

**SGI President Ikeda's Essay**  
**The Seasons of My Mentor's Voice**  
**By HO GOKU**

*In this essay series, SGI President Ikeda uses his pen name Ho Goku — as he does in The New Human Revolution — to write the story-behind-the-story. This series is published as “Thoughts on The New Human Revolution” in the Seikyo Shimbun, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.*

When I recall the voice of my mentor, Josei Toda, I am overcome by powerful nostalgia.

With an infinitely warm tone, he encouraged grieving friends and conveyed concern for the well-being of youth. With a voice like thunder, driven by powerful emotion and tough love, he rebuked those who had been remiss. With devastating eloquence, he vanquished negative forces that sought to obstruct the progress of our movement. With the commanding tones of a mighty general, he tirelessly inspired and roused his comrades to action.

His was the great lion's roar of one who had pledged to eradicate misery from the face of the earth. Mr. Toda's voice reverberated with passion, calm, coldness, warmth, severity, generosity, compassion. It was, if you like, a voice of the four seasons — biting winter cold, gentle spring breezes, hot summer days, cool autumn nights.



At the proposal of Shin'ichi Yamamoto [President Ikeda's character in *The New Human Revolution*], leaders gathered at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters on Jan. 1, 1959 — the first New Year's Day after President Toda's death — to listen to a tape of one of their late mentor's lectures. Shin'ichi lamented the fact that Mr. Toda's impassioned cry seemed to be fading from the Soka Gakkai.

When Mr. Toda's voice sprang from the tape, the atmosphere in the room immediately transformed. Everyone sat up straight, just as if Mr. Toda were in the room speaking to them. Many of them wept with emotion and vowed to keep striving fearlessly to achieve his vision.



Soon afterward, Shin'ichi set about having phonograph records of his mentor's speeches and lectures made, so as to preserve his words for posterity. First he gathered every tape recording available of Mr. Toda's talks and lectures, more than 160 in all. Members all over Japan helped. He was grateful for that.

As a representative of all of Mr. Toda's disciples, Shin'ichi wrote the calligraphy for the title on the record jackets: *Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda's Teachings*. He knew his calligraphy was not great art, but it was heartfelt.

The first record, Mr. Toda's lecture on the Goshō “On Prolonging Life,” was finished a little more than six months later in July 1959. In his diary, Shin'ichi wrote: “I am so happy. I have paid part of my debt of gratitude to my mentor.”

Shin'ichi first had the idea of making recordings of Mr. Toda's speeches in 1951. The inspiration had come from a novel, *The Eternal City* by Hall Caine, which he had read and studied under Mr. Toda. Many years later, in an essay Shin'ichi wrote in connection with *The Human Revolution*, he noted that through *The Eternal City* his mentor had taught him much about the adventure of revolution and the strong bonds of true comrades.

Title: The Seasons of My Mentor's Voice  
Subject: World Tribune 02/13/98 n.3178 p.5 WT980213p05  
Author: Daisaku Ikeda  
Keywords: Concepts Disciple Essays Guidance History Human Ikeda January Josei June Kosen-rufu  
Mentor People President Revolution Seasons Series Terms Toda Tribune Voice World



*The Eternal City* is set in Rome in 1900 — which, by coincidence, is the same year that Mr. Toda was born.

Mr. Toda taught with the passion of a mentor who wished to make each word an everlasting source of inspiration for his disciples.

There is one unforgettable scene in the book. One day a phonograph cylinder — the equivalent of today's record or compact disc — is delivered to the home of the hero, David Rossi. When Rossi winds up the phonograph and plays the cylinder, he hears the voice of his mentor, an old revolutionary, a teacher, parent and benefactor to him.

The recording was made from his mentor's place of exile — it contains his final words to his young successor, urging him to continue the struggle for justice. Hearing the voice of his beloved teacher, Rossi breaks into tears and vows to fulfill his mentor's wish.



As he and his fellow youth studied and discussed the noble ideals of kosen-rufu with Mr. Toda, Shin'ichi thought to himself that he wanted to record his mentor's rousing words for all time — perhaps in the form of a phonograph. At the time, Shin'ichi was only 23 and struggling amid great obstacles.



When Shin'ichi was the youth division chief of staff, he bore the brunt of Mr. Toda's regular scoldings.

The current Soka Gakkai general director, Kazuya Morita, once said: “No one was scolded as often by Mr. Toda as Sensei. I was only scolded a few times. We all used to call Sensei the breakwater.”

As Mr. Toda's disciple, this is a source of pride for me. In my youth, I was favored to have the lion's roar of that great mentor infused in my life to an unsurpassed degree.



Nichiren Daishonin writes: “Suppose a lion has a hundred cubs. When the lion king sees its cubs attacked by other beasts or birds of prey, he roars; the hundred cubs will then feel emboldened, and the heads of those other beasts and birds of prey will be split into seven pieces” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 288).

As the successor of a lion king, I rose to my task a hundred times emboldened. And my efforts to fight for kosen-rufu are unflagging still today.

How could I claim to be a faithful disciple of my mentor if I failed to speak out for truth and justice?



“Be champions of kosen-rufu!” — this cry of his mentor is always with Shin'ichi. Even today.

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