

# Study Guide for Level 1

## Basics of Nichiren Buddhism Study Exam

Following is an abbreviated overview of major topics found in *The Basics of Nichiren Buddhism for the New Era of Worldwide Kosen-rufu*.

It is important to study the full text of the material in the booklet.

If you have any questions, feel free to email the  
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## The Basics of Nichiren Buddhism for the New Era of Worldwide Kosen-rufu

### The Basics of Nichiren Buddhism

#### Chapter 1: The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin —Nichiren Daishonin’s Life & Teachings—

In reading this section, please note the following explanation from *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*: “In reckoning a person’s age, the Japanese, from ancient times until as recently as 1950, considered an infant to be one year old at birth, and added a year with the passing of each New Year’s Day. All ages given in this book follow that system” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Volume 1, pp. xxxiv–xxxv).

#### **1. The Life of Nichiren Daishonin**

##### **1) Early Years**

- family background
- vow at age 12 to become the wisest person in Japan
- entered the priesthood at age 16 and attained “a jewel of wisdom as bright as the morning star”
- Study of Buddhism
- Confirmation that the Lotus Sutra is the foremost teaching and Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the fundamental Law and essence of the sutra
- Mission to spread Nam-myoho-renge-kyo

## **2) The Declaration of the Establishment of His Teaching**

- Proclamation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo on April 28, 1253
- adopted the name Nichiren (literally, Sun Lotus); reaction by authorities; well-known disciples converted to his teaching

## **3) Submitting the Treatise “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” and Encountering Persecution**

- Treatise submitted to Hojo Tokiyori
- The cause of successive calamities lay with people’s slander of the correct teaching of Buddhism and their reliance on erroneous doctrines
- Matsubagayatsu Persecution, Izu Exile, and Komatsubara Persecution

## **4) The Tatsunokuchi Persecution and “Casting Off the Transient and Revealing the True”**

- Threat of attack from Mongol empire
- Nichiren Daishonin’s remonstrations
- Challenged Ryokan in prayer for rain
- Daishonin arrested by Hei no Saemon-no-jo and armed soldiers
- Tatsunokuchi Persecution (Sept. 12, 1271)
- Nichiren Daishonin cast off his transient status, revealing his original, true identity as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law

## **5) The Sado Exile**

- Exile to Sado Island; Tsukahara Debate
- Gained followers such as Abutsu-bo and his wife, the lay nun Sennichi
- Composed important works in exile on Sado Island, especially “The Opening of the Eyes,” identified himself as the votary of the Lotus Sutra and revealed his identity as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law (the object of devotion in terms of the Person)
- “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind” presents the object of devotion of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to be embraced by all people in the Latter Day of the Law in order to attain Buddhahood (the object of devotion in terms of the Law)
- Pardoned, returned to Kamakura (Mar. 1274)
- Remonstrated with Hei no Saemon-no-jo and prediction of Mongol invasion by year’s end, his third remonstrated; Mongol fleet attacked Kyushu, two predictions of internal strife and foreign invasion came true.

## **6) Taking Up Residence at Mount Minobu**

- Daishonin left Kamakura for Mount Minobu (May 1274)
- Composed many major works,
- Fostered disciples for future of kosen-rufu; wrote many letters to followers.

## **7) The Atsuhara Persecution and the Purpose of the Daishonin's Appearance in This World**

- Nikko Shonin led propagation efforts in Fuji District of Suruga Province, convincing many Tendai priests and followers
- Prompted harassment and persecution by local Tendai temples
- 20 farmers who were Daishonin's followers were arrested on trumped-up charges and taken to Kamakura (Sept. 21, 1279)
- Three brothers Jinshiro, Yagoro and Yarokuro were executed
- Ordinary people not begrudging their lives; in "On Persecutions Befalling the Sage" (Oct. 1, 1279), in the 27<sup>th</sup> year since proclaiming his teaching, Nichiren Daishonin refers to the purpose of his advent in this world.

## **8) The Daishonin's Death and Nikko Shonin's Succession**

- The Daishonin, in declining health, left Minobu (Sept. 8, 1282), arrived at home of Ikegami Munenaka, began to make arrangements for after his death
- Lectured on "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land" (Sept. 25)
- Passed away at the age of 61 (Oct. 13, 1282)
- Only Nikko Shonin carried on his mentor's fearless spirit and actions for kosen-rufu, treasured the Daishonin's writings, encouraged all disciples to read them as sacred scripture for the Latter Day of the Law, fostered many outstanding disciples.

## **2. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo**

### **The Fundamental Law That Pervades the Universe and Life**

- Shakyamuni searched for a way to resolve all people's sufferings and awakened to the eternal, all-pervading, fundamental Law of the universe and life existed within his own being; this realization led to his being known as the Buddha; Nichiren identified the Law as Nam-myoho-renge-kyo

### **The Essential Law for Attaining Buddhahood**

- The Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the essential principle for attaining Buddhahood

### **The Eternal Law Inherent in All People's Lives**

- The Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is universal, inherent in all people; also eternal, persisting throughout the three existences of past, present and future

### **The Profound Meaning Reflected in the Name, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo**

- Myoho-renge-kyo is the full title of the Lotus Sutra: "The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful (Mystic) Law"

- Because difficult to fathom and comprehend, it is called the Mystic Law (*myoho*); the lotus (*renge*) is used as a metaphor to describe the distinctive characteristics of the Mystic Law; *Kyo*, meaning “sutra,” indicates that the Lotus Sutra (*Myoho-renge-kyo*) contains the eternal truth—the Mystic Law—and that people should venerate and place their faith in it; *Nam* meaning “bow” or “reverence,” also “to dedicate one’s life” (*kimyo*); *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* is the very heart and essence of the Buddha, which is expressed in wise and compassionate action to lead all people to enlightenment.

### **Nichiren Daishonin’s Enlightened State of Life**

- Nichiren Daishonin revealed the Law expounded in the Lotus Sutra is *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, opening the way for freeing people from suffering and delusion and helping them build unshakable happiness
- *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* is the enlightened life state of Buddhahood, or true identity, of Nichiren Daishonin

### **Ordinary People Are Themselves the Mystic Law**

- The life state of Buddhahood is also inherent in the lives of unenlightened ordinary people—in every person
- When we have faith in and actually practise *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, the power and functions of the Mystic Law are activated and expressed in our lives, and in this way we manifest the life state of Buddhahood

### **The Object of Devotion for Practice, Revealed in the Form of a Mandala**

- Nichiren Daishonin depicted his own Buddhahood in the form of a mandala (*Gohonzon*) for our Buddhist practice, so we can manifest *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* in our lives and attain Buddhahood
- “Never seek this *Gohonzon* outside yourself. The *Gohonzon* exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*”
- When we realize that we are inherently Buddhas and *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* itself, we can bring forth in our lives wonderful benefit and good fortune without measure. There is no greater joy in life.

## **3. Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime and Kosen-rufu**

### **1) Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime**

- Embracing faith in the *Gohonzon* and striving sincerely in Buddhist practice for oneself and others, anyone can realize the state of Buddhahood in this existence
- “‘Attain’ means to open or reveal”

- Attaining Buddhahood is not the achievement of a final goal. It is an unremitting struggle based on faith in the Mystic Law to eliminate evil and generate good. Those who strive tirelessly for kosen-rufu are Buddhas.

### **“The Attainment of Buddhahood by Ordinary People” and “Attaining Buddhahood in One’s Present Form”**

- Attaining Buddhahood is a process of manifesting the life state of a Buddha, which is originally present within all people
- Attaining Buddhahood is revealing the highest humanity—Buddhahood—in our lives as ordinary people.

### **Attaining Buddhahood as an Ordinary Person in This Lifetime**

- Believing in the Gohonzon and continuing to exert ourselves in faith and practice for the sake of kosen-rufu, we can manifest in our lives as ordinary people the same life state as Nichiren Daishonin. This is also expressed as the principles of “attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form” and “attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.”

### **“Earthly Desires Are Enlightenment” and “The Sufferings of Birth and Death Are Nirvana”**

- “Attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form” and “attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime” can be expressed from another distinct perspective as the principles of “earthly desires are enlightenment” and “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana”
- Even ordinary people whose lives are dominated by earthly desires, negative karma and suffering, can, by awakening to the reality that Buddhahood exists within their own lives, manifest the wisdom of the Buddha’s enlightenment, liberate themselves from suffering, and realize a state of complete freedom

### **Relative Happiness and Absolute Happiness**

- Second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda taught that there are two kinds of happiness: relative happiness and absolute happiness
- Relative happiness exists only in relation to external factors
- Absolute happiness is a state of life in which being alive itself is a source of happiness, no matter where we are or what our circumstances
- Attaining Buddhahood means establishing this state of happiness

## **2) “Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” and Kosen-rufu**

- To secure happiness for oneself and others amid the realities of society, Nichiren Daishonin stressed the importance of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land” and kosen-rufu

### **“Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”**

- “Establishing the Correct Teaching” means promoting faith in and acceptance of the correct teaching of Buddhism as the foundation for people’s lives and making the Buddhist teaching of respect for the dignity of life as the fundamental motivating principle of society
- “For the peace of the land” means realizing peace and prosperity in society as well as safety and security for all individuals in their daily lives

### **Kosen-rufu**

- The aim of Buddhism is to share and spread the correct teaching that embodies the Buddha’s enlightenment, and guide all people toward attaining the life state of Buddhahood and realize peace and prosperity for all humanity

### **Kosen-rufu Is the Fundamental Spirit of Nichiren Daishonin**

- “The ‘great vow’ refers to the propagation of the Lotus Sutra [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo]”
- The Daishonin urged his followers to dedicate their lives to kosen-rufu, attain Buddhahood, and actualize the principle of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land.”

### **The Soka Gakkai—Making Kosen-rufu a Reality**

- The Soka Gakkai is a harmonious gathering of Buddhist practitioners who have inherited and carry on the Daishonin’s spirit, spreading the Mystic Law just as he taught in his writings
- Until the appearance of the Soka Gakkai 700 years after the Daishonin’s death, no one had been able to widely spread the Mystic Law. It is the Soka Gakkai that has made the predictions of Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin a reality. This is proof that the Soka Gakkai is the organization that has emerged to carry out the mission of kosen-rufu, acting in accord with the Buddha’s intent.

## **Chapter 2: The Buddhist Philosophy of Life**

### **The Ten Worlds**

- The Ten Worlds is a classification of ten distinct states of life, and forms the foundation for the Buddhist view of life
- The Lotus Sutra teaches the Ten Worlds are ten states of life inherent within each living being
- Living beings of the nine worlds possess within them the world of Buddhas, and Buddhas also possess all the other nine worlds; the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds

### 1) The World of Hell

- The lowest state of life, in which one is imprisoned by suffering and completely lacking in freedom; “Rage is the world of hell”
- The state of being in which living is itself extremely painful and everything we see is coloured by our unhappiness and misery

### 2) The World of Hungry Spirits

- The life state of hunger, characterized by relentless craving and the suffering arising from such craving going unsatisfied
- “Greed is [the world] of hungry spirits”
- Desires can also be the motivating force for human progress and self-improvement. But the life state of hunger is one of suffering in which one is enslaved by desires and unable to use them for constructive, creative purposes.

### 3) The World of Animals

- The life state of animality, characterized by foolishness in the sense of being moved by impulse rather than reason and being concerned only with immediate benefit and gratification
- “Foolishness is [the world] of animals”; “It is the nature of beasts to threaten the weak and fear the strong”
- Those dominated by this life state are the engineers of their own suffering and self-destruction

*[Note: The use of the term “animals” is based on ancient Indian beliefs. Naturally, there are examples of animals, such as service dogs, that devotedly assist others, and it is also true that some of the behaviour of human beings—for example, wars and genocide—is often much more cruel and brutal than that of non-human animals.]*

- Because the worlds of hell, hungry spirits and animals all represent conditions of suffering, they are collectively known as “the three evil paths.”

### 4) The world of Asuras

- *Asuras* are contentious demons found in ancient Indian mythology
- The life state of anger, an obsession with personal superiority or self-importance, a tendency to always compare oneself with others and want to be better than them; arrogant and looking down on those they consider inferior; cowardly and fawning toward those they see as more powerful; pretending to appear virtuous and humble while inwardly filled with jealousy and resentment
- “Perversity is [the world] of asuras”
- Unlike those in the three evils paths, who are dominated by the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness, those in the world of *asuras* act of their own volition

- Although a higher state, it is still filled with suffering, it is grouped together with the three evil paths to form “the four evil paths”

### **5) The World of Human Beings**

- The life state of humanity is a calm, composed state in which people maintain their characteristic human qualities
- “Calmness is [the world] of human beings”
- The capacity to distinguish right from wrong and to exercise self-control
- To live in a humane way is impossible without constant effort at self-improvement and personal development

### **6) The World of Heavenly Beings**

- The life state of heaven, a condition of joy by fulfilling desires through effort
- “Joy is [the world] of heaven”
- The joy of heavenly beings is not lasting. It fades and disappears with the passage of time. It is not the state of genuine happiness that should be our ultimate aim.

### **From the Six Paths to the Four Noble Worlds**

- The worlds from hell to heavenly beings are the six paths, easily influenced by external circumstances. These life states are therefore not truly free or autonomous
- The aim of Buddhist practice is to transcend the six paths and develop a self-determined state of happiness that is not controlled by external circumstances
- The awakened states of life possible through Buddhist practice are the four noble worlds of voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, bodhisattvas, and Buddhas

### **7 & 8) The Worlds of Voice-Hearers and Cause-Awakened Ones**

- Also known as learning and realization, referred to as the “persons of the two vehicles”
- Voice-hearers gain a partial awakening through hearing the Buddha’s teaching
- Cause-awakened ones gain a partial awakening through their own observations and effort, also called the realm of self-awakened ones
- Though they acknowledge the superior enlightenment of the Buddha, they do not think themselves able to attain it and remain at a lower level of enlightenment; inclined to self-absorption, seeking only their own enlightenment and making no effort to help others do the same
- This self-centredness is the limitation of these two worlds

### **9) The World of Bodhisattvas**

- *Bodhisattva* means a living being (*sattva*) who strives continuously to attain the enlightenment (*bodhi*) of the Buddha
- In contrast to persons of the two vehicles, bodhisattvas not only regard the Buddha as their teacher, but strive to obtain the same enlightened state
- They also try to lead others to enlightenment by communicating and spreading the Buddha's teachings
- The essence of the world of bodhisattvas is compassion
- Those in the life state of bodhisattva direct this spirit of compassion to all people and make it the foundation for their lives

## 10) The World of Buddhas

- The life state of Buddhahood is the supremely noble life state manifested by a Buddha
- Buddha means “awakened one”—one who has awakened to the Mystic Law
- Specifically, it refers to Shakyamuni; Nichiren Daishonin is the Buddha of the latter Day of the Law
- Buddhahood is an expansive life state overflowing with good fortune and benefit, unsurpassed wisdom and compassion
- Originally inherent in our own beings
- The Gohonzon embodies the enlightened life state of Nichiren Daishonin
- When we believe in the Gohonzon and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for the happiness of ourselves and others, we can tap the life state of Buddhahood within us
- “Strong faith in the Lotus Sutra is called the world of Buddhahood”—basing our lives on the Gohonzon
- Buddhahood is a state of absolute happiness that nothing can destroy; a state of life in which being alive is itself happiness; the spirit of a lion king—a state of complete ease and confidence in which, like the lion king, one fears nothing

## Chapter 3: Faith and Practice

### 1. Three Proofs

- Three criteria for determining the correct teaching for leading people to absolute happiness
- Documentary proof means that a religion's doctrines are based upon or in accord with its foundational scriptures
- “One should accept what is clearly stated in the text of the sutras, but discard anything that cannot be supported by the text”

- Theoretical proof, or proof of reason, means that a religion's doctrines and assertions are compatible with reason and logic
- Actual proof means that belief and practice of a religion's doctrines produce positive results in one's life and daily affairs and in society
- "In judging the relative merit of Buddhist doctrines, I, Nichiren, believe that the best standards are those of reason and documentary proof. And even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact."

## **2. Faith, Practice and Study**

- The purpose of Nichiren Buddhism is to enable us to transform our lives
- There are three basic elements in applying its teachings: faith, practice, and study.

### **1) Faith**

- Faith is belief and acceptance—believing in and accepting the Buddha's teaching
- Such faith is the foundation for attaining the life state of Buddhahood
- Only through faith can we attain the same great wisdom and life state as the Buddha
- When we believe in and accept the Buddha's teaching, we can understand for the first time the correctness of the Buddhist philosophy of life
- The most important thing is having deep faith in the Gohonzon as the object of devotion for attaining the life state of Buddhahood
- When we have faith in the Gohonzon and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we can tap the power of the Mystic Law in our lives and firmly establish the life state of Buddhahood within us

### **2) Practice**

- Practice is the concrete actions we engage in based on faith in the Gohonzon
- Practice has two aspects—practice for ourselves and practice for others
- These are compared to the two wheels of a cart: our practice must have both of these aspects to advance properly
- Practice for ourselves means striving to gain personal benefit from practising Nichiren Buddhism
- Practice for others is teaching others about Buddhism so they may also receive benefit
- Practice for ourselves means doing gongyo (reciting excerpts of the Lotus Sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo), and practice for others means sharing and spreading the teachings of Buddhism
- In addition, the various activities we carry out as SGI members for the sake of kosen-rufu also constitute practice for others.

## **The Daily Practice of Gongyo and Efforts to Spread the Teachings**

- Reciting portions of the Lotus Sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo before the Gohonzon
- We can polish and strengthen our lives and positively transform the way they function
- The importance of spreading the correct teaching of Buddhism: “You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others. . . Teach others to the best of your ability, even if it is only a single sentence or phrase”

## **Primary Practice and Supporting Practice**

- Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith in the Gohonzon is fundamental; it is therefore called the “primary practice”
- Reciting the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters helps bring forth the benefit of the primary practice; it is therefore called the “supporting practice”
- The “Expedient Means” (2nd) chapter explains the true aspect of all phenomena, the central doctrine of the theoretical teaching (first 14 chapters) of the Lotus Sutra
- The “Life Span” (16th) chapter reveals the Buddha’s attainment of enlightenment in the remote past, the central doctrine of the essential teaching (latter 14 chapters) of the sutra

## **3) Study**

- Study is the study of the Buddhist teachings, primarily reading the writings of Nichiren Daishonin and studying the correct principles and doctrines of Nichiren Buddhism
- Through such study, we can develop a deeper, more solid faith, and also ensure that we practice correctly
- “Both practice and study arise from faith”
- Nikko Shonin: “Followers of this school should engrave the writings of the Daishonin in their lives”

## **3. Faith for Overcoming Obstacles**

- Because our aim is to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime, it is important that we maintain our Buddhist faith and practice throughout our lives
- However, Buddhism teaches that as we continue to persevere in our practice, obstacles and difficulties will arise without fail to obstruct us
- It is crucial, then, that we be prepared for these, and strive to establish faith that cannot be compromised by any problem or adversity

- Why are the obstacles? a) To believe in and practise the correct teaching with the aim of developing the life state of Buddhahood means transforming one's life at the deepest level; b) Buddhist practice in particular arouses strong opposition to change from within our own lives or our relationships with others; hindrances known as the "three obstacles and four devils"; opposition by forces known as the "three powerful enemies"
- Persecution by the three powerful enemies can be proof that one is a genuine votary or practitioner of the Lotus Sutra.

### 1) The Three Obstacles and Four Devils

- "As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils emerge in confusing form, vying with one another to interfere . . . One should be neither influenced nor frightened by them. If one falls under their influence, one will be led into the paths of evil. If one is frightened by them, one will be prevented from practicing the correct teaching." This statement not only applies to me, but also is a guide for my followers. Reverently make this teaching your own, and transmit it as an axiom of faith for future generations.

#### The Three Obstacles

- The word *obstacles* indicates functions that hinder us in our faith and practice; the obstacle of earthly desires, the obstacle of karma, and the obstacle of retribution
- The obstacle of earthly desires indicates when earthly desires, or impulses and afflictions, such as greed, anger, and foolishness (called the "three poisons"), prevent us from progressing in Buddhist faith and practice
- The obstacle of karma refers to hindrances to our faith and practice that result from our evil acts in this life; Opposition from those close to one, such as one's spouse or children, is cited as a specific example
- The obstacle of retribution describes impediments to our Buddhist practice that are due to the difficult circumstances into which we are born or have come to live. These are considered adverse rewards that stem from bad karma formed in past lifetimes; The Daishonin associates these with opposition coming from people whose wishes one is bound to follow, such as the sovereign of one's nation and one's parents

#### The Four Devils

- The word *devil* of the "four devils" refers to workings within the hearts and minds of those who believe in and practise Buddhism; The four devils are (1) the hindrance of the five components, (2) the hindrance of earthly desires, (3) the hindrance of death, and (4) the hindrance of the devil king

- (1) The hindrance of the five components arises from disharmony among the workings of the body and mind, or the five components, of those who carry out faith and practice
- (2) The hindrance of earthly desires means the emergence within one's life of afflictions such as greed, anger, and foolishness that function to destroy one's faith
- (3) The hindrance of death comes when a person's Buddhist practice is cut short due to his or her death. Also, it can be said that one has been defeated by the hindrance or devil of death when the death of another practitioner, or of anyone close, causes one to doubt one's Buddhist faith.
- (4) The hindrance of the devil king. "Devil king" is an abbreviation of the Devil King of the Heaven of Freely Enjoying Things Conjured by Others—the king who makes free use of the fruits of others' efforts for his own pleasure. Also known as the devil king of the sixth heaven, this is the most fundamental kind of devilish function described in Buddhism; This devilish function is something that emerges from the fundamental delusion innate in life itself. It reveals itself in different forms and utilizes various means to persecute and oppress those who are practising Buddhism correctly. Most typically, it appears in the lives of those in power or who have strong influence over practitioners.

### **The Wise Will Rejoice While the Foolish Will Retreat**

- As we endeavour to carry out our Buddhist practice, obstacles and hardships will emerge to hinder our progress. However, they do not in themselves constitute obstacles and devils. What causes them to function as the three obstacles and four devils is the weakness of our own life force that allows us to be influenced negatively by them.
- "There is definitely something extraordinary in the ebb and flow of the tide, the rising and setting of the moon, and the way in which summer, autumn, winter, and spring give way to each other. Something uncommon also occurs when an ordinary person attains Buddhahood. At such a time, the three obstacles and four devils will invariably appear, and the wise will rejoice while the foolish will retreat."
- When the three obstacles and four devils appear, it is crucial to have the conviction that this is the very time for us to make great progress toward attaining Buddhahood and, as wise people who rejoice at such challenges, persevere in our faith and overcome them.

## **2) The Three Powerful Enemies**

- The three kinds of powerful opponents who will persecute those who strive to spread the sutra's teachings in the Latter Day of the Law. Known as the "three powerful

enemies,” they are defined as (1) arrogant lay people, (2) arrogant monks, and (3) arrogant false sages

- (1) “Arrogant lay people” are those ignorant of Buddhism who persecute practitioners of the Lotus Sutra
- (2) “Arrogant monks” are Buddhist clergy who slander the Lotus Sutra’s practitioners
- (3) “Arrogant false sages” are seemingly respectable monks or priests whom people regard as sages
- The third is the most formidable and pernicious. The reason is that it is quite difficult to perceive and recognize the true nature of such esteemed religious figures of high status—arrogant false sages
- In the Latter Day of the Law, whenever there are those who spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, these three powerful enemies will appear and attempt to interfere and obstruct such efforts
- Because of his efforts to spread the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin faced persecutions brought about by these three powerful enemies just as the sutra predicts, thus proving that he was the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day

## **4. Changing One’s Karma**

- Nichiren Buddhism enables people to transform their lives at the deepest level, break through the limitations of karma, or destiny, and open a way forward.

### **1) Changing One’s Karma**

- The term “karma” originates from a Sanskrit word meaning “action.” Our actions in past lifetimes that have the power to influence whether we are happy or unhappy in this life constitute our “karma from past lifetimes,” or destiny.
- “The three existences of life” and “cause and effect spanning the three existences”; This perspective on karma inspires little hope for improving our lives, and worse, it may lead us to simply resign ourselves to our fate
- Nichiren Daishonin shows how to change our karma, or destiny, in this lifetime
- The Daishonin suggests that slandering or disparaging the Lotus Sutra—that is, committing “slander of the correct teaching”—is the most fundamental negative cause a person can make
- Slandering the Lotus Sutra means disparaging or denying the true potential and dignity of human beings and represents the ultimate form of evil, giving rise to all kinds of bad causes

- We can achieve a truly happy state of life if we stop committing the ultimate evil of disbelieving and slandering the correct teaching and instead carry out the ultimate good of believing, protecting, and spreading it
- By replacing the most evil cause with the greatest good cause, the corresponding result will also be transformed into good;
- Believing in the Gohonzon and striving to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for our own and others' happiness, we bring the sun of Buddhahood to rise within our lives, causing the negative karma from our many past lifetimes to vanish like frost or dew in the sunlight

## **2) Lessening One's Karmic Retribution**

- Encountering hardships and being able thereby to change our karma is actually a benefit of Buddhist practice called "lessening one's karmic retribution"
- The beneficial power of our Buddhist practice enables us to receive the effects of such offences in this single lifetime, and in a much diminished form
- Not only that, we can also extinguish all of our negative karma from the unperceivable past
- "The sufferings of hell will vanish instantly"
- Hardships become important opportunities to rid ourselves of past negative karma and to forge our lives.

## **3) Voluntarily Assuming the Appropriate Karma**

- Those who persevere in faith even in the face of hardships, and through doing so transform their karma, will experience a great change in the meaning they derive from living
- The Lotus Sutra explains the principle of "voluntarily assuming the appropriate karma [to fulfill one's vow]." Living beings are born in particular times and places because of two different kinds of causes—that is, they are born either according to their wishes and vows or as a result of their karma.
- In general, Buddhism explains that bodhisattvas are born into this world out of a wish to fulfill their vow, while ordinary people are born into their present circumstances as a result of their past karma.
- The Lotus Sutra teaches that bodhisattvas who have accumulated great good fortune through their Buddhist practice in past lives voluntarily relinquish the rewards due them for their pure deeds and choose instead to be born into this impure world that is filled with evil. They do so because they feel compassion for living beings and wish to save them from suffering. As a result, these bodhisattvas, just like those ordinary

people who are born into this evil world due to their bad karma, also experience suffering.

- As people who overcome problems through faith, we can regard living in this evil world and enduring suffering not as simply a result of our bad karma, but as an opportunity to fulfill our vow as bodhisattvas to lead people to happiness. While sharing people's suffering as our own, we can serve as models for others of how to overcome such suffering.

## **5. Faith Equals Daily Life**

- Nichiren Buddhism is a religion that enables people to build an indestructible state of happiness amid the realities of living
- True victory for human beings is to develop our humanity to the fullest. For that reason, it is important that we embody in our behaviour the wisdom and life force we cultivate through our Buddhist practice, thereby winning the trust of others.

### **1) The Causality of Benefit and Loss**

- The ultimate benefit we derive from the Mystic Law is the attainment of Buddhahood; that is, the establishment of an imperturbable state of happiness
- When we strive in our Buddhist practice, we can wipe away negative or evil functions that shroud our inner life, such as deluded desires and impulses, suffering, and apprehension, and bring forth good and positive qualities, such as wisdom, serenity, and joy
- “
- “Believe in this mandala [Gohonzon] with all your heart. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?”
- We will also be protected by the heavenly gods and benevolent deities, overcome the various problems and difficulties we face in life, and enjoy happiness and fortune
- In contrast, those who slander or disparage the correct teaching of Buddhism and go against the principles of cause and effect will engrave bad causes in the depths of their beings. At the same time, they will experience actual loss in the context of their daily lives.
- By becoming aware of one's errors, reflecting on them, and seeking to correct one's attitude in faith or way of living, one can summon the resolve to practise the Mystic Law more deeply and sincerely.
- The fact that those who act counter to the Mystic Law experience loss is one of the wonderful qualities of that Law, in that it can function to lead them to the correct path and allow them to reclaim the benefit of their Buddhist practice

- In this way, Nichiren Buddhism offers a clear explanation of the benefit accruing to those who believe in and uphold the Mystic Law and the loss experienced by those who disparage the Law.

## **2) Heavenly Gods and Benevolent Deities**

- The various workings or functions that serve to protect a person who practises the correct Buddhist teaching
- Buddhism employed the image of gods to make it readily acceptable to the people in lands where it spread, but they can be thought of as representing protective functions in the environment

### **The Heavenly Gods Protect Those with Strong Faith**

- If we practise the correct Buddhist teaching and do good to others, then our environment and the people around us will begin to work to protect and support us—that is, they will function as heavenly gods and benevolent deities on our behalf
- The strength of the protection we receive depends on the strength of our faith and practice as we uphold and protect the Mystic Law

## **3) Many in Body, One in Mind**

- A most essential principle and guideline for forming unity based on faith for the purpose of advancing kosen-rufu
- “Many in body” (also, “different in body”) means that our appearance, nature, qualities and talents, social position, and circumstances differ from one another
- “One in mind” means that we share the same intention and purpose
- The fundamental goal of our Buddhist practice, and the great wish of the Buddha, is kosen-rufu—broadly teaching and spreading the Mystic Law to realize peace and happiness for all people
- The “mind” of “one in mind” indicates faith, and “one in mind” means to join our hearts and minds in sharing the great wish and vow to achieve kosen-rufu; In contrast, though everyone might be compelled to look and act the same, if each person possesses a different intent or goal, then a state of disorder will ensue. Such a condition is called “one in body, different in mind”
- With the unity of “many in body, one in mind” as our guide and standard, each of us can fully display our unique power and ability as we advance together in realizing the Daishonin’s will for the accomplishment of kosen-rufu.

## **4) Faith Equals Daily Life**

- In Nichiren Buddhism, faith and daily life are not regarded as separate
- Daily life is the venue for Buddhist practice. It is the context in which we demonstrate how we live as individuals with faith as our basis. Our regular conduct

is an expression of the workings of our inner life. And faith is the power that enables us to transform and fulfill our lives at the deepest level.

- When we make the vital energy and rich life state we cultivate through our Buddhist practice the basis for conducting our affairs and fulfilling our responsibilities, then our life circumstances will also naturally change for the better
- One's daily life is an expression of one's Buddhist faith
- A practitioner of Nichiren Buddhism should strive to be trusted by people in society and to win in all aspects of living

## **5) One's Behaviour as a Human Being**

- Buddhism teaches how to develop one's humanity to the fullest. For human beings, this is the meaning of true victory
- "The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being"
- We show proof of the power of our faith by consistently acting with good sense amid human society, and by being people of fine character who are trusted and respected at work, in our communities, and by all those around us
- The noblest kind of human behaviour is that which demonstrates respect for people
- Specifically, these are actions that recognize the Buddha nature innate in the lives of all people, deeply cherish that Buddha nature, and show respect for everyone
- Living with a wish and vow to enable all people to manifest that nature, that is, attain Buddhahood
- Our actions to cherish and care for the person right in front of us
- The practice of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, which consists of respecting the potential for Buddhahood inherent in all people and for that reason venerating every person he meets
- Cherish all people as "children of the Buddha," regarding each person's life with the highest respect and viewing all people as equal
- If that spirit prevails, no violence or action will emerge that tramples on the well-being of others. Based on that conviction, Nichiren Buddhism, through dialogue grounded in the principle of respect for all people, works to realize the transformation of society.
- There is no other way to transform society's tendency toward corruption and raise people's state of life than to spread the practice that embodies behaviour that respects others, cherishes life, and upholds human dignity.

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# Worldwide Kosen-rufu and the Soka Gakkai

## Chapter 1: The Lineage and Tradition of Buddhist Humanism

- The Soka Gakkai is a religious organization that practises Buddhist teachings originating from Shakyamuni Buddha in India and carried on and developed through to Nichiren Daishonin
- It maintains the orthodox lineage and tradition of Buddhist humanism that began with Shakyamuni, which affirms respect for life and for all human beings
- The Soka Gakkai bases itself on the Lotus Sutra, a central scripture of Mahayana Buddhism, and engages in Buddhist practice and activities adapted to modern times. It carries on the fundamental spirit of the Lotus Sutra as taught and exemplified by Nichiren Daishonin through his life and actions.

### **Shakyamuni**

- Shakyamuni, born a prince in ancient India, witnessed the unavoidable sufferings of existence—birth, aging, sickness, and death
- He decided to leave his home and embark on a spiritual quest to find a solution to these fundamental sufferings
- When he became aware that riches were ultimately fleeting and empty, he could find in them no real pleasure. This led him to search for a philosophy or teaching that would clarify the true meaning of human existence.

### **Buddha—The Awakened One**

- Shakyamuni awakened to the eternal and universal Dharma, or Law, that pervades all life and the universe
- The name Shakyamuni is an honorific title meaning “sage of the Shakyas”—Shakya is the name of the clan to which he belonged and *muni* means “sage.” The title Buddha, by which he came to be universally known, means “awakened one.”
- The Law to which Shakyamuni awakened became the core of the Buddhist teachings

### **The Wisdom to Realize the Inherent Dignity of Life**

- Shakyamuni declared that people’s ignorance of the inherent dignity of their own lives results in their being ruled by egoism
- He taught that the noblest and most admirable way for people to live with true dignity is to awaken to the eternal and universal Law within them and return to their original pure state of life that is free of fundamental ignorance or darkness.

- The Buddha’s teaching in this regard amounted to what might be called a “restoration of the value of the human being.” It stressed how important it is for people to regain the supreme dignity of their lives and realize their infinite potential by bringing forth their inherent wisdom.

### **The Compassion to Respect All People**

- Awakening people to the value and dignity of their own lives, Shakyamuni taught them to understand and respect the value and dignity of others’ lives as well. This is the basic spirit of Buddhist compassion.
- Compassion as taught in Buddhism means to understand that others are as important and precious as we are and, as such, we should treasure them as we would treasure ourselves.

### **The Lotus Sutra—The Essence of Mahayana Buddhism**

- Shakyamuni expounded his teachings for some 50 years, and after his death, his disciples compiled records of his words and actions. Those containing the Buddha’s main doctrinal teachings came to be known as “sutras.” Among all his teachings, those pertaining to compassion and wisdom are the focus of the Mahayana sutras. And preeminent among these is the Lotus Sutra, which has been extolled as “the king of sutras.”
- In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha says that, by expounding it, he has fulfilled the wish he has held since the remote past to elevate all people to the same life state as his own. Further, he repeatedly calls upon countless disciples to inherit and share that eternal wish, or vow, and carry out the practice of compassion in order to fulfill it.

### **Nichiren Daishonin—The Votary of the Lotus Sutra**

- Nichiren Daishonin regarded the suffering of all people as his own and, in a time of great social turmoil, sought to find a way to relieve that suffering
- He vowed to identify and carry on the Buddhist teachings capable of realizing genuine happiness and dignity for all people
- As a result of his studies, he found the answer he had been searching for in the Lotus Sutra, which teaches the way for all people to give expression to their unlimited potential and bring it to life in human society
- The Daishonin strongly resolved to help all people realize true happiness and dignity, and to actualize peace and security in society
- He encountered life-threatening persecution by the authorities and fierce opposition from among the populace

- None of this deterred him in the least. He continued to take action in exact accord with the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, encouraging and revitalizing the people, even at the risk of his life.
- Nichiren Daishonin established the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and he inscribed the Gohonzon as the object of faith, or devotion. By identifying, revealing, and establishing the teaching that is the essence of the Lotus Sutra, he opened the way for all people to attain Buddhahood.
- The focus of the Daishonin's lifelong efforts was establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land—that is, establishing the philosophy of respect for the dignity of life as society's guiding principle and building a world where people can live in peace and security

### **The Soka Gakkai—Bringing Nichiren Buddhism to Life in Modern Times**

- Through their selfless efforts, the Soka Gakkai's three founding presidents—Tsuneshaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda, and Daisaku Ikeda—revived the philosophy and practice of Nichiren Daishonin in modern times.
- Soka Gakkai members engage in a variety of activities based on the guidance of the three founding presidents.
- While challenging themselves in all areas of life, they use the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to reflect deeply on their lives and bring forth the hope and courage to deal with problems they encounter. In addition, they strive to develop rich character based on a solid commitment to humanistic values. This is the practice of human revolution.
- Through everyday conversations with fellow members and attending Soka Gakkai meetings, members also deepen their understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's writings and SGI President Ikeda's guidance, share experiences in faith, and encourage and support one another.
- In addition, they talk with friends and acquaintances about the principles and ideals of Buddhism and how their Buddhist practice has enriched their lives. In this way, they spread understanding and support for the life-affirming philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism and the humanistic activities of the Soka Gakkai, while expanding the network of those who embrace faith in the Mystic Law.

### **The Westward Transmission of Buddhism and Worldwide Kosen-rufu**

- Nichiren Buddhism aims to enable people to realize happiness both for themselves and for others. It also places importance on individuals contributing to their communities as good citizens and becoming indispensable people whom others can trust and count on by fulfilling their roles at home, at work, and in society.

- The Soka Gakkai is also actively engaged in addressing the global issues facing humanity today.
- The Soka Gakkai rediscovered the tradition of humanistic philosophy and practice originating with Shakyamuni and inherited by Nichiren Daishonin, recognizing and treasuring it as the very quintessence of Buddhism.
- Through dialogue aimed at deepening understanding and providing inspiration, we of the Soka Gakkai strive continually to cultivate and empower many able individuals who can, in their respective roles and fields, exemplify Buddhist humanism. This movement, which aims to realize the happiness of humanity as well as world peace, is called kosen-rufu.
- Buddhism, which began in India, traveled eastward to Japan. Now, it is being transmitted back westward, spreading not only to the countries of Asia and India but throughout the entire world. This is referred to as the “westward transmission” or “westward return” of Buddhism. Today, our humanistic Buddhist movement has spread to 192 countries and territories around the globe.

### **The Three Treasures**

- The Soka Gakkai is the organization that, in modern times, has inherited the true spirit and lineage of Buddhism passed on from Shakyamuni.
- It is a basic premise for all Buddhists to respect and treasure the Buddha, the Law (the Buddha’s teachings), and the practitioners of the Law. Therefore, these three are regarded respectively as the treasure of the Buddha, the treasure of the Law, and the treasure of the Buddhist Order (community of believers). Together, they are known as the three treasures. The treasure of the Buddha is the Buddha who expounds the teaching, while the treasure of the Law is the teaching the Buddha expounds, and the treasure of the Buddhist Order is the gathering of people who believe in and practice that teaching.
- In Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism of sowing (that is, sowing the seeds of enlightenment, namely, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo),
- The treasure of the Buddha from the perspective of time without beginning is Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of beginningless time, or eternal Buddha, who revealed in his own life as an ordinary person the fundamental Law for attaining Buddhahood.
- The treasure of the Law from the perspective of time without beginning is the Gohonzon, or object of devotion, of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which Nichiren Daishonin revealed as the Law for universal enlightenment.

- The treasure of the Buddhist Order from the perspective of time without beginning is Nikko Shonin (Nichiren Daishonin's direct disciple and successor), who protected and correctly transmitted the treasure of the Buddha and the treasure of the Law.
- When we revere (*nam*) these three treasures, we receive the benefit of sowing the seeds of enlightenment [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] and are thereby able to attain Buddhahood.
- Moreover, the treasure of the Buddhist Order in a broad sense refers to the gathering of people who correctly protect, transmit, and spread the three treasures as objects of respect and reverence. Today, the Soka Gakkai is the treasure of the Buddhist Order, for it is the organization that is carrying on the spirit and conduct of Nichiren Daishonin and advancing worldwide kosen-rufu.

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## Chapter 2: The History of the Soka Gakkai

- The history of the Soka Gakkai, learning about the accomplishments of its three founding presidents, who dedicated their lives to kosen-rufu, and the spirit of mentor and disciple they shared
- The Lotus Sutra makes clear Shakyamuni Buddha's intent, the real purpose of his teachings, that all people bring forth the wisdom of Buddhahood that has always been inherent within them and establish unshakable happiness for themselves and for others, creating the basis for peace throughout the world
- The Lotus Sutra describes those who strive to actualize this intent of the Buddha as bodhisattvas of the true Mahayana teaching.
- Such bodhisattvas, the sutra teaches, appear in the age called the Latter Day of the Law, after the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha. They work to spread the Lotus Sutra throughout the entire world and thereby realize the Buddha's purpose, a process we call kosen-rufu, the widespread propagation of the sutra's teaching. The bodhisattvas who shoulder this mission are called the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.
- The leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who appear in the Lotus Sutra is named Bodhisattva Superior Practices. Nichiren Daishonin awakened to his mission to fulfill the role of Superior Practices in the Latter Day, taking as his own the great desire and vow for kosen-rufu described in the sutra—the Buddha's will and mandate. For this reason, the Daishonin is known as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.
- Today, it is the Soka Gakkai that has inherited and is carrying on the Daishonin's spirit, deeply resolved to accomplish its mission of worldwide kosen-rufu and earnestly preserving in its efforts to actualize that goal.

- The leaders who have firmly established the practice, awareness, and resolve for achieving kosen-rufu in modern times are the Soka Gakkai's first three presidents: its first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, its second president, Josei Toda, and its third president, Daisaku Ikeda (currently its honorary president and the president of the SGI). Together they are respected as the Soka Gakkai's three founding presidents.
- Hereafter we will refer to these three founding presidents with the honorific title Sensei, which follows the family name.

## **1. The Time of the First President, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi**

- The origins of the Soka Gakkai in the relationship of mentor and disciple that existed between the first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and the second president, Josei Toda. Both were educators.
- Tsunesaburo Makiguchi was born on June 6, 1871. He became a schoolteacher, and in 1901 he moved to Tokyo with the manuscripts for his first work, *Jinsei Chirigaku* (The Geography of Human Life), which was published in 1903. He later held the post of principal at several elementary schools in Tokyo.
- Josei Toda was born on February 11, 1900. In around 1902, his family moved to the village of Atsuta in today's Atsuta Ward in Ishikari City, Hokkaido. Eventually, he received his teaching certificate and began his career as a teacher in the Hokkaido town of Yubari.

### **Mentor and Disciple Meet**

- Toda Sensei from that time on had been seeking a mentor in life, and upon visiting Tokyo, he met Makiguchi Sensei, who was by then the principal of an elementary school. The two readily took to each other. The former was 48 years old at the time, and the latter, 19. Before long, Toda Sensei began to teach at the school, regarding Makiguchi Sensei as his mentor in life and supporting him in every possible way.

### **The Establishment of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai**

- As an educator engaged first-hand in primary school education, Makiguchi Sensei's hope and vow was to enable every child to succeed in creating personal happiness as a self-sufficient member of society. He applied himself to developing an approach to education that would make this possible.
- Makiguchi Sensei formulated a theory of value that could serve as a foundation for the unique pedagogy he would later systematize. In the process, he encountered the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin, which he realized clarified the principles and fundamental practice for enabling the kind of life transformation that would give rise to value creation in human society.

- In 1928, he took faith in Nichiren Buddhism as a member of Nichiren Shoshu—a Buddhist school that derived its teachings from the lineage of Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin’s direct disciple and successor. He was 57 years old at the time.
- Regarding his motivation for taking faith, Makiguchi Sensei recalls, “Encountering the Lotus Sutra, I realized the teachings of the sutra in no way contradict the principles of philosophy and science that form the basis of our daily lives.”
- That same year, Toda Sensei followed his mentor in taking faith in Nichiren Buddhism.
- On November 18, 1930, Makiguchi Sensei published the first volume of his *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei* (The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy). This work systemized his views and ideas on education, and was intended as the first of twelve volumes (of which four were eventually published).
- The publisher’s imprint listed Tsunesaburo Makiguchi as the author, Josei Toda as the publisher and printer, and the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value-Creating Education Society, the predecessor of the Soka Gakkai) as the publishing house. This was the first time the name Soka Kyoiku Gakkai had appeared in public, and for this reason the day of the work’s publication, November 18, is celebrated as the day of the Soka Gakkai’s founding.

*[Editor’s Note: After the society was virtually destroyed by the militarist government, as will be explained below, Toda restored and renamed it the Soka Gakkai.]*

- *Soka* means “creation of value.” The purpose of education and the purpose of life are the pursuit of happiness, and the name Soka expresses Makiguchi Sensei’s thinking that the creation of value is integral to building happiness.
- The conception of the word Soka itself came about in the course of a discussion between the two innovative educators. We could say that the birth of the Soka Gakkai, then, was itself a crystallization of the united spirit of mentor and disciple.

### **Buddhist Practice Directly Connected to Nichiren Daishonin**

- In this way, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai itself was born out of the bond of mentor and disciple. Gradually, its organizational structure became more defined and it began to grow.
- While originally an association of educators interested in the principles of value-creating education, non-educators eventually began to join as well, and the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai became a group for the practice of Nichiren Buddhism, the power source for value creation.
- Though a society of lay practitioners of the Nichiren Shoshu school of Buddhism, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai conducted its affairs in a completely different manner than previously established Nichiren Shoshu lay societies. These groups of lay believers

each were affiliated with a specific local temple, and operated under the guidance of the chief priest of that temple.

- The Soka Kyoiku Gakkai, however, operated independently, under the leadership of President Makiguchi and General Director Toda. It did not rely on priests for its management or operation or for providing guidance pertaining to faith.
- Nor was the form of Buddhist practice it encouraged constrained to visiting temples or participating in ceremonies such as funeral and memorial services, as was the case with most Buddhist schools in Japan, including Nichiren Shoshu. Rather, it taught a practice that was open to everyone, which aimed to enable each person to actualize happiness in the midst of life's real challenges and to contribute to the peace and prosperity of society.
- Through holding discussion meetings, and its leaders traveling to various regions to offer guidance and encouragement in faith, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai grew steadily, reaching a membership of around three thousand.

### **Challenging Japan's Militarism**

- The militarist government, in its reckless rush to expand its war footing with State Shinto as its spiritual pillar, endeavored to coerce uniformity of thought among Japan's populace. It placed Soka Kyoiku Gakkai discussion meetings and other activities under surveillance by the Special Higher Police, which was responsible for investigating so-called thought crimes.
- At the time, the government was pressuring citizens to visit and offer prayers at Shinto shrines and to enshrine and worship talismans to the Sun Goddess, the mythical progenitor of the imperial lineage. In June 1943, the priests of Nichiren Shoshu, in fear of government repression, delivered to the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai the following request: "Why don't you accept the Shinto talisman?" This was made to Makiguchi Sensei in the presence of the high priest.
- The posture of Nichiren Shoshu in accepting the government's demand to enshrine the talisman to the Sun Goddess constituted complicity in slander of the Law (slander of the correct Buddhist teaching). It was a violation of the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and his successor Nikko Shonin, from whom Nichiren Shoshu claimed lineage. Makiguchi Sensei adamantly refused to accept the Shinto talisman, and the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai thus persisted in upholding the Daishonin's teaching and example of strictly admonishing slander of the Law.
- On July 6, Makiguchi Sensei, while visiting Shimoda in Izu, Shizuoka Prefecture, and on the same day Toda Sensei, in Tokyo, were taken into custody by detectives of the Special Higher Police. Ultimately, 21 leaders of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai were arrested on suspicion of committing lese majesty (the crime of violating the dignity of the Emperor) and violating the Peace Preservation Law.

- All those arrested were subjected to coercive interrogation, and most of them abandoned their faith. In the end, only Makiguchi Sensei and his trusted disciple Toda Sensei resisted, persisting in their faith. Makiguchi Sensei even explained to the prosecutors and judges who questioned him the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism. Both refused to buckle under the pressure of authority and persevered in upholding the right and just principles of Buddhism.
- On November 18, 1944, at the age of 73, Makiguchi Sensei passed away at the Tokyo Detention Center due to malnutrition and the weakness of age. Coincidentally, the day of his death was the anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding.
- Throughout his life, he had lived and practised as the Daishonin taught in his writings, never hesitant to risk his life to do so. He lived as a noble pioneer who revived in modern times the Daishonin's spirit of propagating the Mystic Law to lead the people from suffering to happiness.

### **Toda Sensei's Awakening in Prison**

- While in prison, Toda Sensei, in addition to exerting himself in chanting daimoku, from early 1944 began to read the Lotus Sutra and ponder it deeply. In the process, he achieved an awakening—a realization that “the Buddha is life itself.”
- Toda Sensei also became aware that he himself was a Bodhisattva of the Earth who had been present at the Ceremony in the Air described in the Lotus Sutra and who was entrusted with the widespread propagation of the sutra's teaching in the age after Shakyamuni Buddha. Thus, in November 1944, he awakened to the deep conviction that “I, Toda, am a Bodhisattva of the Earth,” whose mission it was to accomplish kosen-rufu.
- Through the profound awakening he experienced in prison, Toda Sensei developed an immovable conviction in the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism, and resolved that it was his personal mission to ensure their propagation worldwide. The awakening that Toda Sensei had experienced while in prison became the primary inspiration behind the revival of Buddhism in the modern age and the powerful progress of the Soka Gakkai as a religious group dedicated to the accomplishment of kosen-rufu.
- At a memorial service for Makiguchi Sensei after the war, Toda Sensei addressed his departed 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” (LSOC7, 178). The benefit of this was coming to know my former existence as 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?

- This passage from “The Parable of the Phantom City” (7th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra teaches that the bond between mentor and disciple is such that they will always be born together in a Buddha land, in a place where they will strive together to save people from suffering.
- While most of those persecuted by the authorities discarded their faith, Toda Sensei's words express his sincere appreciation and resolve to repay his debt of gratitude to his mentor under any circumstances. In them, we catch a glimpse of the strength of this bond of mentor and disciple.

## **2. The Time of Second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda**

- On July 3, 1945, Josei Toda emerged from prison, having endured two years of life in confinement, and stood up alone to carry on the will of his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, for the accomplishment of kosen-rufu. As general director of the Soka Gakkai, he began immediately to undertake the reconstruction of the organization, which was in a state of ruin.
- The people of Japan at the time were in the pit of despair, reeling from the destruction brought on by the war and the turmoil of its aftermath.
- Toda Sensei was convinced that Nichiren Buddhism alone constituted a spiritual principle powerful enough to lead the people away from suffering and confusion, and he stood up with a great wish and vow to spread its teachings widely.
- The organization's goal would be not only to carry out educational reform, but to accomplish kosen-rufu, that is, peace throughout the world and happiness for all people. In line with that purpose, he amended its name from Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value-Creating Education Society) to Soka Gakkai (Value-Creating Society), and began again to hold discussion meetings and travel to outlying regions to offer guidance in faith.

### **Encounter between Mentor and Disciple—Toda Sensei and Ikeda Sensei Meet**

- In 1947, Toda Sensei met young Daisaku Ikeda, who would later become the third President of the Soka Gakkai (today President of the Soka Gakkai International).
- Ikeda was born in the district of Omori, in Tokyo's Ota ward, on January 2, 1928
- He grew up at a time when Japan was plunging into war
- As the war intensified, his four older brothers were drafted into the military and sent into battle. To help support his family, Ikeda worked at a munitions factory. Suffering from tuberculosis, however, he spent his early youth in physical distress, thinking deeply about the questions of life and death.

- After the war, the family learned that the eldest brother, who had been sent back to the battlefield, had been killed in combat in Burma (today Myanmar). Witnessing his mother's deep sadness on learning of her son's death, young Ikeda's sense that war was evil, a crime against humanity, strengthened and deepened. Searching for clear answers to the question of how to live, he delved into works of literature and philosophy.
- It was in the midst of this quest that, on August 14, 1947, he attended his first Soka Gakkai discussion meeting. There he encountered the man who would become his lifelong mentor, Josei Toda.
- At the meeting that evening, Toda Sensei was delivering a lecture on Nichiren Daishonin's writing "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land." When Toda had finished lecturing, Ikeda asked him a series of questions, including "What is the correct way to live?"; "What is a true patriot?"; "What is the meaning of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo?"; and "What do you think about the Emperor?"
- Toda's answers were clear and well-reasoned, and infused with the deep conviction he had gained through his struggles against Japan's militarist government and during two years of unjust imprisonment. As he listened, the youth was struck with the sense that he could trust everything this man had said.
- Ten days later, on August 24, Ikeda began his practice of Nichiren Buddhism. At the time, he was 19 years old, and Toda Sensei, 47.
- In September the following year, he began to attend Toda's lecture series on the Lotus Sutra. Taking Toda Sensei as his mentor, he deepened his study and understanding of Buddhism and vowed to live his life for the sake of kosen-rufu.
- In January 1949, he started to work at Toda's publishing company as the editor of a magazine for boys.

### **The Shared Struggle of Mentor and Disciple to Rebuild the Soka Gakkai**

- In July 1949, the Soka Gakkai launched publication of its monthly magazine, the *Daibyakurenge*. The inaugural issue carried an essay Toda Sensei had written, titled "The Philosophy of Life."
- Later, Toda's businesses, which had been struggling amid the effects of Japan's chaotic post-war economy, faced dire financial setbacks, and on August 24, 1950, he announced his intention to step down from his position as Soka Gakkai general director.
- On that occasion, young Ikeda asked him, "Who will be my mentor from here on?" to which Toda Sensei replied, "Though I've caused you nothing but trouble, I am your mentor," affirming the unbreakable bond of mentor and disciple.
- The disciple exerted himself fully to settle Toda's business affairs, solving the financial crisis. He resolved deeply in his heart to make it possible for Toda Sensei to take full leadership as president of the Soka Gakkai.

- Ikeda had decided to stop attending night school so that he could fully support his mentor. But in response, Toda Sensei told him that he would personally instruct him and provide him with a broad education surpassing any he could obtain from a university. This private instruction, known as “Toda University,” continued for nearly a decade, until the year before Toda’s death.
- Amid this intensive struggle, Toda Sensei discussed with his most trusted disciple his vision for the future. This included the establishment of the organization’s newspaper, *Seikyo Shimbun*, to wage a battle of the written word for the sake of kosen-rufu, and the founding of Soka University. Both of these institutions came into being as a result of such dialogues between mentor and disciple.

### **Inauguration of the Second President**

- Having overcome his business troubles, Toda Sensei agreed, in response to requests from many members, to take on the position of Soka Gakkai president.
- His inauguration as the organization’s second president took place on May 3, 1951, and on that occasion he declared his vow to achieve a membership of 750,000 households.<sup>1</sup> There were only about 3,000 members at the time, and no one could believe it was possible to achieve the goal Toda had stated.
- Before his inauguration as president, Toda Sensei implemented a restructuring of the Soka Gakkai organization. He instituted a chapter-based system as a foundation for future development and refreshed the organization’s preparedness to take on the challenge of kosen-rufu.
- Prior to his becoming president, the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper commenced publication on April 20. Its inaugural issue carried the first installment of Toda Sensei’s serialized novel *The Human Revolution*, which he authored under the pen name Myo Goku.
- “Human revolution” refers to the process by which, through the practice of Nichiren Buddhism, each individual achieves a transformation of their state of life, eventually leading to a transformation in the destiny of all humankind.
- Also, immediately after his inauguration, President Toda established in succession the women’s division, the young men’s division, and the young women’s division.
- At the same time, in the beginning of 1952, on Toda Sensei’s instruction, Ikeda became chapter advisor to the Soka Gakkai’s Kamata Chapter in Tokyo, and led an effort that resulted in 201 new households joining during the month of February. This represented a breakthrough, far surpassing the monthly membership increases achieved by any chapter until then, and became known as the historic February Campaign. It marked a turning point, after which the Soka Gakkai’s progress toward achieving its membership goal of 750,000 households accelerated rapidly.

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<sup>1</sup> In those days the Soka Gakkai’s membership was indicated by the number of households.

- Toda Sensei had been planning to publish a collection of Nichiren Daishonin's writings. He knew this would be indispensable to the correct study and understanding of the Daishonin's teachings and, therefore, progress toward kosen-rufu, the widespread propagation of Nichiren Buddhism.
- In April 1952, marking the 700th observation of the Daishonin's establishment of his teaching, the *Nichiren Daishonin Gosho Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin) was published. From that time on, every Soka Gakkai member used this book to earnestly study Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, and the spirit to base everything on the Daishonin's writings was established throughout the entire Soka Gakkai.

### **Battle against the Devilish Tendencies of Power**

- In April 1955, the Soka Gakkai ran its first candidates in local assembly elections. It took this step based on the spirit of "establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land," which the Daishonin espoused in the course of his struggle for the people's happiness and a peaceful society.
- In 1956 in Kansai, Ikeda inspired a remarkable increase in propagation, and in May the Osaka Chapter achieved an unprecedented membership increase of 11,111 households in just one month. In the House of Councillors election held in July that year, a candidate running in the Osaka district, whose campaign Ikeda had led, was elected, defying all predictions to the contrary.
- Three candidates endorsed by the Soka Gakkai had been elected to the House of Councillors, and from then on the organization became a focus of attention as a group with growing social influence. At the same time, vested powers and interests began to attempt unjustly to impede the organization.
- In response to these attacks, Ikeda fought resolutely to protect the Soka Gakkai members. In June 1957, the Yubari Coal Miners Union Incident.
- On July 3, immediately after leaving Yubari, Ikeda was unjustly arrested by the Osaka Prefectural Police in what became known as the Osaka Incident.
- July 3 is the same date on which, in 1945, Toda Sensei was released from prison. Years later, Ikeda Sensei referred to this in a haiku poem, writing, "On this day of release and of imprisonment [July 3] are found the bonds of mentor and disciple."
- For 15 days, Ikeda was subjected to harsh interrogation, during which the prosecutor threatened: "If you don't confess your guilt, we will arrest President Toda." Toda's health had by that time become very frail, and going to jail would have surely led to his death.
- To protect his mentor's life, Ikeda confessed to the charges for the time being, resolved to prove his own innocence later in court. On July 17, he was released from the Osaka Detention Center.

- For the next four-and-a-half years, Ikeda Sensei waged an ongoing court battle, and finally, on January 25, 1962, he was pronounced not guilty on all charges.

### **Entrusting Kosen-rufu to Successors**

- On September 8, 1957, Toda Sensei delivered his “Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons,” which would become the start and keynote of the Soka Gakkai’s peace movement.
- In December 1957, the Soka Gakkai reached its membership goal of 750,000 households, which Toda Sensei had vowed to achieve. And in March the following year, it completed and donated the edifice called the Grand Lecture Hall at the Nichiren Shoshu head temple, Taiseki-ji. There, on March 16, six thousand youth from around Japan, led by Ikeda, gathered for a ceremony in which Toda Sensei entrusted them with every aspect of kosen-rufu. On that occasion, President Toda declared, “The Soka Gakkai is the king of the religious world!”
- This day, March 16, on which these young successors were entrusted with the great wish and vow for kosen-rufu, came to be called “Kosen-rufu Day” in the Soka Gakkai and the SGI.
- On April 2, 1958, Toda Sensei passed away, having completed all he had set out to accomplish. He was 58. Basing himself on the awakening he achieved while in prison, he had rebuilt the Soka Gakkai and constructed an immovable foundation for the future of kosen-rufu.

### **3. The Time of Daisaku Ikeda, Third Soka Gakkai President and SGI President**

- After Josei Toda’s death, Daisaku Ikeda, in the newly established position of general administrator (since June 1958), took full responsibility for the management and leadership of the Soka Gakkai, and on May 3, 1960, was inaugurated as the organization’s third president.
- In his speech on that occasion, he said, “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.” With this, his first “lion’s roar” as president—made on the same date that Toda Sensei had been inaugurated as president in 1951—a new period of great development for the Soka Gakkai began.
- On October 2 that year, President Ikeda left Japan for North and South America, the first step in a journey to spread the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism around the world. In January 1961, he visited Hong Kong, India, and other destinations in Asia, and that October he traveled to Europe, initiating a surge of progress toward worldwide kosen-rufu.

- In this way, Ikeda Sensei opened a substantive path toward achieving the “westward transmission of Buddhism” and the spread of the Mystic Law throughout the entire world, which Nichiren Daishonin had predicted.
- In 1965, under the pen name Ho Goku,<sup>2</sup> he began writing the novel *The Human Revolution*, which would be serialized in the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper and would eventually extend to 12 volumes. His purpose in doing so was to correctly transmit the history and spirit of the Soka Gakkai to future generations.
- In the preface to the novel, he conveys its main theme: “A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind.” *The Human Revolution* portrays the efforts and struggles of the three founding presidents of the Soka Gakkai as they strove to build a foundation for the happiness and peace of humankind.
- Ikeda Sensei has continued to chronicle the Soka Gakkai’s history in *The New Human Revolution*, a 30-volume novel also serialized in the *Seikyo Shimbun*.

### **A Movement for Peace, Culture, and Education**

- The Soka Gakkai is an organization that fosters youth who will contribute positively to society.
- Toda Sensei said that when kosen-rufu advances, numerous capable individuals will emerge, playing important roles in various fields of society. He further expected that the Soka Gakkai would one day become an important mainstay for the flourishing of peace and culture for all humankind. To that end, he insisted that it must become an outstanding educational movement, one that can raise people capable of fulfilling their mission.
- In order to actualize that vision, the Soka Gakkai under the leadership of Ikeda Sensei has promoted a growing movement for peace, culture, and education grounded in Buddhist principles, thereby making great contributions to society.
- To establish a political movement devoted to serving ordinary people and society in Japan, an independent political party known as Komeito was established in 1964 with the support of Soka Gakkai members.
- Ikeda Sensei also established a system of educational institutions to actualize Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda’s philosophy of value-creating pedagogy, or Soka Education. It includes kindergartens; elementary, junior, and senior high schools; a

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<sup>2</sup> In *The New Human Revolution*, Ikeda reflects on his choice of Ho Goku as pen name as follows: “Mr. Toda used the pen name Myo Goku; I will use Ho Goku. Combining the first part of each name creates *myoho*, or Mystic Law. *Goku* means to awaken to the truth of non-substantiality. The *myo* of *myoho* refers to the world of Buddhahood, and *ho* refers to the other nine worlds. *Myo* is also awakening or enlightenment, while *ho* is fundamental darkness or delusion. Based on this principle we can say that *myo* corresponds to mentor and *ho* to disciple” (Vol. 9, p. 13).

junior college, universities, and graduate schools. Among these are Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High School (opened in 1968) in Kodaira, Tokyo; Soka University (1971) in Hachioji, Tokyo; and Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High School (1973, as Soka Girls' Junior and Senior High School) in Katano, Osaka. In 2001, Soka University of America opened in Orange County, California.

- At the same time, Ikeda Sensei was broadening his efforts to conduct dialogues focused on peace, culture, and education on a global scale.
- On September 8, 1968, he announced a proposal for the normalization of relations between Japan and China.<sup>3</sup> And beginning in May 1972, he engaged in dialogues with the renowned British historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889–1975). Their conversations spanned 40 hours over a two-year period. This marked the start of a series of dialogues and exchanges with influential leaders and thinkers.
- In 1974 and 1975, at the height of the Cold War between the East and West and with China and the Soviet Union also in conflict, President Ikeda initiated successive visits to China, the Soviet Union, and the United States, engaging in talks with their top leaders in order to open paths to peace and friendship.
- On January 26, 1975, Soka Gakkai members representing 51 countries and territories gathered on the Pacific island of Guam for the establishment of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), appointing Ikeda Sensei as its president.
- Starting from around 1977, as the Soka Gakkai was making great strides toward worldwide kosen-rufu, priests at branch temples of Nichiren Shoshu began repeatedly making unfounded accusations against the organization. This came to be known as the first priesthood issue. Behind this was an alliance formed of priests and former leaders who had betrayed the Soka Gakkai. They plotted together to sever the bond of mentor and disciple—that is, between Ikeda Sensei, the leader of the movement for kosen-rufu, and the members—with the goal of controlling the Soka Gakkai for their own aims.
- Ikeda Sensei strove to find a solution to the problem in order to protect the members from these attacks and in hopes of restoring harmony between the priesthood and laity. He found the only feasible way to do so was for him to step down as Soka Gakkai president. In April 1979, Ikeda Sensei did so, taking the title “honorary president.”

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<sup>3</sup> At the time, there were no official diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and Japan, so technically the two countries were still in a state of war, and anti-China and anticommunist sentiment was widespread in Japan. Ikeda's call for normalization of relations was based on his belief that peace with China was fundamental to the stability of the Asian region and that the reintegration of China into the international community was essential to world peace. His proposal helped establish the groundwork for negotiations leading to the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1972 and a Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978.

## **A Succession of Awards and Honours**

- Beginning in 1983, Ikeda Sensei has issued a “Peace Proposal” every year on January 26, in commemoration of SGI Day, the anniversary of the SGI’s establishment. These proposals are valued highly by many around the world.
- He has also delivered more than 30 lectures at universities and academic institutions around the globe, while the number of dialogues he has conducted with leading world thinkers, heads of state, cultural figures, and university deans and presidents exceeds 1,600. More than 70 of these dialogues have been published in book form. Among them, the dialogue with Professor Toynbee has been issued in some 30 languages, gaining wide praise as a “guidepost for global culture” and “a textbook for humanity.”
- These dialogues, which connect different cultures and faiths, have helped deepen exchanges among peoples and build mutual understanding and solid bonds among those dedicated to good.
- In 1995, the SGI Charter was adopted, making clear the principles of humanism the SGI stands for; and in 1996, the Toda Peace Institute (formerly Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research) was founded, focusing on the legacy of the teachings and principles of Josei Toda.
- In response to the SGI’s efforts for world peace and activities for culture and education, public parks and streets bearing the names of Presidents Makiguchi, Toda, and Ikeda have appeared in localities throughout the world. Ikeda Sensei has continued to have honors and awards conferred upon him by nations, municipalities, and educational institutions. These include national medals, honorary doctorates and professorships, and honorary citizenships from numerous cities and counties.

## **The New Era of Worldwide Kosen-rufu**

- In the midst of this global progress, in 1991 the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood took the extreme measure of excommunicating the millions of members of the Soka Gakkai throughout the world. (This and related events are known as the second priesthood issue.) The Soka Gakkai strictly admonished this act perpetrated by a corrupt priesthood, which amounted to a grave slander of Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings and betrayal of his intent.
- Having triumphed over the schemes of the priesthood, the Soka Gakkai has ushered in a new era in the history of worldwide kosen-rufu. Its members are practicing Nichiren Buddhism in 192 countries and territories, where they have garnered widespread trust and praise for their steady efforts to contribute to society based on the spirit of Buddhist humanism.
- In November 2013, a new edifice, the Hall of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu, was completed in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, as part of the Soka Gakkai Headquarters complex.

- In his dedication on the monument displayed in the entrance lobby of the Hall of the Great Vow, Ikeda Sensei wrote: “Kosen-rufu is the path to attaining universal peace and prosperity. It is our great vow from time without beginning for the enlightenment of all people.”
- Members from across Japan and around the world gather at the Hall of the Great Vow to do gongyo and chant daimoku. United in their vow to achieve kosen-rufu, they pray to the Soka Gakkai Kosen-rufu Gohonzon, which bears the inscription “For the Fulfillment of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu through the Compassionate Propagation of the Great Law,” and start anew with fresh determination.
- Through the efforts of the Soka Gakkai, Nichiren Buddhism now shines as a great source of hope throughout the world, like a sun illuminating all humankind.

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## Commemorative Dates of the Soka Gakkai

Date	Events
Jan. 26	1975. The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is founded in Guam. Daisaku Ikeda is appointed its president.
Mar. 16	1958. Josei Toda entrusts the fulfillment of the great vow to achieve kosen-rufu to his successors, the youth, and to Ikeda in particular.
May 3	1951. Toda is inaugurated as second president. 1960. Ikeda is inaugurated as third president.
Jul. 3	1945. Toda is released from prison after enduring two years in confinement. He embarks on the reconstruction of the Soka Gakkai. 1957. Ikeda is unjustly arrested by the Osaka Prefectural Police (known as the Osaka Incident).
Oct. 2	1960. Ikeda departs Japan for North and South America, taking the first step toward worldwide kosen-rufu.
Nov. 18	1930. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi’s work <i>Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei</i> (The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy) is published, an event regarded as the Soka Gakkai’s founding.

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## Chapter 3: Repudiating the Nichiren Shoshu

### Priesthood under Nikken

- Since its establishment, the Soka Gakkai has grounded itself completely on faith that is directly connected to Nichiren Daishonin. It has consistently taken action to spread the Daishonin's Buddhist teachings to create happiness for all people and bring about world peace.
- However, a group emerged that sought to destroy this movement for kosen-rufu, and in doing so that group, known as the "Nikken sect," revealed its true nature as a devilish function.
- The Nikken sect refers to the priesthood of the Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist school in its corrupt state under the leadership of Nikken Abe, who claimed to be the 67th in the lineage of its high priests. This sect has taken the position that its high priest, who is also its chief administrator, possesses absolute and uncontested authority and power.
- In the more than quarter century since instigating what has become known as the "second priesthood issue" in 1990, the Nikken sect has betrayed the teachings and spirit of Nichiren Buddhism and has become a group given over to slander of the Buddhist Law.
- Though Nikken transferred the office of high priest to a successor, Nichinyo, in December 2005, the lineage he has passed on continues to be muddied by his slander of the Law.

### **The Battle against Evil Functions**

- In his treatise "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land," Nichiren Daishonin writes, "Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw this one evil" (WND-1, 15) and "The only thing to do now is to abandon the evil ways and take up those that are good, to cut off this affliction at the source, to cut it off at the root" (WND-1, 17).
- In other words, in striving to practise Buddhism correctly, it is essential never to forget to wage a continuous battle against the "one evil," that is, negative influences that delude people and lead them astray.

### **Speaking Out against the "Enemies of the Lotus Sutra"**

- Nichiren Buddhism emphasizes that admonishing and striving against evil is an important element of faith.
- The Lotus Sutra teaches that the Buddha nature exists in the life of every person, expressing the most universal ideal of respect for all human beings. For this reason,

to deny or deprecate the sutra, to impede the spread of the sutra, or to oppress or harm practitioners of the sutra is to oppose the ideals of respect for the dignity of life, the equality of all people, and the primacy of ordinary people. To engage in such acts is what it means to become an “enemy of the Lotus Sutra.”

- In contemporary times, by scheming to destroy the Soka Gakkai, the organization working to accomplish the Daishonin’s will of kosen-rufu, it is Nikken who accords with the definition of an enemy of the Lotus Sutra.

## **An Overview of the Priesthood Issue**

- The Daishonin’s spirit and practice for kosen-rufu was correctly inherited and carried on by his disciple Nikko Shonin (1246–1333).
- That spirit and practice, however, gradually waned within the priesthood of Nichiren Shoshu—a Buddhist school that derived its teachings from the lineage of Nikko Shonin—giving way to hollow formality and ritual. As a result, the school turned into what has often been described in Japan as “funeral Buddhism.”<sup>4</sup> In the process, the priests took on an increasingly authoritarian posture, adopting a discriminatory attitude toward lay believers.
- By the time the Soka Gakkai was established, the correct understanding and practice of the Daishonin’s teachings had been all but lost within the priesthood.
- The Soka Gakkai focused its efforts on realizing the great vow for kosen-rufu, and had always supported the priesthood while correcting it whenever necessary.
- After World War II, when the priesthood faced severe economic problems, the Soka Gakkai earnestly and sincerely supported and protected it, and eventually built and donated more than 350 temples.
- However, elements within the priesthood refused to acknowledge or express gratitude for this earnest support, and friction at times arose with certain priests who were intent first and foremost on maintaining their religious authority. But in every case, the Soka Gakkai persisted in working to resolve the situation and restore good relations.
- The priesthood’s tendency to flaunt its authority and look down on lay believers became more pronounced after Nikken took the office of high priest, as it increasingly disregarded the sincere intentions with which the Soka Gakkai had been supporting it for the sake of kosen-rufu.
- The Soka Gakkai had been making great strides in establishing Nichiren Buddhism as a world religion, and its leader, SGI President Ikeda, had become highly respected

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<sup>4</sup> Temples in Japan collected money and other offerings as payment for performing funeral services and other rituals, amassing wealth in the process. With both power and wealth at their command, Buddhist priests lost interest in the study and practice of the teachings, and instead grew decadent and corrupt. As a result, Buddhism in Japan changed into a religion that stressed ceremonies, such as funerals and services for deceased ancestors—giving rise to the name “funeral Buddhism.”

among notable world figures in many fields. Nevertheless, Nikken came to regard him with enmity and began plotting to destroy the Soka Gakkai.

- Nikken’s aim was to sever relations with the Soka Gakkai and take control of its members, turning them into subservient followers of the priests, and in 1990 he conceived and put into action a surreptitious plan he named “Operation C” (“C” meaning to “cut” the Soka Gakkai).
- Its implementation began in December that year, with the priesthood’s sudden announcement of a revision to its rules as a religious corporation effectively dismissing President Ikeda from his position as chief lay representative of Nichiren Shoshu.
- The Soka Gakkai sought to address and resolve the situation through dialogue, but the priesthood refused any discussion.
- On November 7, 1991, the priesthood sent the Soka Gakkai a document titled “Remonstrance to Disband,” followed, on November 28, by a “Notice of Excommunication.”
- In addition to this high-handed move, it took the cruel measure of refusing to confer the Gohonzon upon members of the Soka Gakkai. The priests were telling people, in effect, that if they wished to receive the Gohonzon, they could do so only by following the priesthood. In this way, they were holding the Gohonzon, the basis of faith, hostage in a cowardly attempt to pressure and intimidate believers.
- Nevertheless, in 1993, the Soka Gakkai decided that it would confer upon its members around the world a Gohonzon transcribed by Nichikan Shonin (1665–1726), a great restorer of Nichiren Buddhism. This was made possible through the cooperation of a temple that had opposed Nikken’s actions and supported the Soka Gakkai.
- The Soka Gakkai is now the only religious group working to achieve kosen-rufu in direct accord with Nichiren Daishonin’s spirit, conferring upon believers the Gohonzon, which he described as “the banner of propagation of the Lotus Sutra” (WND-1, 831). As such, the Soka Gakkai has become the global organization qualified to confer the Gohonzon in order to realize kosen-rufu, the Buddha’s will and intent.
- In 1998, the Nikken sect demolished the Sho-Hondo (Grand Main Temple), an edifice at the Nichiren Shoshu head temple, Taiseki-ji, built in 1972 under the aegis of the Soka Gakkai through the sincere faith and contributions of some eight million people. This reckless act made the priesthood’s malicious and vindictive nature all the more apparent.
- The Sho-Hondo, constructed to last 1,000 years, was hailed as a masterpiece of 20th-century architecture that rivaled any religious edifice in the world. Nikken, however, heartlessly had it demolished just 26 years after its completion, disregarding the sincere faith of eight million believers.

## **The Major Offences and Erroneous Doctrines of the Nikken Sect**

- Core to the Nikken sect is a deluded belief that venerates its high priest as a special, absolute, and infallible being, a belief that might be called “high priest worship.” One of the premises for this claim is that there exists a mysterious heritage or lineage that is only passed on from one high priest to the next, a presumption that bolstered the priesthood’s tendency to look down on lay believers.
- Of course, there is nothing in Nichiren Daishonin’s writings to justify or support this in any way, and it therefore constitutes a false doctrine that is starkly opposed to the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism.
- Careful study of the essential principles of Nichiren Buddhism makes clear the key errors of the Nikken sect.

### **1. The Slander of Destroying Kosen-rufu**

- The Nikken sect implemented its “Operation C” with the aim of destroying the Soka Gakkai, the organization dedicated to kosen-rufu, and in 1991 it sent the Soka Gakkai its notification of excommunication.
- The document cited no passages from Nichiren Daishonin’s writings and expressed no doctrinal basis to support the Soka Gakkai’s excommunication. It simply repeated its assertion in an authoritarian and emotional manner that the Soka Gakkai was not obediently following the priesthood.
- The task of achieving kosen-rufu, the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law, is the legacy left by Nichiren Daishonin. This is evident when he declares: “The ‘great vow’ refers to the propagation of the Lotus Sutra” (OTT, 82) and “When you are so united, even the great desire for widespread propagation can be fulfilled” (WND-1, 217).
- It is for this reason that the Soka Gakkai has aimed since its founding to accomplish kosen-rufu, exerting itself in the propagation of Nichiren Buddhism, not only in Japan but throughout the world.
- To attempt to destroy the Soka Gakkai, therefore, is to attempt to destroy kosen-rufu, an act that constitutes a grave slander of the Buddhist Law and the great offence of betraying the Daishonin’s spirit and intent to save all people from suffering.

### **Nikken’s Grave Offence of Causing Disunity in the Buddhist Order**

- The Buddhist teachings describe the greatest offences a person can commit as the “five cardinal sins.”
- These are (1) killing one’s father, (2) killing one’s mother, (3) killing an arhat, (4) injuring a Buddha, and (5) causing disunity in the Buddhist Order.
- Among these offences, causing disunity in the Buddhist Order, or actions that create disruption and division among the body of Buddhist practitioners, is extremely serious as it destroys the Buddha’s teachings and deludes people, causing them to fall

into unhappiness. This is the gravest offence that Nikken has committed.

## **2. The False Doctrine of Worship of the High Priest**

- It is the doctrine of the Nikken sect that the high priest be regarded as an object of worship or veneration. A high priest should be a person who is primarily responsible for protecting, teaching, and spreading the Buddhist teachings. This person should serve as a model for carrying out faith, practice, and study and for upholding the correct teachings.
- In this regard, since the outbreak of the second priesthood issue, Nikken and his supporters, rejecting any dialogue, have consistently claimed that because the high priest is infallible and an object of worship or veneration, one must follow him without question.
- The idea of the high priest as an object of faith is an extremely vain doctrine that violates the three treasures—the Buddha, the Law (the Buddha’s teachings), and the Buddhist Order—of Nichiren Buddhism.
- In Nichiren Buddhism, however, there should be just one object of devotion, the Gohonzon.
- The Nikken sect’s erroneous doctrine purports that the high priest, whose function should be to protect the Gohonzon, in fact stands on an equal par with the Gohonzon. This is a dogma of unprecedented distortion.

### **Correct Faith Means Basing Oneself on the Gohonzon**

- Since the time of the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin, correct faith has been defined as faith based upon the Gohonzon.
- Nichiren Daishonin writes, “Believe in this mandala with all your heart” (WND-1, 412) and “Since Nichiren’s disciples and lay supporters believe solely in the Lotus Sutra . . . they can enter the treasure tower of the Gohonzon” (WND-1, 832).

### **The Error of Regarding the High Priest as Infallible**

- In “The Twenty-six Admonitions of Nikko,”<sup>5</sup> he writes: “Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha’s Law and propounds his own views” (GZ, 1618).
- Nikko Shonin issued this warning based on his assumption that it was possible that in the future the head of the school might commit a serious error.
- From these “Admonitions of Nikko,” it is clear that the view that the high priest is infallible promoted by the Nikken sect is completely misguided. It is a dogma that violates the teachings of both the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin.

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<sup>5</sup> “Nikko Yuikai Okibumi” in Japanese. Written by Nikko Shonin in 1333. It addresses practitioners of future generations, exhorting them to maintain the purity of Nichiren’s teachings, and outlines the fundamental spirit of faith, practice, and study.

### **3. A Mistaken View of Heritage**

- “Heritage” or “lineage” in Nichiren Buddhism has always been something open to all people, not the exclusive possession of an elite few.
- However, Nikken and his followers hold an erroneous view of heritage which is the source of their notion that the high priest is absolute.
- That view is as follows: There exists a mysterious heritage or lineage that is passed on only from one high priest to the next. Simply by receiving that lineage, one exclusively inherits the Buddha’s enlightenment and the essence of the Buddha’s Law itself.
- The idea of the existence of such a mysterious transmission is false, however, and bears no relation at all to the teachings of the Daishonin or Nikko Shonin. It amounts to a fiction concocted in later times in order to bolster the status and authority of the high priest.

### **The True Meaning of “Heritage” Is Faith That Is Open to All People**

- The Japanese term for heritage, literally “bloodline,” is used frequently in the esoteric teachings of the True Word school and by schools such as Tendai and Zen. It likens the transfer of the teachings from teacher to disciple to the genetic heritage passed from parent to child.
- In the Buddhist world of Nichiren Daishonin’s time, this heritage predominantly meant the passing on of the deepest Buddhist teachings to a select group of individuals in the form of a “secret transmission.”
- In contrast to this, in “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” the Daishonin writes, “Nichiren has been trying to awaken all the people of Japan to faith in the Lotus Sutra so that they too can share the heritage and attain Buddhahood” (WND-1, 217).
- In Nichiren Buddhism, the heritage is ultimately described as the “heritage of faith” (WND-1, 218), that is, as faith itself.

On the other hand, the Nikken sect claims a mysterious, exclusive heritage that, upon receipt, automatically makes one a Buddha regardless of faith or practice. This is far removed from the essential meaning of the heritage of faith, the heritage taught by the Daishonin.

### **4. Discriminatory Attitude toward the Laity**

- An idea that permeates the entire Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, from Nikken to all the priests, is the idea that they, as priests, are superior and that lay believers are inferior. That is, they adopt a discriminatory attitude toward the laity.
- On the contrary, the Daishonin clearly confirmed the equality of clergy and laity, saying: “For this reason, the Buddha surely considers anyone in this world who

embraces the Lotus Sutra, whether lay man or woman, monk or nun, to be the lord of all living beings” (WND-1, 463) and “Anyone who teaches others even a single phrase of the Lotus Sutra is the envoy of the Thus Come One, whether that person be priest or layman, nun or laywoman” (WND-1, 33).

## **5. Misuse of Religious Rituals**

- One of the major errors of the Nikken sect is its misuse of Buddhist rituals and ceremonies, turning them into means for making money. These include funeral and memorial services, the bestowal of posthumous Buddhist names, and the issuing of wooden memorial tablets to be placed beside the grave.
- Such rituals conducted by priests nowadays were not instituted by the Daishonin, but became established in later times. The Nikken sect asserts that unless a funeral service is conducted by a priest, the deceased will be unable to attain Buddhahood; but the Daishonin never taught or stated anything of the sort.
- Rather, he encouraged those who had lost loved ones with such statements as “Therefore, because your beloved departed father chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo while he was alive, he was a person who attained Buddhahood in his present form” (WND-1, 1064).

## **6. Corruption and Immorality**

- With regard to the conduct of priests, Nichiren Daishonin states, “True priests are those who are honest and who desire little and yet know satisfaction” (WND-1, 747).
- The priests of the Nikken sect, however, beginning with Nikken himself, have consistently behaved in a corrupt and self-indulgent manner, in stark violation of the Daishonin’s instruction. The Daishonin compared any such irresponsible priest who uses Buddhism for selfish gain to “an animal dressed in priestly robes” (WND-1, 760) or to “Law-devouring hungry spirits” (WND-1, 190).

## **Spiritual Independence**

- November 28, 1991, marked the day that the Soka Gakkai was excommunicated from the Nichiren Shoshu school. To Soka Gakkai members, however, this day marks the day they achieved their spiritual independence. Freeing themselves from the chains of the corrupt and misguided priesthood, Soka Gakkai members have emerged all around the globe, embracing their mission to achieve kosen-rufu. Their numbers have steadily grown, until today they are active in 192 countries and territories worldwide.
- The Nikken sect, on the other hand, has continued on its course of decline, its membership today a mere two percent of what it was before it excommunicated the Soka Gakkai.

- By striving to achieve the Daishonin's will for kosen-rufu, the Soka Gakkai has succeeded to the true heritage of Nichiren Buddhism. Resolutely challenging and refuting the false and destructive actions of the Nikken sect, Soka Gakkai members are opening the way for the further expansion of kosen-rufu throughout the world.

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