

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA TOWARD THE FINAL VICTORY IN LIFE

SGI President Ikeda remembers how his mentor, Josei Toda, taught him that ‘in life, the final victory is the true victory.’

I have many fond memories of my talks with my mentor, Josei Toda. I remember one day at the time when Mr. Toda’s business was in great difficulty. We were eating lunch near the old Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Nishi-Kanda, Tokyo, at a small diner that accepted meal coupons.

During and after the war, when rice was rationed, you had to obtain coupons from the government to eat out. At the time, you couldn’t eat rice at a restaurant unless it accepted these coupons.

Mr. Toda said to me then: “In life, the final victory is the true victory. Daisaku, the victories of your youth are not the decisive ones. They are nothing but training for the final, ultimate victory in life.”

My mentor’s words remain firm in the depths of my heart.

Mr. Toda consistently stressed the importance of winning, of fighting, of succeeding in reaching our goals.



Nishi-Kanda was a student district. I remember fondly how Mr. Toda and I, mentor and disciple, often ate in those lively surroundings, amid the boisterous clamor of all those university students.

Mr. Toda smiled at the students in the room and asked me: “I wonder what sort of adults these students, these young people, will turn into in 20 years? It’s something I look forward to with anticipation and, at the same time, concern.”

One day, as we were just finishing our lunch, a student who was a fellow Soka Gakkai member called out loudly, “Toda Sensei!” Mr. Toda returned a happy “Hello there!” The student’s eyes sparkled with life. He seemed a bright young man with an inquisitive mind.

Mr. Toda turned to me and said, in a strict tone, “Daisaku, keep your eye on that young man’s future!” I immediately asked the youth his name, and he answered cheerfully. That took place 50 years ago.

“You have to be on the lookout for talent, and then develop it,” said Mr. Toda. That was his constant lesson for me.



After that, whenever we went to that diner in Nishi-Kanda, Mr. Toda would always comment on whether or not the student was there that day, saying: “He’s not here today. I wonder what he’s doing?”

How profound was Mr. Toda’s concern for the members! How profound was his concern for his disciples!

Though he had only met this young man for a moment, Mr. Toda said to me that he wanted to celebrate his wedding when that day came by presenting him with a proud mission for kosen-rufu. “Daisaku, please raise him to be a capable person!” Mr. Toda told me.



Later, this student graduated from his university with excellent grades. He left a legacy of sound achievements in the youth division of those early years. He shone with the brilliance of the morning star. The Soka Gakkai was still small, and we only had a few members.

Unfortunately, this young man was fated to leave this world just a few years later. When I told Mr. Toda of his death, he said, “Ah, another sad memory...”



No matter what days of hardship and sadness we may face, the path of the Mystic Law is always the path of the wise. Nichiren Daishonin states, “The essence of the Lotus Sutra is that earthly desires are in themselves enlightenment, and that the sufferings of birth and death are in themselves nirvana” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 773). He clearly shows us the bright, hope-filled path of the mastery of life.

We must not spend our lives in doubt or sadness. Just because we suffer a setback or a defeat, we mustn’t lose heart or give up.

The Mystic Law is the eternal treasure teaching that leads to absolute victory in life. It is the indestructible, imperishable law of life that extends through the three existences of past, present and future. It is the joy-filled, jeweled path of life’s journey to the realm of supreme happiness.

The crimson glow of dusk fell over Nishi-Kanda. As the sun began to set in the western sky, the streets thronged with the bustle and rush of people making their way home at day’s end.

“There are people who live their days filled with hope. There are people who are sad, hurt by disappointment and the loss of glory. But young people should exert themselves energetically and joyfully in their endeavors today and tomorrow, their hearts blazing with courage and passion.” My mentor’s words reverberated like poetry in my ears.



In my diary that day, I wrote:

*Live a shining, vigorous life!
Make good friends among the brave Bodhisattvas of the Earth!
In the end, triumph over all and lift the cup of victory
with your comrades!
Do not chase dark shadows!
Do not make friends with those who espouse shallow thoughts
and philosophies!
Find true comrades with whom you can rejoice in the realm
of the heart!
Make friends who will respond to your call and your heart!
Make friends whom you can praise with all your heart!
Abandon painful pledges!
Abandon sorrowful pledges!
Live your youth with passion and joy!
Greet the new century with majestic dignity!
Live! You must live!
Live, live, and live on, until you have expended your last
ounce of strength.
Never forget that there you will find your victorious self,
wreathed with fragrant flowers.*