

To My Friends of Each Division Engaged in Our Shared Struggle – Part 4 [of 6]

The Student Division: Be Leaders of Wisdom and Courage Who Will Create a New Era of Hope

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Happy New Year everyone! Welcome to our January study podcast in the Year of Hope and Victory. We will continue studying President Ikeda's 6-part study lecture series called "To My Friends of Each Division Engaged in Our Shared Struggle". This month, we will study Part 4 titled, "The Student Division: Be Leaders of Wisdom and Courage Who Will Create a New Era of Hope".

President Ikeda begins the lecture as follows:

Founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi proclaimed: "Unless you have the courage to be an enemy of those who are evil, you cannot be a friend to the good." Throughout history, multitudes of honest, decent people have been persecuted and countless people deserving of happiness have been oppressed. The Soka Gakkai has battled against all forms of injustice that trample on people, persisting in its valiant struggle to protect the good. This is the shared spirit of President Makiguchi, President Toda, and myself.

The student division was established on June 30th, 1957 by second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda at the division's inaugural meeting with around 500 student division members in attendance. Sensei could not join this meeting as he was in Hokkaido supporting the members in the mining town Yubari who were unjustly treated by the coal miners' union because of their faith in Nichiren Buddhism. This is known as the Yubari Coal Miners Union Incident. In the midst of this fight against injustice in Yubari, Sensei received a notice to appear at the Osaka Police Headquarters for questioning, and this was the start of the Osaka Incident.

In this installment, we will explore the noble mission of our student division members

whose division was established when our organization was being viciously attacked by the authorities. Sensei refers to the student division members as “champions of the spirit of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy, who will lead the way in building a new era filled with hope.”

Why did Sensei compare the student division members to Bodhisattva Universal Worthy? Sensei says:

Bodhisattva Universal Worthy appears in “Encouragements of the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy,” the 28th and final chapter of the Lotus Sutra. He possesses immeasurable wisdom, which he uses to protect those spreading the Lotus Sutra and to advance kosen-rufu. In *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, the Daishonin says that the Mystic Law is propagated in the Latter Day of the Law through the “authority and supernatural power” and the “care and protection” of this bodhisattva (cf. OTT, 190). The Lotus Sutra describes how, upon learning that Shakyamuni is preaching the Mystic Law, Bodhisattva Universal Worthy travels from the east to hear it, arriving with immeasurable bodhisattvas playing wonderful music, just before Shakyamuni concludes his sermon (cf. LSOC28, 360). Similarly, it was toward the end of Mr. Toda’s life that the student division was established. I think we can say that each member of the student division is a Bodhisattva Universal Worthy of Soka, called forth to be entrusted with the important mission of initiating an age of the people.

Wow, what an incredible mission the student division members have. Shout out to the student division!

The first passage from *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings* we are studying this month was also underlined with importance by President Makiguchi in his copy of the Goshō.

I would like to read Sensei’s explanation of the passage:

Here, with respect to the chapter’s title, “Encouragements of the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy,” the Daishonin discusses the meaning of “encouragement” (*kambotsu*) and “universal worthy” or “universal wisdom” (*fugen*). First, he says: “The element *kan* [or *kam*], or ‘encouragement’ refers to the conversion of others” and “the element *botsu* (or *hotsu*), or ‘initiate,’ refers to one’s own practice” (OTT,

189). He then explains the *fu* (meaning “universal”) of *fugen* represents “the principle of eternal and unchanging truth,” while *gen* (meaning “worthy” or “wisdom”) represents “the wisdom of the truth that functions in accordance with changing circumstances” (OTT, 189).

In other words, “encouragement” (*kambotsu*) means rousing faith ourselves and, with the joyous life state we attain through doing so, urging others to practice as well. This is truly a process of life-to-life inspiration. Possessing universal wisdom (*fugen*) means to have a thorough grasp of wide-ranging principles and to demonstrate broad wisdom. It is having the wisdom that allows one to impart comfort and hope, conviction and courage to others.

The Daishonin further states that the “Encouragements of the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy” chapter “expresses veneration for the Law as it is implied in the two teachings, the theoretical and the essentials” (cf. OTT, 190).

For us, venerating the Law means to earnestly chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon and strive in our SGI activities. This will enable us to expand our life and experience life joyfully, and we won’t be able to help it but share this joy with others like when we find a great restaurant or a great sale! Also, the joy we feel will awaken and draw forth the Buddha nature in others. As the title of this section suggests, “kosen-rufu starts with encouraging those around us”.

The following is a well-known passage from the “Encouragements of the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy” chapter, which the Daishonin identified as “the foremost point [the Buddha] wished to convey to us” (OTT, 192).

If you see a person who accepts and upholds this sutra, you should rise and greet him from afar, showing him the same respect you would a Buddha. (LSOC28, 365)

This is a passage we, SGI members often refer to since it’s important to respect one another and work in unity toward kosen-rufu. Sensei says,

[T]he wisdom that comes from believing in the Buddha nature of all people, no matter who they are, is the wisdom of the Buddha. Because we believe in the Buddha nature of others, the compassionate wisdom to realize happiness for ourselves and others wells up boundlessly from the depths of our lives.

Sensei praises the student division members as they possess both wisdom and courage and they respect others as Buddhas. He further shares his hopeful expectation for the student division members:

I hope that the student division members will thoroughly study the Goshō and the humanistic principles of Nichiren Buddhism, while at the same time devoting themselves earnestly to their learning and humbly absorbing insights from diverse sources of knowledge past and present. Please strive to forge links between the vast, profound sea of Buddhism and the world's foremost streams of thought and philosophy, thereby revealing the brilliance of universal wisdom that has the power to protect the people. This is our role as a global religious movement. Your self-development and growth will create a new era.

The second passage we are studying this month is an important Goshō passage from “Banishment to Sado”, which Sensei mentions to convey the Daishonin's intent in studying Buddhism and striving to attain Buddhahood.

From the beginning, I pursued my studies because I wanted to master Buddhism and attain Buddhahood, and also to save the people to whom I am indebted. It seems to me that on the path to attain Buddhahood it may invariably be when one has done something like lay down one's life that one becomes a Buddha. (WND-1, 202; “Banishment to Sado”)

By attaining Buddhahood, the Daishonin wanted to open the way for all people to attain Buddhahood. He also mentions that one can become a Buddha when one strives with the spirit to “lay down one's life”. When we face our challenges and don't run away from our obstacles, we can truly bring forth our Buddha nature - courage, compassion and wisdom.

Sensei further shares his hope for the student division by saying,

[A]ll the more important are the efforts that you, our student division members, are making – efforts to actualize the Daishonin's ideal of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land,” driven by the determination to make the 21st century a century of peace. In the early days of our movement, I once said to student division members: “Your division was established to enable you to lead the way to realizing the victory of the people, by the people, for the people.”

I remember reading this as a student and being extremely touched by how much Sensei believes in the student division members. As a student, I also engraved Sensei's words, "universities exist to benefit those who are unable to attend them" and strived in my studies.

I would like to conclude this podcast by sharing an encouraging new year's message by our national student division leaders, Priya Dubé and Ocean Chen, who are leading all the courageous student division members across Canada:

Students are facing unprecedented challenges across the country, but Ikeda Sensei urges youth to see their obstacles as sources of light. It's up to every student to leverage the moment and answer the question, "For what purpose should one cultivate wisdom?" Each of you have the power to win in your studies and encourage your peers to do the same, forging brilliant friendships along the way. Each of you can consider how you can use your unique skills and knowledge to contribute value to society. This determination is the driving force behind our efforts as students and votaries of the Lotus Sutra, devoted to the ultimate mission of kosen-rufu. (*New Century*, January 2021, p.11)

Let's have a great study meeting to kick off the Year of Hope and Victory!

Thank you.