

**SGI President Ikeda's Essay  
The 21st Century Is Yours  
By DAISAKU IKEDA, SGI President**

*President Ikeda is placing all his hopes for the future in the youth division members.  
'The direction of the 21st century lies in your hands,' he says.*

The wheels of the new age have begun to turn with a powerful force. In Japan, beginning in August, the leadership titles of the front-line youth division leaders have been changed. The young men's division group leader has been changed to new leader, and the corresponding young women's division position of block leader has become young leader. The student division group leader has become victory leader.

I have heard that these new titles have inspired all our young people to work even more vigorously and dynamically, filled with the spirit of a new beginning, of a pioneering, of a rebirth.

How happy this news makes me!

My hopes for our young people are reflected in these new titles. The young men's division title new leader expresses my fervent hope that those who hold it will become fresh, new, innovative leaders, who will shoulder the new century. The direction of the 21st century lies in your hands.

In selecting the title young leader for the young women's division, I wanted to express not only the idea of being young age-wise but also freshness, youthfulness. I want all those who have this title to be heroes, who lead a glorious youth, always providing fresh impetus to the organization, always dedicating themselves to the challenge of expanding our network of happiness and friendship.

The victory leaders of the student division have the mission of scoring the winning run or goal for victory in our endeavors for kosen-rufu. I pray every day that they will achieve that splendid victory and bring about a new dawn of humanism to the world.

**The SGI is a tree. And what are its roots? Each of you.**

A mighty tree is held upright by its roots. These stretch into the earth, spreading out in a network, each single root searching deep and wide for water and nutrients to supply the rest of the tree. If the roots are strong and continue growing, the tree will grow, too. It will produce a flourishing canopy of green leaves. But if the roots rot and die, even the greatest tree will fall.

This great tree is the Soka Gakkai. The individual roots are each of you, protecting our front-line organization.

You cannot see the roots buried deep in the earth. In the same way, your daily Soka Gakkai activities may seem modest or inconspicuous. But it is precisely these practical, down-to-earth efforts that constitute the lifeline sustaining kosen-rufu, that become the driving force for your personal growth and development.

Mr. Toda placed the greatest importance on the front-line youth division leaders and devoted much energy to their education and development. His famous essay "Precepts for Youth," which opens with the words "A new era is created by the passion and power of youth," was originally dedicated to youth division group leaders — those fighting hardest on the front lines of the kosen-rufu movement. I was a group leader at the time, and I rose

up with the rest in response to his stirring call: “Youth, rise with courage! Youth, join me in the struggle!”

As Mr. Toda’s disciple, I vowed to challenge myself wholeheartedly and become a model for all group leaders and all youth — for every generation, for eternity.

A month after “Precepts for Youth” appeared in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, I delivered a determination as a young men’s division representative at the 6th Soka Gakkai General Meeting (November 1951). Under the title “The Conviction of Youth” and expressing our resolve to respond to Mr. Toda’s call, I declared: “We are well aware that religious revolution is by far the most difficult to attain.... And we are equally aware that achieving this revolution — or, indeed, any revolution — means a life-and-death struggle.”

I also voiced our pledge to make President Toda’s heart our own and work to create a new age. After the meeting, President Toda praised my declaration and composed a poem for me:

*A true gem may be fired but is impervious to heat,  
A jeweled sword may bend but it does not break.*

### **I struggled as a group leader, and it became one of my greatest treasures.**

Mr. Toda’s business was just recovering, and I was very busy working behind the scenes managing all his affairs. There was so much to do that most nights I didn’t get home until after midnight.

I was also suffering from a chest condition and a chronic low-grade fever. Yet I fought on.

I did everything I could to arrange my schedule so that I had time for Soka Gakkai activities, and I gave my utmost to discussion meetings, propagation activities and personal guidance.

When the young men’s division was founded in July 1951, my group had only 10 members. By the end of the year, it had grown to 31. Under the leadership of Mr. Toda, who had become Soka Gakkai president that May, I scored my first major victory for kosen-rufu.

Showing actual proof through success in one’s endeavors is the mark of a true disciple. It is not determined by one’s position or standing in the organization. Empty determinations are meaningless. It is how much you have actually done that advances the cause of kosen-rufu and adorns your life with benefit.

The hard-fought struggles of my time as a group leader have become one of the greatest treasures of my life.

The front line of our organization is the true battleground for kosen-rufu. It is the true place of Buddhist practice. The brilliant future of the Soka Gakkai lies in the victories we win there.

To you young leaders, I entrust the 21st century; I entrust the Soka Gakkai; and I entrust my beloved youth division members.

I am earnestly praying for and anticipating your magnificent development.