

## Advancing on the Great Path of Kosen-rufu with Unwavering Lifelong Courage

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Welcome to the May study podcast.

This month's lecture begins with President Ikeda describing his first overseas trip to carry out, on the world stage, President Toda's wish to rid the world of suffering and misery. He undertook this historic journey five months after his inauguration as third president of the Soka Gakkai on May 3, 1960. Departing from Japan on October 2, President Ikeda set forth to advance worldwide kosen-rufu in order to realize a global society where all can live in peace and security. It is our greatest fortune that Canada was one of the three countries Ikeda Sensei visited on that first trip, where he planted the seeds of the Mystic Law. In his many subsequent visits around the world, he permeated the land with Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and called forth the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

During the turbulent period of the Cold War and the growing threat of nuclear weapons, Sensei states:

I awaited the right time, I created the right time, while building a network of global citizens committed to peace who upheld a philosophy of respect for the dignity of life.

On January 26, 1975 the Soka Gakkai International was established. In his speech on that occasion, Sensei stressed that the essential role of religion is to overcome the harmful effects of military might, political power and economic gain, and to open an enduring path to peace. He concluded his speech by saying: "As courageous, compassionate, and dedicated disciples of Nichiren Daishonin who are fully committed to truth and justice, please live out your lives in a positive and uplifting way, striving for the prosperity of your countries, the happiness of the people, and the precious existence of humankind."

The year 2025 will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the SGI. Sensei encourages us, saying:

Our members, with deep pride in their vow as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, are hard at work as our value-creating network for peace, culture, and education continues to spread hope around the world.

He then introduces the theme of the lecture—to advance on the great path of kosen-rufu with unwavering lifelong courage. Following is the first Gosho passage in the lecture, from “The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood”:

**Because I have expounded this teaching, I have been exiled and almost killed. As the saying goes, “Good advice grates on the ear.” But still I am not discouraged. The Lotus Sutra [the Mystic Law] is like the seed, the Buddha like the sower, and the people like the field. (WND-1, 748; “The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood”)**

In the first Gosho passage, Nichiren Daishonin expresses his great compassion, stating that despite all the persecutions he faced, “But still I am not discouraged.”

The courage to face and overcome these persecutions arose from the Daishonin’s great compassion for humanity. In like manner, President Toda taught that, though we may lack compassion, we can always take courage, which will give rise to compassion. From this we can understand that real courage arises from the sincere heart and effort to be compassionate, and that as we continue to expand the greatness of our hearts, we will continue to expand and elevate our state of life. Each of us has the same infinite potential, and each of us can manifest the same life condition as Nichiren Daishonin. It is all a matter of our heart and our effort. President Ikeda explains:

In the portion of the “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra that we recite morning and evening is the phrase “exerting themselves bravely and vigorously (Jpn *yumyo shojin*)” (cf. LSOC2, 56). It can also be translated as “proceeding with courage and diligence” and is given as one of the reasons why the Buddha himself has been able to attain enlightenment...

The Lotus Sutra declares that the Buddha himself attained enlightenment through “courage and diligence,” or “exerting himself bravely and vigorously,” over many lifetimes.

Then, in the “Life Span” chapter, revealing his original attainment of enlightenment, Shakyamuni explains that he has in fact ceaselessly continued his compassionate efforts as a Buddha from the infinitely remote past. “This, a Buddha’s work,” he says, “I have never for a moment neglected” (LSOC16, 267).

Nichiren Daishonin underwent every kind of hardship and persecution, living these words and inspiring his disciples, such as Shijo Kingo, the Ikegami brothers and Nanjo Tokimitsu, who also faced persecutions.

Nichiren Daishonin fulfilled the mission entrusted by Shakyamuni Buddha to Bodhisattva Superior Practices, the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, as described in the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra also predicted the unimaginable difficulty of propagating Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, a time when the majority of the people would be misled and out of touch with the essential teachings of the Buddha.

The Latter Day of the Law is the time in which we are living today. It is not a temporary period; it is the ongoing reality of the world, where the battle goes on to bring forth the fundamental nature of Buddhahood, and to defeat fundamental darkness or ignorance. The mission of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth is to carry out this battle for the sake of the happiness of humanity and the peace of the world.

President Ikeda states in the lecture:

We can view the Daishonin’s statement “Still I am not discouraged” as not only an expression of his own firm determination but also to encourage his disciples never to be defeated.

Mr. Toda lectured on “The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood” in study sessions open to all members held at the Toshima Civic Hall in Ikebukuro, Tokyo.

Regarding the passage we are examining, he passionately stated: “‘Still I am not discouraged’—that’s the key!” Everyone leaned forward, anticipating his next words. He declared:

We are incredibly fortunate to be the disciples of Nichiren Daishonin. We are Bodhisattvas of the Earth. And this is the heart of the Soka Gakkai spirit.

Unworthy though I may be, I, too, am striving for kosen-rufu with the spirit “Still I am not discouraged.” Because we are carrying out the Daishonin’s instructions, we naturally must be prepared for an endless succession of great difficulties. We must have courage and perseverance.

His words still ring clear in my ears to this very day.

He goes on to say:

Nichiren Daishonin’s starting point was his pledge: “I vowed to summon up a powerful and unconquerable desire for the salvation of all beings and never to falter in my efforts” (WND-1, 240). Founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi placed importance on these words, underlining them in his copy of the Daishonin’s writings.

This is the eternal spirit of the Soka Gakkai. This spirit enables us to transform our karma, never being intimidated by obstacles, to manifest wisdom, and to never give up believing in the potential for Buddhahood in all people, just like Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. Sensei explains the ultimate act of courage and compassion as follows:

Sowing the seed of the Lotus Sutra (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo) in people’s lives activates their innate Buddha nature. Our efforts in Buddhist dialogue link directly to the Buddha’s action of sowing the seeds of Buddhahood so that all can attain enlightenment. We are enabling countless people to form a precious connection to Buddhism through our firm resolve, expressed in the words “Still I am not discouraged.”

Following is the second Goshō passage in the lecture, from “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”:

**Though I may be a person of little ability, I have reverently given myself to the study of the Mahayana. A blue fly, if it clings to the tail of a thoroughbred horse, can travel ten thousand miles, and the green ivy that twines around the tall pine can grow to a thousand feet. I was born as the son of the one Buddha, Shakyamuni, and I serve the king of scriptures, the Lotus Sutra. How could I observe the decline of the**

**Buddhist Law and not be filled with emotions of pity and distress?  
(WND-1, 17; “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of  
the Land”)**

This famous passage from “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” illustrates the Buddhist principle “of good friends,” which means those who guide others to the correct path to attain enlightenment. This Gosho is presented as a dialogue between a host and a guest, where step by step, the guest comes to recognize his mistaken views and comes to understand and embrace the Lotus Sutra. It is a very human interaction, where the host allows the guest to freely express himself, and patiently responds in a respectful and logical way. At one point the guest becomes angry, due to his arrogance. President Ikeda describes the Daishonin’s response and its significance:

He begins by saying: “Though I may be a person of little ability, I have reverently given myself to the study of the Mahayana” (WND-1, 17). This suggests that == the humblest individuals can improve themselves without limit and lead magnificent lives by embracing a great teaching and dedicating themselves to a great mission. He then employs the similes of a blue fly and an ivy plant. In this way, he affirms that the criterion for judging others’ worth is not their social status but the philosophy or teaching they uphold.

Upholding the Lotus Sutra, “the king of scriptures,” is a source of the greatest honor and pride. As the Daishonin writes elsewhere: “Since the Law is wonderful, the person is worthy of respect” (WND-1, 1097), and “If the Law that one embraces is supreme, then the person who embraces it must accordingly be foremost among all others” (WND-1, 61).

To practice the great teaching of Buddhism, we also need both a mentor to instruct and guide us along the correct path to Buddhahood and “good friends”—fellow practitioners who support and encourage us on that path of faith and practice. Polishing and developing ourselves within the Soka Gakkai—the most wonderful organization of “good friends”—is crucial for elevating our life state, carrying out our human revolution, and transforming our karma.

We all have unlimited opportunities to be “good friends,” which means we have unlimited access to the life state of Buddhahood. Taking this example as our model, we can discover, as Sensei explains, “the beautiful essence of Buddhist dialogue.” This is the

heart of bodhisattva practice, driven by our unshakable commitment and consistent efforts.

At the close of the lecture, President Ikeda shares the vow that he made at the time of the SGI's founding in 1975, and the message for us:

“The sun of Nichiren Buddhism has begun to rise above the distant horizon. Rather than seeking after your own praise or glory, I hope that you will dedicate your noble lives to sowing the seeds of peace of the Mystic Law throughout the entire world. I shall do the same.”

Let's continue to create one after another opportunity to deepen and expand our friendships, based on the profound principle of “good friends advancing together.”  
Thank you very much.