

The Way of Youth

In this issue of *Seize the Day*, we've included excerpts from the hit book *The Way of Youth*, a universally appealing collection of some of SGI President Ikeda's words to young people. His insight reaches beyond all barriers of race, creed, culture and gender and gets to the heart of youth issues. Each one of over eighty topics is covered in a question/answer format. We'd like to start printing various excerpts from this book in each issue of *Seize the Day*.

I'm not sure what I want to do with my life. How do I get more focused?

Although it is natural to be unsure about your future, it's crucial that you try to accomplish something—anything. The thought of this might seem overwhelming. But as the ancient saying goes, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."...


Each morning and evening, practitioners of Nichiren's Buddhism renew their determination through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Among its many benefits, (chanting) brings about a robust life force, enabling us to tackle all that life puts before us. ...

So do something! Start something!
A person who has firm goals is way ahead of a person who has none. ...

To read more or to find words of wisdom to other questions you may have asked yourself, *The Way of Youth* can be purchased from your favorite online or neighborhood bookstore.

FINDING YOUR MISSION **HANDLING REJECTION**
PEER PRESSURE **CHOOSING GOOD FRIENDS** **WORK VS. COLLEGE**

STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE



By Patricia Lomden, Philadelphia

The youth of the world are the future! We must all fight to make the 21st century the century of peace and the end of suffering! The 20th century has been the century of war, violence and devastation. That ends today with me! I will not be swayed by greed, selfishness and unkindness. I will fight and encourage love! Encourage, encourage, encourage! I will walk the city streets with confidence and hope. I will consider each obstacle I encounter as part of my growth, my humanity. I will learn, and use my knowledge to help others, not to look down on them, because learners become teachers. I will go on and keep my faith! I will bring my faith into other people's lives! They will become happy. I'll see to being the source of everyone's happiness that I know. After I have given them the gift of pride, they will make other people

happy! I will see each and every future youth of the late 21st century grow in a world where guns are outlawed, drugs are shunned and violence is the most "un-cool" thing in every child's heart. I will never give in to the temptation of hate, but give in to the temptation of love. I will know what to say when someone asks, "Want to hurt somebody?" I'll say, "No. I want to be somebody."

People are greedy for material things, things that we must leave and that mean nothing when we die. Let's leave a legacy behind that says we were born with a mission. A mission to free everyone from the chains of cruelty and malice. Yes, a mission to represent all the elderly and youth who have made this world better. Icons of life! We thank you. But there is still more to be done. And we are here. We are here for ourselves and everyone else. Take action my sisters and brothers of America and everyone in other parts of the world! Take action now, while we are young! This is the chance of a lifetime. Make way for us, 21st century, the century of winning! Victory over violence! ♪

MATERIAL request

SEND IN YOUR STUFF

Our youth publication is only as strong as what you bring us.

Poems, Articles, Pictures, Stories, Commentaries, Pulitzer Prize insight
whatever you got, get it to us.

HOW?

Postal Mail:
 SGI-USA
 Attn: Kim Herrmann
 Seize the Day
 606 Wilshire Blvd.
 PO Box 1427
 Santa Monica, CA 90406-9907

Email:
 seize@sgi-usa.org

Seize the Day will be running a monthly column titled "Young Disciples." Each installment will be written with two ideas in mind: to explore the mentor-disciple relationship; and to discuss some of the many actions SGI President Ikeda has taken in the name of peace.

This column will be coordinated by SGI-USA High School leaders Jomo Thorne and Nobuko Kobayashi and SGI-USA Jr. High School leaders Shan Serafin and Bobbie Stemple. They will write their own perspectives, and from time to time, will support someone else, perhaps one of you, in creating material to be printed under the "Young Disciples" heading.



YOUNG DISCIPLES



Shan Serafin,
SGI-USA Junior High
School Leader

The Beautiful Exchange of Dedication and Trust

Sometimes in my weaker moods, I feel that following a mentor means giving up my control. Luckily these moods occur less and less as I see more and more actual proof of how rewarding the mentor-disciple relationship is.

What's ironic is that my struggles with being a disciple stem from my misunderstandings of the role of the mentor. In short, I used to believe that the disciple is the one who is most humble and generous. Now, I feel it is the mentor who in fact demonstrates the greatest selflessness and devotion.

I feel one of the best ways to study the mentor-disciple relationship is to look at various exchanges between SGI President Ikeda and second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda. Repeatedly I am amazed at the selflessness on both sides and the action taken on both sides. I offer you an excerpt from the "Autumn Frost" chapter of *The Human Revolution* (volume 4), which I believe nicely illustrates this point.

Background: Although Toda is exhausted from the ordeal of negotiating with his creditors, he assures his disciple Daisaku that their relationship will continue unbroken. Young Ikeda, having just heard this, offers a poem expressing his own rock solid dedication.

As I serve my master
in the old mystic bond,
Unchanged will I myself remain
Though others may change.

[Toda responded,] "All right, I will compose a poem in response to yours. Have you any paper? Well, let me see..."

Toda picked up the pen, thought for a while and then began to write in bold strokes:

Oft I arose on fields of war
I'll keep you as my sword
At my side always.

My own convictions intensify when I think of the extreme trust Toda placed in young Ikeda. Toda often used metaphors of battle to discuss the struggle of promoting peace. In this sense, the sword symbolizes a peace leader's most effective tool. And there in the above poem, Toda is identifying Daisaku Ikeda, a youth, as this most effective tool. Wow! Think of the enormous trust Toda is placing in young Ikeda, completely entrusting responsibility for the most crucial mission of all time to his young disciple.

The exchange continues...

"This is my small gift for you."

With gratitude, [Daisaku Ikeda] was about to receive the piece of paper, but Toda would not hand it to him.

"Wait, I have another poem to write for you."

With pen in hand, Toda remained still for a moment, and then he moved suddenly and wrote another poem in fluid motions:

My glory as king is fading
And my power gone;
I will leave behind, howe'er
You, my crown
Even if I may die.

Here, Toda is regarding his disciple as his "crown." He opens his own life and distinguishes Daisaku Ikeda as its most glorious aspect. To call someone your crown, to pinpoint his (or her) existence as the greatness of your own life, is astoundingly humble and selfless. And in being the one so compassionate and generous Toda, is acting as the mentor. This noble action provides much needed inspiration for me as I advance along the challenging path of being a true disciple. ♪

"I feel one of the best ways to study the mentor-disciple relationship is to look at various exchanges between SGI President Ikeda and second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda."

YOUTH *Study* MARCH 2001

Changing Ourselves Changes the World Around Us



By Ken Saragosa, Youth Study Committee

Buddhism teaches that all change starts from within—that “a great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation, and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all mankind” (“Foreword,” *The Human Revolution*, vol. 1).

In truth, we don’t have the right or the power to force our will on anyone else. But Buddhism teaches that through a process of self-reformation, we not only improve our own lives, but we provide an example and an inspiration to others. In this way, when we speak to others—out of compassion and sincerity, not out of a desire to impose our will on them—we can have a meaningful impact on their lives. Changing ourselves is the key to changing the world around us.

“Buddhism expounds the principle of three thousand realms in a single life-moment. This principle holds that each life-moment is endowed with three thousand different functions, which influence not only our own lives but those all around us. They also influence society, our natural environment and the earth, and encompass the entire universe. Therefore, once you have decided to do something, the three thousand functions and your entire being start working to help you reach your goal. The entire universe also starts moving toward the fulfillment of your goal. If you pray, ‘This is how I want to be,’ and continue to work toward your dream, you will gradually realize the future you have envisaged” (Feb. 25, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 5).

Buddhism is so practical. We believe in big ideas and grand ideals—world peace, human rights, the power of a single person to make a great change. But every one of those big ideas has its root in the daily life of every single one of us.

Concepts like three thousand realms in a single life-moment (in Japanese, *ichinen sanzen*) seem so abstract and theoretical. But in actuality, they are meant to teach us something about how to live our own lives and how Buddhism enables us to take control over our own destiny.

In a way, it’s a matter of outlook. We can choose to live in a world where we have no control over anything, where things happen around us and to us, and where the problems we see everywhere are beyond our ability to do anything about them. Or we can live in a world where we are a participant, where we are a part of our environment, and we have something to say about anything that happens around us. Is your work environment bad? What can you do about it? Is school a lonely or alienating place? How can you do something about that through your own actions?

“An ascending life, where you keep striving to grow and improve—this is what we mean by human revolution. Human revolution doesn’t mean becoming something special or different from who you are; it simply means striving to improve yourself, no matter what challenges you face. Your future self does not exist in some far-off place; it exists in the heart and mind of your present self. That is why you have to face and tackle the realities that confront you. Just wishing to be a certain way and not making any concrete efforts will get you nowhere” (Feb. 25, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 5).

The most important thing is to pursue our dreams. Human revolution—

changing our own lives for the better, and by doing so, influencing our family, friends, and communities—starts with trying to become something more than what we are. This is an ascending life, a life of growth and improvement. The loftiest Buddhist principles come down to enabling each of us to lead the most valuable, happy and meaningful life. And we practice Buddhism so that we can make concrete and practical efforts to improve ourselves and realize our dreams—every single day. ♪

QUESTIONS for DISCUSSION

1. What does “human revolution” mean to you?
2. What is the relationship between pursuing your own dreams and goals, and making a change in the world?



The Youth Study Page Seeks Your Opinions!

Please write or e-mail your views to Youth Division Study Committee c/o Seize the Day, 606 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401 or seize@sgi-usa.org. We’d like to include your insights and experiences in our youth division study activities.

How has study affected your life?

In what way does understanding Buddhism help you to deal with something in your life?

We have been talking about mission and about inner-motivated change. What does this mean for you? What is your view of mission? What impact do you feel you can have in the world?

How have you come to learn about Buddhism? What experiences brought Buddhism home to you? How have you come to have your own sense of mission or purpose in your life?

Trailblazers!



By **Myeong Chung**,
SGI-USA Student
Division Leader

Engraving the Goshō in My Life

When I was in college, I asked myself: "What is my life-condition? What are my life-tendencies?" I had always learned that the purpose of our Buddhist practice is to elevate our basic life-tendency and establish Buddhahood as a fundamental state. I looked to the writings of Nichiren Daishonin for answers in manifesting this life state. I began reading the Goshō from the very first page.

I wanted to be of the same mind as Nichiren Daishonin. At first, I could not understand what he was saying. My mind was blank and my eyes were only following the sentences. But I believed, deep within my heart, that I would come to understand his spirit.

I continued to read the Daishonin's writings almost every day. After three years, I was able to finish reading the entire Goshō. Through this experience, I felt I had estab-

lished a solid foundation in my life that nobody could destroy. I also gained confidence in my practice and courage to share this Buddhism with friends. I loved this feeling so much I challenged myself to read his writings again.

The second time, I tried to understand more about the Daishonin's spirit by carefully reading each passage. Even though I could not always fully understand what he was saying, I got a taste of what the state of Buddhahood was through the joy I experienced after finishing the second time.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda emphasized that young women should be passionate for study. And in his writings, the Daishonin taught us the importance of study: "Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism. You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if it is only a single sentence or phrase" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 386).

At the same time, the Daishonin explains what attitude we should have when we study. "'Knowledge without faith' describes those who are knowledgeable about the Buddhist doctrines but lack faith. Those people will never attain Buddhahood. Those of 'faith without knowledge' may lack knowledge but have

faith and can attain Buddhahood" (WND, 1030).

As a young woman, I am constantly challenging myself to keep in mind what true happiness is. SGI President Ikeda stated: "What is important for happiness is character, good fortune and a sound philosophy. And the ultimate philosophy is faith. Faith is the true foundation for happiness" (Dec. 15, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 8).

I am still challenging myself to read the Goshō every day. I feel the more I study, the more I am able to perceive life's truth.

The following passage sums up my determination. The Daishonin said: "This body of ours in the end will become nothing more than the soil of the hills and fields. Therefore, it is useless to begrudge your life, for though you may wish to, you cannot cling to it forever. Even people who live a long time rarely live beyond the age of one hundred. And all the events of a lifetime are like the dream one dreams in a brief nap. Though a person may have been fortunate enough to be born as a human being and may have even entered the priesthood, if he fails to study the Buddha's teaching and to refute its slanderers but simply spends his time in idleness and chatter, then he is no better than an animal dressed in priestly robes" (WND, 760). ♪

Poem

Excerpts from "My Promise" by Keoni LaGasa, Seattle

*As a youth, you all have a purpose in life.
Every person's purpose, different than others.
Just like everyone's goals are different from others.*

*We are the Youth, We have to stand.
We have to take the torch.*

*We are strong, we are powerful.
We can overcome anything together.
When the gailing winds come,
we can stand together like a brick wall.
Can you see that we are strong?
Can you see that when we are together,
we are like a Great Ship
sailing the seas for everyone to see!
That we are great as the Sea!
A vast ocean of youth powerful as the wave.*

*We will become known as the Great White Dove of the SGI,
spreading peace throughout the world.
We will be the leaders taking the steps of our parents.*

*This is our Dawning.
You will see.
This is our time to awaken.*

*Awaken to the dream.
Awaken to the path.
Awaken everyone to world peace.*

*I hope my heart has touched yours
and I hope this poem will open your heart
to the nature that we are taught to have.
Our Buddha Nature.
Awaken to the land around us.
Our Buddha Land.
It is our time.*