

A Hope-Inspiring Life Philosophy for the Real World

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Hi everyone! My name is Sachie Motohashi and I am so happy to present this month's study material titled "A hopeful life philosophy for the real world" to you.

Over the course of the months of April and May, the Women's Division have been gathering in small groups, sharing their struggles and victories, so this month's study material is a perfect complement to the activities happening across the country.

Even if your district is not holding a formal study meeting, let's bring our precious SGI Canada publications with us and share a passage or two with those we are meeting with. In this way, we can stay connected with our mentor and continue to encourage ourselves and those around us.

Ikeda Sensei begins this lecture by praising those studying for the study exam. As we face our daily struggles, our passionate seeking spirit to grasp the essence of the Mystic Law will surely give rise to great benefit equal to the Buddha's. He says:

Our daily practice of gongyo and chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo enables us to bring forth indomitable life force. When we use our eyes, ears, voices, and hands to read, hear, recite, and write down passages from the Daishonin's writings, we engrave those words in our hearts and beings. The Daishonin's words become a source of wisdom for our efforts in daily life and society, showing their true worth in the diverse situations and circumstances we encounter. Please be assured that all Buddhas and bodhisattvas will applaud you and all heavenly deities will protect you, people who are earnestly exerting themselves in practice and study.

Buddhist study in the Soka Gakkai instills in us the great compassion and conviction of Nichiren Daishonin, who triumphed over life-threatening persecutions as he tirelessly spread the Mystic Law to lead all people to enlightenment.

I have always been encouraged to set goals to accomplish things in my life, big or small. For myself, I have two goals in terms of study this year. Although I have graduated to the Women's Division, I still continually refer to guidance received from my time in the

Young Women's Division. My first goal is to read again the 30 Gosho recommended for YWG to study. Opening the Gosho has always been a source of inspiration for me. Even though the content can be challenging, afterwards, I feel more connected to Nichiren Daishonin as I can sense his trust and hope in the letter's recipient. My second goal is to encourage all the members in my district to write the Level 2 Study Exam in October. The practitioners in my district enjoy studying and we always have a joyful discussion during our study meetings. I'm looking forward to a joyful study exam as well!

The first Gosho passage we will be studying today is from one of Nichiren Daishonin's major writings "The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind" composed when he was in exile on Sado Island.

When we look from time to time at a person's face, we find him or her sometimes joyful, sometimes enraged, and sometimes calm. At times greed appears in the person's face, at times foolishness, and at times perversity. Rage is the world of hell, greed is that of hungry spirits, foolishness is that of animals, perversity is that of asuras, joy is that of heaven [heavenly beings], and calmness is that of human beings. . . . The fact that all things in this world are transient is perfectly clear to us. Is this not because the worlds of the two vehicles [voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones] are present in the human world? Even a heartless villain loves his wife and children. He too has a portion of the bodhisattva world within him. Buddhahood is the most difficult to demonstrate. . . . That ordinary people born in the latter age can believe in the Lotus Sutra is due to the fact that the world of Buddhahood is present in the human world. (WND-1, 358; "The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind")

The principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds can be challenging to wrap one's mind around. In this passage, the Daishonin is responding to a hypothetical questioner who finds it difficult to believe that the Ten Worlds exist within us. The ten worlds range from enlightened states to deluded states and encompass all of the various conditions of life. The principle states that all worlds contain within them all of the other nine worlds, which further means that every person has the potential to manifest Buddhahood.

As an ordinary person we can understand the daily feelings and emotions we experience

from moment to moment, and day to day. We feel joy when we hear good news or disappointment when we hear bad news. However, to say that in the midst of these fluctuating emotions, we can manifest the highest life state, Buddhahood which is inherent in all living beings, is difficult to comprehend.

Ikeda Sensei states:

As Soka Gakkai members, we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, vibrantly put our Buddha wisdom to work in society, and dedicate ourselves to spreading trust and friendship. Our way of life is clear proof that all people possess the life state of Buddhahood.

All around the globe, our members are sharing the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism in ways relevant to our times, revealing their innate Buddhahood, and thereby showing actual proof that “the world of Buddhahood is present in the human world” (WND-1, 358). Bravely striving in their Buddhist practice, each is a noble protagonist proclaiming the greatness of the Mystic Law, each a powerful ambassador for kosen-rufu. In this, there is absolutely no discrimination of age, gender, nationality, or ethnicity.

The next passage is from “Rely on the Law and Not upon Persons,” one of the Daishonin’s writings included for the first time in the new Japanese edition of The Complete Works of Nichiren Daishonin.

The people of our day do not know who is correct, so on occasion they may support the [mistaken] majority opinion and disregard a single voice of truth, or they may support the opinion of an eminent priest and disregard the voice of truth of an individual of lowly status. At times, they may support the pronouncements of those with authority and disregard the voice of truth of someone lacking authority. The Buddha warned, “Rely on the Law and not upon persons,” but people in the latter age rely upon persons, not on the Law. The Buddha also instructed, “Rely on sutras that are complete and final and not on those that are not complete and final,” but the people of this defiled age rely on the sutras that are not complete and final and reject those that are complete and final. (GZ, new ed., 2146–47; “Rely on the Law and Not upon Persons”)

Reading this passage, many of us may be reflecting on the current times where we all need to be vigilant and careful about what we regard as the truth. With many accessible tools and platforms to create images and stories, it is easy to be swayed and influenced.

The Daishonin emphasizes to rely on the Law and not upon persons, encouraging us to not be swayed by popular opinion, social status, or authority. The Daishonin lived true to the Lotus Sutra, through his persecutions and proving true the predictions of Shakyamuni and the Lotus Sutra. As we draw strength and inspiration from his words, we can also use his life as example to encourage ourselves and each other.

Ikeda Sensei says:

We of the Soka Gakkai are building happiness for ourselves and others, helping each person awaken to the life state of Buddhahood inherent within and bring forth wisdom and compassion. We are producing a steady stream of wise, strong, and good world citizens. Ours is a network of people awakened to the true worth and dignity of human beings and impervious to the vagaries of public opinion, to what Buddhism refers to as the “eight winds.” Our members around the world are actualizing the ideal of enlightenment for all people taught by Shakyamuni in the Lotus Sutra. They are advancing energetically along the great path leading to the happiness of humanity revealed by Nichiren Daishonin while expanding our movement of hope and peace.

Thank you for listening and I hope you have a great study meeting. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to us at study@sgicanada.org. Thank you!