

The Starting Point of Eastern Thought in the 21st Century

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AS director of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, I would first like to express my deepest gratitude and joy at being able to hold this joint symposium with the Daisaku Ikeda Research Society of Peking University in such an impressive manner.

Today, we are honored with the presence of numerous specialists in Eastern thought, which embodies profound spirituality as well as limitless contributive spirit toward humanity. It is my hope that this symposium will be the impetus for many fruitful discussions concerning these topics.

Following this address, I would like to introduce Soka Gakkai International President Daisaku Ikeda's message for this symposium, but before that, please allow me to give a brief explanation of the activities of our institute.

SGI President Ikeda visited the land of the Buddha's enlightenment, Bodhi Gaya in February, 1961. It is there that he conceived of the idea for the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, which he established in 1962.

The institute was founded to carry out the following three main objectives:

1. To promote research in the fields of Eastern religion, thought, culture and tradition.
2. To promote research centered on the Lotus Sutra.
3. To attempt to find solutions to problems facing humanity by expanding on concepts of Buddhist humanism and pacifism.

In short, as stated above, it is our mission to endeavor for the peace and happiness of humanity based on Eastern religion and thought, and in order to carry out its mission, we have three departments to execute these aims.

The first department is the Lotus Sutra research department, which centers its studies on this particular sutra. Studies range from the philology to analysis of the Lotus Sutra's ideals, and also includes historical viewpoints from Tendai (T'ien-t'ai) studies in Chinese Buddhism and Nichiren Buddhism in Japan.

The second department focuses on comparative studies in how Buddhism relates with other religions, especially Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, and its “dialogues” with Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. In this field, it becomes necessary to discuss matters in terms of peace, environment and ethics.

The third department combines components of the previous two and expands on ideals of Soka philosophy. Included in these studies are views on the Lotus Sutra and the principles of Soka Education as set forth by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first president of the Soka Gakkai, along with the theory of life put forth by Josei Toda, the second president of the Soka Gakkai. SGI President Ikeda’s views on humanity, life and death, and the role and function of Buddhism, are also examined from the perspectives of civilization, peace, and the environment. We study how the ideas he put forth can be applied to common problems facing humanity in order to strive for a happier and more peaceful society.

In this symposium, works from the departments described above will be presented in the specific fields of humanism, women’s studies, and civilization studies. We hope you enjoy them.

So with that, I would like to end my remarks, and move on to introduce SGI President Ikeda’s message. Thank you.