

Everything Depends On Youth

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 1st Nationwide Young Men's and Young Women's Division Leaders Meeting, held jointly at the Tokyo Toda Memorial Auditorium, Jan. 11.

To all you valiant young leaders, I declare with my greatest hopes and expectations: Three cheers for the world's foremost group of young people, the SGI youth division! I am praying for your success in all endeavors!

Today, individuals and groups around the world are earnestly grappling with the questions of how they will meet the challenges of the 21st century and what they must do to survive and realize victory in the coming age. We can perhaps regard these next few years as the all-important approach down the runway for our successful takeoff into the 21st century.

For the SGI, these next few years will signal the time to entrust the youth division with the future of kosen-rufu. Everything depends on youth. This will be the time when young people take full responsibility. Congratulations, therefore, on holding this leaders meeting, a ceremony for transferring the baton of succession for the 21st century!

A group of SGI-USA youth division members, representing members from throughout the world, then performed a song as a present to Japan's youth division. The Kanto Brass Band reciprocated by playing the marching song "Alte Kameraden" (Old Comrades), composed by Karl Teike (1864–1922).

"Old comrades" — what a beautiful resonance that has! This meeting is being attended by members from throughout Japan — from Kyushu in the south to Hokkaido in the north — and by SGI representatives from around the world.

I hope that afterward you will spend some time visiting with old friends, shaking hands, exchanging greetings and rejoicing in one another's growth.

The Honor of Great Successors of the SGI

The SGI is a wondrous organization that has appeared in accord with the Buddha's will and decree. We are a gathering of people 10 million strong who embrace a great philosophy and are working to promote peace and culture. We are advancing toward the goal of lasting peace, toward kosen-rufu, based on the profound philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Throughout the world, SGI members are taking action for the happiness of friends and the prosperity of their communities. There is no greater organization of the common people anywhere in the world — not in the past or, undoubtedly, in the future.

And it is you, the youth, who are the true successors of this great organization. The magnificent stage of the 21st century belongs to you. Your mission is truly immense. I am praying each day that you will take the lead and carry out activities freely in your respective areas around the world. And I am working with my entire being to lay the groundwork so that you may indeed do so.

Where Does Happiness Lie?

What is true happiness? Probably people everywhere think they know, but in fact very

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few really do. There is a saying in Thailand: “False happiness makes people spoiled and deplorably arrogant. Real happiness makes people joyful and fills them with wisdom and kindness.” These words, while appearing simple, are actually quite profound. “False happiness” is derived from external sources. “Real happiness,” on the other hand, wells forth from within, from the very depths of one’s life — the quintessence of which is bringing forth the state of Buddhahood in one’s life.

False happiness is derived from the pursuit and acquisition of more and more material possessions. Real happiness is derived from efforts to improve oneself as a human being and develop inner wealth; in other words, from carrying out one’s human revolution. The wisdom of Thailand, a country with a long Buddhist tradition, is truly wonderful.

The second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, also frequently stressed that genuine happiness can only be found in absolute happiness. False happiness is relative; real happiness is absolute. President Toda’s insight always penetrated right to the essence of things.

*President Toda once said: “There are two kinds of happiness, absolute and relative. Achieving absolute happiness is the greatest joy in life; it is carrying out one’s human revolution. Fresh and vigorous faith is the secret to becoming happy without fail.”*¹

Up to this point, Japan has been in sole pursuit of relative happiness. As a result, many people see the Japanese as “spoiled and deplorably arrogant,” as the Thai saying goes. Japan’s future will be bleak indeed if it continues on this path. I believe that true stability, peace and happiness will remain elusive for Japan unless it pursues absolute happiness — in other words, human revolution.

You, the youth of the SGI, who are advancing with the great philosophy of the Mystic Law, are pioneers in transforming society at the most profound level. To you falls the task of opening an era in which all people can savor lives of joy, wisdom and compassion.

No one knows more clearly than we along which path true happiness lies.

Youth Is Infinite Hope, Unlimited Strength

Youth is infinite hope, unlimited strength, a priceless treasure. It is immeasurably more precious, noble and sublime than the status, wealth or renown enjoyed by any head of state, millionaire or celebrity.

President Toda often praised the natural vibrancy and beauty of youth, saying, “Youth needs no cosmetic artifice; youth is beautiful in and of itself.” I feel the same way.

Each of you is dedicating your youth — your precious, jewel-like existence — to readying yourself for the role you will fulfill in the 21st century.

Being young in itself means to possess the greatest wealth, even if you are penniless. Hope, potential and limitless energy are the assets of youth. You don’t need to be in a hurry to own a nice home, or seek status and position, or get rich quick. If you dedicate yourself earnestly to your mission, everything you need for your life will come to you naturally.

If you continue to make steadfast efforts, then, just like fruit ripening on a tree, good fortune and benefit will adorn your life. To be impatient and try to pick the fruit before it’s ripe is foolish. Youth is the training ground for forging your character, for developing into a wonderful human being.

When your life shines, people will naturally be attracted to you. So, for those who want to get married, you can easily have a thousand potential partners vying to marry you! Everything depends on you, on the condition of your life.

It is important that your life shine. And it’s best to be yourself, natural and unaffected.

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Actualizing the Words of One's Mentor

To be young is wonderful, but whether you can appreciate this is another matter.

You have an infinitely great mission. But the outcome of your life will be completely different depending on whether you can recognize your good fortune in having such a profound mission.

Having a personal awareness is important. When we do something, we should do it wholeheartedly and on our own initiative, not dragging our feet and taking action only because someone told us to.

Personal awareness entails a self-awakening. The deeper our awareness, the more our horizons will expand and the more profound our lives will become.

When I was a young man, I made this determination: "I had the fortune to encounter my mentor, President Toda. Therefore, I will actualize all of my mentor's words. And I want to learn and receive training from him." Because this was my unwavering commitment, I do not have any regrets.

A Life Without Purpose Is Miserable

Every day, I receive many faxes from throughout the world. Today, I will share one such letter from a member describing the insights of an American entrepreneur.

The entrepreneur observed that no matter how much money, status or wealth people have, if they fail to polish themselves, their lives will be empty. Similarly, without someone to guide them to a higher self-realization, their lives drift in a void, going nowhere. The entrepreneur knew many of the world's wealthiest people, he said, but among those who lacked a real sense of purpose or mission in life it was often the case that they spent lonely, solitary final years, or having amassed vast fortunes and realized all their worldly ambitions, were left with a great sense of emptiness and futility.

When he spoke to such people about the Daishonin's Buddhism or shared my speeches, he said that they drank in his words like parched earth soaks up water. He was truly glad that he had encountered this Buddhism.

I hope you, my young friends, will take these words to heart as a lesson for the future.

Fifty Years of Continuous Struggle

This year marks the 50th anniversary of my embracing faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism [Aug. 24, 1947]. For half a century, except for a 10-day period when I was ill, I have not rested for a single day. I have worked unceasingly, solely for kosen-rufu and for the happiness of the members. I have exerted myself tirelessly in action and deed. And I have written prodigiously. I have accomplished a thousand times, ten thousand times more than you, my young friends, have to date. And I am proud of all that I have achieved for kosen-rufu.

Develop a Diamondlike Self

The Buddhist scriptures speak of the Buddha having a "diamond-like body." In other words, the Buddha has a state of being as strong and indestructible as a diamond; good fortune and benefit that can never be destroyed, no matter what happens; and character that sparkles with dazzling brilliance.

How can one develop such a state of being? This is a theme that runs throughout the Goshō. The Daishonin's conclusion is that one must thoroughly oppose evil. That is, one must refute that which is erroneous and spread the True Law; exert oneself wholeheartedly for justice; and struggle for the sake of the Law. Repudiating supreme evil is a cause of

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supreme good.

“Fight against evil! If you fail to do so, you will doom yourself to a state of hell. If you rigorously attack evil, you will acquire the ‘diamondlike body’ of a Buddha — you will attain Buddhahood.” This spirit is the cornerstone of Buddhism. This is what Shakyamuni taught and what Nichiren Daishonin practiced.

In “The Opening of the Eyes,” the Daishonin cites a passage from the Nirvana Sutra where Shakyamuni Buddha says:

Kashyapa, because [in the past] I devoted myself to the correct teaching, I have been able to achieve this diamond-like body that abides forever and is never destroyed....

The Monks [whom you are speaking of] preach various teachings, but still they are not able to utter “the lion’s roar.”... Nor are they able to refute and convert evil persons who go against the correct teaching. Monks of this kind can bring no benefit either to themselves or to the populace. You should realize that they are in fact shirkers and idlers. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 184)

In short, when the time comes to act, we must do so. We must wage a thorough and relentless struggle against evil. To the extent that we do so, the negative tendencies in our lives, our negative karma, disappear.

On the other hand, “shirkers and idlers” who fail to speak out when they should and who are unable to repudiate evil are, in the final analysis, slandering the Law themselves. The Daishonin repeatedly explains this principle; this is the lesson that permeates the entire Goshō.

Negligence is one of the fourteen slanders.² Since to be lazy and neglectful is an act of slander, no matter how much daimoku lazy people chant, they will not receive true benefit or develop a diamondlike state of being. They will not attain Buddhahood.

Nichiren Daishonin says, “To seek enlightenment without repudiating slander is as futile as trying to find water in the midst of fire or fire in the midst of water” (MW-1, 165). These are well-known words. When we repudiate evil, we receive benefit, we attain enlightenment, and we acquire the diamondlike body of a Buddha. The SGI’s greatness lies in its members consistently acting in accord with these words.

The Daishonin also cites the words of Nan-yüeh, T’ien-t’ai’s teacher:

If there should be a bodhisattva who protects evil persons and fails to chastise them, and if, as a result, the growth of evil is abetted, good people are caused to feel worry and confusion and the True Law is destroyed, such a person is not truly a bodhisattva. He or she will often spuriously assert, “I am carrying out the practice of perseverance.” When his or her life comes to an end, he or she will fall into hell along with those evil persons. (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 1374)

Such people try to justify their inaction by saying things like, “I know they’re evil, but there are circumstances preventing me from doing anything about them right now....” They self-righteously portray themselves as martyrs bravely enduring the situation. However, Nan-yüeh severely refutes such hypocrisy.

Buddhism is very strict. No matter what excuses people make or what leadership position they hold, if they do not fight against evil, they will fall into hell. This is what the Daishonin teaches. No matter how people may try to make themselves look good, the Mystic Law cannot be fooled. Everyone without exception must face the reckoning of the Mystic Law. A society that attacks the Mystic Law is sure to come to ruin. Precisely because I don’t want to see this happen, I stress this point.

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Encountering Obstacles Is Essential for Enlightenment

The Lotus Sutra declares, “This sutra is hard to uphold” (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 180). In other words, those who embrace the Lotus Sutra are certain to encounter difficulties.

The “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings” states, “Those who embrace the Lotus Sutra should do so with the awareness that they will meet persecution without fail” (Gosho Zenshu, p. 742).

Unless we strive to surmount obstacles, we cannot become Buddhas. Nor can we accomplish kosen-rufu. For that reason, tenaciously enduring all, I continue to fight with the stand-alone spirit against the hardships and persecutions that assail us.

What a great shame it would be not to attain the diamondlike body of a Buddha! For there is no more profound source of happiness than this achievement; it is absolute happiness. Once you realize this state of being, your life will shine like a diamond no matter what happens. It is the same as possessing an inexhaustible store of good fortune.

Everything will be a source of joy. Your life will be pervaded by an unshakable strength and dignity. I want all of you to savor this state of life. This is the reason for our Buddhist practice, our faith and our tireless activities to spread the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Nichiren Daishonin boldly proclaimed: “I will be the pillar of Japan. I will be the eyes of Japan. I will be the great ship of Japan. This is my vow, and I will never forsake it!” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 175). In response to this profound confidence of the original Buddha, President Toda declared, “Today, the Soka Gakkai is the pillar of Japan.”

Those Who Tried To Topple the Pillar of Japan Met a Pitiful End

The authorities of the Kamakura military government tried to do away with Nichiren Daishonin, to topple the pillar of Japan. At the time of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution [1271], Hei no Saemon, one of the most powerful figures of the day, showed up with a force of several hundred warriors clad in armor to arrest just one person, the Daishonin.

The entire country treated the Daishonin as though he were the most heinous villain. Nevertheless, the Daishonin fearlessly proclaimed to his captors: “See how insanely Hei no Saemon is acting! You all have just toppled the pillar of Japan!” (MW-1, 178) His words convey his towering conviction.

Seeing the Daishonin’s dauntless composure, the warriors who came to arrest him shrank back in fear.

Hei no Saemon, who had tried to bring down the pillar of Japan, came to a miserable end. He was beheaded and his entire family was annihilated. Moreover, the government that had persecuted the Daishonin followed a path of rapid decline from the time of the Mongol invasions on. Because of its slander of the Law and persecution of the Daishonin, Japanese society incurred general punishment, while those directly involved received individual punishment.

In today’s world of turmoil and confusion, the SGI stands as the brightest hope for humankind — this is the opinion shared by many people concerned about the future. With a profound awareness of our mission, let us manifest the true power of our faith as genuine disciples of the Daishonin!

When he faced his greatest persecution, the Daishonin discarded his transient status and revealed his true identity as the original Buddha. This is why he affirms, “One should

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regard meeting obstacles as true peace and comfort” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750).

I hope that each of you, too, in the course of facing tremendous challenges, will reveal your true identity and profound potential.

Ceremonies for Passing On the Baton of Kosen-rufu

There is no real joy or excitement in a life without concrete goals or direction. In the realm of faith, too, we grow when we have clear goals — whether it be for propagation or study. In that respect, setting sound goals for activities as organizational leaders is an act of compassion.

Because of this, the goals set should not cause you or others distress, but be reasonable and acceptable to each individual. I want you to advance not as if carrying a heavy burden, but joyfully and confidently as you earnestly apply yourself to the challenges ahead. To do so, wisdom and conviction are important.

Who are the ultimate victors in life? Those who have worked hard and triumphed over difficulties. People who avoid hardship will suffer later. Those who win in the end are those who practice the essence of Buddhism in accord with the Gosho and the Soka Gakkai spirit.

When it comes to faith, those who practice with selfless sincerity gain the greatest benefit and good fortune in their lives; they realize the most profound happiness. This is the conclusion I have reached based on seeing and meeting countless people over the past 50 years.

From now until the start of the 21st century, let’s make each monthly leaders meetings of the young men’s and young women’s divisions a magnificent ceremony for passing on the baton of kosen-rufu. I am looking forward to your splendid victory!

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1. Aug. 20, 1955.
2. For further explanation, see “The Fourteen Slanders” (MW-3, 205).