

To My Friends of Each Division Engaged in Our Shared Struggle—Part 5 [of 6]

The Youth Division: Break through Limitations as the Flag Bearers of Fresh Development

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Welcome to our February 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 5 titled, "The Youth Division: Break through Limitations as the Flag Bearers of Fresh Development".

President Ikeda begins the lecture as follows:

My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, always had the highest hopes for young people, constantly encouraging them: "Young people's strength lies in their burning passion." "Youth, advance boldly into the north wind!" "Youth, make it your responsibility to create an ideal Soka Gakkai!"

In this instalment, which is dedicated especially to the Youth Division members, we will be learning about the stand-alone spirit and the compassionate practice of treasuring each person. These are the essence of Nichiren Buddhism and the bedrock of the Soka Gakkai spirit.

Let's read the first Gosho Passage.

In this entire country of Japan, I am the only one who has been chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. I am like the single speck of dust that marks the beginning of Mount Sumeru or the single drop of dew that spells the start of the great ocean. Probably two people, three people, ten people, a hundred people will join in chanting it, until it spreads to one province, two provinces, and all the sixty-six provinces of Japan, and reaches even to the two islands of Iki and Tsushima. Those persons who have spoken

slanderously of me will in time chant in the same way; and everyone from the ruler on down to the multitude of common people will, as described in the “Supernatural Powers” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with a single voice. Though the trees may desire to be still, the wind will not cease to blow; though we may wish for spring to linger, it must give way to summer. (WND-1, 672; “The Blessings of the Lotus Sutra”)

President Ikeda says:

The Law is the eternal truth without beginning or end. But unless someone who has awakened to the Law stands up and begins communicating it to others, humanity will never be able to enjoy its benefits.

After Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment, he stood up alone to teach the Law for the sake of people’s happiness. When the Daishonin first established his teaching, he also stood up alone to propagate it, fully aware of the great difficulties he would face. In modern times, the first three Soka Gakkai presidents have stood up to advance kosen-rufu, in accordance with the Daishonin’s great vow.

President Ikeda says:

We see here an eternal formula. In all struggles for kosen-rufu, there will be no progress without efforts grounded in the stand-alone spirit.

Mr. Toda was convinced that kosen-rufu could be achieved if even a single young person was willing to dedicate their entire life. President Ikeda supports this by pointing out the great accomplishments of young people in the pioneering days of the Soka Gakkai, and says that they have created “a huge, irrepressible tide” of worldwide kosen-rufu that it is now up to us to maintain and develop.

To end this section, President Ikeda concludes:

But in every age, young people are the drivers of change. This is especially true of you who practice the wonderful Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin. Young people who embrace the Mystic Law have the inner strength and

resilience to forge their way through waves of adversity and suffering, without being swept away by them. Your stand-alone faith enables you to bring forth that ultimate strength.

Let's read the second Gosho passage, which discusses Buddhism's humanistic principle of treasuring each person.

Now when Nichiren and his followers chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, they are setting aside differentiation.

The twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra represent differentiation [in terms of capacity to understand the teaching], but the five characters of the Wonderful Law [Mystic Law] are without differentiation. . . .

[The] "same rain" or "single rain" [in the passage "Though all these plants and trees grow in the same earth and are moistened by the same rain, each has its differences and particulars" (LSOC5, 135)] is the daimoku unmixed with any other religious practice.

The "Introduction" chapter of the Lotus Sutra speaks of how the Buddha wishes "to rain down the rain of the great Law" [LSOC1, 46]. Now this chapter, "The Parable of the Medicinal Herbs," speaks of the plants and trees that "are moistened by the same rain." (From The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings, pp. 64–65)

Here Nichiren Daishonin comments on the "parable of the three kinds of medicinal herbs and two kinds of trees" that illustrates the impartial compassion of the Buddha. There are many kinds of plants and trees growing on the earth. The rain that falls on the earth moistens all plants and trees equally. Yet, receiving the rain, they grow, blossom, and bear fruits according to their own individuality. On that basis, Nichiren Daishonin teaches that the rain that falls on them is Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Based on the Gosho passages, Sensei comments:

While there may be members who have stopped participating in Soka Gakkai activities or whose conviction in faith has waned, the time is certain to come when they will reawaken to their mission and stand up again.

Since my youth, I have wholeheartedly encouraged members based on my firm belief that all are capable individuals and my determination to help everyone become happy.

Then Sensei shares his own experience in the Osaka Campaign where he put into action the practice of compassion for each person. He says:

I chanted to the Gohonzon for as many people in Osaka as possible to join our movement and become our allies. I personally took the lead, reaching out to one person after another and visiting one home after another.

Because of Sensei's strong determination and tireless effort, he was able to personally encourage 8,000 individuals during the Osaka Campaign in just six months. The Osaka chapter led by him achieved introducing 11,111 new households.

President Ikeda says:

I was extremely gratified that all our Kansai members responded to the earnest prayers and struggle of this "one young person" by standing up to strive alongside me.

As I embarked on the Osaka Campaign, I was firmly resolved to fight for my mentor, to give my all for the sake of my fellow members, and to win through faith in the Gohonzon. Based on faith infused with my vow, I strove wholeheartedly, encouraged my fellow members, and realized victory through sincere and dedicated commitment. That is the spirit I hope to pass on to my beloved youth division members.

President concludes his lecture by saying:

Now, as a new era is dawning, we have a brilliant opportunity to set in motion a groundswell for peace and build a humanistic society.

Let us continue to forge ahead in the great struggle to realize the Daishonin's ideal of "establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land" together with Soka youth across the globe who share the mission of Bodhisattvas of the Earth!

February is traditionally a month for introducing people to Nichiren Buddhism. This month, let's put into practice Sensei's guidance in this article to stand up and treasure each person. Let's take the initiative to tell our friends and family about Nichiren Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai, and let's do so with the confidence that every life is precious and worthy of respect. Thank you.