

## Expanding Our Gathering of Courageous Individuals Who Treasure the Dignity of Their Own and Others' Lives

Lecture presented by Glenn Turner  
SGI Canada Study Department

Hi there. Happy New Year and welcome to 2023, the Year of Youth and Triumph.

You'll find the study article for this month in the December 2022 issue of New Century. I hope you'll have a chance to read it before your district study meeting in January.

At the very beginning of the article, President Ikeda notes that women have taken the lead in Soka Gakkai activities, and that women and men who practise the Lotus Sutra are all lion kings. As we individually – and bravely – make efforts in our daily lives to practise Buddhism and encourage the people around us, we are creating kosen-rufu and, in Nichiren Daishonin's words, “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land”.

Working together in the Soka Gakkai makes our actions even more powerful. President Ikeda says:

The dynamism of our supportive and harmonious organization, created by our wondrous karmic bonds, is what opens the way for kosen-rufu. Key to this are the courage that comes from striving together in the oneness of mentor and disciple and the unity of “many in body, one in mind”.

Courage and unity are the themes of this month's study and I think they are particularly significant in this Year of Youth and Triumph.

The first Goshō passage in this article is taken from “In the Continent of Jambudvīpa”:

**My wish is that my disciples will be cubs of the lion king, never to be laughed at by the pack of foxes. It is hard to encounter a master [teacher] like Nichiren, who since distant kalpas in the past down to the present day has never begrudged his body or life in order to**

**expose the faults of his powerful enemies! (WND-2, 1062; “In the Continent of Jambudvipa”)**

In this passage, the Daishonin encourages all of us to have the conviction that we are all “cubs of the lion king”, with the same power and life condition that he possessed himself. The struggles that he faced were quite literally life-and-death. Our obstacles may be on a different scale, but the principle is the same. If we persevere in our practice, we will win. As Nichiren says: “Those with the heart of a lion king are sure to attain Buddhahood”.

Having the heart of a lion king means having courage. President Ikeda says:

Everything starts with courage. When we do gongyo and chant Nam-myoho-  
renge-kyo, we engage in a struggle to tap our inner courage. Courage is also  
essential for conducting dialogue as we work to transform our own and others’  
lives.

As is so often the case in Buddhism, the most important thing is what happens inside us. Do we have the courage to overcome the “three obstacles and four devils” in our lives – meaning all those things that could stop us from practising Buddhism and attaining Buddhahood? Do we stand up to those who oppose our practice? Do we have the courage to speak out, regardless of the consequences?

In my case, the answer is sometimes “no, I’m not sure I do have the courage”, and that’s the time when I really need to go chant, if only for a few minutes. It’s amazing how chanting Nam-myoho-  
renge-kyo can calm me down, help me understand the situation, and give me the confidence that I can deal with whatever comes up.

President Ikeda lists three specific examples of courage. He talks about:

- Taking action for the happiness of others without complaining
- Speaking out against lies and delusion, and
- Protecting all members

These are all aspects of our great mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

The second Gosho passage is taken from the letter “Brothers One in Mind”:

**The fact that the two of you [the Ikegami brothers] are one in mind may be likened to the two wheels of a carriage, or the two wings of a bird. Though your wives and children may have their disagreements, there should never be any disharmony between the two of you.**

**Though I may seem presumptuous in saying so, you should join together in paying honour to Nichiren. If the two of you should fail to act in harmony, then you may be sure that you will cease to enjoy the protection of the Lotus Sutra.**

**Beware, beware, for there are persons who clearly would like to do harm to you both! Should you fail to act in harmony, you will be like the snipe and the shellfish who, because they were locked in combat with one another, fell prey to the fisherman.**

**Recite Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and take care how you behave! Take care how you behave! (WND-2, 914; “Brothers One in Mind”)**

The story of the Ikegami brothers is well known. Both were followers of Nichiren Daishonin, but their father violently opposed their practice and disinherited the older son in order to create divisions between the two brothers.

Nichiren Daishonin’s clear guidance allowed the brothers to completely turn the situation around. As President Ikeda says:

The Ikegami brothers and their wives never retreated a single step during this trying period, forging ahead with unshakable unity just as the Daishonin instructed. In the end, the brothers’ father not only revoked Munenaka’s disownment but took faith in the Daishonin’s teaching. The family brilliantly overcame all their difficulties, showing actual proof of victory and family harmony.

This is a story that continues to inspire us today. By following Nichiren’s guidance and example, the Ikegami brothers were able to achieve absolute unity and achieve all their goals. In our case, by following our mentor, Daisaku Ikeda, we can do the same.

Unity does not mean that we all have to share the same opinions or preferences. It is quite normal to have disagreements and differing views. But by focusing on the goal of kosen-rufu and by sharing the vision and the struggles of our mentor, Daisaku Ikeda, we can advance together regardless of our personal differences. President Ikeda says:

...as we carry out our human revolution, we are building in our local communities networks of wonderful diversity, microcosms of world peace where everyone shines in their own unique way, just as cherry, plum, peach and damson blossoms each display their unique kind of beauty.

And he reminds us of the well-known passage from the Gosho: “If the spirit of many in body but one in mind prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals”. (WND-1, 618)

The world in which we live is full of problems, conflict and disunity. Our job – our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth – is to help people understand that they have the power to transform their lives, whatever their circumstances, by revealing the Buddha nature inside them.

Knowing that everyone has a Buddha nature and is worthy of respect, we naturally want to help and encourage the people around us and chant for their happiness. This is the unity described by the Daishonin as “transcending all differences among ourselves” (cf. WND-1, 217).

President Ikeda concludes by pointing out the need now, more than ever, for unity and courage:

Because the world is facing so many difficulties today, let’s continue our courageous shared struggle to change the destiny of humankind and build peace and harmony, as we hold high the banner of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land”!

As you can tell, it’s a great study this month, and very relevant to what we are all living. You can find the study material in the December 2022 New Century. If you’re not receiving New Century right now, you can subscribe online at [sgicanada.org](http://sgicanada.org) or by talking to your district leaders anytime.

I hope you have a great study meeting in January. Thanks for listening today. Bye for now.