

## AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA KOSEN-RUFU IS INTENSE

*Explaining the significance of July 3, Day of Mentor and Disciple, SGI President Ikeda says that 'kosen-rufu is an intense struggle against the devilish nature of authority.'*

Buddhism exists to achieve humanity's most ambitious goals. Faith exists to elevate and direct incomplete lives toward complete fulfillment, free of all regret.

To achieve these goals, we must fight long and hard for the sake of kosen-rufu. We can never retreat even a single step in our work to transform the tragic destiny of humanity.

The bright, shining day of July 3, breaking through the darkness of the age! On that day in 1945, Josei Toda was released from the prison where he had been held by Japan's wartime military authorities. It was the day he rose up alone and began his struggle for kosen-rufu.

Twelve years later, on July 3, 1957, I, his disciple, proudly followed in his footsteps, imprisoned for a crime I did not commit — a persecution encountered because of my efforts to spread the Mystic Law.

I was on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido when the summons for me to appear in Osaka for police questioning came. Flying from Hokkaido's Chitose Airport, I had to make a stopover in Tokyo and change planes to fly on to Osaka. When I arrived at Tokyo's Haneda Airport, Mr. Toda was there to greet me in one of the airport waiting rooms.

Weak and frail as he was then, he had come all the way to the airport to see me before I was questioned at the Osaka Prefectural Police Headquarters. His experience in prison during the war had made him completely familiar with the conditions I might face, and he was worried about how I would fare with my poor health.

He gripped my shoulder powerfully. "You must not die," he said. "Daisaku, should death overtake you, I would rush to your side and throw myself upon you and die together with you."

Feeling this deep love of my noble mentor, my heart was filled with uncontrollable emotion.

That evening, I appeared at the Osaka Prefectural Police Headquarters with the firmest determination to clarify the truth and dispel all falsehoods. At 7:00 p.m., I was arrested and imprisoned. It was clear that this had been the plan of the police from the start.

My imprisonment took place at nearly the same time on the same date as Mr. Toda's release from jail 12 years earlier. How mysterious are the workings of the Mystic Law! At this thought, all my sadness and worry fell away and were transformed into joy. I was only 29 then.

The charges against me were completely false. The police alleged that, since I was in charge of the campaign for the Soka Gakkai-sponsored candidate in the April 1957 Upper House by-election for the Osaka electoral district, I had instructed Gakkai members to purchase votes and commit other election-law violations. I felt very bad for those members who, out of their enthusiasm, had done door-to-door vote soliciting and been arrested for it, but I had not been in any way involved in these attempts to purchase votes. [Japan's election laws prohibit door-to-door campaigning.]

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The newspapers splashed headlines like “The Arrest of Public Relations Chief Ikeda” across their front pages and printed articles claiming that I was arrested “on suspicion of playing an important role in the election-law violations that characterize the Soka Gakkai’s blitz tactics.” The mass media of the day acted as a mouthpiece for the authorities, and they created an image of the Gakkai as an antisocial organization that had engaged in election-law violations in a premeditated, organized fashion.

While I was in prison, my friends in the Kansai region bore an especially heavy burden of concern for my welfare. I have heard of members who remained standing in the hot sun all day hoping to catch sight of me, even if only briefly. I feel incredibly grateful for their support.

The police had fabricated the charges against me by threatening the Gakkai members they had arrested and extracting false confessions from them that I had directed their illegal activities.

My questioning by the police and prosecutors was extremely harsh. One day, I was grilled far into the night, without even an evening meal. On another occasion, I was led outdoors in handcuffs to publicly humiliate me.

While in prison I read Nichiren Daishonin’s writings and other books, too. Victor Hugo urged me to fight, to remain undefeated, rousing in me the courage I needed to face my persecution.

Hugo had lived in exile for 19 years. Jawaharlal Nehru of India was imprisoned nine times, spending some nine years of his life behind bars.

And what of those who had suffered harsh persecution for the sake of the Mystic Law? I told myself: “Think of the Daishonin! Think of Mr. Makiguchi! Think of Mr. Toda!” I was determined not to give in. I had pride in being a Soka Gakkai member.

Finally, the prosecutors told me that unless I pleaded guilty they would raid the Soka Gakkai Headquarters and arrest Mr. Toda. This was nothing short of a threat.

I wasn’t worried about myself; I could face whatever persecution they dealt out. But Mr. Toda’s health was fragile, and imprisonment could easily spell his death. Thus commenced my true agony.

It was beyond comprehension to me that I should confess to a crime that I did not commit, yet at the same time I could in no way permit my mentor to be arrested on false charges and imprisoned, possibly ending up dying in prison.

I passed a sleepless night, reflecting on this firsthand experience of the insidious, fearful workings of the devilish nature of authority. Then I came to a decision: I would admit, provisionally, guilt of the offenses. But during the trial, I would prove my innocence and reveal the truth for all the world to clearly see.

From that day, my struggle for human rights, my story of the eventual triumph of truth and justice despite overwhelming odds, began.

On July 12, Mr. Toda held a Tokyo rally at the now defunct National Sports Arena in Tokyo’s Kuramae area, during which he called for my immediate release. He also visited the Osaka Prefectural Police Headquarters to speak out against the authorities’ actions, though he was painfully frail and unsteady on his legs, having to grip the handrails to pull himself up the stairs to do so. When I later heard about his visit, I wept tears of gratitude.

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melodrama ruled by the laws of ephemeral, cheap sentiment.

In the midst of his own persecution, Nichiren Daishonin writes, “I have been certain from the beginning that this would occur” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 17). I am the disciple of my mentor, Josei Toda. From the beginning, I knew that I must be prepared to die for the sake of our revolution. Kosen-rufu is a sacred endeavor that can only be accomplished by the heroes of the SGI, those who are not afraid to give their lives for the Law should the need arise.

Youth, rise up as lions for the cause of the people’s triumph! Work for your friends and comrades! Fear nothing! Come forth, my disciples, in the tens and hundreds of thousands!

Inevitably, times change. There are times when a profusion of flowers bloom. There are times, too, of madness — when demons try to ring the death knell for truth and justice.

May you, my youthful disciples — you treasures of the SGI linked in the oneness of mentor and disciple — build a golden road! Please set forth and take that first step on the path of ultimate good!

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