

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA DIALOGUE: THE GREAT PATH OF PEACE

Translated publications by SGI President Ikeda, including his dialogues with world figures, have now reached the 300 mark. ‘I believe that dialogue is the great path of peace that fosters mutual understanding and empathy,’ he writes, ‘and brings both people and cultures closer together.’

Already Soka Gakkai is a world affair”—the greatest historian of the 20th century, Arnold J. Toynbee, contributed these words to the foreword of a book in 1972, some 30 years ago. That book was my first international publication, the first volume of the English translation of *The Human Revolution*.

In the same foreword, Dr. Toynbee went on to emphasize the universality of Nichiren Buddhism: “Nichiren held that Buddhism, as he conceived it, was a means of salvation for his fellow human beings everywhere. In working for the human revolution, Soka Gak-kai is carrying out Nichiren’s mandate.”

The brilliance of the SGI as a universal religious movement, which Dr. Toynbee perceived, has now grown into a great light that is beginning to shine over the entire world.

This autumn, as if to celebrate the start of the second chapter of worldwide kosen-rufu, the number of my translated publications has exceeded the 300 mark—the 300th volume being the German edition of *The Way of Youth*. Back in 1990, the figure stood at 100. This means that my translated publications have tripled in just 11 years.

The renowned French writer Victor Hugo called out, “To speak, write, print, publish—therein lie...our identities; therein lie ever-expanding circles of intelligence in action; therein lie the sonorous waves of thought.”

I cannot help but strongly feel that the vigorous pace of these translated publications represents the sonorous waves of Buddhist humanism reverberating throughout the world.



My works that have been published in languages other than Japanese span a wide variety of genres, from the novels *The Human Revolution* and *The New Human Revolution* to dialogues, poetry, essays, university addresses and children’s stories. They have been published in some 29 European, Asian and African languages to date. I am profoundly grateful to all those who have assisted in the translation and publication of these works.

In particular, I want to express my gratitude to the staffs of these related departments in the Office of International Affairs at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Tokyo: the International Publications Department and the Translation Department, as well as the SGI Newsletter Department that speedily translates my writings from the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily news-paper, and elsewhere, making them available to members around the world.

At present, my dialogue with Dr. Toynbee is in print in 24 languages, including Japanese. The hallowed Oxford University Press, with a history and tradition of 500 years, is the publisher of the English version, titled *Choose Life*.

On many occasions when I have met with the leaders of nations and other noted personages from around the world, they have told of looking forward to meeting me as a

result of reading my dialogue with Dr. Toynbee. People in the publishing world have frequently said that dialogues are generally not a success, but this dialogue has certainly proved the exception. I am sure this would delight Dr. Toynbee as well.

Since the publication of English version of *Choose Life* in 1976, many of my dialogues have been published in various languages. They include those with Dr. Aurelio Peccei, cofounder of the Club of Rome; Dr. Linus Pauling, father of modern chemistry; and former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Recently, the Spanish edition of my dialogue with Dr. Cintio Vitier of Cuba, about the life and thought of José Martí, the hero of Cuban independence, was published. And the French edition of my dialogue with Dr. René Simard, former rector of the University of Montreal, and Dr. Guy Bourgeault of the same university, has just been published under the title *Pour un nouvel art de vivre* (For a New Art of Living).

I am happy that I have been able to heighten and promote the value of dialogue around the globe, because I believe that dialogue is the great path of peace that fosters mutual understanding and empathy, and brings both people and cultures closer together.



I can never forget the dedicated efforts of the translators who have contributed to this phenomenal rise in the number of my international publications.

The accomplished translator Richard Gage has worked diligently for many long years on English translations of *The Human Revolution* and my dialogues with leading thinkers of the world, including *Choose Life*.

Dr. Burton Watson, who produced the first English translation of the Chinese classic *Record of the Historian*, has also been of tremendous service, translating my poetry collection *Songs from My Heart*, as well as *The Living Buddha* and several other works.

In December 1973, when I first met Dr. Watson, I asked him to do an English translation of Kumarajiva's Chinese version of the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra has been the most beloved Buddhist scripture of the peoples of East Asia for centuries, largely because of Kumarajiva's brilliant translation, which Nichiren Daishonin praised as "without error" (see *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 554).

How important translation is!

It was our first meeting, but I immediately perceived that Dr. Watson was the right person for this task, and I asked him to accept the challenge. Fortunately, he agreed, and from that time he began translating this work in earnest. Twenty years later, in the spring of 1993, the English translation of the Lotus Sutra was finally published.

Dr. Watson's translation does not employ old-fashioned, outdated English; he chose to use the living contemporary language instead. Smiling, he explained this decision: "It is important to find the words to express what people are seeking above all. To do that, I have used familiar and easily comprehensible language."

I am also pleased to report that, due to the tireless efforts of Dr. Watson, an English translation of the essence of the Daishonin's Buddhism, the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," will soon be completed—an event auspiciously coinciding with the start of the Century of Life.



Anti-apartheid activist and poet Oswald Mtshali in South Africa read a collection of essays translated by Dr. Watson, *Glass Children and Other Essays*, more than a decade ago. He was deeply moved by the book and introduced it, quoting me, in an essay he

contributed to a magazine. Moreover, Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, in prison at the time, read that essay and came upon my words.

In addition, my books *Buddhism, the First Millennium* and *The Living Buddha* are used as textbooks at U.S. universities, including the University of Idaho and Harvard University.

Books create new friends and unknown comrades. The power of the printed word is tremendous. The reverberations of empathy and shared feeling it arouses can transcend national borders and the walls of ethnic and ideological differences—indeed, they can span the chasms separating cultures and even the passage of time.

“The press, which brings daylight to the spirit, creates fraternity,” declared Victor Hugo. It is my wish that through my books, the hope of the humanistic philosophy of the SGI may be communicated ever more widely and deeply to the hearts of the people of the world and the youth of the future.

Praying that the waves of understanding cultivated in this way will be the seeds for the certain realization of a Century of Peace, we of the SGI will continue to write and speak today and tomorrow.

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