The Brilliant Light of Humanistic Philosophy (11)

Achieving Kosen-rufu through the Shared Commitment of Mentor and Disciple

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Hi everyone! My name is Sachie Motohashi and I am happy to share this month's study material with you.

November is often a month for reflection and renewed determination in the SGI as we celebrate November 18th, the founding of the Soka Gakkai. This month also honours three years since the passing of Ikeda Sensei. In this lecture titled "Achieving Kosen-rufu through the Shared Commitment of Mentor and Disciple", we will discuss the importance of gratitude as the crucial pillar of the mentor-disciple spirit in the SGI.

When we are struggling, we are often encouraged to encourage others. As the well-known passage from Nichiren Daishonin states, "If one lights a fire for others, one will brighten one's own way". Personally, these past few weeks have been a period of intense struggle. In the past, when I have encountered times of great challenge, I have read guidance that feels like it was written exactly for me. Preparing this script has been such an experience for me. Sensei concludes this lecture by saying, "To have a mentor and live as a disciple is the key to constant growth and development. A life dedicated to the way of mentor and disciple is incredibly fortunate." It has helped me re-determine and strengthen my vow for kosen-rufu and deepen my appreciation for Ikeda Sensei.

Let's start with the first gosho passage from Nichiren Daishonin's writing titled "Flowering and Bearing Grain".

> **If a tree is deeply rooted, its branches and leaves will never wither. If the spring is inexhaustible, the stream will never run dry. Without wood, a fire will burn out. Without earth, plants will not grow. I, Nichiren, am indebted solely to my late teacher, Dozen-bo, for my having become the votary of the Lotus Sutra and my being widely**

talked about now, in both a good and bad sense. Nichiren is like the plant, and my teacher, the earth. (WND-1, 909)

To introduce this passage, Ikeda Sensei goes into the background of this writing, sharing that it was written in April 1278 and addressed to two fellow student priests and seniors of the Daishonin at the temple where he entered priesthood as a child. When Nichiren Daishonin entered the priesthood at the age of twelve, he studied under Dozen-bo. This gosho is written as an expression of his gratitude who, although didn't convert to Nichiren's teachings, was critical in his survival and protected him in many ways. Although many districts may not be having a study meeting this month, if yours is holding one, it may be of interest to some to go into the relationships that the Daishonin had with others as it may provide context to the content of this letter.

Ultimately, the main point of this letter is the Daishonin expressing his deep gratitude and appreciation as a disciple for his teacher. The idea of gratitude is so simple, yet requires recognition and appreciation and humility of oneself.

Sensei says:

> The foundation for gratitude and appreciation is a recognition of who helped make us the person we are today, what causes and conditions led up to our present circumstances. Acknowledging and acting upon this gratitude is the basis of honourable behaviour as a human being.
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> From that perspective, the Daishonin's similes expressing his tremendous gratitude for and acknowledgement of the teacher who had educated and fostered him are very moving indeed.

From the gosho passage, Sensei focuses on the word "grow" using the example of Nanjo Tokimitsu and encouragement of bluer indigo. As we bring 2026 and the "Year of Vibrant Growth for a Youth Soka Gakkai Worldwide" to a close, we can take time to reflect on the growth of each one of us and re-determine to continue and expand going forward.

Gratitude in the SGI is foundational in our practice. Ikeda Sensei illustrates the profound examples of mentor and disciples of Josei Toda and his late mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi as well as his own with Josei Toda. Toda went to prison alongside Makiguchi who later died in prison and his words of appreciation are shared in this lecture. Ikeda

Sensei also recollects his pivotal first meeting with Josei Toda. It is a well-known story, documented in the novel, the Human Revolution in detail.

Ikeda Sensei says:

> As for myself, I would not be the person I am today if I had not met Mr. Toda at a discussion meeting in Tokyo's Ota Ward in the summer of 1947, when I was 19, and decided to become his disciple. Without learning the essential teachings of Buddhism from him, I would never have known a life dedicated to working for peace and the happiness of humanity together with honourable fellow members around the globe.
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> Buddhism isn't Buddhism without the spirit of gratitude for one's teachers.

Let's move on to the second gosho passage:

> **The Bodhisattvas of the Earth have four leaders. The [Lotus] sutra says, "The first was called Superior Practices . . . and the fourth was called Bodhisattva Firmly Established Practices" [LSOC15, 254 (LS15, 214)]. If Bodhisattva Superior Practices appears in the Latter Day of the Law, so must Bodhisattva Firmly Established Practices.**
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> **The rice plant flowers and bears grain, but its spirit remains in the soil. This is the reason the stalk sprouts to flower and bear grain once again. The blessings that Nichiren obtains from propagating the Lotus Sutra will always return to Dozen-bo. How sublime! (WND-1, 909)**

The Lotus Sutra describes the four leaders at the forefront of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth and their importance of their appearance. The quoted passage also gives the letter its commonly accepted title, "Flowering and Bearing Grain", describing the cyclical relationship of the stalks and the essence of the rice plant which returns to the earth to enable the plant to send forth new shoots. This draws a parallel to the relationship of the mentor and disciple, likening the mentor as the earth and the plant as the disciple or student. The Daishonin exclaims his joy, as the benefit he has gained by spreading the teaching to guide others to genuine happiness as a votary of the Lotus Sutra will be transferred to his teacher, Dozen-bo. This truly shows his deep compassion and care for

his teacher. Sensei says “There could be no better way of repaying his gratitude to his late teacher than this.”

As shared at the beginning of this podcast, Sensei concludes this lecture by highlighting “To have a mentor and live as a disciple is the key to constant growth and development. A life dedicated to the way of mentor and disciple is incredibly fortunate.” With this in our hearts, let’s renew our determination to bring this year of vibrant growth as dynamic as ever!

Thank you so much for listening! If you have any questions, please feel free to email study@sgicanada.org.

Thank you!