

STANDS TO REASON
LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN
From the Day We Take Faith

By JEFF FARR, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

President Toda was a world citizen. Which might be a strange thing to say given that he never left Japan.

What made him a world citizen? Rather than his travels, it was his prayer — how he prayed with his whole life for humanity, how his heart reached out to people in all countries. SGI President Ikeda explained in his dialogue “What Is a World Citizen?” that SGI members are likewise world citizens because “they are praying earnestly for the happiness of all humanity and working selflessly for the sake of others.... Even if they never leave their countries, such people are respected around the globe” (May 9, 1997, *World Tribune*).

One of my favorite scenes from *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, illustrates this spirit of Mr. Toda. It’s the summer of 1954, and President Toda and Shin’ichi Yamamoto (Mr. Ikeda’s character) are visiting Toda’s childhood home, the seaside village of Atsuta, Hokkaido. Watching the sun set over the sea, Toda tells Shin’ichi: “I will build a solid foundation for kosen-rufu in Japan, but you will pave the way for kosen-rufu throughout the world. I will create the blueprint; you will make it a reality.”

That was only 40-some years ago. I say *only*, because it’s amazing how the kosen-rufu movement, starting with this determination of Toda, has crossed that sea and many others so quickly since then.

Nichiren Daishonin set forth in Gosho like “The Selection of the Time” that once the Pure Law of Shakyamuni had become lost, the Great Pure Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo would have to be propagated throughout the world. Presidents Toda and Makiguchi picked up on this intent, and Toda started making plans for achieving it.

It was Toda’s genius that he saw this propagation as something that common people like himself should accomplish, not something they should leave to priests or just wait for. The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, though, had waited and waited — for 700 years — and showed no signs of wanting to make kosen-rufu happen. Not until President Toda began to train the young Daisaku Ikeda did the worldwide spread of this Buddhism become conceivable.

When we celebrate President Toda’s birthday, Feb. 11 — his 98th, this year — it’s a reminder of the long-lasting impact we can each have on the world. Toda’s blueprint, against all odds, became a reality. And our blueprints for a better world can become realities, too. Toda had confidence. He turned out to be right. He set an example for us all.

In two years, we’ll celebrate the centennial of his birth. SGI President Ikeda has recently pointed out that the Aliso Viejo, Calif., campus of Soka University of America will be completed in the year 2000, Toda’s centennial. The Soka University campus in Japan was likewise finished in 1971, the 100th anniversary of President Makiguchi’s birth. The year 2000 will also be the 40th anniversary of President Ikeda’s first overseas trip — his first stop of which was in the United States — in Toda’s stead. So for us, this is a significant time to become true world citizens like Toda before us.

To Toda, the sea at Atsuta was not just a big body of water. It was a bridge to other countries, other cultures, other people. We all have such bridges to cross as world citizens — for the sake of people far away, the people we have never seen, yet who are close to our hearts.

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