

## Discussions on Youth Human Revolution Is Raising Your Sights

*This is the 22nd and final installment in part one of a series of discussions on youth among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division leaders Hidenobu Kimura (young men's leader) and Kazue Igeta (young women's leader), representing the high school division members.*

**KIMURA:** This is the final installment of “Discussions on Youth.” Over the last year, you have shared guidance and advice on different aspects of daily life in a thorough, all-encompassing way. I know that the principles you have imparted will serve as a foundation that will support all the high school division members throughout their lives. Thank you so much.

In this last installment, we'll discuss with you the most important topics of human revolution and kosen-rufu.

**IGETA:** Your foreword to your novel, *The Human Revolution*, contains the famous line, “A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change the destiny of a nation, and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind.” I see this as not only the main theme of the novel but a description of your life, President Ikeda.

**KIMURA:** Human revolution — transforming or revolutionizing our lives at the most fundamental level — holds the key to realizing change in all spheres. Nonetheless, some members remain unclear as to just what human revolution entails.

**IKEDA:** Human revolution is not something extraordinary or divorced from our daily lives. Let me give you some practical examples.

Let's say there's a young boy who spends all his time playing and never studies. Then, one day he decides to try to improve his future chances, and he begins to take his studies seriously. That is his human revolution.

Or perhaps there is a woman who only seeks happiness for her family on a superficial level. She's satisfied with her life until one day she asks herself: “What if our present happiness doesn't last? Maybe I should look for more solid, enduring happiness.”

She begins practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and, basing her life on this philosophy, starts working for her family's absolute happiness. That is her human revolution.

Or there is a father who thinks only of his small world — himself, his family and his friends. Then, one day he decides to break out of these narrow confines just a little to extend a helping hand to the ill or suffering, giving earnest thought to how he can help them find happiness. As a result, he starts participating in activities for that purpose. That is his human revolution.

In other words, human revolution is raising your gaze beyond your restricted, ordinary, everyday world and striving for and dedicating yourself to achieving something more noble, more profound, more all-embracing.

**KIMURA:** Could we say it means striving, even just a little, to become a stronger person?

**IKEDA:** Yes. That spirit of “even just a little” is important. Will you take a step forward, or will you be content to stay where you are now? Everything in your life is determined by that.

**IGETA:** The Kyushu young women’s high school division leader, Junko Matsuda, shared the following experience with me recently.

A member going to music school was having trouble getting along with others, including her mother, and started skipping classes. She began to chant daimoku about her problems and soon started attending school again regularly. Her friends said that even her piano playing improved. And she began to get along better with her mother.

This experience led her to have more appreciation. Junko Matsuda said the thing she appreciates most about this practice is that it’s helped her become a person who prays for others’ happiness.

**KIMURA:** While we hear many such inspiring stories, some members feel the challenge of human revolution is beyond them. They’re convinced that their lives can never change. They describe themselves as weak-willed — always making resolutions just to break them almost as quickly as they are made.

**IKEDA:** There’s nothing wrong with that. If we were all perfect from the start, we wouldn’t need to do human revolution!

In fact, those who in the beginning may be completely overwhelmed by their environment or constantly defeated by their weaknesses — but then undergo a dramatic transformation as a result of solid Buddhist practice — can be a wonderful inspiration for others.

The times we experience the most intense suffering, unbearable agony and seemingly insurmountable deadlock are actually brilliant opportunities for doing our human revolution.

If you’re the type whose resolve tends to melt away easily, if you find it difficult to stick to your goals, then just renew your determination each time you find yourself slipping. You will achieve your human revolution without fail if you keep struggling valiantly, pressing forward despite setbacks and disappointments, always thinking “This time I’ll make it! This time I will succeed!”

**KIMURA:** I see.

**IKEDA:** Life is complicated. We are defined by all sorts of factors — our personality, our habits, our karma, our family background. It is difficult to free ourselves from these, which are all intertwined and linked.

And life flashes by in an instant. Many spend their days busily running around, absorbed with small, trivial worries and shallow concerns. Many never get beyond the six lower paths of life — Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity and Rapture.

However, when we resolve to break through those lower worlds and access the states of Bodhisattva and Buddhahood, showing greater compassion in our daily conduct and behavior, we are undertaking an “action revolution” — human revolution.

Let me give another example — university entrance examinations. Many of you may be feeling right now that that’s all there is to life. And at the same time, you probably have friends who are experiencing problems. If you ignore your friends’ needs and are only concerned with yourself, you remain locked in the six paths. On the other hand, if you try

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to help and encourage them at this crucial point, realizing that you'll regret it if you don't, you are walking the path of a Bodhisattva.

When such compassion spreads from the individual level to the family level, to the nation and then the world, an unprecedented nonviolent revolution for peace is taking place.

**KIMURA:** Our society is a perfect example of the six lower paths. It is a society dominated by Hunger and Animality.

There are so few role models today of decent, admirable lives. The news is full of government and business leaders — people who hold positions of trust and responsibility — involved in corrupt and underhanded dealings.

Simply making structural changes or reforms isn't going to help, either. The bad guys will just find sneakier ways to get around the system and do even worse things.

There needs to be a fundamental change. People have to change.

**IKEDA:** There are all sorts of revolutions: political, economic, industrial, scientific, artistic and in distribution and communications. And there are many others. Each has its significance and, often, necessity.

But no matter what one changes, the world will never get any better as long as the people — the guiding force and impetus behind all endeavors — remain selfish and lack compassion. In that respect, human revolution is the most fundamental of all revolutions and, at the same time, the most necessary.

Immediately after World War II, the president of Japan's prestigious University of Tokyo, Shigeru Nambara, called for a revolution in people. Aurelio Peccei, cofounder of the Club of Rome, also underscored the need for a revolution, renaissance and revival of humanity. Thinkers the world over have arrived at the same conclusion.

**KIMURA:** When you met with the Brazilian poet Amedeu Thiago de Mello in April 1997, he said, "I thought that there was no longer anything that would move me as a poet, but when I came upon your philosophy of human revolution, I was greatly moved — for the first time in decades."

**IKEDA:** Human revolution is going to be an increasingly important subject of discussion in the years ahead. To lead people's attitudes toward life, society and peace in a new, positive direction is human revolution. I believe that human revolution will be a catch phrase in the 21st century.

**IGETA:** Is human revolution any different from the normal process of growth and development?

**IKEDA:** Revolution means an overturning. It means a sudden and dramatic change.

Gradual change over the years as we grow and mature is part of life's natural process. But human revolution occurs when we transcend that normal pace of growth and undergo a rapid change for the better.

The process of human revolution is one of steady, marked improvement, enabling us to keep growing and developing throughout our lives, for all eternity. We will never hit a limit, a dead-end, in our journey for self-perfection. Faith is the engine, the power source for our ongoing human revolution.

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**IGETA:** I think that few people can do their human revolution with only intellectual stimulation — for example, by reading books about ethics and moral principles.

**IKEDA:** An uncountable number of such books have been written since ancient times. There have also been books designed to inspire us toward self-improvement and self-perfection. If human revolution could be achieved simply by reading, if we could change our karma through the power of words alone, it would be an easy matter indeed.

The SGI is not in pursuit of some abstract intellectual doctrine but a complete, real human revolution — one in which people change their fundamental attitudes and ways of thinking, and focus their minds, their actions and their lives on the highest good.

Essentially, this revolution takes place when our lives are in the state of Buddhahood. When we fuse our lives with the enlightened life of the Buddha, we can tap the power within to fundamentally change ourselves.

**IGETA:** Buddhahood, then, is that power deep within us that makes such self-transformation possible.

**KIMURA:** Let me share the experience of a member that was related to me by the Hokuriku young men's high school division leader, Toshiaki Tanaka.

This member had three close friends with whom he spent a lot of time talking, reading comics and just hanging out. One day, during summer vacation, as they talked about the things they found wrong with society, the meaning of destiny came up. They talked about their views on life for hours.

After that, one friend asked the member, who at the time wasn't very active in the Soka Gakkai himself, to lend him one of your books, President Ikeda. He wanted to take it home and read it.

Then they all started reading the series "Discussions on Youth" together. In the process, the four friends, who had been the biggest goof-offs in their class, became the most serious, dedicated students.

I think that, in their heart of hearts, everyone wants to grow, to improve, to change. That's why even the smallest thing can become an impetus for growth.

**IKEDA:** Human beings possess the unique capacity to aspire for self-improvement and personal growth. We can conceive changing the direction of life instead of merely following its flow.

When people speak of wanting to be a success, they generally mean gaining prestige in society. But doing human revolution is a more profound aspiration, for it involves changing and elevating our lives from within. The transformation achieved is everlasting and far, far more precious than prestige.

A human being is human. No one is superhuman.

For that reason, the most important thing is simply to become the best human being you can. No matter how you adorn yourself with the trappings of fame, rank, academic credentials, knowledge or wealth, if you are impoverished or bankrupt inside, your life will be barren and empty.

What kind of person are you when all those externals have been stripped away? When you stand unadorned, except for your humanity? Human revolution is the challenge to change your life at the core.

Shakyamuni Buddha was born a royal prince, but he gave up everything. He cast off worldly titles and privileges to devote himself to religious practice, to seek the truth. He

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pursued his human revolution.

Nichiren Daishonin, who had no wealth or status — who proudly proclaimed his heritage as a member of the *chandala* class, then the lowest stratum of society — also devoted himself selflessly to Buddhism.

**KIMURA:** Many of the rich, powerful and famous in society compare unfavorably to the ordinary, hardworking people with their warmth and humanity.

**IGETA:** All the average person wants is to live in peace and be happy. Yet we have seen time and again throughout history how leaders of nations, out of failure to pursue their human revolution, have plunged their fellow citizens into war and misery.

**IKEDA:** We have had two world wars in the 20th century. Millions upon millions have tasted the sufferings of hell. When we ponder why this happened, it becomes clear that humankind must change into a compassionate presence on this planet.

**KIMURA:** The opening lines of *The Human Revolution* — “Nothing is more barbarous than war. Nothing is more cruel” — have profound significance.

**IGETA:** And your sequel, *The New Human Revolution*, opens with the passage “Nothing is more precious than peace. Nothing brings more happiness.”

***To be continued***

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