

Study for March 2018

Fostering Successors—Now Is the Time to Create the Future of Soka!

Lecture presented by Mai Ogushi

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Hi everyone! My name is Mai Ogushi and this is a podcast for the March study meeting. I will only be covering the key points for this month's study, so please also read the whole study material when you are preparing for the district study meeting.

This month commemorates the 60th anniversary of the historical March 16 ceremony, where second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda passed on the baton of kosen-rufu to his disciple, Daisaku Ikeda and the youth division. President Ikeda took his mentor's heart as his own and wholeheartedly fostered the future division and the youth division. And now, at the age of 90, President Ikeda is entrusting the youth division to take the lead in this new era of worldwide kosen-rufu.

He says,

Without successors to carry the baton of the Soka Gakkai spirit, worldwide kosen-rufu will not develop, and the realization of happiness for all humanity and world peace will remain a dream.

I myself grew up in the future division, just like many of our current youth leaders in Canada.

The title of this month's lecture is "Fostering Successors—Now is the Time

to Create the Future of Soka!"

Now, let's move on to the first Gosho passage:

If we examine the "Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, we find Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions who are emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha gathering together. And why? As the sutra itself says, "Each . . . has come to this place on purpose to make certain the Law will long endure" [LSOC11, 216]. Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the other Buddhas intend to insure the future propagation of the Lotus Sutra so that it can be made available to all the children of the Buddha in times to come. We may surmise from this that their concern and compassion are even greater than those of a father and mother who see their only child inflicted with great suffering. (WND-1, 286–87; "The Opening of the Eyes")

In this Gosho passage, Nichiren Daishonin talks about the significance of the "Emergence of the Treasure Tower" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Shakyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha and the Buddhas gathered together with an intent to preserve the teaching for universal enlightenment forever, so it can be transmitted in future ages.

Through various writings of the Daishonin, we can see how much he cherished his disciples and how much joy it gave him to witness the growth and development of his disciples' children.

President Ikeda declared:

If we don't plant saplings, trees will not grow. If we wait to plant them

when we need sturdy, tall trees, it will be too late. We mustn't let the time for action slip by!

He further states:

When we foster capable people today, we are also building a stage upon which new capable Bodhisattvas of the Earth can emerge in the future and be active.

With this in mind, let's make the cause and give our all in fostering many new capable leaders in our districts, so that our districts will be constantly flowing with fresh ideas and energy. This is the way to expand our membership toward November 18 – it starts from our district.

Another sutra passage says that children are a treasure. The king Wonderful Adornment was destined, after his life had ended, to fall into the hell called the great citadel of incessant suffering, but he was saved by his son, the prince Pure Storehouse. Not only was he able to escape the sufferings of that great hell, but he became a Buddha called Sal Tree King. A woman called Shodai-nyo, for the faults of greed and stinginess, was confined in the realm of hungry spirits, but she was saved by her son Maudgalyayana [one of the Buddha's ten leading disciples] and was freed from that realm. Thus the sutra's statement that children are a treasure is in no way false. (WND-1, 1091; "The Gift of Clear Sake")

This passage teaches us that both in life and in death, the faith of a child can help a parent attain Buddhahood, and the faith of a parent can help a child attain Buddhahood.

President Ikeda says,

Some of you may have children who aren't engaging in Buddhist practice right now. But there's no need to feel anxious or guilty. The important thing is that you keep praying each day for their growth and happiness. Those prayers will definitely reach your children's Buddha nature, and their mission from the infinite past is sure to blossom.

This section is very encouraging for parents, especially for parents struggling with child-raising. Perhaps we can shed some light on such parents in our districts and ask them to share their thoughts or a brief experience during this section.

It takes so much effort and courage for parents to bring their young children to meetings, so let's truly praise their efforts and make each district meeting more welcoming for young families. It's also beneficial for the children to sit in on the meetings, even if they don't seem interested. They will naturally absorb everything—more than we think—through even their pores.

My parents often tell me that the greatest treasure that they can leave me and my sisters are not the treasures of the storehouse, treasures of the body, but it is the treasures of the heart. And it is the practice of Nichiren Buddhism that enables us to accumulate treasures of the heart.

Children are always watching their parents, so one's "behaviour as a human being" becomes important. If the parents are not practising Buddhism in daily life, it will be difficult for the children to see the benefit of Buddhist practice.

President Toda used to say:

Parent and child are both children of the Buddha. If you resolve to grow together with your children in the garden of the Soka Gakkai, things will definitely move in a positive direction.

And by practicing and growing together, the children will be able to accumulate treasures of the heart.

I remember going to meetings with my two older sisters, and if I may be honest, we didn't look forward to the meeting itself, but we looked forward to seeing and playing with our SGI friends. And I still have good friendship with many of them. When I was a teenager, which is when I wasn't an active member, going to meetings was not my "thing", but I can say that whenever I did go to a meeting, I felt good afterwards and I always learned something. Even as a non-active member in her teens, I knew in my heart that I could always turn to the practice if I hit a wall in my life. And that's exactly what happened. With an encouragement from an older YWG member, I started to chant and read Sensei's guidance when I was applying for post secondary education and that's when my own practice began.

I feel so fortunate to have had the opportunity to grow up in the garden of the Soka Gakkai. We spent lots of time as a family going to meetings and doing SGI activities, so I feel like we were able to actualize one of the Five Eternal Guidelines of Soka Gakkai: "Faith for a Harmonious Family".

In this lecture, President Ikeda further discusses the importance of condition or external causes. Although we all possess Buddha nature, it will manifest

by encountering the necessary conditions by meeting a good friend.

The YWG member that encouraged me to chant and read Sensei's guidance was my "good friend" in faith whom I encountered at that time of my life when I needed the practice the most.

We all need "good friends" who will guide us toward attaining enlightenment. This is true for children as well. They need someone to help them believe in themselves and bring forth their inner potential.

Soka Gakkai is a gathering of good friends. It's through interacting with each other, chanting, supporting and inspiring each other that we are able to manifest our true potential. Therefore, it's important that we practice together in the district, and it's even more important for children to be brought up in the garden of Soka.

With the spirit to foster capable successors who will surpass us, let's encourage and support our future division members even more and enable each one of them to freely grow in the garden of Soka, so they can reveal their full potential. It is our responsibility to create such foundation for them.

And for those districts that do not have future division members, let's make a goal as a district and chant to have future division members in the district!

I hope you all have a wonderful study meeting this month!

Thank you