

For Our Wonderful New Members—Part 3 [of 5]

A Teaching That Enlightens and Empowers—Become Champions Who Can Stand Alone

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Hi everyone. Welcome to May's study podcast. I'm Antonio. In this month we are celebrating May 3rd, the 60th anniversary of President Ikeda's inauguration as the third president of the Soka Gakkai. This month, we'll be studying Part 3 of President Ikeda's 5-part study lecture series "For Our Wonderful New Members".

Last month, we studied the concept of the happiness of self and others. This month's material focuses on the principles of Nichiren Buddhism that enable us to transform our lives.

In the opening paragraphs, President Ikeda explains that the Soka Gakkai movement has spread on such a global scale because we have always treasured and respected each individual.

President Ikeda says:

Through our steadfast efforts to carry out one-on-one dialogue and encourage others, we have enabled one person after another to change themselves from within. That is why we have grown into such a vibrant socially engaged grassroots movement. (NC, p.31)

In our society, everything that happens is the work of human beings: attaining world peace and the happiness of all people starts and end with human beings. The purpose of a religion is to revitalize people and enable them to lead lives of joy.

President Ikeda says:

This is the essence of a religion that exists for the sake of the people, rather than religion that exists solely for religion's sake. (p.32)

The key to this month's study is a focus on the principles of Nichiren Buddhism that enable us to transform our lives.

President Ikeda quotes two Goshō passages in this installment. The first one is a passage from "On the Treasure Tower".

What is the Treasure Tower? Where can we find it?

In the first Goshō passage, Nichiren Daishonin says:

In the Latter Day of the Law, no treasure tower exists other than the figures of the men and women who embrace the Lotus Sutra. It follows, therefore, that whether eminent or humble, high or low, those who chant Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō are themselves the treasure tower, and, likewise, are themselves the Thus Come One Many Treasures. No treasure tower exists other than Myōhō-rengē-kyō. The daimoku of the Lotus Sutra is the treasure tower, and the treasure tower is Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō. (WND-1, 299)

President Ikeda explains:

The Daishonin tells us that in the Latter Day of the Law, those who uphold the Mystic Law and strive earnestly in their Buddhist practice are themselves great and magnificent treasure towers....This is what makes Nichiren Buddhism a universal teaching transcending all differences of nationality, ethnicity, and gender. (p.32)

Mr. Toda also taught us: "Firmly decide that you yourself are Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō."

How does Buddhist practice establish the treasure tower of Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō in the depths of our lives?

President Ikeda says:

The treasure tower is the life state of Buddhahood, which is revealed by vanquishing fundamental darkness through strong prayer. It is the elemental force within life that enables us to rise up from all suffering and despair and win. We who embrace the Gohonzon can actualize this treasure tower within our lives anytime and anywhere and transform our environment into the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light. And not only do

we try to bring forth the treasure tower in our own lives, but we also help others do the same. (p.33)

President Ikeda concludes the first section with:

The way we perceive our own lives is also the way we perceive the lives of others. When we have a sense of our own dignity, we recognize the dignity of others and value their lives, too... It is no exaggeration to say that the world today is eagerly seeking a movement like ours based on altruistic bodhisattva practice, where individuals awakened to their own dignity strive to help others reveal the treasure tower in the depths of their lives. (Ibid.)

In the second Gosho passage “The Bow and Arrow”, The Daishonin encourages the lay nun Toki, who had long been struggling with poor health, to continue to uphold her faith in the Mystic Law and attain Buddhahood without fail.

President Toda says:

[I]f we continue with our Buddhist practice, then eventually pure benefit will pour forth without fail. We will definitely be able to transform our karma, or destiny, in this life—that is, we will actualize the principle of “attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.” The Gohonzon is the great beneficial medicine with the tremendous power that enables us to do this. It is a supremely noble device for producing happiness. (pp.33–34)

It is our tendency to ask why problems are happening to us and to become caught up in our immediate suffering.

President Ikeda says:

If we simply view our problems or suffering as the result of karma from the past, then we are taking a rather backward approach. Instead, we need to revise our outlook and see suffering as something we have voluntarily taken on to fulfill our mission—something we have vowed to overcome through

faith to demonstrate the tremendous power of the Mystic Law and thereby help many others achieve happiness. (p.34)

Buddhist principles such as lessening one's karmic retribution, changing poison into medicine, and voluntarily assuming the appropriate karma set forth teachings that inspire hope, revealing the essential power for overcoming adversity. When we adopt this way of thinking, our hearts become filled with the light of hope and courage.

President Ikeda says:

Mr. Toda used to say: "Becoming happy yourself is no great challenge; it's quite easy. But the essence of Nichiren Buddhism lies in helping others become happy, too."

Being committed to others' well-being enables us to transform our life state, and making efforts to encourage others is the driving force that propels our own human revolution and inspires others to do theirs. (Ibid.)

How can we bring out our powerful life force?

President Ikeda says:

Nichiren Buddhism does not teach passive belief in something outside ourselves.

Prayer in Nichiren Buddhism is drawing forth hope with unwavering conviction. The practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the source of the wisdom and power of Buddhahood. Our ability to tap great life force comes down to the strength of our faith.

When you're suffering, when you're sad, when you're hurting, just chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with an open heart. Keep chanting just as you are, as if sharing your feelings with a caring parent. In this way, you transform your problems into prayers.

Most important, as you chant, you will experience courage surging up from within, filling you with the conviction that you can triumph over what's troubling you. (pp.34-35)

President Ikeda explains that when we look back, we will see that our difficulty became an opportunity to expand our life state. He uses his own experience from when Mr. Toda was having financial problems.

He says:

When Mr. Toda's businesses were in crisis, I took full responsibility to support and assist him through everything. During that time, I witnessed in my mentor's solemn and dignified demeanor in facing those challenges the true strength of a Bodhisattva of the Earth and the real depth of humanity. (p.35)

Being Mr. Toda's disciple has been my life's mission. (Ibid.)

Nothing can destroy the bonds of mentor and disciple dedicated to the vow of kosen-rufu. Our lives, united as one, are eternally indestructible. (p.36)

President Ikeda explains that being a champion of human revolution means to have a stand-alone spirit and have absolute conviction in the nobility of your own life. It is having the inner strength to believe in your potential and live true to yourself.

By strengthening our daily practice, taking part in the 1,2,3 campaign, keeping a high life condition and making efforts to encourage others, we can overcome the current worldwide challenges of the COVID19 pandemic and resume normal life very soon. Stay safe and healthy.

If you have any questions, please feel free to send them to us, SGI Canada Study Department, at study@sgicanada.org. Thank you for joining us today. Bye for now.