

SGI President Ikeda's Essay
No Barriers
By HO GOKU

President Ikeda tells the story of how President Toda won over a religious scholar who had a bad impression of the Soka Gakkai. 'Buddhism and society are one,' President Ikeda writes. 'There are no barriers....'

April is the month when the cherry blossoms bloom, dance in the breeze, then scatter and fall. The second day of that month is the day on which our beloved second president, Josei Toda, passed away.

Mr. Toda was a great Buddhist leader. He also had many friends and a wide circle of acquaintances. Since I was assisting Mr. Toda, it often was my responsibility to contact those friends and acquaintances on his behalf, a task I considered a great honor.

Among his friends was a brilliant religious scholar, an associate professor at Tokyo University at the time. Later, he became a full professor and the president of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies.



In the spring of 1959, a year after Mr. Toda's death, this scholar contributed an article, which appeared in the April 10 issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, sharing his recollections of his late friend. He related that once, when he was leaving on a research trip, Mr. Toda had given him as a going-away present, a copy of his novel *Human Revolution* (written under the pen name Myo Goku). Opening the book, the scholar said, he found that Mr. Toda had written a poem for him on the flyleaf:

*Such is my state of mind now
That, as I bid you bon voyage,
I pray with all my heart
For your happiness.*

What a warm poem it is, filled with wishes for a friend's happiness and good fortune as he heads off on his travels!



The two first met toward the end of November 1954. Mr. Toda was conducting a discussion with two scholars of religion at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, one of whom was this friend. The content of their discussion was later aired on the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) radio show *The Religion Hour*. Mr. Toda presented the positions of the Soka Gakkai clearly and directly. I was present as well.

The scholar, who was younger than Mr. Toda by a decade, had developed a rather negative image of the Soka Gakkai. But during the discussion, Mr. Toda dispelled all his misunderstandings and misconceptions with great patience and tact. And he stayed in touch with the scholar after the program was finished.

Later, I visited this friend of Mr. Toda at Tokyo University where, with members of the student division, we carried on philosophical and religious discussions. How fondly I look back on those times now.

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I want to share a bit more of that scholar's recollections of Mr. Toda, as they appeared in the *Seikyo Shimbun*: "My role with regard to religion is to be an objective scholar," he wrote, "and I cannot become too closely involved with any religious organization. But I had a close personal relationship with Mr. Toda, one that transcended any religious matters. I am certain that even those who defame the Soka Gakkai would have been won over by Mr. Toda had they met him."

He also wrote in this article: "Mr. Toda once asked me to act as an intermediary and arrange a meeting among him and those who disliked him and the Soka Gakkai. Unfortunately, I was never able to accomplish this." How wonderful it would have been if he had!

While Mr. Toda was uncompromising regarding his firm faith in Buddhism, he was remarkably flexible and broad-minded in relations with others, tolerant of the ways of the world and human nature. He could look beyond dogmatism and forge friendships and alliances with all.

After becoming a leader in his field, this scholar continued to offer us sound advice, always based on a sympathetic understanding of the Soka Gakkai and its mission.



I, too, have engaged in many dialogues with scholars and men and women of learning and culture. I have done this always firmly holding in my mind the image of my mentor, who could speak freely and persuasively with anyone and everyone.

I have spoken with and become close friends with many scholars, such as Professor Emeritus Bryan Wilson of Oxford and the late Professor Emeritus Shin Anzai of Sophia University, Tokyo. All of them have and do possess finely honed critical faculties regarding religion. That is precisely why I felt it so important for them to know the truth about the Gakkai.



The noble Soka Gakkai that Mr. Toda gave his entire life to building.

The Soka Gakkai — a citadel of conscience dedicated to human happiness and world peace.

The Soka Gakkai — a citadel of the people. Those who gather under its banner shine with the noblest human spirit. Kosen-rufu is the process of embracing one friend and then another in this radiant light.

Buddhism and society are one. There are no barriers between the Soka Gakkai and society at large. Nor can we permit any barriers to arise between one human heart and another.

Friendship is proof of our humanity. And Buddhism is what enables us to develop that humanity to the fullest possible extent. That is why it is so important for us to devote our lives to encouraging the flowers of enjoyable, worthwhile discussions to bloom. And to causing the fruit of friendship to grow and ripen.

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