

The Place of the Soka Gakkai in Buddhist History in Japan

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SINCE Buddha Shakyamuni first taught Buddhism, it has undergone many changes in different countries, societies, and cultures, nevertheless it is assumed by many people today to be the same Buddhism. Having said that, if he appeared today in a time machine, seeing various forms of Buddhism, he would say, “I didn’t teach them.”

However, in religion, I think, the significance for believers, or interpretations that they give to the religion in certain cultural society, is more important than the founder’s original intention. (Sometimes we can’t find out exactly what the founder’s original intention was partly because original texts are not enough to show it and partly because original texts’ messages are placed in different cultural contexts.) If the believers can’t find any significance in the religion, the religion would be abandoned and disappear.

In some countries Buddhism was once believed in, but now remains only in the form of historical relics. In Japan, however, Buddhism remains as a faith believed in by many people, because it has been reforming itself in a suitable way for social and cultural changes, and finding new significance in a new social and cultural context. In the first half I would like to follow historical changes in Japan’s Buddhism corresponding to social and cultural changes. In the latter half I would like to discuss the social and cultural needs in modern times that the Soka Gakkai has been coping with.

HISTORICAL CHANGES IN JAPAN’S BUDDHISM

The Introduction of Buddhism as Clan Religion (in the Asuka Period)

Buddhism founded in India was introduced to Later Han dynasty of China, and to Korea in the fourth century. Immigrants from China and Korea soon introduced it to Japan. In the sixth century a king of Paikche sent an image of Buddha and some volumes of the sutras to Emperor Kinmei (510–570) in order to recommend the adoption of Buddhism.

Because in those days the function of an emperor was religious as well as political, many ministers declared themselves against Buddhism. The emperor didn't accept Buddhism, and gave the image to the Soga clan affiliated with the immigrants. The Soga worshiped the image of Buddha as a new clan god.

After that, a conflict between supporters of Buddhism and its opponents became intensive, and the Soga, a supporter of Buddhism, defeated the Mononobe, a leader of the opponents, in 587. The Soga came to power, and Empress Suiko (554–628) appointed Prince Shotoku (574–622), her nephew and a Buddhist, Regent. Following the Soga, other leading clans also accepted Buddhism. The Soga erected a clan temple, wishing their clan's prosperity and praying for the repose of their ancestors' souls. In the Asuka period dozens of clan temples were erected mostly in Kansai area. With erecting clan temples, constructions of large-scale tumuli (ancient tombs) disappeared. It meant that people accepted Buddhism as a new means of funeral and memorial services.

In the Imperial House that had refused Buddhism, Emperor Jomei (593–641) erected the Imperial House's temple for the first time in 639, in addition, and he ordered some priests to lecture Buddhist scriptures in the court. The Imperial House worshiped Buddhism in the same way as other clans did. They wished for their clan's prosperity and prayed for the repose of their ancestors' souls. Buddhism in the Asuka period can be called clan religion.

*The Foundation of State Religion and Its Development
(in the Nara period)*

In the seventh century Japan experienced a drastic change in social structure that started at the Taika Reform in 645 and resulted in centralization of administrative power. In the year Prince Naka No Oe (later Emperor Tenji, 626–671) led a coup d'état and defeated the Soga. Students and monks who had been dispatched to China to study its advanced institutions and Buddhism by Prince Shotoku advised the new government to found a centralized state in imitation of T'ang dynasty. The new government declared that it deprived clan leaders of their rights to govern their clan lands and clan people, and that all the lands and people belonged solely to the new government or the emperor. At the same time it proclaimed that the emperor himself would promote Buddhism instead of the Soga clan.

In those days Japan, supporting Paikche against T'ang and Silla, was at a disadvantage. Being confronted with this national crisis, the emperor held the ceremony of lecture on the Benevolent Kings Wisdom Sutra

in the court. The purpose was to pray for protection of the state by guardian gods described in the sutra. The government worshiped three sutras, the Benevolent Kings Wisdom Sutra, the Golden Light Sutra (later a new translation, the Sovereign Kings Sutra of Golden Light) and the Lotus Sutra, for protection of the state. It held annually the ceremonies of lecture at government expense. It meant that Buddhism developed from clan religion into state religion.

Since then plagues and famines caused social unrest, and the threat of invasion by Silla increased. In response to this national crisis Emperor Shomu (701–756) ordered the erection of provincial monasteries and nunneries to pray for protection of the state. In these temples monks and nuns were ordered to dwell and recite sutras for protection of the state on fixed days. He also erected the Todaiji temple as a central temple of the state. In this way priests that were licensed to become Buddhist monks or nuns by the government dwelled in temples that were erected by the government, and prayed for protection of the state. Thus Buddhism in the Nara period can be called state religion.

The Development of Aristocratic Buddhism (in the Heian period)

The protective policy for state Buddhism in the Nara period caused building of many Buddhist temples and an increase in the number of Buddhist priests exempted from taxation. It resulted in the state's financial difficulties. Emperor Kanmu (737–806) tried to get rid of Buddhist influences, and transferred the capital from Nara to Kyoto. He didn't permit the transfer of Buddhist temples from Nara to Kyoto. He regulated old Buddhism in Nara and sought a new one suitable for his new capital.

At that time Saicho (766–822) practiced asceticism and studied hard doctrines of T'ien-t'ai (538–597) in a mountain near Kyoto. His reputation reached the emperor's ears. The emperor dispatched Saicho to T'ang to study mysterious doctrines of the T'ien-t'ai school. Saicho studied bodhisattva precepts, True Word (Shingon), and Meditation (Zen) as well as T'ien-t'ai's teachings. When Saicho returned from China, Emperor Kanmu was severely ill in bed. Saicho prayed for his recovery with esoteric baptism in True Word. When the emperor recovered a little, he granted Saicho permission to found the Tendai Lotus sect.

At the same time Kukai (774–835) studied comprehensively True Word in China, and was supported by Emperor Saga (786–842). He was appointed abbot of the Toji temple, the most important temple in Kyoto. His successors were appointed the post one after another. The temple

became a center of the True Word sect.

The Tendai sect and the True Word sect had new excellent doctrines, such as a teaching that every sentient being can attain Buddhahood and a teaching that one can attain Buddhahood in one's present form, respectively. However, emperors and high officials expected these new Buddhist sects to pray for protection of the state with new esoteric rituals more efficacious than old recitations of sutras. Ennin (794–864) and Enchin (814–891) in the Tendai sect went to China to study new esoteric rituals to rival the True Word sect. In those days Buddhism became esoteric.

Early in the Heian period the government made efforts to maintain a centralized political system based on the *ritsuryo* codes. However, members from the Fujiwara were appointed Regent and Kampaku (a chief adviser to an emperor) one after another. They treated the *ritsuryo* system as a mere name and began to privatize nationally owned lands. It caused a collapse of the political system where the centralized government owned all lands and controlled all people, and the manorial system prevailed throughout Japan. Owners of manors asked regents and kampakus to guarantee their ownership and contributed nominal ownership to them.

In Buddhist society also the state government could not support Buddhist temples. Leaders of Buddhist sects began to get financial supports from those in power, chiefly from the Fujiwara, by praying specially for the family's prosperity, such as praying for birth of a prince whose mother was from the Fujiwara. Moreover sons and daughters from the Fujiwara were welcomed to be leaders of Buddhist sects because of their dowry. In the Heian period Buddhism became aristocratic religion.

The Foundation of Single-minded Buddhist Sects Specializing in Particular Practices (in the Kamakura and Muromachi Periods)

Late in the 11th century a change of regime from the Fujiwara to the retired emperor occurred. Those in power were inclined to settle a struggle for power with military force. As a result the influence of warriors increased. Moreover influential temples that ought to have prayed for the peace and protection of the state began to appeal to forces of monk soldiers in order to realize their secular demands such as the acquisition of manors. Aristocrats, chiefly members of the Fujiwara believed that the Latter Day of the Law (*mappo*), the worse time that is described in some sutras, had arrived. The common people also believed in its arrival because the instability in the ruling class had caused the disturbances of war and because the government's inability

couldn't prevent the cause of natural disasters.

In such a situation the Buddhist sects which had been supported by the state or the aristocrats in the Nara and Heian periods lost their ability to give salvation. When the Taira struggled against the Minamoto furiously, Honen (1133–1212), the first runner of new Kamakura Buddhist movements, founded the Jodo (Pureland) sect. He published the treatise *Senchaku-shu* in 1175. There he insisted that senshu nenbutsu (single-mindedly chanting Namu-amida-butsu, which means devoting oneself to Amida Buddha) was the only way to salvation in the Latter Day of the Law.

Though chanting Namu-amida-butsu had been one of the traditional ways of practicing in Heian Buddhism, it had been assumed to be a lower and insufficient way open to those inferior in religious capacity. Against such an assumption, Honen insisted that any other way of practicing in Nara and Heian Buddhism lost their validity in the Latter Day of the Law. Instead he recommended chanting Namu-amida-butsu that common people could practice easily. He thought that only by chanting Namu-amida-butsu people could be reborn in the Pureland of Amida Buddha and attain Buddhahood there. He grounded his arguments in Amida Buddha's original vow of salvation and insisted that any other way of practicing was no longer necessary.

The most characteristic thought in Kamakura Buddhism was an opinion that people should devote themselves to a certain way of practicing single-mindedly; consequently, an idea that any other way of practicing was useless for salvation. Honen presented the thought for the first time in his *Senchaku-shu*. Many people converted to the Jodo sect. Honen's thought showed that Buddhism in Japan changed from religion for aristocracy to single-minded sect religion that was supported by common people who believed in the same religion. Honen's thought generated Shinran's Jodo-shin-shu (the True Pureland sect) and Ippen's Ji-shu. These sects have formed one of the largest Buddhist bodies in Japan until now.

The next trend in Kamakura Buddhism was Zen Buddhism. Eisai (1141–1215), a monk from the Tendai sect, visited China twice and introduced the Rinzai sect in Zen Buddhism that was enjoying its heyday in China. Eisai allowed plural ways of practicing that had been maintained in the Tendai sect. He adopted Rinzai Zen as a certain method of practicing Zen that was one of the four practicing introduced by Saicho.

Against Eisai, Dogen (1200–53) introduced the Soto Zen as single-minded practice intentionally. He insisted that people could attain Bud-

dhahood only by practice of meditation and that chanting Namu-amida-butsu was useless. Zen Buddhism was introduced from China, which was assumed to be the most civilized state. The Kamakura shogunate took interest in Zen Buddhism because it sought a new religion that could rival aristocratic Heian Buddhism. As a result many Zen temples were built in Kamakura.

Getting an inspiration from chanting Namu-amida-butsu, Nichiren (1222–82) introduced a new way of practicing, chanting Namu-myoho-rence-kyo, in the traditional faith of the Lotus Sutra. In Japan the faith of the Lotus Sutra had a long history stretching from Prince Shotoku's Commentary on the Lotus Sutra in the Asuka period, through recitation of it as one of the three sutras for protecting the state in the Nara period, to Saicho's foundation of the Tendai Lotus sect in the Heian period. In the Kamakura period, practices of the Lotus Sutra, e.g., recitation and copying by hand, were common. But chanting Namu-amida-butsu became more popular than traditional practices of the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren inherited the faith of the Lotus Sutra from the Tendai Lotus sect and he thought that the Lotus Sutra was superior to any other sutra. He invented a new way of practicing, chanting Namu-myoho-rence-kyo (it means devoting oneself to the Lotus Sutra), against chanting Namu-amida-butsu. Later Nichiren abandoned plural ways of practicing that were traditional in the Tendai Lotus sect, and insisted that chanting Namu-myoho-rence-kyo single-mindedly was the only effective way of practicing in the Latter Day of the Law.

The Kamakura shogunate collapsed in the 14th century. After that the emperor came to power temporally, soon followed by the Muromachi shogunate. It was substantially a coalition regime that was supported by powerful warrior families. It lacked the centralization of administrative power from the beginning and after the civil war in the Onin era (1467–77) the Warring period began.

In such a decentralization of power, free competition for believers and protectors arose in Buddhism. The new Kamakura Buddhist sects developed various religious movements suited to various needs of warriors, farmers and merchants. Zen Buddhism was supported by the upper class of warriors with Zen monks functioning as bureaucrats for them. The Jodo Shin-shu sect affiliated with local lower warriors and farmers. This led to riots in many provinces while other provinces were governed effectively. Merchants in Kyoto and other big cities supported the Nichiren Lotus sect. It also set off a riot in Kyoto against the Tendai Lotus sect and the Jodo Sin-shu sect. In the Muromachi period single-minded Buddhist sects attained a greater social influence.

The Regulation of Buddhist Sects and Their Subordination to the Establishment (in the Edo period)

Late in the Warring period Oda Nobunaga (1534–1587) and Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1599) tried to unify Japan and they destroyed large defiant temples, e.g., the Enryakuji temple on Mt. Hiei (the center of the Tendai sect) and the Ishiyama Honganji temple in Osaka (the center of the Jodo Shin-shu sect). Though they could destroy sects' central temples, they could not annihilate Buddhist sects because the sects affiliated with lower warriors, farmers and merchants and their networks developed throughout the country.

The Tokugawa shogunate that was founded by Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) adopted a different religious policy and used Buddhist temples as parts of the administrative organization. Its aim was to prevent farmers' riots that were associated with Buddhist sects. The shogunate persecuted Christianity and carried out a systematic, nation-wide inquisition against it. It ordered all Japanese to register membership with the Buddhist temple of their parish and to get a guarantee of being non-Christian from the temple. This meant that all Japanese became formally Buddhists regardless of their faith.

Buddhist temples abused their authority to grant a guarantee and forced their parishioners to shoulder various economic burdens for the temples. They falsified some government documents to justify their exploitation and prohibited their parishioners from changing temples. Buddhist temples forced Buddhist funerals and periodic ancestral ceremonies upon them.

Owing to this authority to grant a guarantee of non-Christian status, Buddhist sects became stable. However, because they became parts of administrative organization, they could not answer the needs of believers. As such they lost religious enthusiasm and stagnated. By the end of its rule the Tokugawa shogunate became ineffectual. People began to seek salvation not in Buddhism but in new Shinto religious movements, e.g., the Tenri-kyo, the Kurozumi-kyo and the Konko-kyo.

Shinto as the State Religion and Inactivity within Buddhism (From Meiji Restoration to the Defeat in the World War II)

At the beginning of the Meiji era, the pro-Shinto government ordered discrimination between Shinto and Buddhism. After that many common people began to destroy Buddhist images and temples, refusing to be ruled by Buddhist priests. They were angry with Buddhist priests for their economic exploitation. The Meiji government made Shinto the

state religion in order to build an emperor-centralized state. The government prescribed the rank in Shinto shrines and maintained them at the national expense, and made Shinto priests public officials.

At first the government continued to persecute Christianity. The western powers criticized the policy, and the Meiji government was compelled to allow freedom of religion. On the other hand the government wanted to maintain Shinto as the state religion. The government separated national ritual from religion and insisted that Shinto was national ritual and not religion. It banned Shinto priests as public officials from religious activities such as funeral service and the preaching of doctrines. Some Shinto religions that were supported by their believers were separated from state Shinto and were called sectarian Shinto.

Buddhist sects lost support from the government and had to cope with other religions and new western ideas under the system of state Shinto. The government permitted people freedom of religion provided that they obeyed state Shinto. Buddhist sects insisted that Buddhism was superior to other religions, but received little support for the argument.

The government removed the ban on priests' eating meat and marriage, and abolished a system of Buddhist priest registration that had been in existence since the Asuka period. This meant under the government policy, Buddhism belonged to private and not public affairs.

In the Meiji era western studies on Buddhism were introduced, and excellent Buddhist scholars in Japan began to study Buddhism academically. They neglected traditional sectarian doctrines, and thought a great deal of religious and humanistic ideas about Buddha and their sects' founders.

In general traditional Buddhist sects became stagnant and contented themselves with funeral services. People's religious needs went toward sectarian Shinto such as the Tenri-kyo, the Kurozumi-kyo, the Konkoyo and the Omoto-kyo. On the other side lay Buddhist movements such as the Honmon Butsuryu-ko, the Kokuchukai and the Reiyukai arose under the restriction of state Shinto. It was a sign that lay Buddhist movements would later develop after the collapse of state Shinto.

The Development of New Buddhist Movements (after World War II)

After the defeat in World War II very important events happened to religion. G. H. Q. ordered the government to protect human rights and to abolish the Religious Body Law that had been made to regulate religious movements. It also ordered the government to end all state patronage of Shinto and to treat Shinto as one of the religions. The new

Constitution of Japan prescribes the principle of religious freedom and that of separation of religion and government. Religion is considered a private affair and the state can't interfere with religious movements.

These changes of religious policy generated independence for various religious groups that had been suffering under the restriction of state Shinto. Many religious bodies branched off and became independent, and many religious corporations were founded. Though sectarian Shinto such as the Tenri-kyo developed in the post war era, lay Buddhist movements based on the Lotus Sutra or teachings of Nichiren did much more. They were the Reiyukai, the Rissho Koseikai that branched off from the Reiyukai, and the Soka Gakkai that was a lay organization belonging to Nichiren Shoshu, one of the traditional Buddhist sects.

These new religious movements developed successfully partly because traditional Buddhist sects couldn't grow out of the family religion that functioned as a funeral service and ancestral memorial service. They couldn't make new doctrines and organizations to cope with individual problems and needs. The demographical change from rural to urban also damaged traditional Buddhist sects because their temples in cities were insufficient.

New religious bodies didn't adopt a priest system and developed as lay religious movements. Therefore leaders and common members shared a similar way of life. Leaders could interpret religious doctrines well suited to common members' various needs. Through such guidance new religious movement could implant religious belief in common members. By comparison with new religious bodies based on the Lotus Sutra and esoteric sutras (True Word sect), new religious movement based on the Pureland Buddhism didn't develop because it focused on the next world and wasn't suited to common people's worldly needs.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOKA GAKKAI AND ITS SOCIAL, CULTURAL BACKGROUND

More than 70 years have passed since the Soka Gakkai was founded in 1930. Social systems in Japan have changed on a large scale. When the Soka Gakkai was founded, an aftermath of the Taisho democracy remained as a cultural aspect of society, and the World Financial Panic began in the economical aspect, and the tensions among the imperialistic powers intensified. In such situations the Soka Gakkai began its movement under the leadership of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944) in the imperial state that maintained state Shinto.

After the defeat in the World War II, G.H.Q. ordered the Japanese

government to abolish state Shinto in order to democratize Japan. Under G.H.Q.'s guidance the new Constitution of Japan prescribes the principle of religious freedom and that of separation between government and religion. On the other side the domestic economy became impoverished and political antagonism in Japan intensified during the Cold War. In such new conditions the Soka Gakkai was reconstructed and developed under the leadership of Josei Toda (1900–1958).

After the first domestic strife concerning the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1960, a rapid growth of the economy started, and the Liberal Democratic Party maintained stable governments. Many people moved from rural to urban and the population in big cities increased drastically. In such situations the Soka Gakkai developed stably and decreased social frictions under the leadership of Daisaku Ikeda (1928–).

This history of the Soka Gakkai shows that in social and cultural changes it has successfully coped with common people's various troubles and needs. It has provided new movements to cope with changeable situations and has been lending new social and cultural significances to religion.

*The Soka Gakkai before the World War II Led by
Tsunesaburo Makiguchi*

The Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (the former organization of the Soka Gakkai) was founded by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Jogai (later Josei) Toda in 1930. It was an organization of educational reforms to realize Makiguchi's original educational ideas, namely ideas of education for creating values such as Beauty, Benefit, Good. He was a lay believer in Nichiren Shoshu, one of the Nichiren Lotus sects. He thought that character building through religion was important to reform education. Founded for educational reforms, however, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai later became a religious body rather than an organization of educational reform.

Though having been temporarily interested in Protestantism and Nichirenism of the Kokuchukai, he couldn't believe in them because they weren't compatible with his view of science and philosophy. He became a believer in Nichiren Buddhism introduced by Sokei Mitani, a lay believer of Nichiren Shoshu.

Makiguchi discovered some important features in Nichiren's teachings. First, Nichiren's teachings had three types of proof (proof by documentary evidence, by logical reasoning and by demonstrations of actual facts) that were compatible with scientific knowledge. Second, the object of devotion in Nichiren Buddhism was not an image of personi-

fied deity or Buddha, but a mandala that symbolized the law for becoming a Buddha. Third, a saying in Nichiren's teaching that the Buddhist law was the law of society meant that the Buddhist law was, or should be, compatible with secular law, which were studied by ethics, philosophy and science. Fourth, Nichiren's favorite saying in the Nirvana Sutra, that one should rely on the law not on persons, meant that constitutional government ruled by universal law was better and more democratic than authoritarian government under a monarch.

In his religious movement, Makiguchi used his philosophy of value that was developed in his major work, "The System of Value Creating Pedagogy." He characterized a Buddha as one of the noblest persons, someone who tried to save people from social disorder and led a truly altruistic life of Great Good. He recommended faith in Nichiren Buddhism for such character building. Makiguchi's religious movement had different elements from the Nichiren Shoshu, which was a traditional Buddhist sect engaged in funeral and memorial services. Makiguchi developed a lay Buddhist movement well suited to modern culture that endorsed science and democracy.

Japan's military government forced the people to worship talismans from Ise Shrine that was the earthly house of the Imperial ancestor, the Sun Goddess. Observing Nichiren's single-minded practice, Makiguchi rejected it. The military government oppressed the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai on suspicion of violating the Public Security Preservation Law. Makiguchi sacrificed himself for his religious faith in prison. This was one of the rare cases during wartime in which people fought for freedom of religion against the military government.

The Reconstruction of the Soka Gakkai by Josei Toda

After being sent to jail with Makiguchi, Toda received two religious enlightenments in prison. First, trying to understand a passage of the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra that explained Buddhahood, he realized that Buddhahood was one stage of life that was common to both human and cosmos. Later he systematized his enlightenment into a philosophy of life that is now Soka Gakkai's framework of interpretations about Buddhism.

Second, he had a religious vision that he, as one of bodhisattovas who emerge from the earth, attended a ceremonial meeting in an empty space, which was described in the Lotus Sutra. Though Toda didn't think that such a vision was necessary for attaining Buddhahood, he realized his special religious mission. Released from prison, he changed the religious body's name to the Soka Gakkai and led an active religious movement.

Before becoming president of the Soka Gakkai in 1952, Toda changed its framework of interpretations from Makiguchi's philosophy of value to a philosophy of life. Under his presidency the Soka Gakkai developed dramatically. Toda emphasized that the object of worship transmitted by the Nichiren Shoshu could provide a reward absolutely, and promised that believers could resolve difficulties such as diseases, poverty and family troubles. He systematically guided new members with Nichikan's doctrine, which insisted the absolute truth of Nichiren Shoshu.

Most of the new members having come from rural to urban lived unstable lives. Toda gave them both a promise to overcome their hardship and a mission to save people with the absolute truth. They committed themselves to the religious movement in the hope of happier future lives. While causing much social friction, the Soka Gakkai developed its missionary works rapidly.

With its organizational development, Toda decided that the Soka Gakkai should participate in political movement. Toda gave two reasons for this movement. The first reason was religious. Toda interpreted an ordination platform of the essential teaching as national. This was one of the most important doctrines of Nichiren Buddhism, that is, the Three Great Secret Laws. He emphasized a religious purpose that they should erect an ordination platform by the Diet's decision.

The second reason was secular. At that time in Japan a confrontation between conservatives and reformists intensified within the context of the Cold War. Two major parties could not meet the needs of unorganized workers and proprietors of small business in big cities. Under such a social situation people's political frustration increased. Toda gave secular reason as the social mission of believers. This is, they should build a society where social prosperity would be in keeping with individual happiness.

Toda's advocacy of political reform appealed to those young uneducated in big cities who lived in obscurity because of their poverty. The Soka Gakkai could recruit significantly more young members than any other new religious body partly because of its political movement. Toda passed away in 1958 after attaining his objective to achieve 750 thousand household members.

*The Development of the Soka Gakkai International
by the Leadership of Daisaku Ikeda*

Since Toda died, Daisaku Ikeda from the youth division led the Soka Gakkai. Ikeda announced new directions in succession, e.g., a seventh

bell plan that surveyed Soka Gakkai's future development, a missionary plan to get as many members as a third of the Japanese population from a Buddhist episode of the Shaei city-state, and a full-scale offensive direction against the Tenrikyo and the Rissho Koseikai. With his guidance the Soka Gakkai developed over three million household members in seven years.

With its organizational development its political movement also increased. The Soka Gakkai separated its political division and founded the Komei party. The Komei party went into the House of Representatives. Though the Komei party had no religious purpose, the members of the Soka Gakkai who supported the party took it for granted that the party should work for erecting the national ordination platform.

Because the national ordination platform is against the separation principle of religion and government in the Constitution of Japan, much severe criticism arose. After the trouble concerning the interference with the press, Ikeda abandoned erecting a national ordination platform and policy to become a state religion in 1970. He said that the Soka Gakkai respected the separation principle partly because the military government in wartime had oppressed the Soka Gakkai and partly because it received benefit from freedom of speech and religion in the post-war period.

Though the Soka Gakkai decided to build a private ordination platform, there was a problem concerning one of the most important doctrines of Nichiren Shoshu. Its traditional view was that an ordination platform in the essential teachings should be built by the state. Some priests and old lay believers in Nichiren Shoshu criticized the Soka Gakkai from their fundamentalist point of view. Eventually the high priest Nittatsu Hosoi decided that the Shohondo that the Soka Gakkai built as the ordination platform should or would become an ordination platform of the essential teachings in the future. The decision was ambiguous and was a compromise between the Soka Gakkai and fundamentalists. Since then the conflict between Nichiren Shoshu and the Soka Gakkai about doctrinal interpretations became to intensify. Later it would cause their separation.

Formally the Soka Gakkai had been a lay believers society in the Nichiren Shoshu and observed Nichiren Shoshu's doctrines and religious rites. Nevertheless regarding beliefs, the Soka Gakkai is different from Nichiren Shoshu. Nichiren Shoshu is one of the traditional Buddhist sects. In Nichiren Shoshu priests play a central role and its main religious activity is funeral and memorial service. Its lay believers are nothing but powerless clients.

In the Soka Gakkai leaders are also lay believers and share a life style with common members. They can guide common members to settle troubles in daily life through their own religious experiences. The Soka Gakkai is one of the lay Buddhist movements. While it uses Nichiren Shoshu's doctrines and religious rites to guide their members, it interprets them flexibly to cope with modern culture. Therefore it is able to recruit many new members.

When Ikeda became the third president, the Soka Gakkai continued its enthusiastic religious movement as before. After the trouble concerning interference with the press, it changed its organization system from a converter-converted relationship to a local relationship. Though the change weakened members' feeling of fellowship a little, it facilitated the working of its members for the good of the local community. Eventually this led to Soka Gakkai's social stability.

With Japan's rapid economic growth, members' troubles and needs changed from those of poverty, diseases and discord within the family to pursuing a fulfilling life and working for the welfare of the people. To cope with these changes, Ikeda promoted various cultural, peaceful and educational movements within the Soka Gakkai.

Japan's economic growth encouraged also members' emigration. Ikeda took advantage of their emigration to propagate Nichiren Buddhism worldwide. His challenge met with success and he founded the Soka Gakkai International. He guided foreign members flexibly in a way well suited to their life style and promoted positively cultural exchange.

Now the Soka Gakkai maintains basic religious movement but it spends a lot of energy on peace, cultural and educational movements. It advocates that Buddhists should take social responsibility for the contribution to the solving of human hardship because religion should cope positively with present cultural and social problems. The Soka Gakkai takes on Makiguchi's emphasis on believers' social responsibility. Today the Soka Gakkai has various movements. This variety is one of the ways of belief that characterize today's Buddhism.