

July Discusison Topic – Hope Is a Decision

SGL-president Daisaku Ikeda says: “Looking at the world today, it is easy to feel despair. Decisions about important issues all seem to be made somewhere beyond our reach. What can one person accomplish in the face of the vast forces that run our world? Times are changing rapidly, and the issues we face are often complex and overwhelming.”¹

“But we cannot be paralyzed by despair. We must each take action toward the goals we have set and in which we believe. Rather than passively accepting things as they are, we must embark on the challenge of creating a new reality. It is in this effort that true, undying hope is to be found.”²

“During my dialogue with the American journalist and doctor Dr Norman Cousins (1915–1990), he said that the greatest power in the world is the regenerative power of life. As human beings, he continued, we have an innate ability to physically and mentally overcome all kinds of suffering and ordeals and heal ourselves of illness. But there is something even more remarkable than that, he added – the power of hope.”³

“Josei Toda once wrote: ‘In looking at great people of the past, we find that they remained undefeated by life’s hardships, by life’s pounding waves. They held on to hopes that might have seemed like illusions to others. They let nothing stop or discourage them from realizing their goals. The reason for this, I feel certain, is that their hopes themselves were not directed toward the fulfillment of personal desires or self-interest but based on a wish for all people’s happiness, and this filled them with extraordinary conviction and confidence.’”⁴

The wisdom of Nichiren Buddhism shines brightest when society has lost hope and is mired in the darkness of suffering. It has the power to overcome despair and resignation – caused by fundamental ignorance – and light the way to a bright future for all humanity.

President Ikeda also says: “I believe that the ultimate tragedy in life is not physical death. Rather, it is the spiritual death of losing hope, giving up on our own possibilities for growth.”⁵

Amid great hardship, we can attain an invincible state of life. That is a fundamental truth of Nichiren Buddhism.

Hope leads to victory, and victory leads to hope, and as president Ikeda often says, ‘hope is a decision’: “When we change our inner determination, everything begins to move in a new direction. The moment we make a powerful resolve, every nerve and fibre of our being will immediately orient itself towards the fulfilment of this goal or desire. On the other hand, if we think, ‘This is never going to work out’, then every cell in our body will be deflated and give up the fight. Hope, in this sense, is a decision. It is the most important decision we can make. Hope changes everything, starting with our lives. Hope is the force that enables us to take action to make our dreams come true. It has the power to change winter into summer, barrenness to creativity, agony to joy. As long as we have hope, there is nothing we cannot achieve. When we possess the treasure of hope, we can draw forth our inner potential and strength. A person of hope can always advance.”⁶

¹ Excerpt from SGL-president Daisaku Ikeda’s essay ‘De most important decision’; New Years Message of SGI Europe, 2021

² Daisaku Ikeda, *Hope is a decision*, 6

³ SGI Nieuwsbrief 10700.

⁴ Idem.

⁵ Daisaku Ikeda, *Hope is a decision*, 6.

⁶ Daisaku Ikeda, *Hope is a decision*, 4-5.

- What does hope mean to you, and what gives you hope?
- How does your practice help you to foster hope? Do you have any experience with this?
- President Ikeda says that “hope is a decision.” What does that statement mean to you?