

Where Buddhist Study Comes Into Play
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Why is the study of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings so important for young people? In this essay, the SGI president gives three important reasons. 'Unless the youth division members, our future leaders, gain a solid grounding in Buddhist philosophy,' he writes, 'there will be no bright future for the human race.'

Inazo Nitobe, early purveyor of Western thought to Japan and under-secretary-general of the League of Nations, once said, "Philosophy makes the world go round." He also said, "Ideals that arise in the purity and innocence of one's youth, when one is free of worldly ambition, untainted by desires for fame or wealth, are truly noble."

Nitobe's friendship with our founding president, Mr. Makiguchi, is well known. And, if the above words are any guide, the convictions of these two resonated.

Ideals forged in our youth sparkle like diamonds, lighting our hearts and our minds. On

Sept. 6, the second-level study exam for the youth division was held throughout Japan. Many youth spent the summer studying hard for this exam.

The highest philosophy, that which fosters people of the highest humanity, is Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. The power and passion of youth who possess this priceless philosophy will shape the new century.



Why is study of the Daishonin's teachings so important for young people? There are many arguments, but I think the answer can be summed up in the following three points:

First, Buddhist study deepens faith. I will never forget Mr. Toda once saying, with deep regret, that the reason the majority of his fellow members abandoned their faith when pressured by the military authorities during World War II was that they hadn't gained a solid grounding in the Daishonin's teachings.

"Without study," he declared, "the members didn't really understand faith. They became frightened and were defeated by persecution. It was very unfortunate. I'm determined that mistake will not be repeated."

Study is a torch that illuminates the path of faith. Even the most subtle, complex onslaughts of negative forces become clear when illuminated in the bright light of Buddhism. Study builds a solid framework for our faith and spurs our human revolution. That is why Mr. Toda made study of the Daishonin's teachings the focus of his efforts to rebuild the Soka Gakkai after the war, as is evidenced in his in-depth lecture series on the Lotus Sutra.

Second, study gives impetus to the advance of kosen-rufu. The Daishonin's writings set forth the validity of the Daishonin's Buddhism and the method of refuting the erroneous and revealing the true in propagation. They teach us in comprehensive detail the commitment required by those who seek to widely spread the Mystic Law, the qualities necessary of Buddhist leaders and the key to fostering capable successors.

To study the Daishonin's writings is to come into contact with his spirit. It is to receive supreme encouragement and guidance directly from the original Buddha on faith and the propagation of Buddhism. Only when we take action in accord with the Daishonin's writings can we say that we have grasped the teachings of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

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Study without practice is meaningless. A thorough knowledge of Buddhist principles provides us with a source of infinite courage and aids us in realizing our highest human potential.

Third, study is the key to establishing a new humanistic philosophy. Today, we face many extremely serious problems: the threat of nuclear war, ethnic conflict, environmental problems and the collapse of educational systems. People are searching for peace and happiness, but the situation grows ever darker and more confused with each passing day. This is coming from the lack of a philosophy that expounds the true nature of life and its functions.

And this is where Buddhism comes in. Only by returning to such principles as the ultimate dignity of life, compassion, the oneness of body and mind, and the indivisibility of life and its environment can we begin to open the way toward a new humanism.

Mr. Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons was an expression of these compassionate principles of Buddhism that seek to protect humanity from harm. Unless the youth division members, our future leaders, gain a solid grounding in Buddhist philosophy, there will be no bright future for the human race.



Ours is a supreme philosophy dedicated to bringing happiness to all the world's people. It was Mr. Toda's firm belief that youth who championed the Daishonin's Buddhism would become world leaders in various realms of human activity.

The earnest devotion that Mr. Toda brought to his lectures on Buddhism always reminded me of the diligence and intensity of a master swordsman.

Once, Mr. Toda went to Osaka to deliver a lecture to the members there, but he was in such poor physical health that he instructed the Study Department leader to be prepared to give the lecture instead.

But when evening came, Mr. Toda got out of bed and declared: "I'm going to give the lecture myself after all. The 'Life Span' chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, 'This, the Buddha's work, I have never for a moment neglected' (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 226). A Buddha works continuously to save all suffering beings, never taking a moment's rest. I've come all this way to give a lecture, and I can't very well turn it over to someone else now. It's my wish to give this lecture, even if I should die doing it!"

From my mentor's example, his willingness to risk his health and his life to deliver a study lecture, I learned how gravely serious is the work of transmitting the Daishonin's Buddhism.



In my youth, I studied the Daishonin's writings diligently. I studied so hard that I ended up memorizing many of the major writings. This study has become the foundation of my life today.

Study exams are the best encouragement there can be to study Buddhism. To the examinees I said: "Do your best! May you make this summer one of hard work and growth — one you will remember fondly for years to come — as you strive to become winners in faith and unrivaled experts on the humanistic teachings of Buddhism."

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