

Discussions on Youth Weaving the Fabric of Peace

This is Part 2 of the final installment in a series of discussions on youth among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division leaders Hidenobu Kimura (young men's leader) and Kazue Igeta (young women's leader), representing the high school division members.

IKEDA: Every August, I recall the day World War II ended. Japan surrendered on Aug. 15, 1945. It was a sunny day, and I was staying with relatives in Nishi-magome in Tokyo's Ota Ward. Our house had been razed by the authorities to create a barrier to block the spread of fires caused by air raids.

I heard that there would be an important radio broadcast at noon. I was expecting an announcement from the Imperial Headquarters, the nation's highest military council during the war, that we were going to launch an all-out attack on the United States. That was the general atmosphere at the time. That was what we had been taught to think.

Just before noon, I went to my grandmother's house in nearby Higashi-magome. Everywhere was quiet and still. I listened to the emperor's address, but the reception was poor, and I couldn't make out what he was saying.

Neither my grandmother nor I had any idea whether Japan had won or lost. When I got back to Nishi-magome, my younger brother came running to me in tears, crying, "We lost, we lost!" I thought the wartime hardships had finally driven him crazy.

We all stood about saying: "How could we have lost? It's impossible!" Not until evening did it finally begin to sink in that Japan had lost the war.

The city fell into a strange lethargy. People were worried what would happen when the occupation forces arrived. Until supper, everyone sat about in a stupor.

But, at the same time, we began to realize that the sound of bomber raids, which had continued through the morning, could no longer be heard. They had completely stopped at noon. The skies were quiet.

A sense of relief seemed to spread.

That night, for the first time in months, we could turn on the lights in our homes as we pleased — we had been forced to live in semi-darkness during the air raids. "How bright!" I thought.

And I also thought what a good thing peace was. We were all relieved, yet no one dared to come right out and say: "I'm glad we lost. What a relief that the war's over!"

Many fine youth lost their lives in the war. My four elder brothers were sent to the front to fight.

KIMURA: I am reminded of this passage from *The Human Revolution*: "Nothing is more pitiful than a nation being swept along by foolish leaders."

IKEDA: My eldest brother died in Burma, which is now Myanmar. He was a fine young man of great integrity.

When we received the news, we couldn't believe it. About three years later, a young man who had served with him visited us and recounted how my brother had died. My brother had been hit by machine-gun fire from a low-flying aircraft and had fallen into a river during the drawn-out Battle of Imphal.

For a long time, I had difficulty picturing this. One day, many years later, I watched an

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in-depth TV documentary on the Battle of Imphal. At last I felt what it must have been like. And I was again made aware of what a senseless, tragic campaign it was.

During this disastrous battle, the Japanese army left a trail of its own soldiers' corpses in its path, which became known as the Skeleton Trail. It was a tragedy caused by leaders who made terrible misjudgments, were preoccupied with self-serving interests and forgot completely about the men who were carrying out their orders.

KIMURA: Such dreadful things must never be allowed to happen again.

IKEDA: Yet today many warn of a resurgence of nationalism and authoritarianism in Japan. Everyone is beginning to forget the tragedy that took place just a half-century ago.

That's why the Soka Gakkai, which ardently cries out for peace, is so important. The initial reason I joined the Soka Gakkai was that I could completely trust Mr. Toda, because he had spent two years in prison during the war for his opposition to militarism. I didn't know anything about Buddhism. I believed in a person, in Mr. Toda. And following the path of oneness of mentor and disciple with Mr. Toda became the path of my human revolution.

KIMURA: That path has been the path of kosen-rufu itself, hasn't it?

IKEDA: The determination to accomplish kosen-rufu adds momentum to the determination to accomplish your human revolution. Human revolution is like a planet's rotation on its axis, while kosen-rufu is like the planet's revolution around the sun. Rotation and revolution are the foundation of all motion in the universe. It would counter the laws of the universe if a planet did not revolve around the sun.

IGETA: Some people don't clearly understand what kosen-rufu implies. One member asked whether it means converting everyone on earth to the Daishonin's Buddhism.

IKEDA: Kosen-rufu is the spread of the Mystic Law from one person to another. So, too, is its spread from 10,000 to 50,000. Yet, kosen-rufu is not about numbers. It is a process, an eternal flow.

Kosen-rufu is not something that will end at some fixed point in time. We won't sit down one day and say, "Well, now kosen-rufu is finished." Not only would that spell our spiritual death, we'd lose all motivation to do human revolution.

Kosen-rufu is unending. Although we can try to describe it by defining certain conditions, in reality, kosen-rufu has no set form.

IGETA: Can the same be said about our personal revolution, our human revolution? Is it a process, too?

IKEDA: Yes. When a seriously ill person recovers, that is great human revolution. When a mean person becomes kind, that is human revolution. When people who treat their parents poorly begin to respect and love them, that is human revolution.

Human revolution cannot be pinned down to one specific thing. It is any action that leads to positive change or improvement in the inner realm of your life. Like kosen-rufu, it is an ongoing process. What's important to ask yourself is whether you are on the path of continuous personal growth.

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IGETA: What is the literal meaning of the word *kosen-rufu*?

IKEDA: *Kosen* means to widely declare. *Widely* implies speaking out to the world, to an ever-greater number and ever-broader spectrum of people.

Declare means to proclaim one's ideals, principles and philosophy. The *ru* of *rufu* means a current like that of a great river. And *fu* means to spread out like a roll of cloth.

The teaching of the Mystic Law has nothing to do with appearance, form or pride. It flows out freely. To all humanity the world over. Like a cloth unfolding, it spreads out and covers all. So *rufu* means to flow freely, to reach all.

Just like a cloth, *kosen-rufu* is woven from vertical and horizontal threads. The vertical threads represent the passing of the Daishonin's teaching from mentor to disciple, parent to child, senior to junior. The horizontal threads represent the impartial spread of this teaching, transcending national borders, social classes and all other distinctions.

Simply put, *kosen-rufu* is the movement to communicate the ultimate way to happiness. To communicate the highest principle of peace to people of all classes and nations through the correct philosophy and teaching of the Daishonin.

IGETA: It is natural to want to tell others how great something is that we believe in. This is not limited to our Buddhist practice.

IKEDA: That's right. Any vendor or salesperson, for example, believes that his or her product — whether it be televisions, fast food or fresh vegetables — is the best and tries to have as many people as possible know about it and buy it. This is an example, in a sense, of the widespread propagation of one's beliefs.

School administrators believe their educational institution employs the best methods and produces the highest quality students. They want to have as many people as possible know this. Their activities to promote their schools are the widespread propagation of their beliefs.

We also might say that Christianity carried out its own widespread propagation in the past. So did Islam, Hinduism and Communism. While we already know what happened when they were widely propagated, we don't yet know the result of widely propagating the Daishonin's Buddhism. We are now carrying out this grand experiment and creating history as we go.

KIMURA: That's wonderful. The work of *kosen-rufu* is really the most exciting drama.

IKEDA: But unless each of us is certain of our beliefs and proud that we practice the highest Buddhist teaching, we can't properly carry out *kosen-rufu*.

In all walks of life, there are and always will be corrupt, unscrupulous people. They find it impossible to remain for long in such a sincere, earnest movement. This was true of all who betrayed our organization in the past. Anyone who tries to join the *kosen-rufu* movement with a deceptive, scheming or malicious intent will soon be exposed.

KIMURA: *Kosen-rufu* cannot be properly carried out unless each person strives to do his or her human revolution.

IKEDA: You can also think of your human revolution as undertaking *kosen-rufu* in the microcosm of your own world. When many individuals are pursuing their human revolution, they can advance the *kosen-rufu* of society as a whole. In other words, *kosen-*

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rufu is advanced in direct proportion to the strides you make in your human revolution. At the same time, when you abandon selfish interests and devote yourself to kosen-rufu, a movement to lead others to happiness, your human revolution will progress. That is how closely the two are related.

It is wrong to isolate yourself. Those who unite with caring, supportive seniors in faith, seniors who are sincerely devoted to kosen-rufu, grow by leaps and bounds and make great strides in their human revolution.

KIMURA: Some people ask why, if the Daishonin's Buddhism is such a superior teaching, everyone doesn't jump at the chance to practice it? And why those who practice are criticized?

IKEDA: It isn't practiced readily by all precisely because it is true and right. Being kind to one's parents is right, but how easy is that? Studying is the right thing to do, but how many do it? The same is true of Buddhism.

That human beings possess philosophy and ideals distinguishes us from other animals. All people ask, at least once in their lives, why they were born in this world. But animals don't ask themselves that question.

Another of our distinguishing features is our human yearning for principles that allow us to live honorably, peacefully, happily. It's also human nature that when we see a starving child on television, we want to do something to help. That is a natural instinct.

We cannot live alone, isolated from others. In Japanese, *human being* (Jpn *ningen*) is written with two Chinese characters that, when combined, mean between people. It is through our interactions with others that we polish our lives and grow.

Therefore, it's only natural that, with as many people as possible, we share and promote understanding of the philosophy, the ideal, that we believe is most correct and valid. It is our duty and our right.

It's the nature of animals to accumulate food just for themselves. If we were to keep to ourselves the means we have found for attaining happiness, not sharing it with others, we would have succumbed to the states of Animality and Hunger. The wish to share the truth with others, to share the means for achieving happiness, is the hallmark of philosophy, of education, of culture and of Buddhism.

IGETA: That's what kosen-rufu is all about, isn't it? Widely sharing the Daishonin's Buddhism is a wonderful crystallization and expression of our humanity.

IKEDA: Yes. It's not being stingy or closed. *Kosen-rufu* means sharing with our fellow human beings through heart-to-heart dialogue and friendship, and striving with them to find the way to become better, happier people. That alliance of individuals working for the happiness of all constitutes kosen-rufu.

KIMURA: I feel, President Ikeda, that I have gained a deeper understanding of your efforts to engage in dialogue with people the world over and forge an international alliance for peace.

On Aug. 24 last year, you celebrated your 50th anniversary of practicing the Daishonin's teachings. Fifty years ago, kosen-rufu must have seemed a fantastic dream. But today, because of your incredible efforts, the Daishonin's Buddhism has spread to 128 countries and territories.

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IKEDA: I have only tried to keep my vow to walk the path of human revolution that my mentor, Josei Toda, taught me. Now I have fulfilled that vow to the letter. I have won. That's what's important — to win over yourself. That is human revolution. That is kosen-rufu.

I am not concerned with the immediate future. I am not afraid of persecution or criticism. I am thinking about 100 and 200 years from now. My actions today are based on the future 10 millennia hence.

From ancient times, it has been said that posterity judges teachers by their disciples. I have been the object of every conceivable groundless attack and insult, but I don't care in the least. Buddhism teaches that this is unavoidable.

I know, deep in my heart, that the evaluation of my true worth, of my success or failure, will be based on the activities, contributions and achievements my disciples will make in their local communities, countries and the world. There are many, many graduates of the high school division who are playing active roles in society all around the world. I find this enormously encouraging. It makes me very, very happy.

I have no regrets. I believe that I have done my best as a Buddhist and a leader.

My legacy will always be remembered. Why? Because I know that my disciples are achieving great things and making an important mark on our world. That means that my life has been victorious. I can claim proud, glorious victory in my efforts.

I hope, pray and trust that you, my young friends, and many others behind you will follow me on this triumphant path into the future.

That is my only wish.

This concludes the series "Discussions on Youth"

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