

## Q-AND-A SESSION WITH SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA EFFORT DETERMINES YOUR FUTURE

**‘Effort is what determines whether or not your dreams come true,’ SGI President Ikeda tells Kansai Soka Senior High School students.**

*The afternoon of Feb. 28, at the Hyogo Culture Center in Kobe, SGI President Ikeda fielded questions from several seniors of the Kansai Soka Senior High School who were about to graduate.*

**SGI President Ikeda:** You have really worked hard during your time at school. Today, I want you to be completely at ease, as if in your own home. Please take off your jackets, sit comfortably and relax.

If any of you have a question you want to ask me, please feel free to do so. Just think of me as your dad. Does anyone have a question?

**Student:** I do. Thank you for taking a picture with us today. It was my wish to learn about the spirit of the joint struggle of mentor and disciple while I was in high school. With that in mind, I have spent a lot of time reading your essays and other writings. I know that I’m still young, but I am determined to try to match your spirit, even if only a little, and work for peace.

**President Ikeda:** Thank you! Actually, you don’t have to worry too much about such things right now. When I speak sternly about the importance of disciples striving with the same spirit as their mentor, I am addressing adults. I am particularly strict toward those who, having gained important positions through the support and assistance of many people, forget their debt of gratitude, grow arrogant and betray their benefactors, and do bad things.

You have your whole life ahead of you. I want you to concentrate on studying now. Think about getting better grades on your examinations. That is your personal joint struggle of mentor and disciple at this time in your life.

Study hard, so that your parents will say with pleasure: “Your grades are improving. That’s great. You’ve done well.” That will make me the happiest of all.

Don’t worry about reading my writings—spend that time reading your textbooks instead! [Laughter.]

Have you decided where you’re going to college yet?

**Student:** Soka University.

**President Ikeda:** Is that so? That’s wonderful. Thank you for choosing the university that I founded!

You don’t need to have a deep understanding of the joint struggle of mentor and disciple just yet. Let’s talk about this some more when you’re a university student.

Please be true to yourself. That’s enough.

**Student:** Yes, I will. Thank you.

**President Ikeda:** All right, who's next? You don't have to stand up.

### **A life without dreams is colorless.**

**Another Student:** President Ikeda, what is your dream?

**President Ikeda:** I'm so busy that I don't have time to think about dreams! [Laughter.] I'm always thinking about the world.

Actually, dreams are the unique birthright of human beings. A life without dreams is gray and colorless. A person who has no dreams cannot accomplish anything great and often ends up as a loser.

Please have dreams! Have hopes and aspirations!

Effort is what determines whether or not your dreams come true. There are times, however, when social conditions are so bad that you can't realize your dreams. Or there may be karmic elements, things you can't see that still prevent you from achieving your goals.

Though not all your dreams may come true, I hope that you will still always live with some dream in your heart. This is what youth is all about. And having dreams is the sign of a person who will continue to grow throughout life. Any dream is fine. Please possess your own dream, one that matches your unique character.

My dream is to realize the dream of Mr. Toda. He is my mentor, a fact that will absolutely never change. The Buddhist Law is not a manmade thing, something that can be either proven or denied by reasoning alone. It is an absolute law, the unchanging law of the universe, something as inevitable as the rising of the sun and moon, the coming of day and night.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the essence of that universal law. The entire universe moves in the rhythm of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. My mentor and I are linked together by the rhythm of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. And that is why I must realize his dream and ideals, why I must keep exerting myself.

Unless your dream is something that will truly contribute to your growth and self-improvement, it can end up simply being selfish and egoistic, an empty wish. A noble dream encompasses happiness, truth, altruism and peace. It is, in fact, in the pursuit of these goals—happiness, truth, altruism and peace—that we formulate dreams of genuine value and meaning.

**Student:** I understand.

**President Ikeda:** Take care of yourself. Its students determine the worth of a school, not its teachers or public opinion. It all depends on the students. This was the profound insight of Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, who were both educators—and it is the conclusion of leading thinkers the world over. People may say, "That school follows such-and-such a system, so it's a great school," but that's not true.

**Another Student:** I throw the javelin on the track team. Thank you for your constant

encouragement!

**President Ikeda:** No, thank you. Is your mother well?

**Student:** Yes. She has been delivering the Seikyo Shimbun [the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper] for 20 years now.

**President Ikeda:** That's wonderful! Please thank her for me. Please be good to both your parents!

Does anyone else have a question?

**Another Student:** Yes. During my three years in high school, I was deeply impressed by the words "Difficulties and hopes coexist in our lives, and when you challenge yourself, new opportunities arise" [by Chinese poet Wang Po]. Do you have a quote or motto that is your favorite?

**President Ikeda:** I want to present you with these words now: "Win in your endeavors!" Please do not let yourself be defeated, giving in to despair and feelings of insecurity. Everything in life is a struggle. If you win, life is wonderful, and you feel great. If you lose, you feel awful.

Any goal is fine. The important thing is to strive toward it, triumphing in each challenge along the way.

Winning doesn't mean getting rich or becoming important. There are many rich and important people who succumb to negative influences and grow corrupt. Such people can't be said to have won in life.

True victory is winning over your own mind. It is not determined by others' opinions. Nor is there any need for you to compare yourself with others. A genuine victor in life is one who can declare: "I lived true to myself, and I have won! I am a spiritual victor!"

Please remember that.

### **Sincerity is the most important quality that you can have.**

**Student:** I live in a dormitory. I am indebted to my dorm mom and dorm dad and many others for all they have done for me during my stay there. How do I convey my appreciation?

**President Ikeda:** I am also grateful to all who help run our school dormitories. Living in a dorm can be very educational, teaching you important lessons that will stand you in good stead in the future.

How can you express your gratitude to those in the dorm who have taken care of you in so many ways? The only answer is with sincerity. Sincerity is the most important quality that you can have. This is my personal belief. Nothing compares with sincerity.

Yesterday [Feb. 27], I met with Rector Adolfo Torres of Argentina's Universidad Nacional del Nordeste. He is a fine human being. These leading world thinkers and first-rate people are always completely honest. They never try to trick or manipulate others. They have shining characters and rich humanity. All of their actions are marked by sincerity. Those who are sincere are the most respectable people.

Our society is rife with jealousy and envy. The sincere may be deceived and taken advantage of. They may be maligned.

Or, when they try to explain the purity of their motives, no one may pay any heed to them. But there is a saying—a little old-fashioned, I know—“Sincerity is communicated to Heaven.” This means that if you act with sincerity, your intent will reach the heavens, and you will have good results.

People who possess sincerity of conviction cannot be defeated. They will live without regrets.

Fun and games are ephemeral pleasures. And you cannot count on the opinions of others. It all comes down to you. You have to live with integrity and be honest to yourself.

Both Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, incidentally, acknowledged the educational aspect of dormitory life. Almost all students in Japan’s prewar high schools [corresponding to present-day universities] lived in dorms. In dorms, you experience living with other students, forming strong bonds of friendship and going through the trials and tests of friendship along the way.

In some cases, experiencing dorm life in one’s youth can be more educational than classroom education. Of course, the things you learn in the classroom are important, but in a dormitory you can get an education about people.

Both Oxford and Cambridge universities in England have student dorms. In fact, I once visited Cambridge University in England with my wife [in May 1972]. While there, I asked to see the dormitories. The people at Cambridge seemed a little surprised at my request, but they responded gladly. A professor guided us, and, when we entered the dormitory from the garden, we found two students hurriedly straightening their room for their unexpected visitors. They were fine young men. All of the students in the dormitory were talented people who would go on to be future leaders in their fields.

I also talked at some length with those who ran the dormitories about various aspects of the significance of dormitories in education.

I am of the opinion that if parents love their children, they will let them leave home and learn independence. Today in Japan, many children who are doted on by their parents and grow up in what seem to be very good families end up failing when they enter society. I think this is because they have been raised to be too dependent.

It may seem desirable to grow up at home, being spoiled and pampered by your parents. But in reality, it is not desirable. By contrast, a child that is “toughened up” a little by life in a dormitory tends to be strong and a success in society. That is why educational institutions that produce world leaders have them experience dormitory life.

Many of our Soka Junior and Senior High School students who live in dorms are wonderful students. Many people who have experienced dormitory life have gone on to be great men and women, shining and strong. In this regard, also, I have the highest respect for all those who run our dormitories. They are taking care of my “sons” and “daughters”—I am grateful to them.



Addressing the students, President Ikeda went on to say: “I applaud those of you who have been active in school club activities and team sports. You have helped build our schools’ tradition. I know you really challenged yourselves, and I wholeheartedly praise these efforts of your youth.” He then presented the members of the baseball team with a box of new baseballs.

President Ikeda also presented candy necklaces to students who had lost their mothers or fathers. The other students warmly applauded as he did so. Praising students who had studied diligently in spite of struggling with various hardships, the Soka schools' founder said: "I will solemnly pray again for the deceased parents of all our students. Some of you may have parents who are ill. I will pray for your parents' health and long life."

He told the students about the ceremony the previous day, in which he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Argentina's Universidad Nacional del Nordeste, saying that "a representative of the university proclaimed that the title of honorary doctorate is the jeweled crown of highest knowledge. I always regard any award I receive as the result of the activities of our Soka University and Soka schools graduates around the world. I hope that in the future, all of you will become fine scholars and leaders. That is my greatest personal dream."

### **Youth is a struggle between problems and hopes.**

As he rose to go, President Ikeda continued to encourage the students as long as time would permit. To a student wearing glasses, he said: "Don't make your eyes any worse. If you cause lasting damage to your eyes, you will regret it later. Don't watch television too long. It will hurt your eyes. Spend that time reading instead."

To a student who has a long commute to school, President Ikeda said: "I know it's hard to travel so far to school, but everything in your life is part of your training and will make you stronger."

To all the students, he said: "Youth is a time when you worry and agonize over all kinds of problems. It is also a time when you can soar with energy and enthusiasm—a time to burn with hopes and dreams. Youth is a struggle between problems and hopes.

"You mustn't let your problems defeat you and ruin your life. Please don't make your parents and your family sad. Those who triumph over their problems and advance in the direction of hope lead wonderful lives.

"No one is free from problems. Everyone has them, to a greater or lesser degree. Having problems is a natural part of life. The important thing is not to let them defeat you. And do not forget to do what you have to do now—whether it is to study or earn a degree or certificate—so that you do not put yourself at a disadvantage in the future."