

BUDDHIST CONCEPT: Kosen-Rufu More Than Just a Word

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Kosen-rufu was probably one of the first words we ever heard at a Buddhist meeting. It appears often in the Gosho, in SGI President Ikeda's guidance and at our discussion meetings. But what does it really mean? Nichiren Daishonin taught that *kosen-rufu* means "to widely declare and propagate Buddhism." The second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, taught that *kosen-rufu* means "to realize true happiness in the world by elevating the life-condition of all humanity."

But *kosen-rufu* has always been more of a feeling to me than just a word or a definition. It's a dream for humanity we all share in our hearts — the reason we've all gathered together to practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism at this time, right?

Often, though, we casually refer to this concept as meaning "world peace." Let's face it, *kosen-rufu* does sound kind of weird in our society. Instead of confusing guests, we often say things like "world peace gongyo meeting" or "world peace prayers." Somehow, I've never felt this replacement quite does the concept justice.

To widely declare and propagate Buddhism is, after all, an immense mission, one to which we gradually awaken. It seems too easy to me to just substitute the buzzwords *world peace* for the Buddha's will. And yet we continue to do so, perhaps because we can't think of anything else to say.

Kosen-rufu also implies taking practical action, while world peace sometimes seems like something so big an individual cannot do it. On Feb. 27 in Okinawa, President Ikeda explained:

A youth, and a life, dedicated to realizing the great wish of *kosen-rufu* means willingly taking on suffering for the sake of the happiness of our friends and the peace and prosperity of society. It means asking oneself: "How can I help so-and-so get back on his feet?" "What can I do to encourage her?" or, "What can I do to help my local organization advance?" This is the spirit of a bodhisattva. It is also identical to the heart of a Buddha.

Kosen-rufu is thus something we learn and that we can best explain through our individual actions to help others. Recently, I had a revelation about this: After nine years of practice, it suddenly occurred to me that I didn't really know what *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* means. Sure, I could spout the English translation of it in my sleep. And, despite my blaring ignorance, chanting it has even worked! But I suddenly needed to really know, with my whole life, what *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* means. I started chanting in earnest about this as I prepared for our March 16 youth division meeting.

During the meeting, suddenly it occurred to me: *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* means to live Buddhism, as in to show what my practice is through my daily actions. And this is how I can best explain *kosen-rufu* to others. It might not be as quick and easy as saying "world peace," but it holds a lot more meaning.

Kosen-rufu is more than just a word. It is my efforts to bring happiness to this world by helping my friends.

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