—the prologue to the Lotus Sutra—that describes the essence of the Buddha with thirty-four negations. After deep prayer and contemplation, he came to the realization that the Buddha is essentially life itself; this life of the Buddha exists within himself and all people, as well as in the vast universe.

Then, in November, after chanting more determinedly than ever, he awakened to the truth that he himself was among the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. In the Lotus Sutra, these are the bodhisattvas entrusted with the mission to spread the sutra's teaching in the Latter Day of the Law, the impure age after Shakyamuni Buddha's passing that corresponds with the present.

On November 18, 1944, Makiguchi died of malnutrition in the Tokyo Detention House at age seventy-three. His death coincides with the anniversary of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai's founding. Undeterred until the end, he lived in accord with Nichiren's teachings, dedicated to restoring the Daishonin's spirit to save all people from suffering by spreading Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

His disciple, Toda, through the enlightenment he experienced in prison, awakened to his mission as a leader of kosen-rufu. This profound awakening became the starting point for the Soka Gakkai's development in the postwar era.

After the war, at Makiguchi's memorial in 1946, Toda expressed his gratitude to his mentor: "In your vast and boundless compassion, you let me accompany you even to prison. As a result, I could read with my entire being the passage from the Lotus Sutra 'those persons

who had heard the Law dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, constantly reborn in company with their teachers.”³ The benefit of this was coming to know the essential purpose of a Bodhisattva of the Earth, and to absorb with my very life even a small degree of the sutra’s meaning. Could there be any greater happiness than this?”⁴

The passage “those persons . . . reborn in company with their teachers” signifies the deep bond between mentor and disciple who always strive together for the happiness of humanity. Josei Toda’s words express his deep sense of gratitude toward his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi.

(2) The Development of the Soka Gakkai in Postwar Japan

Josei Toda was released from prison on July 3, 1945. Though physically frail, he burned with a fierce resolve to rebuild the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai, which had virtually dissolved during World War II. From early 1946, Toda began lecturing on the Lotus Sutra and resumed discussion meetings and propagation efforts. He renamed the organization the Soka Gakkai (Value Creation Society), dropping the word *kyoiku*, meaning “education” or “pedagogy,” reflecting a broader commitment to the peace, happiness and prosperity of society.

Daisaku Ikeda’s Early Years

Daisaku Ikeda was born on January 2, 1928, in Ota Ward, Tokyo. Beginning in 1937, his four older brothers were drafted into Japan’s military, which was waging a war of aggression in China. He was thirteen when the Pacific War broke out in 1941. Though struggling

with tuberculosis, he supported his family by working at a munitions factory.

Ikeda was painfully aware of the tragedies of war. His family lost two homes in air raids. His eldest brother, Kiichi, on leave from the warfront, shared accounts of cruelty perpetrated by Japan's military that deeply saddened and angered Ikeda. When Kiichi died in battle, the pain deepened, compounded by his parents' grief.

When the war ended, Ikeda, in his late teens, sought meaning amid the pain and chaos of a devastated Japan. The values esteemed during wartime had proven to be fraudulent; like many youth his age, he was tormented by a spiritual void.

Ikeda attended his first Soka Gakkai discussion meeting on August 14, 1947. When introduced to Toda, Ikeda posed questions about life, patriotism, the emperor and the meaning of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Toda's answers were to the point, logical and without pretense, expressing a powerful conviction. *How succinctly he answers!* Ikeda thought. *There is no confusion in him. I think I can believe and follow this man.*⁵

Ikeda respected the fact that Toda had been imprisoned for his refusal to compromise his convictions in the face of pressure from Japan's militarist government. As their dialogue concluded, Ikeda asked if he could study under Toda.⁶

Ten days later, on August 24, he joined the Soka Gakkai, vowing to regard Toda as his mentor. In January 1949, two years after beginning his Buddhist practice, he was hired at Toda's publishing company as the editor of a youth magazine.

Daisaku Ikeda Fully Supports His Mentor

In July 1949, the Soka Gakkai launched its Buddhist study magazine, *Daibyakurenge*. Later that year, the postwar economy worsened and the publishing company foundered. The youth magazine Ikeda had

been editing was suspended. He quickly switched gears to devote himself fully to building up Toda's new credit association, which soon faced severe setbacks. He gave everything to support his mentor in business and in private matters, as well as in his responsibility to lead the Soka Gakkai.

In 1950, economic disorder intensified, seriously impairing Toda's entrepreneurial efforts. Though Toda's businesses had financed the initial growth of the Soka Gakkai, as his enterprises faltered and his debt grew, some members—especially those connected to his unsuccessful credit association—lost confidence in him and the Soka Gakkai. On August 23, the credit association was suspended. To avoid burdening the organization with his financial struggles, Toda resigned as general director of the Soka Gakkai on August 24.

One by one, Toda's employees left, but he remained steadfast, devoting his entire being to repaying the company's massive debt. Ikeda fervently supported him, determined to help Toda become financially solvent and to see him become president of the Soka Gakkai. Toda began privately tutoring his young disciple, who a year earlier had quit night school to fully support his mentor, in a variety of academic subjects and in Buddhism.

Toda shared his vision for the future with Ikeda. His goals ranged from starting a newspaper for the Soka Gakkai to founding a university. In time, both the newspaper *Seikyo Shimbun* (1951) and Soka University (1971) emerged as the fruit of their joint efforts.

Josei Toda Becomes Second President of the Soka Gakkai

Josei Toda and Daisaku Ikeda struggled intensely between 1950 and 1951 to turn Toda's financial situation around. Toda resolved: "Whatever hardship may befall me, I must put it aside. This I will not do for my own sake but for the cause of fulfilling my mission.

I must not by any means leave even a single teaching of Nichiren Daishonin's unfulfilled.”⁷

During this tumultuous time, Ikeda strove to fulfill his deepest wish—that his mentor be freed from his constricting financial situation and become president of the Soka Gakkai.

Within a year, Toda's financial difficulties were behind him, though he and Ikeda suffered from ongoing health troubles. Ikeda describes the struggles of that period as “the deciding factors of the Soka Gakkai's development and existence today.”⁸

On May 3, 1951, Josei Toda became the second Soka Gakkai president. In his inaugural address, he vowed to accomplish a membership of 750,000 households. At the time, active Soka Gakkai families numbered approximately three thousand. Many in attendance could not comprehend how his goal would be achieved. Toda, however, had already begun preparations for a widespread propagation movement and was so confident that he told the members, “If my goal should not be attained by the end of my life, you need not hold a funeral for me, but just throw my remains into the sea off Shinagawa, all right?”⁹

Just prior to becoming president, on April 20, Toda launched the Soka Gakkai's newspaper, *Seikyo Shimbun*. He formed the women's division on June 10, the young men's division on July 11 and the young women's division on July 19.

In January 1952, Toda assigned Ikeda responsibility for the organization's Kamata Chapter. Ikeda devoted himself to meeting personally with and encouraging many members, and the following month, the chapter's membership increased by an unprecedented 201 households.

Toda firmly believed that diligent and correct study of Nichiren's writings was indispensable for the progress of kosen-rufu. He commissioned former high priest and Nichiren Buddhist scholar Nichiko Hori to help compile all of Nichiren's existing writings.

Gosho zenshu (The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin) was published in April 1952, marking the 700th anniversary of the establishment of Nichiren's teachings. This made it possible for Soka Gakkai members to make the writings and teachings of Nichiren Daishonin a solid foundation for their Buddhist practice. In September, the Japanese government formally recognized the Soka Gakkai as a religious organization.

Ikeda, in the meantime, took on various organizational responsibilities. In January 1953, he became leader of the young men's division First Corps, and in April, he was appointed acting Bunkyo Chapter leader. The following March, he became the Soka Gakkai youth division leader.

Struggles With Authority

Nichiren Daishonin's determination to establish "the correct teaching for the peace of the land" defined his lifelong battle for the happiness of all people and realizing peace in society. Based on that same spirit, and to confront corruption in politics that caused people suffering and had led to religious repression, the Soka Gakkai for the first time endorsed candidates for the national parliament in April 1955.

Daisaku Ikeda led propagation efforts in the Kansai region, which resulted in Osaka Chapter growing by an unprecedented 11,111 households in the single month of May 1956. In July, Ikeda was put in charge of the Soka Gakkai election effort in Osaka.

Three candidates sponsored by the organization in Osaka won seats in the national elections. With this victory, the Soka Gakkai came to be regarded as an influential popular movement. At the same time, it faced heightened opposition from various groups that felt threatened by its success. For example, in June 1957, Ikeda went to Hokkaido, where the Yubari branch of the Japan Coal Miners Union, which had strong links to the country's Communist Party, had

attempted to oppress and intimidate local coal miners who belonged to the Soka Gakkai. He protested such treatment, taking action through debate and dialogue to resolve the problem.

Immediately after this, on July 3, 1957, the Osaka police arrested and detained Ikeda, falsely charging him with election fraud, though other Soka Gakkai members had naively committed the infractions.

Ikeda was interrogated for fifteen days. Prosecutors threatened to arrest Toda if Ikeda did not confess to the charges. Toda's health was failing, and Ikeda could not bear the thought of his mentor returning to jail. To protect his mentor, Ikeda conceded. On July 17, he was indicted and released from the Osaka Detention Center. After a trial that continued for four years, he was found innocent of all charges on January 25, 1962.

Entrusting the Future of Kosen-rufu to the Youth

On September 8, 1957, Josei Toda passionately and publicly condemned all use of nuclear weapons, calling for their immediate abolition. Because of the mass death and devastation brought about by nuclear weapons, Toda denounced those who would use them as “devils” and “evil incarnate.” He vowed to defeat the dark tendency in human life that would justify their use. This declaration set the tone for the Soka Gakkai's future peace movement.¹⁰

In December, the organization's membership reached 750,000 households—Toda's ultimate goal. In March 1958, the Grand Lecture Hall, donated by the Soka Gakkai, was completed at the head temple, Taiseki-ji, near Mount Fuji.

On March 16, six thousand youth assembled from throughout Japan at Taiseki-ji. At this gathering, though weakened by illness, Toda boldly passed the responsibility for accomplishing kosen-rufu to the youth, declaring, “The Soka Gakkai is the king of the religious world.”¹¹ March 16 is celebrated today as Kosen-rufu Day.

On April 2, Toda died at age fifty-eight. Having drawn upon his enlightenment in prison as a source of strength, he had succeeded in rebuilding the Soka Gakkai and creating a solid foundation for kosen-rufu. His legacy includes the numerous successors he raised, among them the future third president of the Soka Gakkai, his closest disciple, Daisaku Ikeda.

(3) Establishing a Worldwide Network of Buddhist Humanism

On May 3, 1960, Daisaku Ikeda was inaugurated third president of the Soka Gakkai. He declared, “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.”¹²

Determined to fulfill second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s wish to spread Nichiren Buddhism worldwide, on October 2, 1960, five months after becoming president, he visited nine cities in North and South America. In each country he visited, President Ikeda encouraged the Soka Gakkai members living there, most of whom were Japanese immigrants.

In New York, President Ikeda and his party visited the United Nations headquarters. There, he contemplated the role and potential of that international body in creating peace in the world. He has continued since then to support the United Nations and offer, through proposals and dialogues, a vision of the vital role it can play as an agent representing the will of ordinary people around the world for peace and working toward that common aim. In 1983, President Ikeda wrote his first peace proposal to the United Nations, offering a

perspective and detailed suggestions on issues such as nuclear abolition, the environment and strengthening the United Nations. He has submitted a peace proposal each year since.

In January 1961, his travels included a visit to India. During the trip, and particularly at Bodh Gaya—the place where Shakyamuni attained enlightenment—he pondered creating an institution dedicated to researching Asian philosophy and culture as a means to promote dialogue and peace. The following year, he established the Institute of Oriental Philosophy.

In 1963, he founded the Min-On Concert Association, dedicated to fostering peace through cultural and artistic exchange. He writes: “Cultured people value peace and lead others to a world of beauty, hope and bright tomorrows. Tyrannical authority, on the other hand, only leads people to darkness—the opposite of art.

“For that reason, nurturing and spreading an appreciation for art and culture are crucial in creating peace.”¹³

President Ikeda traveled extensively throughout Japan to encourage Soka Gakkai members. He focused on raising the next generation of leaders, conducting lectures on Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings for student division representatives. In June 1964, he created the high school division and in 1965, the junior high school and elementary school divisions.

In 1965, he began writing his serialized novel *The Human Revolution*, which details President Toda’s struggle to reconstruct the Soka Gakkai after being released from prison at the end of World War II. This and its ongoing sequel, *The New Human Revolution*, chronicle the history of the Soka Gakkai spanning eighty years.

Forging Peace Through Dialogue

To create pathways to peace, President Ikeda often exchanges views with cultural, political, educational and artistic leaders from around

the world—an estimated sixteen hundred such encounters thus far. President Ikeda's best known dialogue, with eminent British historian Arnold J. Toynbee, took place over two-and-a-half years in the early 1970s. Their discussion opened many doors for him to meet and exchange views with notable thinkers over the ensuing years, including former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, Nobel Peace laureates Linus Pauling and Betty Williams, futurist Hazel Henderson and many others.

In 1974, when he visited China, President Ikeda saw people living in fear of Soviet attack. He soon after visited the Soviet Union to confirm with its leaders that it would not attack China. He returned to China to convey this assurance. In one year, President Ikeda engaged in intensive dialogues with political figures of these two countries to nurture bonds of trust and plant seeds of peace.

Leon Strijak of Moscow University interpreted for President Ikeda's 1974 meeting with Soviet Premier Aleksey Kosygin. He recalls: "The subject matter of the Ikeda-Kosygin meeting was quite different from that normally discussed by Japanese delegations visiting Moscow. They spoke about war and peace, about war and its victims and how to prevent war."¹⁴

The following January, President Ikeda flew to the United States, where he spoke with leaders who could move the world toward peace. That same month, he traveled to Guam, and there participated in events culminating in the founding of the Soka Gakkai International on January 26. He writes: "The SGI was established in the midst of my efforts to bring the United States, China and the Soviet Union closer together through dialogue in a world shrouded by the dark clouds of the Cold War.

"History teaches us the bitter lesson that coercive balances of power and attempts to resolve conflicts through military force only create greater division. Choosing dialogue is the key to building peace and achieving a victory of our inner humanity.

“Since the founding of the SGI, this truth has continued to ring out vibrantly across the globe as the cry of world citizens.”¹⁵

Former chair of the China-Japan Friendship Association, Sun Pinghua, said of President Ikeda’s diplomatic efforts: “The ‘golden bridge [of trust]’ erected by President Ikeda has a peculiar construction. The more people cross it, the more solid it becomes.”¹⁶

Separation From Nichiren Shoshu

The Soka Gakkai, from its inception in 1930, was the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood’s primary benefactor. The Soka Gakkai’s growth after World War II transformed Nichiren Shoshu from a poverty-stricken and obscure Buddhist school into one of the largest religious bodies in Japan.

As Soka Gakkai membership grew during the 1970s, President Ikeda began to point out in speeches and lectures that, from the perspective of Nichiren Daishonin’s writings, lay believers should in no way be considered inferior to priests. Increasing reports of priests acting in an authoritarian, condescending and even abusive manner toward the laity prompted his actions. Lay members complained of mounting pressure to offer large financial donations to the priests while, at the same time, being treated disrespectfully. President Ikeda tried to engage the priests in dialogue about these concerns.

Many priests felt threatened by his public assertions and his considerable influence. A lawyer for the Soka Gakkai attempted to undermine President Ikeda by exploiting these fears, feeding the priests false reports about the Soka Gakkai’s supposed ill intentions. Tensions grew in a climate of accusation and counteraccusation.

In an essay about that intense period, President Ikeda writes: “I agonized over the situation. I knew I had to prevent further suffering from being inflicted on our members and to protect them from the persecution of the priests. Mr. Toda had said that the Soka Gakkai

was more precious to him than his own life. The Soka Gakkai is an organization that follows the Buddha's intent and decree to the letter; it is dedicated to the happiness of the people, the propagation of Buddhism and world peace.

“My resolve to take all the blame upon myself and to resign the presidency gradually grew firm within me.”¹⁷

President Ikeda stepped down as president on April 24, 1979. The priesthood set harsh restrictions, forbidding him from addressing Soka Gakkai members at the organization's gatherings and from contributing articles to the organ publications.

Despite these restrictions, he found ways to encourage members. He penned short poems and calligraphy for individuals. He traveled throughout the country, visiting members in their homes. And he took what had seemed a debilitating setback as an opportunity to fulfill an even grander vision—to fortify the SGI and its mission to establish a solid network for building peace throughout the world.

The conflict between the Soka Gakkai and the priesthood eventually seemed to be settled for a time, and President Ikeda, as honorary president of the Soka Gakkai and SGI president, again fulfilled a more public role as a Buddhist leader. In the ensuing years, however, Nikken, the sixty-seventh high priest, conspired to disband the Soka Gakkai or bring it under direct control of the priesthood.

After making public a list of groundless complaints against the lay organization as a pretext, the priesthood refused repeated requests from the Soka Gakkai for dialogue. Unable to win Soka Gakkai members to its side as Nikken had planned, the priesthood excommunicated the entire organization in November 1991.

Nikken had hoped that excommunication would cause large numbers of members to abandon the SGI and follow the priesthood, but only a very small percentage did so. The vast majority remained with the SGI, viewing the excommunication as liberation from an archaic and oppressive institution. The SGI now had the freedom

to pursue a more modern and humanistic approach to applying Nichiren Buddhism to the conditions of global society and creating bonds of trust and friendship throughout the world.

Building an Everlasting Foundation for Peace

Daisaku Ikeda, now eighty-five, has continued to pursue dialogue with philosophers, scientists and world leaders, as well as submitting annual peace proposals to the United Nations. Numerous institutions, governments and organizations have acknowledged him as a genuine builder of peace.

He continuously encourages members to develop and strengthen themselves through Buddhist practice so that they may establish happiness and peace in their lives and their communities. And he continues writing daily installments of *The New Human Revolution*, as well as messages, essays and ongoing study series such as “Learning From the Writings of Nichiren Daishonin: The Teachings for Victory.” He constantly encourages youth around the world to share the same sense of responsibility he has, to build an everlasting foundation for world peace grounded in the most humane Buddhist principles.

For more than six decades, President Ikeda has kept the vision of his mentor, Josei Toda, close to his heart. He says: “Mr. Toda was focused on the world. He was thinking about humanity as a whole. He once said earnestly: ‘Nichiren Buddhism is like the light of the sun. By embracing faith in the Mystic Law, countless Soka Gakkai members have risen up from the depths of despair and vibrantly revitalized their lives.’ The Mystic Law makes it possible for humankind to transform its karma. It is here that we find the mission of the Soka Gakkai, an organization dedicated to building peace.”¹⁸

Notes

1. *Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Education for Creative Living*, edited by Dayle M. Bethel and translated by Alfred Birnbaum (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1994), pp. 5–6.
2. *The Human Revolution*, p. 90.
3. *The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, p. 178.
4. *The Human Revolution*, p. 1967.
5. See *ibid.*, 232.
6. See *ibid.*, 224–32.
7. *Ibid.*, 529.
8. See *ibid.*, 539–40.
9. *Ibid.*, 563.
10. See *ibid.*, 485–87.
11. *Ibid.*, 1895.
12. *Ibid.*, 1971.
13. *Discussions on Youth*, second edition, p. 169.
14. Kimura, Keiko, *Daisaku Ikeda Up Close* documentary (Owners Promotion, Inc.: Tokyo, 2001).
15. January 1, 2009, *World Tribune*, p. 4
16. Sun, Pinghua, “Meiyo kaicho, chunichi yuko kyokai no Sonheika kaicho to kandan” (President Ikeda’s Dialogue With Sun Pinghua, Chair of the China-Japan Friendship Association), July 20, 1990, *Seikyo Shimbun*, p. 1.
17. March–April 2009 *Living Buddhism*, pp. 27–28.
18. March 20, 2009, *World Tribune*, p. 4.

