

SIGNIFICANT DATES: HOW CAN WE ACHIEVE THE SGI'S GREAT GOALS? BY JOHN KASAHARA, NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT

On Jan. 26, we commemorate the 24th anniversary of the formation of the Soka Gakkai International. When we look at the SGI organization and its history, we start to see the grand view that SGI President Ikeda has for the worldwide propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

In 1947, Daisaku Ikeda first made the acquaintance of Josei Toda, who would become his mentor in life. Through the years that Daisaku Ikeda was able to be side by side with Toda, he grasped Toda's vision for the future: for the Soka Gakkai to spread this Buddhism to all corners of the world. The Soka Gakkai was to work on a worldwide scale to promote peace, culture, and education based upon the Daishonin's teachings.

After taking the helm as third Soka Gakkai president, President Ikeda embarked in 1960 on a trip to America, his first trip overseas, which proved to be the beginning of the fulfillment of his mentor's dream. Fifteen years later, on Jan. 26, 1975, the SGI was formed in Guam with Daisaku Ikeda as president. The formation of this international organization was for no other reason than to engage in activities that would create a peaceful world.

President Ikeda has said that the objective of the SGI is "working for peace by opposing all forms of violence and contributing to the welfare of humankind by pursuing humanistic culture and education." The SGI exists only to help people realize absolute happiness and the happiness of the places in which they live.

The SGI also works together with other organizations aiming toward the same goals, such as the United Nations. The SGI and the Soka Gakkai in Japan are registered with the United Nations as a non-governmental organization. Because the world has experienced the most intense negative effects of science and technology in the 20th century, with world wars and atomic bombs, this correlation between the SGI and all the organizations that it works together with becomes very crucial to assure that those same mistakes are not repeated again.

Since 1975, the SGI has grown to approximately 12 million members in 128 countries. Centering around President Ikeda's leadership, members throughout the world are contributing their efforts in every aspect of their lives to improve the world. By becoming good world citizens, we can lead a grass-roots movement of dialogue and exchange that leads to understanding and respect among the people of the world.

I constantly find myself thinking about what the 21st century will bring. But President Ikeda has said recently that now it's already the 21st century! With this spirit in mind, I try to remind myself that all the efforts we are making now will bear fruit in the new millennium and last for thousands of years. I believe that the only way to reach our noble goals is to continue to have dialogue with each individual member about anything that they want to speak about and to base our lives on the Daishonin's teachings. I am confident that our efforts will continue to unite the people of the world.

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