

To Our Future Division Members, the Torchbearers of Justice – Our Hope for the Future

“Letter from Sado”—Part 2 [of 2]

Walk the Path of Champions, Undefeated by Adversity!

Lecture presented by Mai Ogushi

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Hi everyone! My name is Mai Ogushi. This month, we will continue studying President Ikeda’s 2-part study lecture series called “To Our Future Division Members, the Torchbearers of Justice – Our Hope for the Future”. We will study part 2 titled, “Walk the Path of Champions, Undefeated by Adversity!”

It’s amazing how this lecture we are studying since last month was written for the Future Division members. We can truly feel Sensei’s trust and hope in young people. He begins by sharing how he used to listen to Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony (Fate) and “Ode to Joy” in his youth. I’m sure we all have tunes we listen to in order to get through tough times. Sensei says:

Beethoven’s exhilarating music, expressing his spirit to break through suffering and arrive at joy, inspired me to keep on fighting... Beethoven refused to let the relentless blows of fate defeat him. In the end, he gifted humanity joyous music that broke through the darkness of the times. He wrote: “I will boldly meet my fate, never shall it succeed in crushing me. Oh! It is so glorious, to live one’s life a thousand times over!” Those words call to mind the countless Soka Gakkai members who, while giving their all to advance kosen-rufu amid society’s harsh realities, have changed their destiny and developed absolute happiness. Summoning forth the “courage of a lion king,” as Nichiren Daishonin teaches (WND-1, 997), they have bravely confronted all problems and hardships and forged ahead steadily to victory. They brim with that pride.

As we learned last month, Nichiren Daishonin overcame countless persecutions, while continuing to write letters to his disciples to encourage them and lead everyone to happiness. The passages we will study this month are from the Daishonin’s writing,

“Letter from Sado”. Here is the first passage:

Iron, when heated in the flames and pounded, becomes a fine sword. Worthies and sages are tested by abuse. My present exile is not because of any secular crime. It is solely so that I may expiate in this lifetime my past grave offences and be freed in the next from the three evil paths. (WND-1, 303; “Letter from Sado”)

“Iron, when heated in the flames and pounded, becomes a fine sword. Worthies and sages are tested by abuse,” is a famous passage, which I’m sure many of us turned to while facing obstacles and was encouraged not to give up. By going through struggles and facing obstacles head on, we are able to bring forth courage and keep strengthening our spirit.

In this lecture, Sensei emphasizes on the importance of human revolution and transforming karma into mission, which are both empowering Buddhist concepts. He says:

Everything starts from the inner transformation of the individual. As we steadily practice Nichiren Buddhism, we awaken to the dignity and worth of our lives. We tap our inherent wisdom and strength and strive to create the greatest value, contributing to the welfare and happiness of others and society. The Soka Gakkai is the organization building and expanding this movement of human revolution throughout the world.

He continues:

There is a scene in the Lotus Sutra in which bodhisattvas vow to appear in an evil future age to help lead people to happiness. In other words, they choose of their own free will to take on the karma to be born in a troubles time and, through their example of battling that karma, encourage others who are suffering. This is the principle of ‘voluntarily assuming the appropriate karma’ ... This way of life grounded in transforming karma into mission is, in contemporary terms, the work of empowering others and fostering their capacity for resilience. That is the power of the bodhisattva vow.

Here's the next passage:

There are also those who appeared to believe in me, but began doubting when they saw me persecuted. They not only have forsaken the Lotus Sutra, but also actually think themselves wise enough to instruct me. The pitiful thing is that these perverse people must suffer in the Avichi hell even longer than the Nembutsu believers... “Though the priest Nichiren is our teacher, he is too forceful. We will spread the Lotus Sutra in a more peaceful way.” In so asserting, they are being as ridiculous as fireflies laughing at the sun and moon, and anthill belittling Mount Hua, wells and brooks despising the river and ocean, or a magpie mocking a phoenix. (WND-1, 306; “Letter from Sado”)

While the Daishonin was exiled to Sado Island, his disciples also faced persecutions, and unfortunately, some of his disciples gave up their faith and even began criticizing him. But the Daishonin described them “as ridiculous as fireflies laughing at the sun and moon, and anthill belittling Mount Hua, wells and brooks despising the river and ocean or a magpie mocking a phoenix.” (WND-1, 306) His absolute confidence, unshakable spirit and vast life state is incredible. How many of us can stay calm and not be affected by negative criticisms from others, especially from those you have personally encouraged or supported? I'm sure his disciples facing persecutions were very encouraged and filled with a fighting spirit.

Sensei says, “Nichiren Daishonin's community of fellow practitioners, exemplifying the spirit of oneness of mentor and disciple, was built when his disciples stood up with the same vow and unwavering commitment as he.” And we can see that this spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple continued on from President Makiguchi to President Toda who overcame various obstacles with the “heart of a lion king”, and from President Toda to President Ikeda, and now to all of us. It is time for each of us to stand up with the “heart of a lion king” and face our obstacles head to do our human revolution and transform our karma as taught by the Daishonin.

President Ikeda closes his lecture by calling out to the Future Division members:

Based on this Soka Gakkai spirit, we are dedicating our lives to the noble purpose of realizing worldwide kosen-rufu – in other words, world peace. There is no more admirable way of life. You, our Future Division members, taking part in this admirable effort in your youth, are present on every continent across the globe. The entire world is your stage.

No matter what troubles arise, keep summoning forth the “heart of the lion king” and overcome every obstacle with a spirit of selfless dedication to spreading the Mystic Law. When you have such determined faith, your life will shine with victory and honour.

Hope you feel empowered as much as I did through this lecture series! As we celebrate the founding of the Soka Gakkai this month, I’m filled with appreciation to President Makiguchi, President Toda and President Ikeda. I’m also grateful to my grandparents who started to practice in Japan and to my parents who continued to encourage me to chant and be involved in the SGI even when I had no interest. Let’s take time this month to show appreciation to those who introduced the practice to us and never gave up on us.

This concludes President Ikeda’s 2-part study lecture series called “To Our Future Division Members, the Torchbearers of Justice – Our Hope for the Future”.

Thank you and have a wonderful study meeting this month! If you have any questions, please send them to: study@sgicanada.org