

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

## “Letter from Sado”—Part 1 Triumph with the Heart of a Lion King!

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Hi everyone! My name is Sachie Motohashi and I am so happy to be presenting this study material this month.

Although this month’s study material is directed towards our precious future division members, Sensei’s guidance is applicable to us at any age. He starts with a phrase that I’m sure has been a source of encouragement to all of us: “Winter always turns to spring.” Personally, I find guidance that Sensei writes to the youngest members particularly encouraging as I think about my own experiences when I was in my impressionable teenage years. Sensei continues by recognising the hardships that we have all had to endure because of the pandemic and says:

“But from a long-term perspective, the fact that you have encountered such unexpected hardships in the sensitive days of your youth has profound meaning. The time is sure to come when this experience will prove tremendously valuable and useful.

“No education surpasses that of trials and hardships”—I hung this motto on the wall of my room and often repeated it to myself when I was 17 years old. That was during the turbulent period immediately following World War II.

Experiencing unprecedented misfortune or calamity firsthand can make you deeply aware of life’s preciousness, understand others’ pain and suffering, and ready to reach out to those in need. I therefore hope that you will grow to be fine leaders who work for people’s happiness, each of you shining brilliantly in the realm of your personal mission. With that wish, my wife, Kaneko, and I are praying wholeheartedly every day for your sound growth and successful endeavours.”

How encouraging!

The two passages selected are from one of the Daishonin's writings titled "Letter from Sado."

Here is the first passage from "Letter from Sado":

The way of the world dictates that one should repay a great obligation to another, even at the cost of one's life. Many warriors die for their lords, perhaps many more than one would imagine. A man will die to defend his honour; a woman will die for a man. Fish want to survive; they deplore their pond's shallowness and dig holes in the bottom to hide in, yet tricked by bait, they take the hook. Birds in a tree fear that they are too low and perch in the top branches, yet bewitched by bait, they too are caught in snares. Human beings are equally vulnerable. They give their lives for shallow, worldly matters but rarely for the Buddha's precious teachings. Small wonder they do not attain Buddhahood. (WND-1, 301; "Letter from Sado")

Nichiren Daishonin's Sado Exile and the events that led up to it are a testament to the incredible determination and resolve. Corruption, unjustly arrests, and an attempted execution lead the Daishonin to arrive on Sado Island in the middle of winter to a dilapidated hut lacking clothing and food. Despite this, the Daishonin continued to write letters to his disciples and lead all people to happiness. Despite his agonizing living conditions, he claimed to be "the richest man in all of present-day Japan", portraying a truly dazzling life state.

One of the important points in this letter that the Daishonin points out is the subject of life and death. Sensei says:

"The Daishonin indicates that by devoting our lives to "the Buddha's precious teachings," we can attain enlightenment (cf. WND-1, 301). There is no greater good fortune than being born human and encountering the unsurpassed, life-affirming teachings of Buddhism.

To what, then, should we devote our incredibly fortunate lives? And how can we create the greatest value in our lives, which are precious beyond measure? The Daishonin encourages us to use them for the sake of Buddhism, for widely spreading the Mystic Law.

Concretely speaking, this means causing the dignity of our own and others' lives to shine and helping everyone around us become happy. It means transforming despair into hope, creating happy, harmonious families, and building thriving communities and societies. The heart of the Daishonin's teachings is to dedicate our lives to realizing a world of peace and humanity, protecting the natural environment, and changing the destiny of humankind."

Returning back to the point that this lecture was written for the future division, I feel that this is such valuable guidance for any young person to hear. To every young person in our lives, let's embody this sentiment and ensure that we can be a source of hope. The world can often feel so daunting to navigate even for those with lots of life experience! As seniors in faith, let's cherish our juniors in faith to feel hope in the midst of challenges, joy in the midst of sorrow and continue to carry on with strong faith.

Sensei continues and says:

"I hope you will challenge yourselves to do gongyo and chant daimoku as you continue to apply yourselves to your studies. Be kind and respectful to your parents and treasure good friends.

Such steady, seemingly ordinary daily efforts are the key to accumulating the "treasures of the heart" (WND-1, 851). Even if you experience setbacks or problems along the way, you'll find later that they've become treasures—valuable lessons contributing to your growth.

There is no need to worry or be impatient."

Here is the second passage from "Letter from Sado":

It is the nature of beasts to threaten the weak and fear the strong. Our contemporary scholars of the various schools [of Buddhism] are just like them. They despise a wise [person] without power, but fear evil rulers. They are no more than fawning retainers. Only by defeating a powerful enemy can one prove one's real strength. When an evil ruler in consort with priests of erroneous teachings tries to destroy the correct teaching and do away with a [person] of wisdom, those with the heart of a lion king are sure to attain Buddhahood. Like Nichiren, for example. (WND-1, 302; "Letter from Sado")

Regarding the sentence "Only by defeating a powerful enemy can one prove one's real strength," Sensei says:

We can read this as a statement of his determination to fight boldly, even in the face of attack and persecution, against such formidable opponents and to triumph over them. It represents a vast life state that is the polar opposite of "the nature of beasts." The Daishonin's disciples must have been deeply encouraged and inspired by their mentor's courageous example as he unflinchingly confronted the storm of devilish functions.

To continue to encourage his disciples, despite being exiled to Sado, the Daishonin instills in them the importance of standing up with "the heart of a lion king" and to stand up against oppressive forces. We can refer to numerous examples of such acts, beginning with the lives of our three presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda and Daisaku Ikeda who embodied the genuine spirit of a lion king.

Sensei says:

"Summoning "the heart of a lion king" to work for the happiness of people everywhere, no matter the obstacles or difficulties, is the solid history and tradition of the Soka Gakkai.

It is the way of life of Soka Gakkai members to strive together as lions, each taking personal responsibility for our movement. This is the source of our genuine, indestructible unity of "many in body, one in mind."

In the early days of our movement, and in recent years as well, the Soka Gakkai has repeatedly encountered obstacles and difficulties similar to those described in the Daishonin's writings. My fellow members in every region, including many of your parents, who triumphed over these hardships together with me, are all my precious comrades."

I feel so fortunate to have been born into this practice. Growing up in the garden of Soka, I recall so many times when district members shared their experience in faith and I truly felt the greatness of this practice. I hope that each of us can treasure our young comrades in faith in our districts and encourage them to go out boldly into the world!

Thank you so much for listening! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to send them to us at [study@sgicanada.org](mailto:study@sgicanada.org).

Thank you!