

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S NEWEST POEM
THE ETERNAL TRIUMPH OF MENTOR AND DISCIPLE**

Commemorating the 70th Anniversary Of the Soka Gakkai's Founding

The morning sun!
O the morning sun shining in the eastern sky!

The light illuminating
The great stage
Of the 21st century
Beckons us
To stride out exuberantly
Into the new age ahead of us.

His gaze on the fresh horizons
Of the vast future,
Bathed in the newborn light
Of the still beyond,
Our great mentor
Tsunesaburo Makiguchi
Left this world.

Above the abject darkness,
The cruel dawn
Appeared once again.
When will the day
For which our peaceful
 hearts yearn
Arrive?
All hope seemed lost.

But beyond the deepening darkness,
A bright new dawn
Of unending victory
Was definitely waiting.

The memories
Of Mr. Makiguchi's noble life
Were deeply engraved
Into my own heart
By my mentor Josei Toda,
Again and again
Uncountable times,
Striking my life
With the force of

crashing waves
So that I might withstand
the pain
Of any wound, however deep.

Mr. Toda told me,
“My greatest pride in life
Is having been with
Mr. Makiguchi
During each of his four
persecutions.”

Through the machinations
Of arrogant government
officials,
The dedicated educator,
Principal Makiguchi,
Met his first persecution
When he was removed
from his post
At Nishimachi Elementary School;
And his second,
When he was ousted
From Mikasa Elementary School.
The passionate young disciple
Josei Toda,
Filled with anger,
Staunchly defended
His just and upright mentor.

The third persecution
Was Mr. Makiguchi’s
forced removal
From Shirokane Elementary School.
In the midst of that ordeal,
His great work,
The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy,
Was published.

On Nov. 18, 1930 —
A Tuesday —
As the harsh winds of the Great Depression
Buffeted the world,
And as Japan was being rocked
By an assassination attempt
On its prime minister —
The rays of a great spiritual struggle

Flashed like lightning
Through the darkness and confusion.

At the time,
The mentor was 59,
The disciple, 30.
These two alone
Rang the bell,
Sounding the dawn of Soka
For the world!
For the future!

The fourth persecution
Was oppression by the
 militarist authorities.
Traacherously betrayed by the priesthood,
Twenty-one Soka Gakkai leaders were arrested.
And cowardly disciples did an abrupt about-face —
With flagrant ingratitude,
They disparaged and cursed their mentor
And abandoned him.

“Although I and my disciples
May encounter various
 difficulties,
If we do not harbor doubts in our hearts,
We will as a matter of course
Attain Buddhahood.
Do not have doubts
 simply because
Heaven does not lend you
 protection.
Do not be discouraged
Because you do not enjoy
An easy and secure existence in this life.
This is what I have taught
 my disciples
Morning and evening,
And yet they begin
 to harbor doubts
And abandon their faith.
Foolish men
Are likely to forget
The promises they have made
When the crucial
 moment comes.”
(*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 283)

When the crucial
moment came,
Only Mr. Toda joined
his mentor
In living this passage
From "The Opening of
the Eyes."

In prison,
The disciple prayed fervently.
He prayed to the Buddhas
And heavenly deities
Throughout the universe:
"I am still young,
But my mentor is old.
Let all the responsibility
For the charges against us
Fall on me alone,
And allow my mentor to
be released
As soon as possible!"

Here
Unsurpassed beauty
And unconquerable strength
Blazed
As the Soka spirit of mentor and disciple.

Up to the moment of
his death,
Mr. Makiguchi
Led by example.
He always energetically set out
For discussion meetings,
No matter how far
he had to travel,
And was sure to arrive
ahead of time.
He expressed his sincerest
appreciation
To the families
Who offered their homes
As meeting places,
And he welcomed
each participant
With the respect

He would accord a Buddha.
When someone arrived,
He immediately engaged
that person
In openhearted conversation.

To a young man
Struggling with his job,
He said:
“It is not the Lotus Sutra
If it cannot change poison into medicine.
Now is the time
For you to put this into practice
In your own life.
A Gakkai youth must have the strength
To work as hard as three!”

The Daishonin declares:
“Buddhism primarily
concerns itself
With victory or defeat” (WND, 835).
In Mr. Makiguchi’s copy
of the Goshō,
These words
Were underlined
Heavily and boldly in red.

Authoritarian leaders
Exploit the youth,
Look down on them
as inferiors;
They oppress their juniors.
But true leaders
Love and nurture the youth;
They constantly strive
To help their juniors grow
and develop
Into people more able,
More accomplished than themselves.

To a young woman,
Mr. Makiguchi said:
“Convince people
Of the greatness of this
Buddhism
Through your own behavior.
Be especially kind

To those younger than yourself.”
He taught a philosophy of humanism
Based on the deepest sincerity.

Kosen-rufu
Is human beings engaging
in discussion,
Forming ties of friendship,
And spreading trust
In the most natural
and human way.

Though the ominous sound
Of military boots grew louder,
Though agents of the Special Higher Police
Were always on his trail,
Mr. Makiguchi continued his efforts for peace.
Each day, each night,
Undeterred by the authorities’ angry shouts
To cease and desist,
Boldly and with dignity,
He proclaimed with
a lion’s roar
The noble philosophy of
justice and truth.

Mr. Makiguchi said:
“To be people of great good,
We must be strong.
The unshakable strength
To take a determined stand against evil
Will brighten
Both the lives of individuals
And society as a whole.”

Mr. Makiguchi entrusted
The jeweled sword
Of this most powerful
conviction
To the next generation.
“Kosen-rufu must be achieved
Through the leadership of
the youth!”
Until just before his arrest,
He continued giving lectures to students
On the Daishonin’s treatise
“On Establishing the Correct Teaching

For the Peace of the Land.”

Mr. Makiguchi
Passionately rebuked
The priesthood
That trampled on the
instructions
Of the Daishonin and
Nikko Shonin
And that bowed to the
demands
Of the militarist authorities.

He said:
“Buddhism
Is not an intellectual game.
Its purpose is to save the land
And the people from suffering.
To stand by with folded arms
And fail to do so
When that time arises
Is to betray the Buddha’s intent.”

A full 600 years
After the Daishonin’s exile to Sado,
Mr. Makiguchi was born
In Niigata,
The same province as that
historic isle.
And
At the age of 72,
For the sake of kosen-rufu,
Well aware of the risks involved,
He traveled resolutely to Izu,
Another site of the
Daishonin’s exile,
And there met with
persecution for the Law,
His arrest coming early in
the morning
Of July 6, 1943.

At the last discussion meeting he attended
In the town of Shimoda in Izu,
He left behind a declaration
Of his great conviction:
“The Lotus Sutra

Is like the sun.”

His struggle in prison
Lasted more than 16 months—
Five hundred days.
His cramped cell,
With its bare wooden floor,
Was sweltering in summer,
And bitterly cold in winter,
The chill cutting to the bone like a knife.
The food was sparse
And the clothing inadequate.

Yet
Mr. Makiguchi’s face
Was a rosy pink,
His eyes
Shone ever brighter,
And with a clear resounding voice,
He continued his Buddhist
 dialogue,
Strictly refuting the erroneous
And revealing the true
Even in prison.

In his letters to his family,
 he wrote:
“I have no worries,”
“I have no fear,”
“I have no wants.”
A Buddha is invincible!
Whatever happens,
A Buddha is never defeated!
To the very end
Mr. Makiguchi demonstrated
The quintessence
Of that supreme
 human strength.

He wrote in his last letter,
One month before he died:
“When I reflect on how
I was able to produce
The ‘Theory of Value’—
A theory that scholars
For the past 100 years
Had sought in vain—

And, moreover,
To connect it
To faith in the Lotus Sutra
And enable several
 thousand people
To realize actual proof,
I am surprised in spite of myself.
Therefore,
It is only natural
That the three obstacles and four devils
Should have assailed me;
It is just as the sutra states.”

On Nov. 18, 1944,
Just after six o'clock
On a Saturday morning,
As the sun rose majestically over the horizon,
The founder of Soka
Died with noble dignity,
A martyr to his cause.

The bonds of mentor and
 disciple are eternal.
The bonds of mentor and
 disciple are indestructible.
The bonds of mentor and
 disciple are boundless.

His disciple Josei Toda cried out:
“I will be like the Count of Monte Cristo!
Should I ever leave this prison,
I will avenge the death
 of Mr. Makiguchi.
Striking a blow for justice
Against those who
 persecuted him,
I will prove to all the world
His greatness!”

It was many years later,
On a bright autumn day,
Nov. 16, 1950 —
Just ahead of
The 20th anniversary
Of the Soka Gakkai's founding
And the seventh memorial [sixth anniversary]
Of Mr. Makiguchi's death,

At a time when Mr. Toda's business
Was in the direst straits.
On that day,
My mentor and I
Went to the Nihon University cafeteria
And talked together
Over lunch,
Amid the boisterous clamor
of students.

“Daisaku,
Let's build a Soka University.
This was Mr. Makiguchi's
Fervent wish.
It may not be possible
In my lifetime,
But I ask you, Daisaku,
To realize this dream.
Let's make it
the best university
In the world!”

In the five decades since then,
I have fulfilled
All of my promises to
my mentor.
And
On May 3, 2001,
Soka University of America
Will open its doors
In California's Orange County
As a full-fledged liberal arts college.
The curtain will rise
with majesty
On a brilliant
Century of Soka Education.

Nichiren Daishonin said:
“In the 700 or more years
Since the teachings of
the Buddha
Were first introduced to Japan,
There has never been anyone
Who was hated to such a degree
Because of the Lotus Sutra” (WND, 519)

How wondrous the rhythm

of time,
In accord with the Buddha's intent and decree,
By which the Soka Gakkai
Should have appeared
Seven hundred years
After the Daishonin's birth!

The Lotus Sutra says
That its practitioners
Will be "cursed and
spoken ill of"
(*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 193)
And "Since hatred
and jealousy
Toward this sutra abound
Even when the Thus Come One
Is in the world,
How much more will this be so
After his passing" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 164).
In these more than 700 years,
No follower of
Nichiren Daishonin
Has endured persecutions
of the kind
That have befallen
the first three presidents
Of the Soka Gakkai.
This is clearly borne out
By history.

Yet
The selfless heroes
Who have dedicated their lives for their beliefs
Smile undaunted....
O corrupt, arrogant
authorities,
Your very arrogance
will become a heavy weight
Wearing you down
Until you collapse!

Our wings of truth,
Growing ever more luminous
With the dazzling light of honor and glory,
Will receive
Countless enthusiastic
accolades,

Applauding our victory,
Outshining you millions
of times.

You are slaves to base power.
No matter how hard you try
To close our veracious eyes,
The pulse of truth
Will continue to beat strongly
In our veins.

All that surely lies in wait
For you, the corrupt and malign,
Is dark misery.
But we
Will be greeted
By true and eternal happiness.

Your actions
Will lead you to despair.
Some day
You will sigh despondently
At our courage.

Your journey
Is that of a frozen,
Setting sun.
We, however,
Make our way
Cloaked in life's joy
Surging forth vibrantly
Like a powerful wave
Far beyond winter:
Spring is near.

We can see
The jubilant morning sun,
Shining and clear.
Throughout eternity,
Concrete proof of triumph
Of the great life-philosophy
Of the oneness of
body and mind
Awaits us.

Our age
Marks a new era!

We will create a magnificent new world—
Looking from the past to the present,
From the present to the future.

With you, dear friends!
With friends throughout
the world!
I will fight,
Conveying the profound teaching
Of Buddhism
With its soaring spirit
To Asia,
To Africa,
To Europe,
To North and South America,
To Oceania.

We will let nothing defeat us!
Uniting together solidly
And maintaining strong
communication,
Our organization of the heart,
A close community of people
Of many nations,
Will throw into disarray
The vacuous, arrogant ones.
The organization will
support us—
As noble individuals
Who walk the correct path
On which the sun of truth
Always shines.

Distilling 700 years
Into 70,
We of the Soka Gakkai
Have vanquished
The three powerful enemies
That have appeared in all shapes and sizes,
And achieved the widespread propagation
Of the Law
Throughout the entire world.

Ah!
The Soka Gakkai's 70th
anniversary!
We have triumphed!

The bonds of mentor and
disciple of Soka
Have secured a resounding victory
On the vast stage of the world!

Mr. Toda said:
“It is the Soka Gakkai’s
mission
To repay our debt of gratitude
To Nichiren Daishonin
And to pave the way
For the lasting happiness of humanity,
By drawing up a grand plan for peace
Encompassing several
millennia.”
He declared
That all of us
Would be clearly recorded
And honored
In the scriptures of the future
As noble emissaries of the Thus Come One.

The golden words of the
Daishonin state,
“Those who become
Nichiren’s disciples and
lay believers
Should realize the profound karmic relationship
They share with him
And spread the Lotus Sutra
As he does” (WND, 994)

The Day of the Founding!
This is a day
Shining with brilliant splendor
On which we return
To our prime point
Of time without beginning.

Forever, from this day,
Blazing brightly with hope,
Brimming with an
inexhaustible
Sense of mission and
conviction,
We will rise,
Proud and tall.

We will set forth
Bravely and joyously,
Keeping the eternal flame
Of justice and truth
Burning bright.

Into the boundless blue expanse,
Let us fly—
At times with daring!
At times with patience!
At times with laughter!
Like immortals,
Filled with energy
And a sense of mission,
We will spread the wings
Of eternal being
Without beginning or end,
And soar throughout the three existences
Of past, present and future.

Nov. 18, 2000

—Dedicated to first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and second president Josei Toda on the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding.

With profound respect for the noble pioneer members who made lasting contributions to our movement, and with sincerest prayers for the ever-greater good health of my praiseworthy fellow members in Japan and in all 163 countries and territories around the world.

My palms pressed together in reverence.

Daisaku Ikeda