

March Discussion Topic - Fostering the Youth is fostering the Future

SGI-president Daisaku Ikeda says: “Believing in the youth, being their friend, big brother or sister and treasuring them if they were one’s own children - that, I am convinced, is the key to fostering capable young people. Our vital and dynamic organization for kosen-rufu that continues to produce an endless stream of talented youth with a strong sense of responsibility and a clear mission in life, is a source of immense hope for the world.”¹

He encourages young people to have the courage to stand on one’s own two feet - to ‘stand up alone’: “It is not good to blindly follow the crowd. Going along with something without any real thought, just because everyone is doing it, or being quite content with not having to make any decisions yourself, leads to mental laziness and apathy. And that’s dangerous. When everyone says that war is good, everyone rushes to war, without dissent or opposition, even if they know it spells disaster. No one has the courage to stand up and bravely declare: ‘War is wrong!’ They just go along with the current social climate and whatever appears to be popular at the time.

“But we mustn’t be led astray. We must never abandon our commitment to peace, our desire to learn, and our love for humanity. Putting those values into practice ourselves and encouraging others to share them, too, takes courage. Courage lies inside us. It is something we must rouse from within.

“Mindlessly following the crowd is not courage, but cowardice. It’s fascism, not democracy. In a democracy, we each have to recognize that we are society’s protagonists and as such have a responsibility to fulfill. Instead, there’s too much self-interest - the attitude that “so long as I’m happy, that’s all that matters” - and too much blind following - the mentality that ‘it’s safer to go along with what everyone else says’.

“Only when people have the courage to stand alone can they lead the world in the direction of peace and good. When such courageous individuals join forces and unite in strong solidarity, they can change society. But it all starts with you. You have to be courageous. The rest all follows from that.”²

Because one single person can initiate a great change, our own determination is crucial. Kosen-rufu is often seen as something that can only be achieved in the distant future, but we can also see it as a process that is continually initiated by individuals. Just as a stone causes ripples when thrown into a pond, the way we put our Buddhist practice into action has a profound influence on the people around us. It determines how we live from moment to moment, how we care for others and how we support them.

The passion and power of youth will create a new era. That is why it is essential that we trust young people, instill courage and self-confidence in them, and show them the way to a future characterized by hope, dignity, and responsibility.

- What resonated with you the most in what we just read?
- When in your life have you experienced that someone believed in you or encouraged you?

¹ *Sheikyo Shimbun*, 24 november 2006.

² From Discussions on Youth II, published in Japanese in September 2000.

- What does “stand up alone” mean to you at this moment?