

**The Greatest Treasure**  
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Lion cubs are raised by lions. People of courage are fostered by people of exceptional courage.

The special month for promoting the growth and activity of the future division has arrived again, starting on July 20. [In the Soka Gakkai organization in Japan, future division comprises the Boys and Girls Group, the junior high school division and the high school division.] I extend my most heartfelt appreciation for the dedicated efforts of the leaders of the future division who, on top of their own Soka Gakkai activities and busy work schedules, are taking time to help nurture our precious younger members.

Three years ago, I bestowed the name 21st Century Mission Group on the leaders of the future division [in Japan]. Since they are working to foster the leaders of kosen-rufu in the 21st century, their mission and their contributions to the development of our movement are immense.

Each of the divisions within the future division was established at my proposal many years ago. When Mr. Toda was president of the Soka Gakkai, several chapters around the country had organized groups and activities for children, but there was no structured future division for the Soka Gakkai as a whole like there is today. Watching the growth and development of these younger members with great joy, I cherished a vision for expanding and strengthening the organizational framework for their activities in the future.

Then, in 1964 — a few years after I became president and the Soka Gakkai embarked on a new phase in spreading the philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism in society — I decided to establish the junior high school and high school divisions to ensure the future of our movement. The high school division was founded first, and its inaugural meeting was that June.

At that time, I remember turning to then-Youth Division Chief Einosuke Akiya (now president of the Soka Gakkai) and asking him to appoint the most capable members of the youth division to lead the newly established division.

I wanted to create an environment in which our next generation of promising youth could receive inspiring direction, guidance and leadership from reliable older youth, so that they could develop their fullest potential while giving first priority to their studies.



Thirty-four years have passed since the establishment of the high school division, the first corps of the future division. Over the years, the high school division has produced a steady flow of capable people that today courses like a mighty river.

Many vice presidents and top leaders of the Soka Gakkai, including Tokyo Metropolitan Area Chief Shigeru Asami and Soka Gakkai Women’s Division Chief Yoko Takayanagi, are graduates of the future division.

Soka Gakkai Youth Division Chief Yoshiki Tanigawa was a member of the junior high school division when he stood up in faith, thanks to the encouragement of his leader in that division. When the Soka Gakkai was under fierce attack in 1970, the young leader said to Mr. Tanigawa: “I’m really annoyed and angry with myself that I didn’t study harder when I was younger. If I had, I’d be able to do much more to defend the Soka Gakkai than I can now. But you still have plenty of time to acquire that ability. Study hard and grow into a capable person for kosen-rufu.”

Mr. Tanigawa resolved to reply to these high expectations and threw himself wholeheartedly into his studies and Soka Gakkai activities. As a result, he challenged himself and grew tremendously.

When Soka Gakkai Young Men's Division Chief Hiroshi Sato was a member of the junior high school division, his leader, though suffering from tuberculosis, used to visit him regularly. This leader was more concerned for his younger members' growth than his own health. Mr. Sato was so moved by the older youth's confident and energetic encouragement that he vowed to live up to his senior's hopes and become a capable person.

"Youth should be treated with respect," a well-known Eastern saying goes. The sincere and earnest desire to foster young people so that they may become even more capable than us, communicating with them heart to heart and striving to inspire them by our example, is the tradition of fostering youth within the Soka Gakkai.



From the time I was a member of the youth division, I made it a point to talk with children, especially the children of those families who opened their homes as meeting places for the members. I always treated them as my young friends and offered them sincere encouragement.

I remember an incident that took place around 1950. I attended a meeting at a member's house in Tsurumi, Yokohama, and she showed me a letter she had received. It was from her teenage son, who had gone to work in another prefecture to help out with the family finances.

In the letter he wrote that he was living in a single dormitory with several others and it was difficult for him to do gongyo undisturbed. So he would take his towel and soap and say he was going to the public bath, but actually he would go up the hill behind the house and do gongyo there.

When I finished reading the letter, I immediately took up a pen and wrote the young man a poem. I wanted to encourage and support him, and to tell him not to give up in spite of his tough circumstances, because he had a mission that only he could fulfill.

Friend, be strong,  
And rise up courageously!  
I have faith in you,  
In your sincere devotion.  
Your arduous efforts at work  
And your late-night studies —  
They, too, are training for your life,  
Letting you turn all hardships into joy.  
Your conviction, your passion,  
Are known to the original Buddha.

I was very happy when I later learned that my words had been a great source of encouragement and inspiration for this young man.

Several years on, that same poem became a verse in a Gakkai song "Friend, Be Strong," and has since been sung by countless youth.



The greatest treasure that we can leave for the future is capable people. And no one is more talented and able than a person who can discover and nurture individuals of promise and ability. In the process of fostering others, we polish and perfect ourselves.

This summer, let us once again make a golden effort for the sake of the future. Together let us nurture a rich green forest of capable people for the 21st century.

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