

To Our Future Division Members, the Torchbearers of Justice—Our Hope for the Future—Part 3 [of 3]

“On the Buddha’s Prophecy”—Young Phoenixes, Soar into a New Age!

Lecture presented by Mai Ogushi
SGI Canada Study Department

Hi everyone! My name is Mai. This month, we will continue studying President Ikeda’s 3-part study lecture series called “To the Torchbearers of Justice, Our Hope for the Future”. We will study the last part titled, “On the Buddha’s Prophecy” – Young Phoenixes, Soar into a New Age!

From the beginning of this lecture, President Ikeda encourages our precious Future Division members who continue to face various challenges amidst the pandemic. He says:

I wish to declare again to all of you – today’s members of the high school, junior high school, and boys and girls divisions – that your growth is the herald of a bright new dawn for the entire world. That is because, at this time when humankind is rising to the challenge of a global pandemic, your presence and your growth inspire people everywhere with fresh hope.

This passage reminds me of the first time I read President Ikeda’s guidance when I was a teenager, which was the same time I started to chant on my own accord. I remember being so touched by how much he cares about young people and how much confidence he has in young people. I was a shy person with no confidence, so it encouraged me to tears. From then on, I started to read and study more of President Ikeda’s writings.

As March 16th is around the corner, let’s encourage as many young people as possible to join our study meeting this month!

In this installment, we will be studying Nichiren Daishonin’s writing, “On the Buddha’s Prophecy”. President Ikeda says, that, “through studying ‘On the Buddha’s Prophecy’,

we can learn about the origins of the Soka Gakkai spirit, which is directly linked to the Daishonin.” And throughout this lecture, you can feel President Ikeda’s hope for the Future Division members to rise into action with the same spirit as the Daishonin.

The Japanese title of the writing, “On the Buddha’s Prophecy” literally means to actualize what the Buddha predicted and left as a message for the future. So, what is the Buddha or Shakyamuni’s prophecy? You can find out in the first Goshō passage:

The seventh volume of the Lotus Sutra states, “After I [Shakyamuni] have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it [the Lotus Sutra] abroad widely [realize kosen-rufu] throughout Jambudvīpa [the entire world] and never allow it to be cut off” [LSOC23, 330]. On the one hand, it is deplorable to me that more than 2,220 years have already passed since the Buddha’s demise. What evil karma prevented me from being born in his lifetime? Why could not I have seen the four ranks of sages in the Former Day of the Law, or [Great Teachers] T’ien-t’ai and Dengyo in the Middle Day of the Law? On the other hand, I rejoice at whatever good fortune enabled me to be born in the last five-hundred-year period and to read these true words of the sutra. (WND-1, 398; “On the Buddha’s Prophecy”)

So, the Buddha’s prophecy is the propagation of the Lotus Sutra throughout the world, and that its transmission must never be allowed to cease.

Buddhism originated from the wish of Shakyamuni, the original Buddha to find a way for human beings to overcome the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death. It teaches that we all have a Buddha nature, which we can manifest to overcome these sufferings in life. With the motto, “happiness for oneself and others”, Soka Gakkai members awakened to this truth are striving to “rid the world of misery” which was a determination of the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda. This movement of making a positive transformation in society through the spread of Buddhism is called kosen-rufu, and this was the wish of the Buddha.

Nichiren Daishonin was determined to propagate the great Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the essence of the Lotus Sutra and lead people to happiness. But as President Ikeda says, “however excellent a teaching may be, without successors to inherit it, it cannot be passed on to many people.”

And he encourages the Future Division members as follows:

You, my young friends of Future Division, are the successors, the people who will “embrace and teach” our ideals to others. I hope you will carry on the lofty Soka Gakkai spirit and continue to advance boldly into the 21st century, committed to fulfilling the modern-day prophecy of the realization of kosen-rufu and the global spread of Nichiren Buddhism as a teaching for all humankind.

Here’s the next Goshō passage:

The moon appears in the west and sheds its light eastward, but the sun rises in the east and casts its rays to the west. The same is true of Buddhism. It spread from west to east in the Former and Middle Days of the Law, but will travel from east to west in the Latter Day. (WND-1, 401; “On the Buddha’s Prophecy”)

It’s incredible how Nichiren Daishonin wrote this Goshō passage with such confidence in the year 1273! It reveals his own prophecy, which was his strong determination of spreading this Buddhism from Japan to the world.

President Ikeda says, “This is what is called the westward transmission of Buddhism.”

The Soka Gakkai members around the world have read this Goshō passage not simply as the Daishonin’s vision for the future, but our own determination, together with the three founding presidents.

In the latter part of the Goshō “On the Buddha’s Prophecy,” the Daishonin quotes the words of Great Teacher Dengyō: “To discard the shallow and seek the profound is the way of a person of courage” (WND-1, 402).

President Ikeda says,

I also once presented this passage as a guiding principle to the Future Division Young Phoenix Group members.

These words call on us to reject a shallow life swayed by circumstances and solely concerned with pursuing pleasure and instead choose a noble, profound life dedicated to the lofty goal of kosen-rufu and world peace.

That is the “way of a person of courage.” In addition to being a practitioner who remains unwavering on the correct path, a person of courage possesses outstanding character. Their heart is filled with the courageous, challenging, lionhearted spirit to devote one’s life to fulfilling the great vow for kosen-rufu.

What a strong encouragement to the Young Phoenix Group members!

Perhaps you can encourage the Future Division members in your district to read some of the encouragement by President Ikeda.

President Ikeda closes his lecture by calling out to the Future Division members:

I would like now once again to present our Future Division members everywhere with the closing words from my 1965 editorial “Young Phoenixes, Soar into the Future!”:

“My young friends, may you always maintain pure-hearted faith and carry on the true Soka Gakkai spirit, and may you soar and dance freely on the foundation built through the wholehearted efforts of your predecessors.

“Please live each day with joy, confident that the time when you have all grown splendidly and stand up together as one will signal the time for the realization of the great vow of kosen-rufu.

“I pray that you develop wonderfully as young Bodhisattvas of the Earth who strive for the welfare of society, the Mystic Law, and yourselves.”

This concludes President Ikeda’s 3-part study lecture series called “To the Torchbearers of Justice, Our Hope for the Future”.

Thank you and have a wonderful study meeting this month!