

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY



SGI-USA  
YOUTH  
DIVISION

protecting the mentor & the teachings

FIFTH CLASS

## *Study Guide*

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

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# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

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# LOOKING TOWARD THE 2023 IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY EXAM

**Since March 2021**, the Ikeda Wisdom Academy's fifth class focused on select lectures by Ikeda Sensei in *Learning from Nichiren's Writings: The Teachings for Victory*, volumes 1 and 2. To affirm the content of these lectures, an exam will be offered in early 2023. Here are some details:

## Who can take the exam?

- All district through national youth leaders.

## Where can the exam be taken?

- At local SGI-USA centers. Please check with your local leaders for more information.

## What material will the exam cover?

- Selections from *Learning from Nichiren's Writings: The Teachings for Victory*, vols. 1 and 2
- All the material can be accessed at: [worldtribune.org/c/ikeda-wisdom-academy/](http://worldtribune.org/c/ikeda-wisdom-academy/)
- Material can also be downloaded via: [linktr.ee/livingbuddhism](https://linktr.ee/livingbuddhism)

## Will there be a study guide?

- Workbook questions will be published in the November 2022, December 2022 and January 2023 issues of *Living Buddhism*.

## 3 REASONS WHY BUDDHIST STUDY IS IMPORTANT

*Ikeda Sensei clarifies the importance of Buddhist study in these excerpts from The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace, part 2, revised edition, pp. 281–85.*

**Nichiren Buddhism** is an unsurpassed philosophy for fostering people of unsurpassed humanity. The passion and power of young people who uphold this priceless philosophy will create a new age.

Why is it important for youth to study the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism?

### 1) Buddhist study helps us deepen our faith.

**Buddhist study** is a beacon illuminating the path of faith. Even the complex workings of negative forces that arise to assail us are clearly revealed for what they are in the bright mirror of the Buddhist teachings.

Indeed, studying the principles of Buddhism enables us to build our own solid foundation of faith and becomes a power source for our human revolution. ...



## 2) Buddhist study serves as a driving force for kosen-rufu.

**To study the writings** of Nichiren Daishonin is to come into contact with his spirit; it is to receive powerful encouragement directly from the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, as well as guidelines for the promotion of kosen-rufu.

We can be said to have truly studied Nichiren Buddhism only when we take action in accord with the Daishonin's writings. There is no genuine Buddhist study without practice. And when we put the teachings into practice, limitless courage wells forth in our lives and we can display boundless ability and strength.

## 3) Buddhist study lays the foundation for establishing a new humanism.

**Our times are rife** with serious challenges, including the threat of nuclear war, ethnic conflict, environmental problems, failing education systems and other social issues. Though people long for happiness and world peace, things just grow more chaotic and confused. This results from the lack of a sound life philosophy.

I believe the teachings of Buddhism alone can

shine a light on these problems. Only by grounding ourselves in such Buddhist principles as respect and compassion for life, the oneness of body and mind, and the oneness of living beings and their environment can we open the way to a new humanism. Josei Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons was also an expression of the life-affirming principles of Buddhism.

It was Mr. Toda's conviction that there can be no bright future for humanity unless the youth division members who will shoulder responsibility for the 21st century gain a deep understanding of the philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism, the world's supreme teaching that can enable all humanity to attain happiness. He was confident that young people who embraced this great philosophy would go on to become world leaders in every field of human endeavor. ...

In my youth, I studied the Daishonin's writings thoroughly, to the extent that I actually committed many of his major writings to memory. That effort has built a foundation that has stood me well for my entire life.

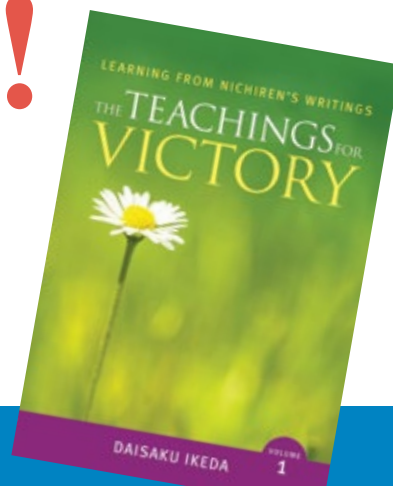
# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

Studying Buddhism  
enables us to lead lives  
of unparalleled victory  
and happiness.

# MY DISCIPLES, WIN WITH THE HEART OF A LION KING!

**The Ikeda Wisdom Academy** is an SGI-USA youth division movement to engage youth leaders in advanced study. While it is a youth leaders study program, all SGI-USA members are invited to utilize this section as a guide for their personal study of *The Teachings of Victory*, volume 1.



# Chapter 1

## “Letter from Sado”—Part 1 of 3

*Nichiren Daishonin wrote “Letter from Sado” amid persecution to encourage his disciples facing hardship and transmit the spirit of safeguarding the correct teaching of Buddhism for future generations. In this lecture, Ikeda Sensei dives into this letter, describing it as the “writing for the Soka Gakkai.”<sup>1</sup>*

### The Fundamental Issue of Life and Death

**The most dreadful things in the world are the pain of fire, the flashing of swords, and the shadow of death. Even horses and cattle fear being killed; no wonder human beings are afraid of death. Even a leper clings to life; how much more so a healthy person. (“Letter from Sado,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 301)**

To fear death and cling to life is the way of living beings. “The pain of fire” indicates accidents or natural disasters, while “the flashing of swords” signifies violence or war. Nothing is more frightening than the shadow of death—the prospect of one’s own demise. This is as true for animals as for human beings. If, however, we do nothing but fear death and cling to life, we cannot savor a truly profound existence. Why are we born? What is the purpose of our lives? Why do we die? Only by earnestly contemplating our own existence can we lead lives of great depth and meaning.

Nichiren takes up the subject of life and death here in order to explain to his followers, who were suffering tremendous hardships, that Buddhism exists to resolve the fundamental problems of human existence. And he further drives home to them that no matter what tempests might blow, they must never lose sight of faith, the foundation of everything.<sup>2</sup>

### For What Purpose Should We Use This Irreplaceable Life?

**Since nothing is more precious than life itself, one who dedicates one’s life to Buddhist practice is certain to attain Buddhahood. If one is prepared to offer one’s life, why should one begrudge any other treasure for the sake of Buddhism? On the other hand, if one is loath to part with one’s wealth, how can one possibly offer one’s life, which is far more valuable? (WND-1, 301)**

[Nichiren] is in effect saying with strict compassion to those of his followers who trembled at the thought of being persecuted and suffering such terrible consequences as having their fields confiscated: “Aren’t these present persecutions we are facing an unparalleled chance to give our lives in exchange for Buddhahood? Since the goal of attaining that supreme state of life is just ahead, what can we possibly have to fear?”

This passage also conveys an important spirit that offers lessons for us today. One lesson, as noted above, is that simply clinging to our lives will not result in attaining genuine happiness. Establishing a fundamental purpose and pursuing the correct course in life—ready to face any hardship this might entail—enables us to experience deep joy and fulfillment. If we allow ourselves to be controlled by shallow desires and hold fast to our lesser selves at a crucial moment, then our hearts will wither, and only misery and regret will await us.

Another lesson is that the lofty state of life gained through Buddhist practice is eternal, transcending the limited nature of our present existence. By dedicating this precious lifetime to Buddhism, we are certain to enjoy abundant happiness and benefit in all future lifetimes.<sup>3</sup>

### Dedicate This Supreme Life to Buddhism

**The way of the world dictates that one should repay a great obligation to another, even at the cost of one’s life. Many warriors die for their lords,**

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**perhaps many more than one would imagine. A man will die to defend his honor; a woman will die for a man. Fish want to survive; they deplore their pond's shallowness and dig holes in the bottom to hide in, yet tricked by bait, they take the hook. Birds in a tree fear that they are too low and perch in the top branches, yet bewitched by bait, they too are caught in snares. Human beings are equally vulnerable. They give their lives for shallow, worldly matters but rarely for the Buddha's precious teachings. Small wonder they do not attain Buddhahood. (WND-1, 301)**

Nichiren, therefore, counsels that rather than giving our lives—the most valuable possession of all—for “shallow, worldly matters,” we should dedicate them to “the Buddha's precious teachings.”

We speak of not begrudging one's life, but Nichiren Buddhism is definitely not a teaching of reckless self-sacrifice or martyrdom. Mr. Makiguchi, Mr. Toda and I—the first three presidents of the Soka Gakkai—have taken action with the resolve to advance kosen-rufu in such a way that not one member is sacrificed, and we have willingly given our all toward that end. In the future, as well, this must remain the spirit of successive Soka Gakkai presidents.

You absolutely must not throw away your precious lives. To our young men and women, I say: No matter what painful or difficult challenges you may be facing, you must never disrespect or harm your own lives or the lives of others. Each of you is endowed with the wondrous and supremely noble Buddha nature.

In specific terms, how should we practice in order to dedicate this invaluable lifetime to “the Buddha's precious teachings”? In another writing, Nichiren says with regard to ordinary people attaining Buddhahood in the Latter Day of the Law: “As for the matter of becoming a Buddha, ordinary people keep in mind the words ‘earnest resolve’ and thereby become Buddhas” (“The Gift of Rice,” WND-1, 1125). These words express the spirit of “not begrudging one's life” in its supreme and highest form. It is the Daishonin's emphatic declaration that ordinary people of this age can, without having to sacrifice their lives in the manner of the boy Snow Mountains, attain the same benefit that accrues to such selfless dedication through their “earnest resolve.”

As Nichiren writes, “It is the heart that is important” (“The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra,” WND-1, 1000). It's a matter of exerting millions of kalpas of effort in a single moment of life for the sake of Buddhism, for the noble cause of kosen-rufu. For us, not begrudging our lives ultimately means steadfastly chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo without any fear and wholeheartedly dedicating ourselves to showing actual proof of faith—for the sake of the world, for the sake of the future and for the sake of others.

President Makiguchi described this as “a selfless way of life of great good.” Overcoming both selfishness and fear, and striving for the



happiness of both oneself and others characterize such a way of life. He explained, “It is an ordinary way of life, a way of plain humanity—such that anyone who consciously experiences it and comes to realize that it is universally accessible will feel an overwhelming desire to embrace it, and, indeed, will feel compelled to do so.”

Therefore, he asserted that the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value-Creating Education Society; forerunner of the Soka Gakkai) “was itself living proof of a life of great good.”

In other words, selfless dedication is found in a seemingly ordinary way of life open to anyone. A true example of such dedication can be seen in our daily efforts for *kosen-rufu*, exerting ourselves body and soul to encourage others and sincerely sharing the greatness of Buddhism with those around us.<sup>4</sup>

### **“The Latter Day Is the Time for Shakubuku Alone”**

**Buddhism should be spread by the method of either *shoju* or *shakubuku*, depending on the age. These are analogous to the two worldly ways of the literary and the military. (WND-1, 301)**

In this passage, Nichiren Daishonin clarifies the Buddhist practice appropriate to the Latter Day of the Law. *Shoju* means explaining the Law according to each person’s capacity. *Shakubuku* means directly teaching others the ultimate principle of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo just as it is. ... Determining the time in terms of choosing the right method of propagation for a certain age requires that we view things through the insightful lens of Buddha wisdom.

In a lecture he gave on “Letter from Sado,” Mr. Toda discussed [this passage], saying: “We mustn’t misinterpret the meaning of the word *age*. Nichiren says that we should employ either *shoju* or *shakubuku* depending on the age or time, but many erroneously take this to mean that they can arbitrarily decide for themselves what age it is and correspondingly decide which method of propagation. For

instance, they think: ‘Since people in society are so critical of Nichiren Buddhism right now, let’s go with *shoju*,’ or ‘Since everyone’s rather quiet and not making any objection, let’s employ *shakubuku*.’ This is wrong. Age here refers to the Former Day, the Middle Day and the Latter Day of the Law. ... And the Latter Day is the time for *shakubuku* alone.”

Whenever and wherever we carry out activities, we must never forget to be guided by the spirit to share Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with others.<sup>5</sup>

### **Practitioners of the Correct Teaching Encounter Resentment and Persecution in the Latter Day**

**It is the nature of beasts to threaten the weak and fear the strong. Our contemporary scholars of the various schools are just like them. They despise a wise man without power, but fear evil rulers. They are no more than fawning retainers. Only by defeating a powerful enemy can one prove one’s real strength. (WND-1, 302)**

The “nature of beasts” refers to the essential character of the likes of Ryokan and other priests of established Buddhist schools during Nichiren’s day. They despised a person of wisdom (Nichiren) and feared evil rulers (the government authorities). This was the spiritual climate in Japan that led to the harsh crack-down on the Daishonin and his followers.

Nichiren, however, boldly confronted this great persecution, declaring, “Only by defeating a powerful enemy can one prove one’s real strength.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Defeating Injustice by Speaking Out for What Is Right**

**When an evil ruler in consort with priests of erroneous teachings tries to destroy the correct teaching and do away with a man of wisdom, those with the heart of a lion king are sure to attain Buddhahood. Like Nichiren, for**

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**example. I say this not out of arrogance, but because I am deeply committed to the correct teaching. (WND-1, 302)**

This describes a perverse alliance between political and religious authorities. The pattern of persecution against those who uphold the correct Buddhist teaching is the same in every age.

Amid a calamitous storm of persecution, Nichiren Daishonin forged ahead with the “heart of a lion king,” refusing to retreat a single step. To have the heart of a lion king means to calmly recognize the “nature of beasts” for what it is and to defeat it. In Buddhism, lion king is another name for a Buddha. Those who stand up with this heart—or spirit—are certain to attain Buddhahood. ...

We should keenly reflect on his profound commitment to the Law. When we “treasure the Law more highly than our own lives”—when we overcome attachment to our lesser selves and reveal our greater selves by basing our lives on the Law—we will find the courage to confidently speak out for what is right without fearing anyone. Herein lies the essence of faith. ...

To not begrudge one’s life and to live with the heart of a lion king are like two sides of a coin. Unhesitatingly committing yourself to the Law and having the lionhearted courage to battle the enemies of the Lotus Sutra are in essence the same thing. It seems to me the key message of the first half of “Letter from Sado” is that the Daishonin’s disciples should be lion kings, courageous individuals who embody the same selfless spirit as he does. Let us note how emphatically he drives this point home.<sup>7</sup>

## The Spirit to Cherish the Correct Teaching Gives Rise to Infinite Courage

Nichiren Daishonin’s assertions about his teaching or his practice are free of arrogance. He observes, “An arrogant person will always be

overcome with fear when meeting a strong enemy.” It is just as he says. The true nature of the arrogant is egotism. Being self-centered, when coming face to face with a powerful opponent, they are solely concerned with their own welfare. As a result, they are consumed by fear. In contrast, those with the heart of a lion king always live based on the Law. Because they are not obsessed with themselves, they have an endless supply of courage to take a firm stand against those who seek to destroy the Law.<sup>8</sup>

## Carrying Out the Practice That Accords With the Time and Capacity of the People

**Even a word or a phrase of the correct teaching will enable one to gain the way, if it suits the time and the capacity of the people. But though one studies a thousand sutras and ten thousand treatises, one will not attain Buddhahood if these teachings are unsuitable for the time and the people’s capacity. (WND-1, 302)**

*Shakubuku* means, with the spirit of a lion king, to denounce error and persist in speaking the truth. Nichiren declares that as long as people have the courage to do so, then even just a word or phrase of the correct teaching will confer the benefit of attaining Buddhahood. But without this fundamental spirit—that is to say, the shakubuku spirit based on cherishing the Law—people cannot reveal their enlightenment, even if they study a thousand sutras or ten thousand treatises. ...

“Follow in the footsteps of the teachers who embody the heart of a lion king! Disciples, win with the heart of a lion king!”—this is the motto for the eternal victory of Soka mentors and disciples who read “Letter from Sado” with their lives.<sup>9</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, p. 1.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

## Notes

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# OVERCOMING GREAT OBSTACLES IS THE KEY TO TRANSFORMING OUR KARMA

**The Ikeda Wisdom Academy** is an SGI-USA youth division movement to engage youth leaders in advanced study. While it is a youth leaders study program, all SGI-USA members are invited to use this section as a guide for their personal study of *The Teachings of Victory*, volume 1.

## Chapter 2

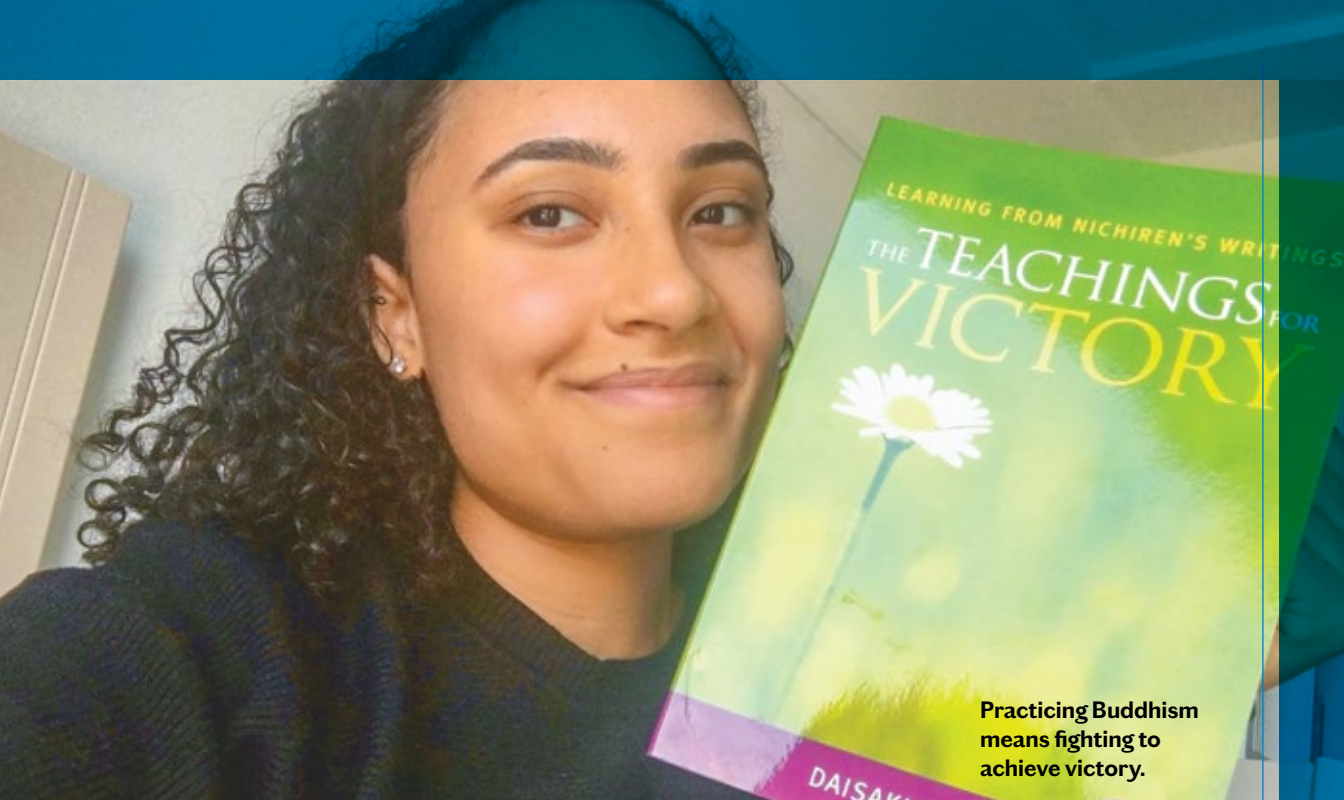
### “Letter from Sado”—Part 2 of 3

*Nichiren Daishonin wrote “Letter from Sado” amid intense persecution to encourage his disciples facing hardship and to transmit the spirit to safeguard the correct teaching of Buddhism to future generations. In this lecture, Ikeda Sensei dives into “Letter from Sado,” describing it as the “writing for the Soka Gakkai.”<sup>1</sup>*

For what purpose were we born? We were born to become happy and to help others do the same. Crucial to this goal is winning over our weaknesses. We practice Nichiren Buddhism so that we can triumph over ignorance, over our karma, over obstacles and devilish functions, and over the three powerful enemies. Buddhism teaches that we each inherently possess the wisdom and power to win in all areas of our lives. It is a philosophy for victory. We must engage in “Buddhist study for winning” to make this hope-filled philosophy the source of successive victories in our lives. ...

In the section we are studying this time, Nichiren describes the lionhearted actions he took to defeat evil rulers and erroneous priests. At the same time, he uses himself as an example to drive home to his disciples the key to faith for changing one’s karma.<sup>2</sup>

**The Fulfillment of the Prophecies in “On Establishing the Correct Teaching”**



**Neither non-Buddhists nor the enemies of Buddhism can destroy the correct teaching of the Thus Come One, but the Buddha's disciples definitely can. As a sutra says, only worms born of the lion's body feed on the lion. A person of great fortune will never be ruined by enemies, but may be ruined by those who are close. The current battle is what the Medicine Master Sutra means by "the calamity of revolt within one's own domain." The Benevolent Kings Sutra states, "Once the sages have departed, then the seven disasters are certain to arise." ("Letter from Sado," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 302)**

The fundamental cause of the three calamities and seven disasters,<sup>3</sup> which include internal strife, rests with a country losing sight of the correct teaching. When erroneous priests appear and distort the teaching, Buddhism is destroyed from within. Nichiren declares that evil priests who slander the Law are an influence that destroys Buddhism, likening them to "worms born of the lion's body."

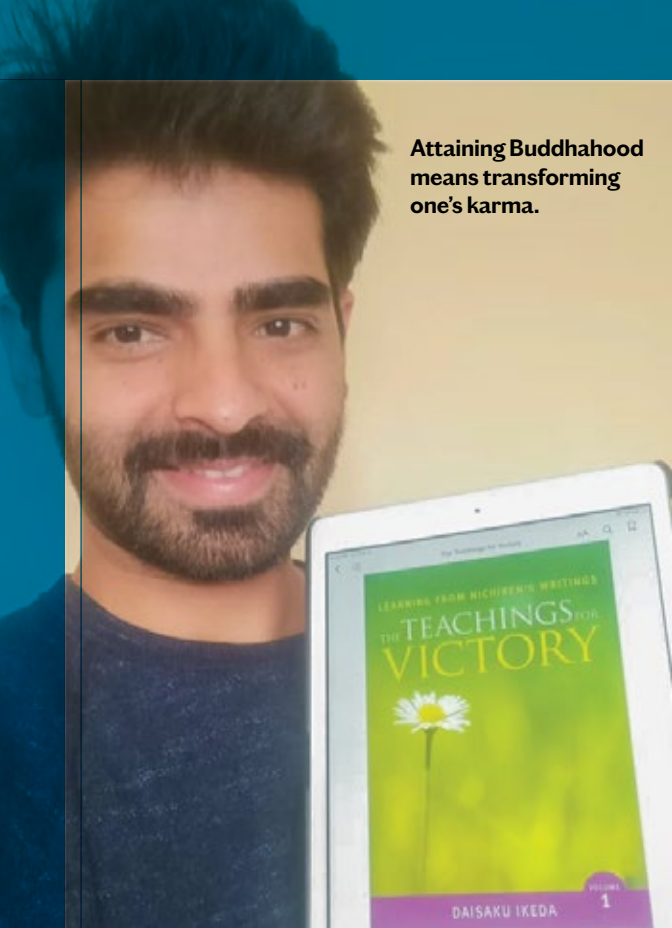
Confused values stemming from erroneous

ideas and beliefs activate and strengthen the workings of the three or four evil paths in people's lives. Consequently, ruled by anger, greed, foolishness and jealousy, people persecute and try to drive from society those of wisdom who spread the correct teaching. That is the reality of the Latter Day of the Law. When wise individuals are ousted through the collusion of evil rulers and errant priests, a brutish and animalistic spirit pervades society. As a result, internal strife occurs, and the people suffer.

Unless we view things with the eye of the Buddha and the eye of the Law, we cannot truly apprehend the deep-seated reasons for persecutions directed against the correct teaching or the fundamental cause for upheavals and disturbances in society. Practicing Buddhism means fighting to achieve victory. Therefore, we have to stand up with the heart of a lion king and win.<sup>4</sup>

### **Repaying the Boundless Debt Owed to the Mentor**

**Ignorant people wonder why Nichiren is persecuted by the rulers if he is truly a wise man. Yet it is all just as I**



Attaining Buddhahood means transforming one's karma.

## Working To Establish the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land

Nichiren is father and mother to the ruling house and is like a Buddha or an arhat to this age. The sovereign and his subjects who rejoice at my exile are truly the most shameless and pitiable of all. Those slanderous priests who have been bewailing the exposure of their errors may be overjoyed for the moment, but eventually they will suffer no less than myself and my followers. ... The demon who will destroy the ruling clan has already entered the country. This is the meaning of the passage from the Lotus Sutra that reads, “Evil demons will take possession of others.” (WND-1, 303)

**expected. King Ajatashatru tormented his father and mother, for which he was hailed by the six royal ministers. When Devadatta killed an arhat and caused the Buddha to bleed, Kokalika and others were delighted. (WND-1, 303)**

Next, Nichiren Daishonin refers to the common criticism people made that, if he were truly a wise person, why then had he been persecuted by the authorities and exiled? This criticism is founded on two assumptions: that a wise person would foresee the threat of persecution and avert it, and that a person of genuine wisdom would surely be respected by society. Nichiren, however, dismisses such views as the thinking of ignorant people.

“It is all just as I expected,” he says, indicating that he had known from the outset he would be persecuted. Buddhas invariably encounter great obstacles and opposition. This is an unchanging principle of Buddhism.<sup>5</sup>

“Nichiren is father and mother to the ruling house”—what a magnificent declaration! Nichiren Daishonin was not in the least afraid of the powerful. Rather, he boldly proclaims himself to be the father and mother of the Hojo clan that had tried to execute him and had now sentenced him to exile. This was the immense life condition of the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

As to the fate of the sovereign and subjects who persecuted him and rejoiced over his misfortunes, Nichiren asserts that they are bound to experience great suffering. This principle is the same in any age. ...

Nichiren further declares, “The demon who will destroy the ruling clan has already entered the country.” Rejoicing at a person of justice being tormented is a hallmark of a society in which people have been possessed by evil demons. This means the land is filled with powerful devilish functions that skew people’s faculties of judgment.

Nothing is more fearful than misguided ideas and philosophies. By working to establish the correct teaching for the peace of the land, we can transform society for the better. This is the spirit of Nichiren Buddhism.<sup>6</sup>

## The Great Struggle To Transform the Karma of Humankind

**Since my heart believes in the Lotus Sutra, I do not fear even Brahma or Shakra, but my body is still that of an animal. With such disparity between my body and my mind, no wonder the foolish despise me. Without doubt, when compared to my body, my mind shines like the moon or like gold. Who knows what slander I may have committed in the past? ... Perhaps I am descended from those who contemptuously persecuted Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. ... It is impossible to fathom one's karma. (WND-1, 303)**

Attaining Buddhahood means transforming one's karma. By challenging persecution or other difficult obstacles, we can overcome our karma from previous existences. To persevere with the selfless dedication to Buddhist practice is itself the path to eternal happiness. Great hardships lead directly to changing our karma. That is why we must always remember to have a fighting spirit. Overcoming karma is in fact no simple matter. Hence, Nichiren teaches the importance of being steadfast in our Buddhist practice. Above all, he urges that we be resolved to battle our karma to the very end. ...

Bodhisattva Never Disparaging bowed in reverence to the Buddha nature inherent in people's lives and faithfully practiced the principles expounded in the Lotus Sutra, a teaching of universal enlightenment. As a result, he was cursed and abused, as well as beaten with sticks and pelted with tiles and stones (see LSOC, 309); but such persecution was in fact retribution for his own past offenses. The Lotus Sutra goes on to explain that by persisting in his practice of revering people even amid persecution, he could expiate those offenses and ultimately attain Buddhahood. ...

Returning to the text, the Daishonin emphasizes that his own body is "fundamentally that of an animal." Nevertheless, he infers that, owing to his unwavering faith in the Lotus Sutra, his mind shines with a luminous nobility

and is filled with an inner dignity and confidence that make him unafraid of anything. ...

"It is impossible to fathom one's karma," he says, implying that he must have committed unimaginably grave offenses in past lifetimes. Nichiren was uncompromising with himself. He gazed unflinchingly at the true reality of his life. And, through his rigorous spiritual struggle, he opened the universal path by which all people, all humanity, can change their karma.<sup>7</sup>

### Cultivating One's Life Is the Supreme Benefit

**Iron, when heated in the flames and pounded, becomes a fine sword. Worthies and sages are tested by abuse. My present exile is not because of any secular crime. It is solely so that I may expiate in this lifetime my past grave offenses and be freed in the next from the three evil paths. (WND-1, 303)**

Developing inner strength and fortitude is the supreme benefit of practicing Nichiren Buddhism. A thoroughly forged life ensures our eternal happiness. The Daishonin says that his present ordeal "is not because of any secular crime," even going so far as to assert that he was exiled solely so that he could change his karma in this lifetime. ...

Nichiren vigorously encourages his embattled followers as if shaking them by the shoulders: "You have to change your karma! The power to do so exists within you! Don't run away from hardships! True victory means winning over your own weaknesses! Great suffering produces great character! Become an enduring victor!"<sup>8</sup>

### A Land Pervaded With Slander

**The Parinirvana Sutra states: "Those who enter the monastic order, don clerical garments, and make a show of**

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

**studying my teachings will exist in ages to come. Being lazy and remiss, they will slander the correct and equal sutras. You should be aware that all these people are followers of the non-Buddhist doctrines of today.” Those who read this passage should reflect deeply on their own practice. The Buddha is saying that those of our contemporary priests who wear clerical garments, but are idle and negligent, were disciples of the six non-Buddhist teachers in his day. (WND-1, 303)**

Here, Nichiren Daishonin shifts his focus to the karmic retribution that will await those persecuting him and his followers—in other words, the priests who expound erroneous teachings and the people throughout the land whose minds have been poisoned by those teachings. ...

According to the Parinirvana Sutra, corrupt priests who are lazy and remiss, and who slander the correct teaching of the Lotus Sutra are the spiritual descendants of those who upheld non-Buddhist doctrines and criticized Shakyamuni’s teachings during his lifetime. Nichiren then goes on to refute the positions of various Buddhist priests of his own time who denigrate the Lotus Sutra. What they all have in common is the self-righteous attitude to groundlessly malign this supreme teaching, turning people away from it in favor of their own doctrines. The Daishonin asserts that these priests must be “followers of the six non-Buddhist teachers” of Shakyamuni’s day. ...

What lies at the root of [the negative tendency to disbelieve and slander the correct teaching]? It is the deluded state of mind unable to comprehend the Lotus Sutra’s spirit of respect and reverence for all. In modern terms, it means disregard for the sanctity of life, for human equality and the infinite potential of each person.

Nichiren keenly observed that the erroneous priests of his day and their followers, despite

lacking true insight into their own lives, rejected the correct teaching that would have enabled them to develop such insight and denigrated anyone who practiced it.<sup>9</sup>

## Buddhism Exists for People’s Happiness

**Today, when I expose people’s slanders in an effort to save them they deny it with every excuse possible and argue back with Honen’s words about barring the gates to the Lotus Sutra. From Nembutsu believers this is hardly surprising, but even priests of the Tendai and True Word schools actively support them. (WND-1, 304)**

Fine temples, solemn traditions and formalities, and high social standing in society are all rendered meaningless once the spirit to vigorously defend the correct teaching is lost. In that event, authoritarianism sets in and corruption and decline ensue, leaving only a hollow shell of the original intention of the teachings.

Buddhism exists for the sake of people’s happiness. Erroneous teachings and interpretations, however, can plunge people into suffering and misery. To turn a blind eye to such misleading ideas and forget the desire to guide all people to enlightenment is to become an enemy of the people. This cannot be condoned. Nichiren’s practice of shakubuku—of refuting error and revealing the truth—is a struggle to restore the authentic spirit of Buddhism, reviving the true compassionate spirit of Shakyamuni Buddha and elevating the life condition of all people.<sup>10</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, p. 1.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

3. The three calamities and seven disasters are catastrophes described in various sutras that lead to the destruction of human society and the world and are generally held to result

from slander of the correct teaching.

4. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, pp. 25–26.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–29.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 29–31.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 31–32.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.

## Notes

[illegible]

# DEDICATING OUR LIVES TO THE GREAT PATH OF MENTOR AND DISCIPLE

**The Ikeda Wisdom Academy** is an SGI-USA youth division movement to engage youth leaders in advanced study. While it is a youth leaders study program, all SGI-USA members are invited to use this section as a guide for their personal study of *The Teachings of Victory*, volume 1.

## Chapter 3

### “Letter from Sado”—Part 3 of 3

*Nichiren Daishonin wrote “Letter from Sado” amid intense persecution to encourage his disciples facing hardship and to transmit the spirit to safeguard the correct teaching of Buddhism to future generations. In this lecture, Ikeda Sensei dives into “Letter from Sado,” describing it as the “writing for the Soka Gakkai.”<sup>1</sup>*

### A Teaching of Empowerment

In “**Letter from Sado**,” Nichiren Daishonin outlines the importance of walking the great path of mentor and disciple throughout one’s life. His message is that, just as he has forged ahead in every struggle with the heart of a lion king, his disciples should do likewise, for through such efforts, they will definitely attain Buddhahood. His concern for the well-being of his disciples pervades this writing from beginning to end. He seeks to convey to them that it is precisely in the midst of tremendous hardships that they can fundamentally transform their karma and secure the way to enlightenment. And he calls on them to follow his example of personally engaging in that crucial struggle.<sup>2</sup>

### Buddhism Seeks to Free People From the Sufferings of Karma

One who climbs a high mountain must eventually descend. One who slights





SGI-USA national youth leaders lecture on the Ikeda Wisdom Academy study webinar, March 2021.

another will in turn be despised. ... One who laughs at those who cherish the precepts faithfully will be born a commoner and meet with persecution from one's sovereign. This is the general law of cause and effect. ("Letter from Sado," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 305)

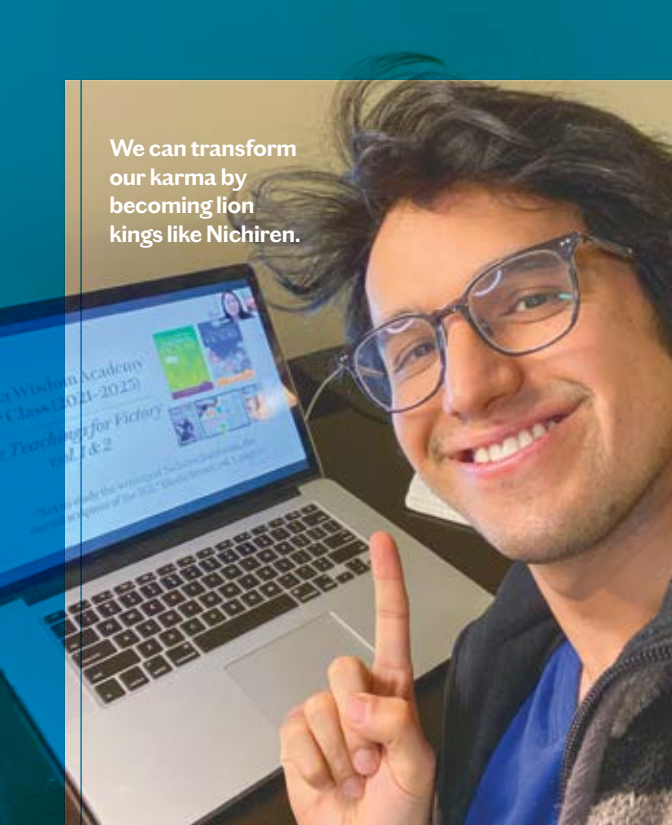
The word *karma* derives from the pre-Buddhist Indian word *karman*, meaning "action." In ancient India, liberation from the suffering of negative karma was thought to require special rites performed by priests on behalf of individuals who would then have to wait for the gods to grant salvation.

By contrast, Buddhism radically changed the concept of karma. It rejected the view that one's destiny is influenced by gods or transcendent beings. As an internally directed teaching—a philosophy that teaches that enlightenment comes from within—Buddhism holds that we create our own destiny. Our present self is the result of our past choices and actions. Our future self will be determined by what we do in the present—whether we accumulate "good karma" or "evil karma."<sup>5</sup>

## The Causality of the Mystic Law Is the Basis for Transforming Our Karma

My sufferings, however, are not ascribable to this causal law. In the past I despised the votaries of the Lotus Sutra. I also ridiculed the sutra itself, sometimes with exaggerated praise and other times with contempt. ... This is why I have experienced the aforementioned eight kinds of sufferings. Usually these sufferings appear one at a time, on into the boundless future, but Nichiren has denounced the enemies of the Lotus Sutra so severely that all eight have descended at once. ... This is what the sutra means when it states, "It is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law." (WND-1, 305)

Nichiren Daishonin here reveals a more fundamental causality of life. He explains that the reason he has undergone the eight kinds of retribution is not due to the law of karmic retribution, or the general law of cause and effect, as outlined above. Rather, he attributes it to past slander of the Law in the form of denigrating



We can transform  
our karma by  
becoming lion  
kings like Nichiren.

the votaries of the Lotus Sutra. ... It is because of this fundamental negative karma formed through having attacked those who uphold this supreme teaching that he has experienced the eight kinds of retribution. He indicates that at the heart of all negative causes that bring suffering to people is slander of the Law.

Therefore, by dedicating ourselves as votaries of the Lotus Sutra—battling the enemies of the sutra and propagating the Mystic Law—we can break free from our negative karma and accumulate fundamental positive karma in our lives.

What Nichiren is explaining here is the causality for attaining Buddhahood—eliminating fundamental evil and powerfully manifesting the world of Buddhahood, the ninth consciousness existing at the deepest level of life. This is the causality of the Mystic Law implicit in the Lotus Sutra—namely, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Even if we are presently suffering some form of karmic retribution, by basing ourselves on this causality of the Mystic Law, we can instantly bring forth the vast life state of Buddhahood. In other words, we can only truly change our karma through the Mystic Law of the simultaneity of cause and effect, which enables us to actualize an inner transformation based on the principle that the nine worlds and

the world of Buddhahood are mutually inherent—that is, the nine worlds possess the potential for Buddhahood, while the world of Buddhahood retains the nine worlds. ...

Highlighting the difference between these two types of causality, Nichiren says, “Usually these sufferings appear one at a time, on into the boundless future, but Nichiren has denounced the enemies of the Lotus Sutra so severely that all eight have descended at once.” He clarifies the kind of Buddhist practice that allows us to make fundamental positive causes. This is none other than the practice of *shakubuku*—correcting false views and awakening others to the truth of Buddhism; specifically expressed here as “denouncing the enemies of the Lotus Sutra”—an action that embodies the causality of the Mystic Law and enables us to change our karma. ...

“It is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law”—this means we can transform our karma by becoming lion kings like Nichiren, earnestly safeguarding the Law by speaking out against those who attack the Lotus Sutra. In other words, Nichiren assures us, through the practice of *shakubuku*, any painful karmic retribution will vanish “instantly” (see “Lessening One’s Karmic Retribution,” WND-1, 199). Moreover, we can establish the life state of Buddhahood.

For us, “the blessings obtained by protecting the Law” refers to the benefit we gain by struggling for the sake of kosen-rufu together with our mentor.<sup>4</sup>

### The Principle of the Oneness of Mentor and Disciple Found in the Lotus Sutra

**Were it not for the rulers and ministers who now persecute me, I would be unable to expiate my past sins of slandering the correct teaching.**

**Nichiren is like Bodhisattva Never Disparaging of old, and the people of this day are like the four categories of Buddhists who disparaged and cursed him. Though the people are different, the cause is the same. Though different people kill their parents, they all fall**

**into the same hell of incessant suffering. Since Nichiren is making the same cause as Never Disparaging, how could it be that he would not become a Buddha equal to Shakyamuni? (WND-1, 305)**

**The appearance of the** three powerful enemies constitutes proof that the votaries of the Lotus Sutra are living the teachings of the sutra. It is just such persecution or opposition that enables these votaries to change their karma and attain Buddhahood. ... He further indicates that making continued efforts to spread the Law based on the conviction that persecution or opposition directly enables votaries to change their karma accords with the principle by which Bodhisattva Never Disparaging attained Buddhahood, as described in “The Bodhisattva Never Disparaging,” the sutra’s 20th chapter.

Never Disparaging respected and venerated all people and as a result was persecuted by the four categories of Buddhists, or four kinds of believers—monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. Through encountering unceasing harassment, however, Never Disparaging expiated his negative karma from past existences. The Lotus Sutra describes the benefit he received “when his offenses had been wiped out.” Namely, he purified his six faculties or sense organs and attained the Buddha way, while in a future lifetime he was reborn as Shakyamuni Buddha.

Of course, our ordinary lives may seem quite different from the life of a great predecessor like the Daishonin. That only stands to reason, because we are different individuals, with our own circumstances, personalities, abilities and so on. Nonetheless, if we make the same kind of causes—pursue the same practice and actions—as the courageous votaries of the Lotus Sutra who have gone before us, then we can achieve the same effects or results. This is a view of causality based on the path of mentor and disciple.

While disciples may feel unequal to the mentor in terms of wisdom or compassion, so long as they maintain the same commitment, ideals and dedicated efforts as the mentor, they can definitely attain the mentor’s same expansive life state.

This is the path to attaining Buddhahood based on the spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple found in the Lotus Sutra.<sup>5</sup>

## **The Fearful Nature of the Devil King of the Sixth Heaven**

**Aside from these people, there are also those who appeared to believe in me, but began doubting when they saw me persecuted. They not only have forsaken the Lotus Sutra, but also actually think themselves wise enough to instruct me. The pitiful thing is that these perverse people must suffer in the Avichi hell even longer than the Nembutsu believers. (WND-1, 306)**

**Nichiren Daishonin explains that** arrogant disciples pose the greatest problem. For the offense of erstwhile followers who do not merely abandon their faith but, out of an inflated opinion of themselves, denigrate their teacher and fellow practitioners is far more serious than that of those who reject and slander the correct teaching from the outset. Their retribution will also be more severe.

Moreover, disciples who have allowed their lives to be consumed by fundamental darkness and ignorance will seek to sway others, potentially causing many to stop practicing. Such is the fearful nature of the devil king of the sixth heaven. In “The Workings of Brahma and Shakra,” Nichiren remarks, “Those possessed by a great devil will, once they succeed in persuading a believer to recant, use that person as a means for making many others abandon their faith” (WND-1, 800). Even though such individuals had the fortune to encounter and take faith in the Mystic Law, they ultimately allowed their lives to be controlled by the devil king of the sixth heaven. The fundamental reason can be traced to arrogance, the essence of which is jealousy and contempt for the mentor. ...

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

The Daishonin awakened to the Law that makes it possible for all people to achieve enlightenment. In terms of the fundamental path of attaining Buddhahood, the teaching of Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day, is absolute. As a teacher, he dedicated himself to fostering and training disciples, and therefore his instruction was often very strict. Some, however, failed to understand his heart and turned against him. Yet no matter how those perverse individuals might have maligned his name, Nichiren remained unperturbed.<sup>6</sup>

## A Promise of Victory to Disciples

**The renegade disciples say, “Though the priest Nichiren is our teacher, he is too forceful. We will spread the Lotus Sutra in a more peaceful way.” In so asserting, they are being as ridiculous as fireflies laughing at the sun and moon, an anthill belittling Mount Hua, wells and brooks despising the river and the ocean, or a magpie mocking a phoenix. Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. (WND-1, 306)**

**Nichiren Daishonin closes the** main body of the text of “Letter from Sado” with a passage expressing the towering conviction of a lion king.

Here, he points out that the arrogant will try to add their personal, arbitrary views to the Buddha’s teaching. ...

Among Nichiren’s disciples were similarly arrogant and ignorant people who looked down on him and said disparagingly: “Though the priest Nichiren is our teacher, he is too forceful. We will spread the Lotus Sutra in a more peaceful way.” While it might appear at first that they maintained faith in the Lotus Sutra, they had in fact lost sight of the sutra’s essence. Consequently, they could not appreciate the true greatness of their teacher, Nichiren Daishonin, in propagating the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day.

From the viewpoint of Buddhism, the Sado

Exile and other persecutions were ultimately the result of the devil king of the sixth heaven having entered the lives of the ruler and other powerful figures in order to drive a wedge between Nichiren and his followers. When the bonds uniting mentor and disciple are healthy and strong, the power and influence of the Mystic Law increases, the momentum for the eternal perpetuation of the correct teaching strengthens and spreads, and the great path leading to happiness and peace for all humanity—the fundamental goal of Buddhism—opens wide. The devil king, therefore, seeks to prevent this at any cost.

In that sense, the disciples who criticized Nichiren while avoiding hardship themselves had, despite their seeming reasonableness, been utterly defeated by the devil king. They had surrendered the all-important spirit of mentor and disciple to the devilish nature, to their inner fundamental darkness.<sup>7</sup>

## The Victory of Disciples Is the Victory of Soka

**For me, “Letter from Sado” is** a writing of the victory of mentor and disciple, which President Toda and I studied and used as inspiration in overcoming adversity. I vowed that in order to actualize his vision, I would first do my best and take full responsibility.

Toward that end, I resolved to develop my district. I started by visiting members at their homes, holding discussion meetings and stirring a great groundswell of propagation. This is because the future victory of kosen-rufu lies in expanding the unparalleled realm of mentor and disciple of Soka outward from our own districts.

To engage in one-to-one dialogue to convey the greatness of Nichiren Buddhism, to courageously share the noble path of mentor and disciple with others—this is what it means in modern terms to put into practice the spirit of “Letter from Sado.”<sup>8</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, p. 1.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 48–49.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 52–53.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 53–54.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56.

## Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study *for*  
SGI-USA Youth Division

# OVERCOME ALL OBSTACLES THROUGH STEADFAST FAITH!

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## Chapter 4

### “Letter to the Brothers” —Part 1 of 3

*Nichiren Daishonin wrote “Letter to the Brothers” to instill in his followers the spirit to triumph over all devilish functions and attain Buddhahood. In this lecture, Ikeda Sensei uncovers the “formula for total victory”<sup>1</sup> that Nichiren outlines in this writing.*

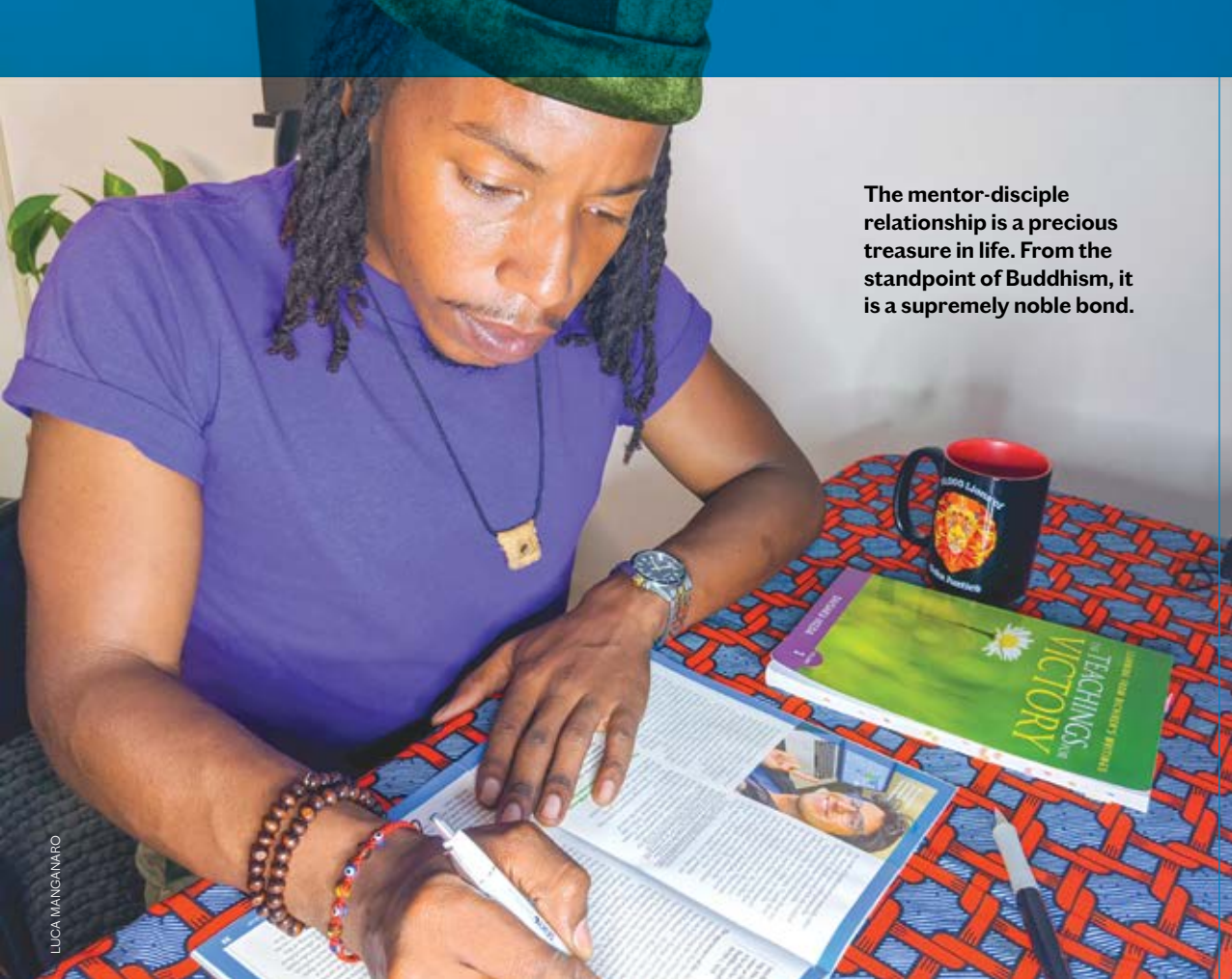
**“The great undertaking of kosen-rufu** is a struggle against devilish functions. We cannot afford to cower at their onslaughts. If we allow them to defeat us, humanity will be forever enveloped in darkness.” This was the powerful

declaration of my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda—words that carry an important message for posterity.

Mr. Toda never retreated a single step in battling malicious or destructive forces that sought to block the flow of kosen-rufu; he fought on, determined to put a stop to them. The happiness of all humanity was his goal. Because he wished to rid the world of suffering and misery, he strove tirelessly to vanquish all negative forces that inflicted pain and torment on people. To the very end of his life, he led the way as supreme commander of kosen-rufu.

• • •

“Letter to the Brothers” is a writing that my mentor and I studied together as a crucial text for learning the correct attitude in faith. In it, Nichiren Daishonin teaches his followers to triumph boldly over all devilish functions—whether they appear as the three obstacles and four devils, or as the workings of the devil king of the sixth heaven—and attain Buddhahood. He urges them to do so by striving in faith with the same commitment as his and uniting solidly with their fellow believers.<sup>2</sup>



LUCA MANGANO

The mentor-disciple relationship is a precious treasure in life. From the standpoint of Buddhism, it is a supremely noble bond.

## Great Obstacles Are the Direct Path to Transforming Our Karma and Attaining Buddhahood

The Lotus Sutra is the heart of the eighty thousand teachings and the core of the twelve divisions of the scriptures. The Buddhas throughout the three existences attain enlightenment because they take this sutra as their teacher. The Buddhas of the ten directions guide living beings with the teaching of the one vehicle as their eyes. (“Letter to the Brothers,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 493)

We can surmise it is because of the gravity of the brothers’ situation that Nichiren begins by outlining the fundamental significance of faith in this way. He teaches that to deeply recognize

the supreme value of upholding the Lotus Sutra results in a conviction and joy that produces the strength to overcome any hardship.

He then discusses from various perspectives the serious consequences of abandoning faith in the Lotus Sutra. Forsaking this teaching constitutes such a grave offense because “the Lotus Sutra is the eye of all the Buddhas. It is the original teacher of Shakyamuni Buddha himself, the lord of teachings” (WND-1, 494). In other words, to discard one’s faith is to discard the ultimate teaching.

On a deeper level, abandoning the Lotus Sutra amounts to rejecting the fundamental principles the sutra embodies, such as universal enlightenment, respect for all people and harmonious coexistence. Doing so, therefore, causes the three poisons—greed, anger and foolishness—which prompt people to act in opposition to the ultimate Law—to intensify in people’s lives until eventually darkness

dominates and they are destined to wander through the evil paths of existence.

The Daishonin seeks to strongly impress upon the Ikegami brothers an understanding of the Lotus Sutra's paramount importance, explaining that to discard one word or even one brushstroke (see WND-1, 494) would constitute a serious offense.<sup>3</sup>

### **It Is Difficult to Encounter a True Teacher**

**Moreover, it is extremely difficult to meet a person who expounds this sutra exactly as the sutra directs. It is even more difficult than for a one-eyed turtle to find a piece of floating sandalwood, or for someone to hang Mount Sumeru from the sky with the fiber from a lotus stem. (WND-1, 495)**

**The person or teacher mentioned** here is the votary of the Lotus Sutra, a reference specifically to Nichiren. It is something truly extraordinary to have encountered the Daishonin in this saha world during this evil age of the Latter Day, which is defiled by the five impurities.

Likewise, it is equally difficult for those living in the world after the Daishonin's passing to meet an authentic leader of Buddhism who propagates the Mystic Law, the essence of the Lotus Sutra, exactly as he teaches. For me, there is no greater joy than having been born in this world and becoming the disciple of President Toda, a great teacher of kosen-rufu. ...

The mentor-disciple relationship is a precious treasure in life. From the standpoint of Buddhism, it is a supremely noble bond. ...

This is because the Law only comes to life in the lives of those who practice it, and its real worth only manifests through their behavior and actions. Unless there are people who

correctly uphold the Buddha's teaching, who practice true to its spirit, nothing of value will be created through that teaching.

Having a teacher in faith is vital to practicing Buddhism correctly. And it is by disciples acting with the same spirit as their mentor that the Law is transmitted. The mentor-disciple relationship is a cornerstone of Nichiren Buddhism.<sup>4</sup>

### **Beware of Negative Influences**

**Since this is so, believers in the Lotus Sutra should fear those who attempt to obstruct their practice more than they fear bandits, burglars, night raiders, tigers, wolves, or lions—even more than invasion now by the Mongols. (WND-1, 495)**

**“Those who attempt to obstruct one's practice”** are known as “negative influences.” What makes them so frightening is that they can corrupt people's minds and destroy their faith. If practitioners of the Lotus Sutra allow themselves to be swayed by negative influences, to be deceived by evil teachers, thereby losing their commitment to the correct path of faith, they cannot attain the Buddha way.

Conversely, if practitioners remain steadfast in their commitment, they can eventually, through the power of faith, surmount even the greatest difficulties. It is really true, as Nichiren often says, that the heart is most important. To forge the inner strength to withstand negative influences, we must have the wisdom to discern that they are devilish functions and courageously battle them.<sup>5</sup>

### **Faith Is a Struggle Against the Workings of the Devil King**

Having a teacher in faith is vital to practicing Buddhism correctly. And it is **by disciples acting with the same spirit as their mentor that the Law is transmitted.**

**This world is the domain of the devil king of the sixth heaven. All of its people have been under the rule of this devil king since time without beginning. Not only has he built the prison of the twenty-five realms of existence within the six paths and confined all humankind within it, but also he has made wives and children into shackles, and parents and sovereigns into nets that block off the skies. To deceive the true mind of the Buddha nature, he causes the people to drink the wine of greed, anger, and foolishness, and feeds them nothing but dishes of evil that leave them prostrate on the ground of the three evil paths. When he happens on persons who have turned their hearts to goodness, he acts to obstruct them. (WND-1, 495–96)**

**In this and the following passages,** Nichiren indicates that the workings of the devil king of the sixth heaven are the evil influences that we should fear most as practitioners. ...

The devil king represents negative forces that manipulate at will the lives of others, that obstruct good and that cause people to fall into evil paths. Devilish functions deprive believers of the Lotus Sutra of the benefit of their Buddhist practice and cut off the flow of wisdom in their lives. They destroy the roots of goodness people have cultivated, causing them to transmigrate through the six paths of the threefold world. The forces of the devil king also devise various schemes to hinder the progress of the Buddha's forces. The Daishonin lists three specific examples of the insidious workings of the devil king: 1) making wives and children into shackles; 2) making parents and sovereigns into nets that block off the skies; and 3) causing people to drink the wine of greed, anger and foolishness to cloud the true mind of their Buddha nature. These three types of hindrances correspond to the three obstacles—karma, retribution and earthly desires.

In the many momentous persecutions that beset him, Nichiren was actually fighting the

negative forces personified by the devil king of the sixth heaven.

In another writing, he says, “The devil king of the sixth heaven has roused the ten kinds of troops and, in the midst of the sea of the sufferings of birth and death, is at war with the votary of the Lotus Sutra to stop him from taking possession of and to wrest away from him this impure land where both ordinary people and sages dwell” (“The Great Battle,” WND-2, 465).

The devil king, commanding his ten armies, wages battle to prevent the votary of the Lotus Sutra from gaining influence in the saha world. And if the votary should succeed in spite of all of these attacks, the devil king will still make every effort to wrest back control. Fully aware of this, Nichiren declares: “It has been twenty or more years now since I found myself in that situation and began the great battle. Not once have I thought of retreat” (“The Great Battle,” WND-2, 465). In other words, his life was a continuous struggle against the forces of the devil king. Kosen-rufu will forever entail an unrelenting struggle between Buddhahood and the negative functions inherent in life.

The SGI is the organization that has inherited the true spirit of Nichiren Daishonin. As a result, the more dynamically our noble Soka movement has grown, the more intense have been the onslaughts of the devil king and other negative forces.

President Toda instructed: “Fight fearlessly against devilish functions! Don't let them cause mischief! Don't ever give in to them!”<sup>6</sup>

## Recognizing Negative Influences

**He is determined to make believers in the Lotus Sutra fall into evil, but if he is unsuccessful, he tries to deceive them gradually by luring them toward the Flower Garland Sutra, which resembles the Lotus Sutra. ...**

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

**This is what the Lotus Sutra means when it says in its fifth volume, “Evil demons will take possession of others.” (WND-1, 496)**

**The devil king of the sixth heaven** resorts to any and all means to prevent those who believe in the Lotus Sutra from attaining Buddhahood. As a simple illustration of this, Nichiren Daishonin cites the actions of priests of various Buddhist schools, asserting that they seek to gradually deceive believers by luring them away from the Lotus Sutra with something that “resembles” it. ...

Since these are eminent priests respected in society, people fail to discern their true nature. On the contrary, they esteem these misguided individuals and prize their teachings, allowing “poison to penetrate deeply into their lives” without realizing it and ultimately losing their “true minds.” This causes them to turn away from the Lotus Sutra and even denigrate it. This is the frightening outcome of a society in which people have succumbed to negative influences. People’s normal sensibilities at some point become numbed, and the very fabric of society starts to decay. Yet, people cannot understand the cause for this.

The votary of the Lotus Sutra endeavors to teach people the truth about the poison that has deeply penetrated their lives, but those he seeks to teach, being deluded, perceive him as a villain. Nevertheless, using the power of words and reasoning based on the Lotus Sutra, he strives to reveal the ugly face of slander of the Law and expose for all to see the true nature of erroneous teachers and other negative influences. ...

[Nichiren] did not fear criticism or abuse. We even find him proclaiming in other writings: “Let others hate [me] if they will” (see “The Unity of Husband and Wife,” WND-1, 464), and “Let them say what they will” (“The Embankments of Faith,” WND-1, 626). His unshakable commitment and resolve show him to be a true votary of the Lotus Sutra. Because without this resolute spirit, one cannot battle the negative forces inherent in life personified by the devil king of the sixth heaven.<sup>7</sup>

## Defeating Fundamental Darkness Through the Power of Faith

**The great demon of fundamental darkness can even enter the bodies of bodhisattvas who have reached near perfect enlightenment and prevent them from attaining the Lotus Sutra’s blessing of perfect enlightenment. How easily can he then obstruct those in any lower stage of practice! (WND-1, 496)**

**Up to this point**, Nichiren Daishonin has clarified that the “evil friends” or negative influences that obstruct people’s faith in the Lotus Sutra are personified by “men of wisdom possessed by evil demons” and that these influences are actually the workings of the devil king of the sixth heaven.

But if they are people of wisdom, how then can the devil king of the sixth heaven take possession of them? The reason is that they are not defeated from without but from within; they are defeated by the devilish nature known as fundamental darkness innate in life. In another writing, Nichiren states, “Fundamental darkness manifests itself as the devil king of the sixth heaven” (“The Treatment of Illness,” WND-1, 1113). ...

To remain fearless no matter what happens, to refuse to succumb to darkness or negativity—**this is the spirit of faith needed to battle devilish functions.**

The devil king of the sixth heaven is the fundamental negative impulse that resides in the depths of people's lives. This devilish nature or negativity gives rise to the desire to control others or even take others' lives and causes destruction and war. To conquer this devilish nature, we need to bring forth our inherent Dharma nature, or fundamental nature of enlightenment, which exists along with our fundamental darkness. Toward that end, it is vital that we continue striving in faith, practicing Nichiren Buddhism ourselves and sharing it with others.

In one of his lectures, President Toda commented on the devil king of the sixth heaven being inscribed on the Gohonzon: "The devil king of the sixth heaven is depicted on the Gohonzon. So when we pray to the Gohonzon, the devil king obeys the Gohonzon. The devil king will issue orders keeping the leaders of his devilish forces in check. The original enlightened potential of the devil king is manifested through the Gohonzon. Indeed, all entities depicted on the Gohonzon display their innate dignified attributes when illuminated by Nam-myoho-enge-kyo."

Continuing, he went so far as to say, "The devil king of the sixth heaven then changes for the first time into an entity that helps and benefits others." ...

In *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, Nichiren states, "The single word 'belief' is the sharp sword with which one confronts and overcomes fundamental darkness or ignorance" (pp. 119–20). ... This means persevering and challenging ourselves in faith throughout our lives. It means seeing devils for what they are and constantly bringing forth the fundamental nature of enlightenment from within. Through faith that grows stronger day by day and month after month (see "On Persecutions Befalling the Sage," WND-1, 997), we can, at a fundamental level, win over the workings of our darkness or ignorance.

This is also why it is important to have a mentor in faith to give us correct direction. President Toda often told me: "If you are a true disciple of mine, then you must carry on in my

**The mentor-disciple spirit is a powerful driving force for defeating any form of devilish function.**



YVONNE NG

footsteps to the end without fearing hardship. You must never be defeated." Day after day, I have fought on, just as my mentor instructed, and I have overcome all devilish functions.

The mentor-disciple spirit is a powerful driving force for defeating any form of devilish function. By contrast, those who lose sight of this spirit and forget their debt of gratitude to their mentor will become increasingly consumed by fundamental darkness until they eventually turn into subjects or followers of the devil king.

To remain fearless no matter what happens, to refuse to succumb to darkness or negativity—this is the spirit of faith needed to battle devilish functions. With this spirit, we can definitely prevail. This is the secret to a victorious life.<sup>8</sup>

#### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, p. 63.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 61–63.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 65–66.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 66–67.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 69–70.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 70–72.

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

## PURSUE THE GREAT PATH OF MENTOR AND DISCIPLE, REGARDING HARDSHIPS AS A BADGE OF HONOR

The Ikeda Wisdom Academy is an SGI-USA youth division movement to engage youth leaders in advanced study. While it is a youth leaders study program, all SGI-USA members are invited to use this section as a guide for their personal study of *The Teachings for Victory*, volume 1.

### Chapter 5

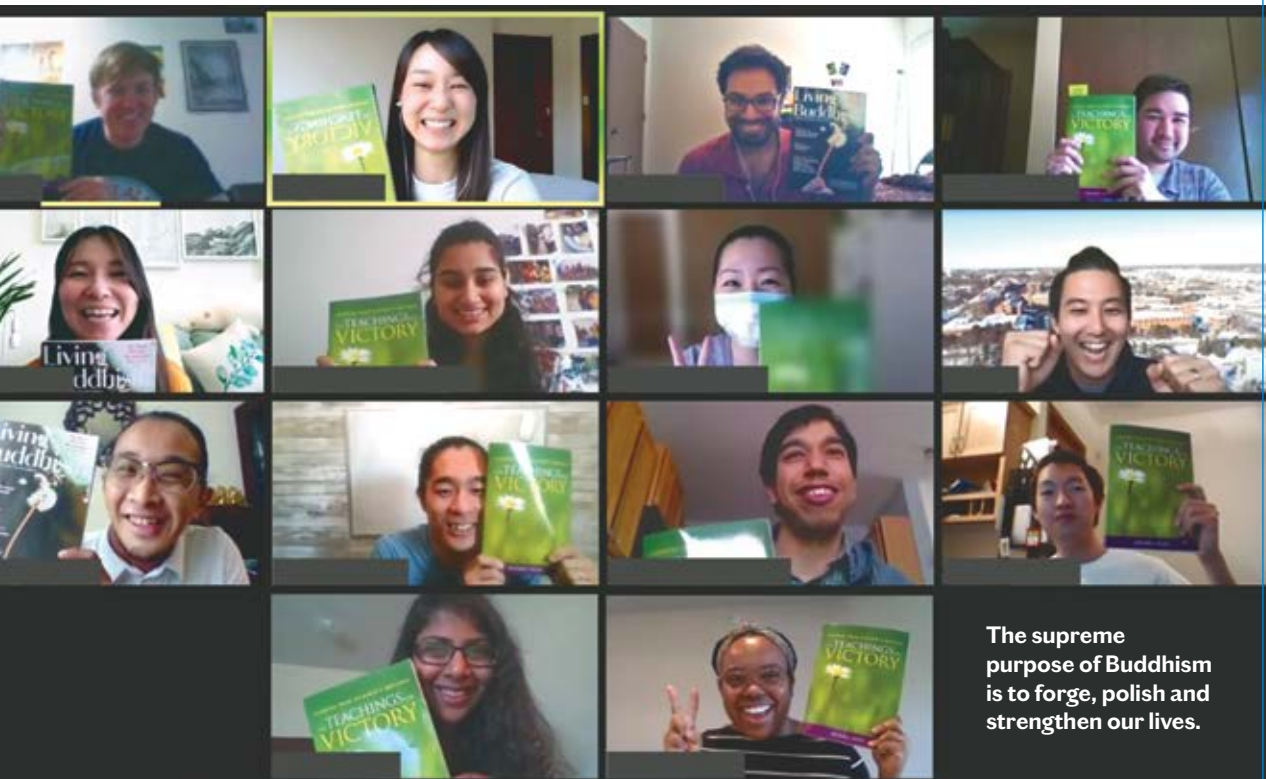
“Letter to the Brothers”  
—Part 2 of 3

*Nichiren Daishonin wrote “Letter to the Brothers” to instill in his followers the spirit to triumph over all devilish functions and attain Buddhahood. In this lecture, Ikeda Sensei uncovers the “formula for total victory”<sup>1</sup> that Nichiren outlines in this writing.*

### Hardships Are Proof of Lessening Karmic Retribution

We, who now believe in the correct teaching, in the past once committed the offense of persecuting its practitioners, and therefore are destined to fall into a terrible hell in the future. The blessings gained by practicing the correct teaching, however, are so great that by meeting minor sufferings in this life we can change the karma that destines us to suffer terribly in the future. (“Letter from Sado,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 497)

**Nichiren Buddhism**—a teaching of changing karma—first recognizes that the cause of all negative karma can be traced to disbelief in and disrespect for the Mystic Law—which is termed “slander of the Law.” This clarification of



**The supreme purpose of Buddhism is to forge, polish and strengthen our lives.**

fundamental evil also illuminates that which constitutes fundamental good. If we are to change our karma, a clear understanding of the basic causality of good and evil in life is vital.

One form that this fundamental evil of slander takes is people denigrating the Lotus Sutra, a teaching of universal enlightenment, because they cannot believe that everyone possesses the Buddha nature. Another manifestation of slander is people maligning and attacking the sutra's votary, who is dedicated to helping others reveal their Buddha nature. Fundamental good, therefore, is the exact opposite—namely, upholding and preserving the Lotus Sutra's teachings and fighting together with the votary of the Lotus Sutra against this most basic evil—that of denying people's Buddha nature.

Receiving the painful retributions we were destined to incur in the future in a lesser form in the present through the "blessings obtained

by protecting the Law" (WND-1, 497) is the heart of the Buddhist principle of "lessening one's karmic retribution." By experiencing hardships in the course of practicing the Mystic Law in this life, "the sufferings of hell will vanish instantly" ("Lessening One's Karmic Retribution," WND-1, 199), and then, completely freed from these grave offenses (see "The Opening of the Eyes," WND-1, 281), we can realize the sublime life state of Buddhahood. In other words, we can change the inner direction of our lives—moving from the negative cycle of transmigration in the evil paths to the positive cycle of transmigration in the realm of Buddhahood. This is Nichiren's teaching of changing karma.

Consequently, the hardships we experience in the course of our Buddhist practice as a result of the principle of lessening karmic retribution are the benefits or blessings of protecting the Law. They could also be called proof that we are changing karma.<sup>2</sup>

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

## The Process of Changing Karma Forges and Polishes Our Lives to the Highest Degree

**Both of you have continued believing in the Lotus Sutra; thus you are now ridding yourselves of your grave offenses from the past. For example, the flaws in iron come to the surface when it is forged. Put into flames, a rock simply turns to ashes, but gold becomes pure gold. (WND-1, 497)**

As this passage indicates, when viewed in terms of the Buddhist principles of lessening karmic retribution and changing karma, hardships take on deeper meaning and come to signify opportunities for forging and developing our faith and our inner state of life.

Elsewhere, Nichiren writes, “Iron, when heated in the flames and pounded, becomes a fine sword” (“Letter from Sado,” WND-1, 303). The process of confronting and challenging our karma enables us to polish and strengthen our faith. When we are tested by the fires of karma, we can show our true mettle. If we are irresolute, we will be like ash and crumble, but if we maintain a firm resolve, we will become pure gold, our lives growing ever more radiant.

The supreme purpose of Buddhism is to forge, polish and strengthen our lives. Without polishing and developing, people with ability and talent will not shine their brightest. Without training, people of genuine commitment will not be fostered. By striving wholeheartedly for kosen-rufu, we can transform our negative karma from past existence and bring our lives to shine with the brilliance of a gleaming, unbreakable sword.<sup>3</sup>

### Heavenly Deities Test One’s Faith

**This trial, more than anything else, will prove your faith genuine, and the ten demon daughters of the Lotus**

**Sutra will surely protect you. ... It is even possible that the ten demon daughters have possessed your parents and are tormenting you in order to test your faith. (WND-1, 497)**

Next, Nichiren Daishonin assures the Ikegami brothers that their demonstration of genuine faith guarantees the protection of the heavenly deities, who vowed in the Lotus Sutra to safeguard the sutra’s practitioners. Having said this, he adds that the heavenly deities at times also seek to test the genuineness of people’s faith. ...

Based on this principle, Nichiren suggests that the brothers’ present ordeal—that of the elder brother being disowned by their father because of his Buddhist practice—is likely an instance of the ten demon daughters influencing the brothers’ parents to torment them in order to test their faith. ...

In Buddhism, unremitting faith is the cause for attaining enlightenment, and obstacles are viewed as an inevitable consequence of upholding the correct teaching of the Lotus Sutra. The crux of the matter, therefore, is whether, when great hardships or persecutions arise, we are consumed by fear and abandon our faith or muster our courage and remain steadfast.

If our resolve is weak and we discard our faith, it means we have been defeated by the torments of the devil king of the sixth heaven. But if we win over such painful ordeals with firm resolve and maintain unwavering faith, then in hindsight, we may also say we have passed a test by the heavenly deities. In other words, everything depends on our own heart or resolve. The protection of the heavenly deities is in essence nothing more than the power of our own faith.

Second Soka Gakkai President Toda declared:

The Daishonin writes that he regards Heino Saemon—an archenemy of Buddhism who has unceasingly harassed him—as a good friend or positive influence for his own Buddhist practice. Never fear enemies! Their onslaughts are all just swirling dark winds that help us perfect ourselves and attain Buddhahood.

This is the lionhearted essence of Nichiren Buddhism. It is crucial that we have a fearless spirit, a fearless resolve.

In his writings, Nichiren frequently cites the line from the Great Teacher Miao-lo of China, “The stronger one’s faith, the greater the protection of the gods.” The heavenly deities will unfailingly protect Lotus Sutra practitioners whose faith is genuine. ...

The German poet and novelist Hermann Hesse wrote to the effect that only those who have the courage to fulfill their destinies can be called heroes. Those confident that everything begins with their own inner transformation are people of true courage and heroism and can forge lasting happiness for themselves.<sup>4</sup>

### **Maintaining Steadfast Faith at a Crucial Moment**

**Any weakness in faith will be a cause for regret. The cart that overturns on the road ahead is a warning to the one behind.**

**In an age like this no one can help but thirst for the way. You may hate this world, but you cannot escape it.**  
(WND-1, 497)

**Ultimately, everything hinges on** whether we can realize how fortunate we are to have encountered “a person who expounds this sutra exactly as the sutra directs” (WND-1, 495), and to strive with this teacher to propagate the Mystic Law. If our faith or resolve is weak at a crucial time, we’ll be left with eternal regret.

When we encounter obstacles in the course of our Buddhist practice, we, in fact, find ourselves at a momentous crossroads, a vital juncture that will decide whether we open the gateway to attaining Buddhahood forever through strong

faith or close off the path to happiness by forsaking our faith.

Whenever great obstacles confront us, let’s challenge them intrepidly, bearing in mind this passage from Nichiren Daishonin’s treatise “The Opening of the Eyes”: “Although I and my disciples may encounter various difficulties, if we do not harbor doubts in our hearts, we will as a matter of course attain Buddhahood. Do not have doubts simply because heaven does not lend you protection. Do not be discouraged because you do not enjoy an easy and secure existence in this life. This is what I have taught my disciples morning and evening, and yet they begin to harbor doubts and abandon their faith. Foolish men are likely to forget the promises they have made when the crucial moment comes” (WND-1, 283). ...

Any time we face hardships is a crucial moment. It is, therefore, essential that we have the dauntless faith to enable us to fight back bravely at such times—for instance, when the three obstacles and four devils strike, when we are challenging ourselves to change our karma or when we are engaged in a win-or-lose struggle for kosen-rufu. We should realize that every day we can learn this spirit of faith from Nichiren’s example. We must never be foolish people who cave in at a crucial moment.

If our faith is weak or shallow, or if we are foolish, we will end up drifting along aimlessly like floating weeds, lacking fundamental purpose. Human beings are animals that seek meaning in life. Through this earnest pursuit, it is possible to give infinitely profound meaning to our existence. ...

In this passage from “Letter to the Brothers,” Nichiren further states, “In an age like this no one can help but thirst for the way.” These words reflect society at that time, where people were filled with anxiety and uncertainty toward the future. There were repeated famines, epidemics

Human beings are animals that seek meaning in life. Through this earnest pursuit, **it is possible to give infinitely profound meaning to our existence.**

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

and natural disasters. Certainly such an age would spur thinking people to seek the Buddha way. The more confused and disordered a society becomes, the more people will seek a profound philosophy on which to base their lives. Nichiren Buddhism is truly the Buddhism of the Sun with the power to illuminate the darkness of the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law. ...

Nichiren consistently teaches these cherished disciples to boldly confront devilish functions—negative forces—and to always take the offensive in this struggle. If one is passive or fearful, such negative forces will only grow stronger. He instructs them, “You must never be cowardly” (WND-1, 498). Mr. Toda once also said quite sternly: “What can the fainthearted who shun difficulties possibly accomplish? I’m sure none of my disciples fit that description.” He also declared: “The Soka Gakkai is an organization of lions, a gathering of lions. We have no use for cowards!”<sup>5</sup>

## “You Must Grit Your Teeth and Never Slacken in Your Faith”

**You must grit your teeth and never slacken in your faith. Be as fearless as Nichiren when he acted and spoke out before Hei no Saemon-no-jo. ... Death comes to all, even should nothing untoward ever happen. Therefore, you must never be cowardly, or you will become the object of ridicule.**  
(WND-1, 498)

**Nichiren Buddhism is a teaching** of mentor and disciple. If the mentor is a lion king, the disciples must also be lion kings. The mentor thus calls on his disciples to learn from and follow his example. ...

Nichiren also writes, “Death comes to all, even should nothing untoward ever happen.” This quote has left a deep impression on me in the course of my more than half century of Buddhist practice.

As human beings, we will all have to die sometime. No one can escape this reality. The important thing is how we use this unique and precious existence.<sup>6</sup>

## The Meaning of True Filial Devotion

**A teacher or mentor in the** realm of Buddhism is one who has battled and triumphed over devilish functions. Disciples, meanwhile, learn the essentials of faith from the mentor so that they can begin to do the same. Buddhism as a teaching of the oneness of mentor and disciple is only complete when disciples respond to the mentor’s teaching and spur themselves to take action. ...

Faith and filial devotion are normally not in opposition, so there’s no need to choose one at the expense of the other. In fact, Nichiren Buddhism teaches the importance of filial devotion—being a good son or daughter to one’s parents—and also clarifies what filial devotion really means.

Nichiren writes, “In all worldly affairs, it is the son’s duty to obey his parents, yet on the path to Buddhahood, disobeying one’s parents ultimately constitutes filial piety” (WND-1, 499). In this context, our attaining Buddhahood becomes the supreme expression of filial devotion. He further states, “Not only will they [those who hear the Lotus Sutra] themselves attain Buddhahood, but also their fathers and mothers will attain Buddhahood in their present forms” (“What It Means to Hear the Buddha Vehicle,” WND-2, 744). ...

We cannot defeat devilish functions if we allow ourselves to be ruled by ego. The way to build a solid and unshakable self is to stand up with the same spirit and commitment as the teacher or leader of kosen-rufu. Those who can find this supreme path of happiness within the depths of their lives will never be defeated.<sup>7</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, p. 63.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 84–85.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 86–88.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 88–89.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 90–92.

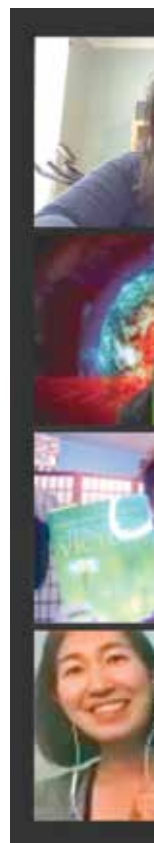
## Notes

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# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

# THE DISCIPLE'S VICTORY IS THE MENTOR'S GREATEST WISH AND JOY



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## Chapter 6

### “Letter to the Brothers” —Part 3 of 3

*Nichiren Daishonin wrote “Letter to the Brothers” to instill in his followers the spirit to triumph over all devilish functions and attain Buddhahood. In this lecture, Ikeda Sensei uncovers the “formula for total victory”<sup>1</sup> that Nichiren outlines in this writing.*

**Battling devilish functions** is the core of the guidance given by the first three Soka Gakkai presidents throughout their struggles for kosen-rufu. This is in exact accord with Nichiren’s teachings. If this spirit of faith to challenge devilish functions is maintained now and in the future, kosen-rufu will definitely be achieved. “Letter to the Brothers” sets forth the formula for this. In this installment, I will discuss the struggle against the three obstacles and four devils, the importance of unity of purpose and faith based on the oneness of mentor and disciple.<sup>2</sup>

### “A Guide for My Followers” and “An Axiom of Faith for Future Generations”

**The doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life revealed in the fifth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* is especially profound. If you propagate it, devils will arise**



**Momentous obstacles strengthen the lives of genuine Lotus Sutra practitioners.**

without fail. If they did not, there would be no way of knowing that this is the correct teaching. One passage from the same volume reads: “As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils emerge in confusing form, vying with one another to interfere ... One should be neither influenced nor frightened by them. If one falls under their influence, one will be led into the paths of evil. If one is frightened by them, one will be prevented from practicing the correct teaching.” This statement not only applies to me, but also is a guide for my followers. Reverently make this teaching your own, and transmit it as an axiom of faith for future generations. (“Letter to the Brothers,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 501)

**Obstacles and devilish functions** naturally arise to assail those who practice the correct teaching. Here, Nichiren teaches an important point for victory in our Buddhist practice—for only by recognizing this truth and courageously confronting and triumphing over such obstacles will it be possible for us to realize our own inner transformation.

The passage that Nichiren cites from *Great Concentration and Insight* begins, “As practice progresses and understanding grows,” indicating a stage where practitioners have deepened their understanding of the Lotus Sutra and solidified their practice as a result. The three obstacles and four devils attack precisely because of the genuine efforts by practitioners to transform their lives at the fundamental level. In our own context today, it means such obstacles will appear when we exert ourselves wholeheartedly in the two ways of practice and study and move forward in our lives and in our efforts for kosen-rufu. Nichiren asserts that the

three obstacles and four devils arise when we are on the verge of attaining Buddhahood.

Next, the passage states, “The three obstacles and four devils emerge in confusing form, vying with one another to interfere.” These negative functions seek to catch Lotus Sutra practitioners off guard and, through various insidious means, to intimidate, tempt, discourage or exhaust them, or to lull them into complacency.

T’ien-t’ai outlines two key ingredients of the kind of faith needed to battle the three obstacles and four devils head-on: 1) not being influenced by them and 2) not being frightened by them. Those who let themselves be influenced by devilish functions will be drawn toward the evil paths of existence, while those who are intimidated by them will be prevented from practicing the correct teaching. In short, wisdom and courage are the foundation for victory in this struggle—the wisdom to see devilish functions for what they are and not be swayed by them and the courage to stand up to them without fear. Chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is the source of the wisdom and courage needed to defeat such negative forces. The power of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, the Mystic Law, can instantly transform innate darkness or ignorance into the fundamental nature of enlightenment, enabling us to attain a state in which we can regard difficulties along the path of faith as peace and comfort (see *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, p. 115). ...

Momentous obstacles strengthen the lives of genuine Lotus Sutra practitioners. By courageously confronting such challenges, they bring their Buddhahood to shine forth all the brighter. ...

Confident that the Ikegami brothers’ courageous Buddhist practice and ultimate victory will become an enduring model for future practitioners, he tells them, “Reverently make this teaching your own, and transmit it as an axiom of faith for future generations.”<sup>75</sup>

**The three obstacles in this passage are the obstacle of earthly desires, the obstacle of karma, and the obstacle of retribution. The obstacle of earthly desires is the impediments to one’s practice that arise from greed, anger, foolishness, and the like; the obstacle of karma is the hindrances presented by one’s wife or children; and the obstacle of retribution is the hindrances caused by one’s sovereign or parents. Of the four devils, the workings of the devil king of the sixth heaven are of this last kind.**

**In Japan today, many people claim they have mastered the practice of concentration and insight. But is there anyone who has actually encountered the three obstacles and four devils?**  
WND-1, 501)

**First, he discusses the** “three obstacles,” which function to obstruct Buddhist practice and undermine the good causes one has accumulated. ...

In “Letter to the Brothers,” Nichiren offers concrete examples of these three obstacles in a context that has relevance for the Ikegami brothers. He explains that the obstacle of karma corresponds to “hindrances presented by one’s wife or children,” while the obstacle of retribution corresponds to “hindrances caused by one’s sovereign or parents.” I wish to specifically clarify here that people who hinder one’s Buddhist practice—such as spouses or children, authority figures or parents, as Nichiren indicates—are nothing more than “evil friends,” or negative influences; they are not inherently evil in themselves. Ultimately, it is up to individual practitioners whether they remain steadfast or abandon their faith as a result of others’ opposition. When we win over our own selves, we can see everyone as a “good friend,” or a positive influence for our lives. To put an even finer point on this: By bringing about a change in the depths of our own lives, we can also change or exert a

positive influence on the lives of others.

Next, Nichiren discusses the “four devils.” The term *devil* or *devilish function* in Buddhism derives from the Sanskrit word *mara*, which was variously translated into Chinese as “murderer,” “robber of life” or “destroyer.” It refers to the negative workings within people’s hearts that seek to destroy their spirit and even deprive them of life itself. ...

Discussing this same passage from “Letter to the Brothers,” Mr. Makiguchi declared:

Experiencing attacks by devilish functions is what distinguishes “practitioners” from mere “believers.” ...

People leading lives of minor good who practice faith only for their own benefit will certainly not encounter obstacles, but those leading lives of major good dedicated to altruistic bodhisattva practice will most definitely be assailed by devilish functions. ...

Just like lotus flowers that bloom unsullied by the muddy water in which they grow, we (the members of the Soka Gakkai) boldly plunge into the midst of forces hostile to the correct teaching—people of small and medium good who commit slander of the Law—and resolutely seek to redress their grave error and wrongdoing. It is only natural, therefore, that the three obstacles and four devils will furiously descend upon us. Indeed, their appearance earns us the name of “practitioners.”

We mustn’t be fainthearted “believers” who only desire minor benefit for ourselves and are too fearful to battle devilish functions. Authentic practitioners throw themselves wholeheartedly into battling the three obstacles and four devils for the great benefits of attaining Buddhahood in this

lifetime and advancing kosen-rufu for all people’s happiness. All SGI members are noble “practitioners of the Lotus Sutra” of the modern day.<sup>4</sup>

## Unity Is Key to Victory

**Now you two brothers are like the hermit and the man of integrity. If either of you gives up halfway, you will both fail to achieve Buddhahood. (WND-1, 501)**

**You two wives should have no regrets even if your husbands do you harm because of your faith in this teaching. If both of you unite in encouraging your husbands’ faith, you will follow the path of the dragon king’s daughter and become a model for women attaining Buddhahood in the evil latter age. (WND-1, 502)**

**The secret to faith** for battling devilish functions is sharing the mentor’s commitment and solidly uniting in purpose with fellow practitioners. ...

The most important thing for the Ikegami brothers was that they remain united. Devilish functions seek to create schisms. Had their father disowned both of them over religious differences, then it would simply have been a matter of them working together to clarify any misunderstanding with him. But in disowning only the elder, their father hoped to tempt the younger with the prospect of gaining the right of succession. It was clearly a scheme to drive a wedge between the two brothers and, as such, a manifestation of the workings of the devil king of the sixth heaven.

Only a positive united force could defeat these devilish functions. ... Their unity represents an unassailable fortress to keep out devilish functions. ...

Women’s faith often proves decisive at a

**The secret to faith for battling devilish functions is sharing the mentor’s commitment and solidly uniting in purpose with fellow practitioners.**

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

crucial moment. We should thus take Nichiren's words to heart. As for striving in faith for a happy and harmonious family, there is no need to be impatient with family members who do not practice Nichiren Buddhism. One person upholding faith in the Mystic Law is like a shining sun that illuminates all family members and loved ones, the benefit of their Buddhist practice extending to everyone. The most important thing is to pray and have absolute confidence that your efforts in faith will lead to their happiness.<sup>5</sup>

## A Victorious Life Guided by the Principle of the Heart Being Most Important

**A passage in the Six Paramitas Sutra says to become the master of your mind rather than let your mind master you. Whatever trouble occurs, regard it as no more than a dream, and think only of the Lotus Sutra. (WND-1, 502)**

If we base ourselves on our own fickle ever-changing hearts, we cannot make our way up steep ridges buffeted by the fierce winds of devilish functions. We must set our sights on the solid and unshakable summit of attaining Buddhahood and continually seek to master our minds. This is the meaning of the passage "Become the master of your mind rather than let your mind master you."

Becoming the master of one's mind ultimately means basing oneself on the unwavering foundation of the Law. Herein lies the importance of sutras or writings containing the teachings of the Buddha who has awakened to and spreads the Law. For us, as practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism, mastering our minds means basing ourselves on the Gohonzon and Nichiren's writings. And in Buddhism, it is the teacher or mentor who puts the teachings into practice that helps us connect to the Law. Mastering our minds means having a sincere

seeking spirit in faith based on the oneness of mentor and disciple, and not being ruled by arrogant egoism or self-centeredness. ...

When viewed in terms of the infinite scale of eternity, any event or phenomenon is as fleeting as a passing dream. The Law, in contrast, is eternal. Allowing oneself to be defeated by devilish functions and straying from the Law will be a cause for everlasting regret. In this passage, Nichiren urges his followers to "think only of the Lotus Sutra," to focus only on kosen-rufu and to remain steadfast in their faith for the sake of eternal victory.<sup>6</sup>

## Faith Based on the Oneness of Mentor and Disciple

**Nichiren's teaching was especially difficult to believe at first, but now that my prophecies have been fulfilled, those who slandered without reason have come to repent. Even if in the future other men and women become my believers, they will not replace you in my heart. ...**

**This letter was written particularly for Hyoe no Sakan. It should also be read to his wife and to Tayu no Sakan's. (WND-1, 502)**

Weakness, cowardice, treachery—the human heart can be truly frightening. No doubt this is what prompted Nichiren to write to the Ikegami brothers and their wives, who remained true to the path of mentor and disciple, "Even if in the future other men and women become my believers, they will not replace you in my heart." These followers who persevered on the great path of kosen-rufu, undaunted by raging tempests and unfazed by those who abandoned their faith, are true disciples, he says in words of the highest praise. The mentor-disciple bond is one of life's supreme treasures.<sup>7</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, p. 63.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 99–101.

4. *Ibid.*, 102–04.

5. *Ibid.*, 106–07.

6. *Ibid.*, 107–08.

7. *Ibid.*, 108–09.

## Notes

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# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

## THE LOTUS SUTRA IS THE GREAT SHIP FOR THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF ALL PEOPLE

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### Chapter 7

#### “The Supremacy of the Law” —Part 1 of 3

*Nichiren Daishonin wrote “The Supremacy of the Law” during a time rife with confusion, misguided beliefs and erroneous teachings, urging his disciple to strengthen her faith. In this lecture, Ikeda Sensei details the “important essentials of faith” that Nichiren outlines in this writing.*

**This time, we will study** “The Supremacy of the Law,” a writing Nichiren composed when Japan faced the very real threat of a second invasion by Mongol forces. The times were also characterized by great confusion in society and a prevalence of misguided beliefs and erroneous teachings. In this letter of encouragement, Nichiren urges the recipient—referred to here only as the mother of Oto—to practice the correct teaching of the Lotus Sutra even more strongly and develop into a person of genuine faith. Ultimately, in a time of turmoil, the only thing we can rely on is our faith in the Mystic Law.<sup>2</sup>

#### Sharing a Common Desire for People’s Happiness

**Nichiren Daishonin tells** the Sage Nichimyo that the Lotus Sutra is an incomparably noble teaching. He outlines the characteristics of the





different Buddhist sutras, referring in particular to the essence of the Mahayana sutras, of which, he points out, the Lotus Sutra is the highest. His message is that those who uphold the Lotus Sutra in the present troubled age are infinitely respectable—and, more specifically, that Nichimyo is a remarkable woman for practicing this supreme teaching as his disciple. ...

The birth of almost all religions or spiritual traditions can be traced back to a wish for people's happiness. ...

It was [second Soka Gakkai President Josei] Toda's view that the founders of universal religions in particular ... would be sure to find agreement in their shared wish to rid humankind of misery.

The problem, however, is that later heirs to these religious traditions invariably lose sight of the founder's original goal of people's happiness. Forgetting the intense struggles waged by the founder, they become increasingly preoccupied with ritual and formality. Eventually, they

succumb to self-interest and personal ambition, denigrating the lay believers, the ordinary people. One of the most conspicuous examples of this is the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, which is notorious for its blatant disregard for the welfare of its lay believers. By acting against Nichiren's spirit, it has degenerated into a school that espouses erroneous teachings.

The reason Nichiren vigorously refuted the other established Buddhist schools of his day was that their priests had turned their backs on Buddhism's original purpose and obscured the teaching of universal enlightenment that holds the key to the happiness of all people. He always made the happiness of the people his criterion. ... He was unable to ignore the situation where, because of the misguided priests of these schools, people's grief grew increasingly deeper (see "The Letter of Petition from Yorimoto," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 809). ...

Employing the profound wisdom of

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Buddhism that is the starting point of human revolution, we can greatly contribute to our own happiness as well as the happiness of others, which is the original purpose of all religions. Any religious tradition that forgets to put people first invariably grows self-righteous and dogmatic.<sup>3</sup>

## The Great Ship of the Lotus Sutra

**In contrast [to the Hinayana sutras], the Mahayana sutras are like those huge vessels that, carrying ten or twenty people and loaded with large quantities of cargo, can sail from Kamakura as far as Tsukushi or Mutsu Province.**

**But the ship of the true Mahayana sutra is incomparably greater than those ships that are the other Mahayana sutra. Loaded with a hoard of rare treasures and carrying a hundred or a thousand passengers, it can sail all the way to the land of Korea. The sutra called the Lotus Sutra of the one vehicle is like this. ("The Supremacy of the Law," WND-1, 612-13)**

Nichiren Daishonin first acknowledges the positive role played by Confucian and other non-Buddhist teachings in ancient China and then highlights the ultimate superiority of Buddhism. Next, he explains that the Buddhist teachings themselves are also ranked according to merit. ...

The expression "superior in content or more profound" doesn't mean, for instance, that certain sutras are utterly worthless; rather, it indicates each sutra's relative merit in terms of the whole, in that each has meaning or relevance corresponding to the time and the capacity of the people when it was preached. This means that when a more profound teaching appears in

response to the time and people's capacity, then the pre-existing teachings become shallow and inferior in comparison.

As clarified in this writing, Nichiren bases his evaluation of the different sutras on the criteria of how many people they are capable of leading to happiness and also whether they can serve as a means to free all humankind from suffering. ...

In short, the Lotus Sutra, by expounding the principle of the "mutual possession of the Ten Worlds," is the only teaching that reveals that all people possess within them the potential to become Buddhas. By bringing forth our inner Buddhahood, we attain enlightenment. The Lotus Sutra, therefore, is the great ship for all humankind, possessing infinite passenger capacity and unlimited range.

Moreover, this ship is available to us not only in this lifetime alone. The great ship of the Lotus Sutra, a teaching that enables us to actualize indestructible happiness, will also take us across the sea of the sufferings of birth and death. That is why Shakyamuni declares: "This sutra can save all living beings. ... It is like ... someone finding a ship in which to cross the water" (*The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, pp. 327-28).<sup>4</sup>

## The Lotus Sutra's Revolutionary Teaching of the Enlightenment of Women

**Devadatta was the most evil man in the entire land of Jambudvīpa [the whole world], but the Lotus Sutra predicted that he would become the Thus Come One Heavenly King. Although Ajatashatru was a wicked king who killed his own father, he was among those present when the Lotus Sutra was preached, and after hearing only a verse or a phrase, formed a connection with the sutra [that would enable him to attain enlightenment in the future]. The dragon king's daughter, a woman with a reptile's body, attained Buddhahood by listening to Bodhisattva Manjushri preach the Lotus Sutra. Furthermore, the Buddha designated**

**the evil era of the Latter Day of the Law as the very time for the Lotus Sutra to be propagated, and bequeathed it to the men and women of that impure age. The Lotus Sutra, the teaching of the one vehicle, is then a sutra as great and as powerful as the ships of the China trade. (WND-1, 613)**

**In this next section**, Nichiren Daishonin touches on the enlightenment of evil people and women. The sutras expounded prior to the Lotus Sutra held that evil people and women were incapable of attaining Buddhahood. Many practitioners therefore felt resigned to that unfortunate fate; but the Lotus Sutra firmly dispels such disconsolation by proclaiming broadly that all people have the potential for Buddhahood. ...

Above all, the Lotus Sutra teaches the enlightenment of women, who in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings had been scorned and despised. The dragon king's daughter, hearing Manjushri preach the Lotus Sutra—the “secret teaching of the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form”—instantly manifests the life state of a Buddha. In doing so, she scored a victory for the happiness of women everywhere.

The enlightenment of the dragon king's daughter might seem to have no relevance to the enlightenment of men. But Nichiren writes, “All living beings are the dragon king's daughter as an essential or intrinsic quality” (*The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, p. 230). The enlightenment of the dragon king's daughter, in other words, is a vital precondition for the enlightenment of all people, because it serves as actual proof of the principle of “attaining Buddhahood in one's present form.” It could be said to symbolize the enlightenment of all humankind.<sup>5</sup>

## **Genuine Leaders Work for People's Happiness**

**Moreover, there is superiority and inferiority not only among the sutras, but also among their adherents. The various teachers of the True Word school, who believe in the Mahavairochana Sutra, are like fire being put out by water, or dew being blown away by the wind when confronted in debate by the votary of the Lotus Sutra. If a dog barks at a lion, its bowels will rot. The asura demon who shot an arrow at the sun had his head split into seven pieces. The True Word teachers are like the dog or the asura, while the votary of the Lotus Sutra is like the sun or the lion. (WND-1, 613)**

**In this section**, Nichiren Daishonin asserts that the practitioners of the different sutras can also be ranked in a corresponding manner to the sutras themselves. ...

The true measure of human beings and of the depth and breadth of their lives is found in their wisdom, the beliefs and philosophy from which that wisdom derives, and to what extent they have embodied or actualized their ideals. ...

Why does he single out the True Word priests for criticism? We can assume it was because at that time, the entire country was relying heavily on the priests of this school to offer up incantations and prayers for the defeat of the Mongol forces. Also, the esoteric True Word school enjoyed unsurpassed influence and prestige in Japanese society during Nichiren's day. Even the Tendai school, originally based on the Lotus Sutra, gradually fell under the influence of the esoteric doctrines and rituals of the True Word school. Beguiling people with the mystique of their incantations and prayers, the priests of

**Courage inspires courage.** One wave gives rise to a thousand in a ripple effect that powerfully spreads through the entire organization until everyone is emboldened.

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various schools, especially the True Word school, ingratiated themselves with those in power, gaining patronage and protection. ...

The people of Nichiren's day should have been asking these questions about the established Buddhist schools: Did they benefit the people or merely seek to bolster their own authority and power? Did they lead people to happiness or consign them to misfortune? Did they combat the devilish nature of power or collude with it? But, sadly, the people had no way of knowing the true nature of these schools.

Nichiren scornfully notes that the priests of these various Buddhist schools ... deceive people with their seeming virtue and wisdom. Frauds are skilled at duping people. That is why the only real solution lies with people becoming wiser. ...

To protect the correct teaching, he speaks out boldly and incisively against erroneous teachings that not only spell suffering for the people but can easily put the entire country on the path to ruin.

Without deeply engraving in our hearts Nichiren's solemn determination to protect the Law, we cannot be regarded as genuine disciples. This passage vividly conveys Nichiren's noble commitment to keep on fighting, even if entirely alone, to protect the Lotus Sutra and defend the spirit of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Supporting those who work for the people's welfare, but denouncing those who discriminate against the people; being open to ideals that benefit humanity, but rejecting those that inflict suffering—this is the spirit of genuine humanism.<sup>6</sup>

## The Times Demand a Leadership Revolution

**As you know, before the Mongol attack, the arrogance of the people of our day knew no bounds. Since the tenth month of last year [October 1274, when the first Mongol invasion occurred],**

**however, none of them has dared to assume a haughty attitude, for as you have heard, Nichiren alone predicted this foreign invasion. If the Mongols attack our country again, none of the people will have the courage to face them. ... In battles soldiers regard the general as their soul. If the general were to lose heart, his soldiers would become cowards. (WND-1, 613)**

**“We mustn’t permit** this situation where people suffer the direst distress because of inept and incompetent leaders! Now is the time for a leadership revolution!”—this was the essence of the Daishonin’s fervent resolve to keep fighting based on his unwavering commitment to the welfare of the people, which is evident in this writing. ...

Let us ... take as a guideline for leadership the words: “In battles soldiers regard the general as their soul. If the general were to lose heart, his soldiers would become cowards.” Mr. Makiguchi underlined this passage in his copy of Nichiren’s writings, and he constantly embodied it in his own behavior. Mr. Toda and I, too, amid major struggles for kosen-rufu, read this passage together with our fellow members as a source of strength and inspiration for our advance.

The more troubled the times, irrespective of the challenge, the more crucial is the attitude and resolve of those in leadership positions. Are the leaders energetic? Are they brimming with enthusiasm, a passionate fighting spirit? Are they filled with a fearless and tenacious determination to win in the face of even the most difficult trials?

Courage inspires courage. One wave gives rise to a thousand in a ripple effect that powerfully spreads through the entire organization until everyone is emboldened, finally producing an overwhelming groundswell toward victory.<sup>7</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, p. 116.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., pp. 117–18.

4. Ibid., pp. 119–20.
5. Ibid., pp. 120–22.
6. Ibid., pp. 122–23.
7. Ibid., pp. 124–26.

## Notes

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# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

## LEADING A LIFE OF PRINCIPLE AND CONVICTION TOGETHER WITH ONE'S MENTOR

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### Chapter 8

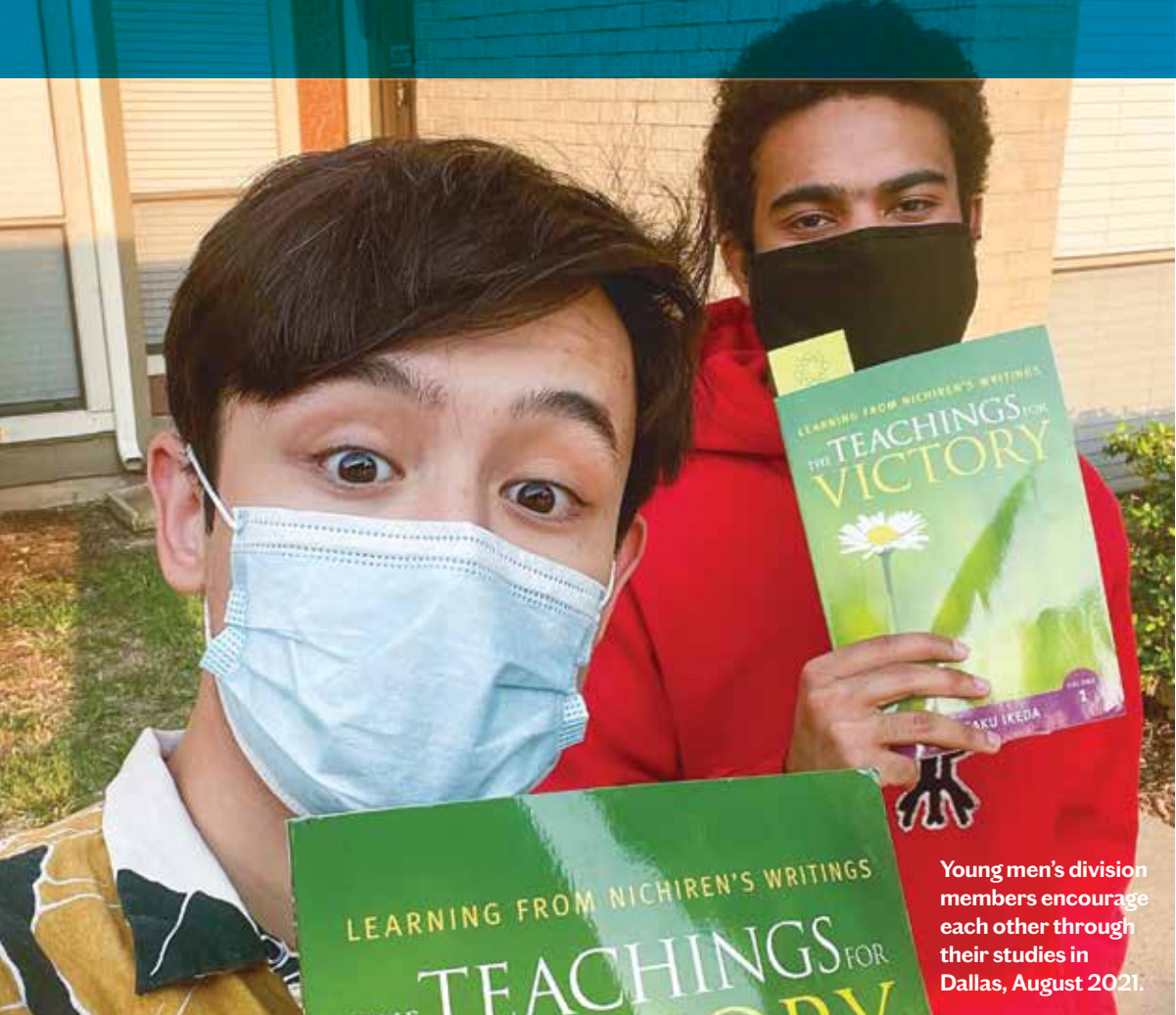
#### “The Supremacy of the Law” —Part 2 of 3

*Nichiren Daishonin wrote “The Supremacy of the Law” to urge the recipient to strengthen their faith at a time when society was in great confusion with a prevalence of misguided beliefs and erroneous teachings. In this lecture, Sensei uncovers the “important essentials of faith”<sup>1</sup> that Nichiren outlines in this writing.*

**Through the power** of faith in the Mystic Law, those who have suffered the most can attain the greatest happiness. Nichiren Buddhism enables those who have triumphed over hardship and adversity to become inspiring leaders who can help many others. ...

This letter, “The Supremacy of the Law,” is infused throughout with his compassionate wish that its recipient, Nichimyo, and her daughter, Oto, lead truly happy lives and, toward that end, develop the strong faith that would allow them to resiliently weather any challenge presented by the evil times in which they lived. ...

For Nichimyo, and many of Nichiren’s other women followers, the answer to such fundamental questions as “What is a correct way of life?” and “How can I lead a truly meaningful existence?” was to advance together with this great teacher of Buddhism who, despite momentous obstacles, remained steadfast in his principles and convictions. In this and numerous other writings,



Young men's division members encourage each other through their studies in Dallas, August 2021.

he unstintingly commends the faith of his female disciples. Such praise is no doubt inspired by his fervent hope that each without exception would enjoy a happy and victorious life.<sup>2</sup>

### Victory Lies in Striving With the Same Commitment as Our Mentor

**Women regard their husband as their soul. Without their husband, they lack a soul. Nowadays, even married women find it difficult to get along in the world. Though you have lost your soul, you lead your life more courageously than those who have one. Furthermore, because you maintain your faith in the gods and you revere the Buddha, you are indeed a woman who surpasses others. (“The Supremacy of the Law,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 613–14)**

“**Soul**” here can be interpreted as meaning support, mainstay or sustenance.

Epidemics and famines were rampant throughout the land, and the threat of a second Mongol invasion loomed over the populace. It must have been arduous for Nichimyo to survive amid these troubled times without a husband to support and protect her. Yet, she did not give in to self-pity or despair. Undaunted by circumstances, she applied herself steadfastly to her Buddhist practice, just as Nichiren instructed. ...

Not only did Nichimyo travel to Sado, but, because of her seeking spirit and desire to repay her gratitude, after Nichiren was pardoned from exile and subsequently took up residence at Mount Minobu, she also visited him there. Nichiren warmly confirms that because of her sincere devotion, the protective forces of the universe will safeguard her and compassionately watch over her without fail.

The depth of our commitment to faith is

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revealed at a crucial moment. The touchstone is whether, when it really counts, we continue taking action in the same spirit as our mentor.

Viewed from the perspective of Buddhism, Nichiren's exile to Sado was simply a devious plot by hostile forces to drive a wedge between him and his followers. Devilish functions always seek to divide the forces of the Buddha.

The Soka Gakkai is the community of believers accomplishing the Buddha's intent and decree in the modern day. Throughout our history, we have faced countless schemes by malevolent forces bent on breaking the unity of mentor and disciple. But such onslaughts, in fact, ultimately served to show who genuinely shared the mentor's commitment. ...

It would seem evident from Nichimyo's dedicated commitment to practicing the Mystic Law alongside Nichiren that she placed complete trust in him as a true teacher of Buddhism and a person genuinely fighting for the welfare and happiness of all humankind. ...

Nichiren says, "Though no one else came to visit me, you, a woman, not only sent me various offerings, but personally made the journey to see me" (WND-1, 614). In terms of our activities today, this is comparable to solidly uniting our hearts with our mentor and realizing victorious achievements on the grand stage of kosen-rufu. The mentor-disciple relationship is not defined by physical distance. It ultimately comes down to the commitment and actions of the disciple.<sup>5</sup>

## 'Buddhism Is About Winning'

**The Buddha promised in the Lotus Sutra that, for women, the sutra will serve as a lantern in the darkness, as a ship when they cross the sea, and as a protector when they travel through dangerous places. (WND-1, 614)**

The law of cause and effect is strict and impartial. Cunning and deviousness do not get one far

in the realm of Buddhism. Sincere, honest efforts, on the other hand, will all return to us in the form of good fortune and benefit. Those who have striven earnestly for kosen-rufu will absolutely be protected. Responsible, dedicated people will certainly be rewarded. This is my conclusion based on more than 60 years of practice.

Throughout his writings, Nichiren emphasizes that inconspicuous efforts, or struggles of which no one else is aware, will definitely produce benefit. For instance, he says: "Unseen virtue brings about visible reward,"<sup>6</sup> "What is hidden turns into manifest virtue"<sup>5</sup> and "Though one's trustworthiness may at first go unnoticed, in time it will be openly rewarded."<sup>6</sup>

During the years I spent working for Mr. Toda, I devoted myself to countless behind-the-scenes struggles. When he faced the greatest adversity, I supported him in ways of which no one else was ever aware. Because of those efforts, I often couldn't attend Soka Gakkai meetings or activities. Some top leaders callously remarked, "Ikeda's quit practicing." But I wasn't swayed in the least, because I was confident that supporting and assisting Mr. Toda would lead to the advance of kosen-rufu. ...

The causes for the tremendous actual proof manifested as the present global spread of kosen-rufu can be found in my selfless struggles as a youth to develop our movement. And I can state unequivocally that everything I am or have achieved today is the good fortune and benefit resulting from having done my utmost to support and protect Mr. Toda. Such is the realm of Buddhism.

The teachings of the Lotus Sutra constitute a direct path by which ordinary people of deep seeking spirit can attain absolute happiness. How inspiring Nichimyo must have found Nichiren's explanation of the great and unmistakable benefits of practicing this sutra.<sup>7</sup>

## The Spirit of Always Moving Forward From the Present Moment

**That is why the Great Teacher Miao-lo stated, "The stronger one's faith, the greater the protection of the gods." So**

**long as one maintains firm faith, one is certain to receive the great protection of the gods. I say this for your sake. I know your faith has always been admirable, but now you must strengthen it more than ever. Only then will the ten demon daughters lend you even greater protection. (WND-1, 614)**

We cannot move the heavenly deities to action with a weak or passive attitude in faith. The protective workings of these benevolent universal forces arise in response to prayers and actions infused with an unwavering determination to win and never be defeated by hardship. ...

[Nichiren] urges [Nichimyo] to strengthen her faith even more in order to teach her a cornerstone of Buddhist practice. This, in other words, is the spirit of always moving forward and continually growing—further today than yesterday, further tomorrow than today.

Nichiren Buddhism teaches the mystic principle of the true cause—meaning that a fresh cause can be made at each moment—and emphasizes the present and the future. No matter how admirably we may have exerted ourselves in our Buddhist practice in the past, if we allow our efforts to grind to a halt in the present, we will eventually stop growing in faith. As the saying goes, “Not advancing is regressing.”

Of course, people sometimes cannot be as active as they’d like due to illness or the infirmities of old age. And circumstances sometimes place restrictions on people’s efforts for kosen-rufu. But irrespective of our situations, the important thing is not to slacken in our resolve; if we do, we cannot be said to have the firm faith that Nichiren proclaims is so necessary. No matter how hard we might have struggled in the past, if we stop practicing, then all our efforts will have been in vain. ...

Having firm faith means bravely confronting

adversity, not retreating under any circumstance. Those who are weak and indecisive at a crucial moment cannot hope to bring forth the protection of the heavenly deities.<sup>8</sup>

### **Self-Reliant Disciples Taking Initiative to Spread the Correct Teaching**

**You need not seek far for an example. Everyone in Japan, from the sovereign on down to the common people, without exception has tried to do me harm, but I have survived until this day. You should realize that this is because, although I am alone, I have firm faith. (WND-1, 614)**

**Ever since submitting** “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” to the country’s most powerful figure (in July 1260), Nichiren had encountered life-threatening persecution. He had written this treatise of remonstrance out of the wish to relieve the suffering and misery of all people of the Latter Day of the Law. ... The entire populace was turned against him and clamored for his death. Nevertheless, he managed to survive. What is the reason for this? He clearly explains, “Because, although I am alone, I have firm faith.” This passage deeply resonates in my heart.

The Daishonin stood entirely alone, outnumbered by hostile and antagonistic forces. Yet he declared that victory is not decided by numbers but by one’s own heart or resolve. His statement “Because ... I have firm faith,” which was backed by the conviction of his experience, encapsulates several key ingredients of faith. These include an unwavering commitment to the great vow for kosen-rufu, the courageous and vigorous determination to fight against evil and wrongdoing, and the spirit of compassion to lead others to enlightenment. Because of his strong faith in the Lotus Sutra and his

**Having firm faith means bravely confronting adversity, not retreating under any circumstance.**

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dauntless, lionlike courage, Nichiren could emerge triumphant over all obstacles. ...

One reason he describes his own struggles in his writings, I believe, is his wish for the emergence of genuine disciples of unwavering resolve. Throughout, he calls on followers to strive in the same spirit as he has. In sharing details of his own struggles, Nichiren shows us that if we emulate his spirit and efforts, we can develop the same dauntless state of life.

The Buddha's great wish is to "make all persons equal to me, without any distinction between us" (*The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, p. 70)—that is, to help everyone gain the same enlightened state of being he has attained. This reflects the Buddhist view that all people possess the same boundless potential as the Buddha. ...

To share the same spirit as our mentor means to take action and strive in our Buddhist practice with the same stand-alone spirit. This constitutes true oneness of mentor and disciple.

Nichiren sought to foster admirable, self-reliant disciples who would persevere in spreading the Mystic Law, whether or not others joined them. ...

[He] exemplifies how our inner resolve or determination at each moment plays a powerful role in bringing about victory. A courageous, resolute spirit is contagious. Courageous people awaken courage within others.<sup>9</sup>

## The Central Role of Women in Building Peace

**If a boat is handled by an unskilled steersman, it may capsize and drown everyone aboard. Likewise, though someone may have great physical strength, if he lacks a resolute spirit, even his many abilities will be of no use. In this country, there may be many wise people, but they cannot utilize their wisdom because they are governed by foolish leaders. (WND-1, 614)**

**Faced with an** imminent second Mongol invasion, the land was filled with despair and fear. How could Japan steer clear of this impending disaster? First, Nichiren says that if the person at the ship's helm is unskilled at sailing, everyone on board may lose their lives. Next, he says that if people are fainthearted, then no matter how strong they may be physically, they cannot make full use of their abilities. In this way, he seeks to drive home that the country's problems can only be overcome if its leaders have proper wisdom and dauntless courage. ...

Amid these circumstances, Nichiren deliberately conveyed to his followers his unshakable confidence that kosen-rufu can definitely be achieved. Even while living at Minobu, he wrote tirelessly, proclaiming the correct teaching with an indomitable lion's roar. ...

The foremost duty of Buddhists is to create a safe and peaceful world for mothers and children everywhere. Toward that end, we have to change the fundamental nature of human society, moving away from a culture of war and greed to a culture of building peace.

And women can play a central role in this process. When women of great courage, optimism and wisdom join together, society will change profoundly. When a united force of fearless women emerges, the times will change dramatically. When women with the rich sensitivity and deep compassion of nurturers and protectors of life rise into action, human society will be transformed on a fundamental level.

Buddhism is a teaching for fostering genuinely awakened people—men and women, young and old—who are capable of translating ideals into reality for the happiness of themselves and others.<sup>10</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, p. 116.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 132–33.
4. "The Farther the Source, the Longer the Stream," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 940.
5. "The Three Kinds of Treasure,"

WND-1, 848.

6. "The Four Virtues and the Four Debts of Gratitude," WND-2, 636.

7. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, pp. 134–35.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 135–37.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 137–38.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 139–40.

## Notes

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# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

# FAITH THAT GROWS STRONGER IS THE KEY TO ETERNAL VICTORY

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## Chapter 9

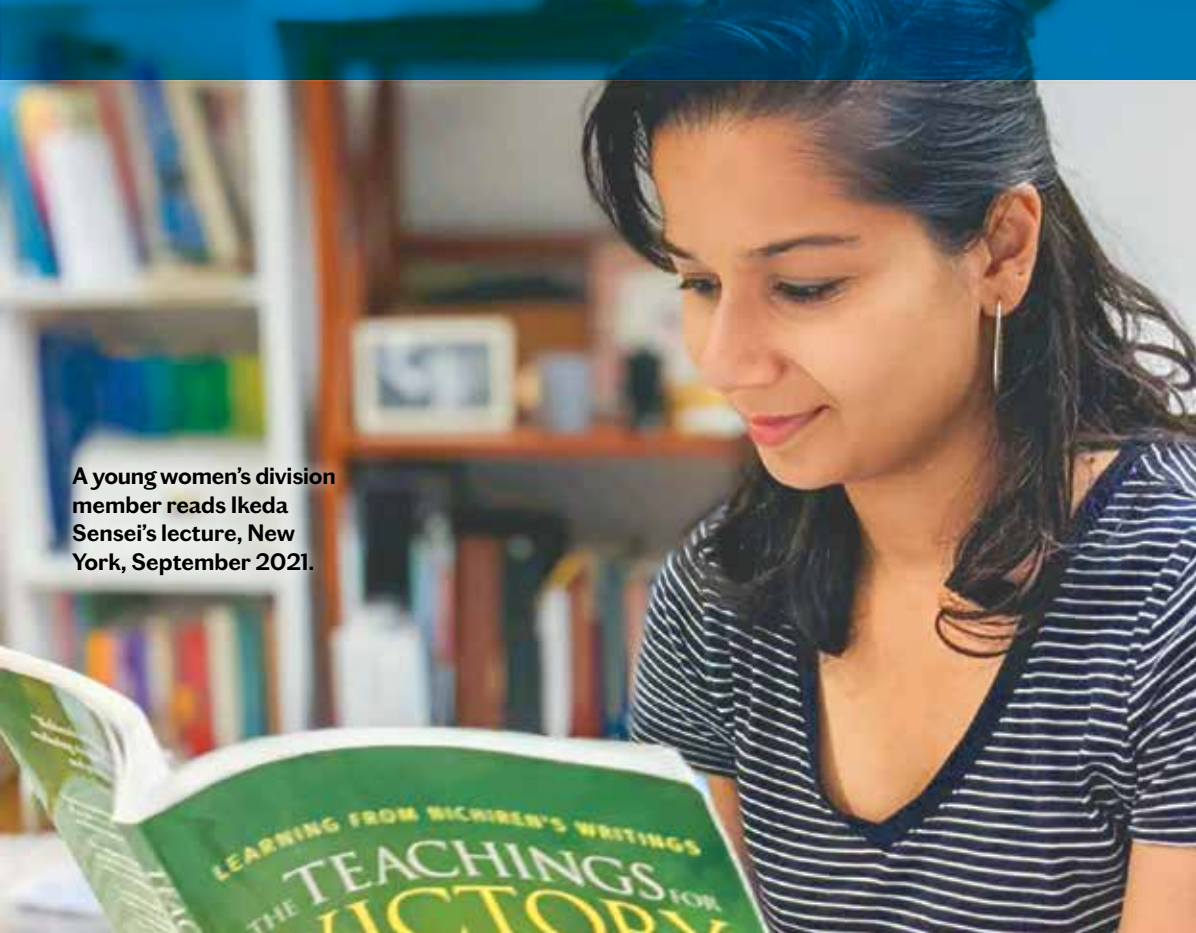
### “The Supremacy of the Law” —Part 3 of 3

*Nichiren Daishonin wrote “The Supremacy of the Law” to urge the recipient to strengthen her faith at a time when great confusion prevailed in society due to misguided beliefs and erroneous teachings. In this lecture, Sensei uncovers the “important essentials of faith”<sup>1</sup> that Nichiren outlines in this writing.*

**The mentor-disciple** relationship is the foundation of Nichiren Buddhism. When mentor and disciple are united in purpose, they can accomplish anything. In both our own human revolution and in the challenge to establish the correct teaching for the peace of the land, steadfastly adhering to the path of mentor and disciple is the direct path to absolute victory. ...

One profoundly encouraging aspect of the path of mentor and disciple as taught in Buddhism is that the mentors themselves manifest and embody the essence of the Buddhist teachings in their own lives as ordinary human beings. By setting a personal example of the dignity and nobility inherent in human life, they inspire others and spur them to walk the same illustrious path. Following the lead of the mentors, these awakened disciples proceed in the same spirit to take action to make a difference in the world.

As long as we carry on the noble cause and struggles of our mentors in faith, Buddhism will continue to spread throughout the world and illuminate people’s hearts as a teaching for the enlightenment of all humankind.<sup>2</sup>



A young women's division member reads Ikeda Sensei's lecture, New York, September 2021.

KEN BAXER

### Repeatedly Strengthening Our Resolve Causes Our Benefit to Multiply

**No matter whom you may marry, if he is an enemy of the Lotus Sutra, you must not follow him. Strengthen your resolve more than ever. Ice is made of water, but it is colder than water. Blue dye comes from indigo, but when something is repeatedly dyed in it, the color is better than that of the indigo plant. The Lotus Sutra remains the same, but if you repeatedly strengthen your resolve, your color will be better than that of others, and you will receive more blessings than they do. ("The Supremacy of the Law," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 615)**

**By continually reaffirming** our commitment to faith, our lives in this transient existence become adorned with the everlasting and indestructible treasures of eternity, happiness, true self and purity. Constantly fortifying our faith becomes

the key to establishing such a state of life.

Repeatedly strengthening one's resolve, or faith, therefore, means persevering in one's Buddhist practice. It means being undaunted by obstacles or, rather, using obstacles as an impetus to summon forth even stronger faith and to polish one's life even more.

While all of us who practice Nichiren Buddhism embrace faith in the same Lotus Sutra (the Mystic Law) and the Gohonzon, it is the strength of our faith that determines the outcome. The stronger the faith we summon, the greater the benefits we will experience, and the more expansive and fulfilled the life state we will achieve. ...

Both Nichiren and Shakyamuni exerted themselves with an ever-fresh and unflagging commitment, living with a fighting spirit to the very end. The same can be said of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first two Soka Gakkai presidents. And I now want to teach this essential spirit of faith to my disciples.

Life, in one sense, is a constant battle against deadlock. As long as we are alive, as long as we continue challenging ourselves, difficult

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obstacles will block our way forward. If life were all smooth sailing, if we never encountered setbacks, that itself would be a sign of stagnation. ...

All of us at times feel stuck or at an impasse in our lives or undertakings. But it is precisely when we are deadlocked that our faith is put to the test; such a time represents a decisive moment to seize victory. The important thing is to always keep our minds focused on moving forward. The challenge of triumphing over obstacles will itself become the cause for substantially expanding our state of life. If we actively grapple with our problems, we can definitely change inside and transform our karma.

Any time we become stuck, then, is actually an opportunity to realize victory. And ever-stronger faith is what gives us the power to break through such deadlocks. This is true both in terms of our individual struggles and the larger struggles of society. ...

Everything lies before us. Everything comes down to an inner struggle. It is one's mind, one's heart, that is important.<sup>3</sup>

## Protecting the Law Means Steadfastly Proclaiming the Truth

**The people of Japan, by becoming enemies of the Lotus Sutra, have brought ruin on themselves and their country. And because I proclaim this, I am called arrogant by those of little understanding. But I do not speak out of arrogance. It is simply that if I did not speak out I would not be the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Moreover, when my words prove later to be true, people will be able to believe all the more readily. And because I write this down now, the people of the future will recognize my wisdom. (WND-1, 615)**

The Nirvana Sutra states, “Rely on the Law

and not upon persons” (“Conversation between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man,” WND-1, 102). Nichiren Daishonin always waged his struggle based on the Law. Accordingly, he was very strict about distinguishing between correct and erroneous Buddhist teachings. When considering a particular teaching, he would ask: “Is this a correct teaching that seeks to actualize the Buddhist ideal of universal enlightenment? Or is it an erroneous teaching that distorts this fundamental principle and causes people suffering?” He clarified what was true and what was false, safeguarding the correct teaching and refuting erroneous teachings. This is the way in which Nichiren strove to protect the Law. ...

He rejects the criticism that he is arrogant, clarifying his intent. ... To broadly proclaim the Lotus Sutra's greatness and take a firm stand against its enemies are the actions of a genuine votary. Those who lack this fighting spirit and are ruled by fear do not qualify as votaries.

Nichiren also rejects criticism from another perspective, explaining that he is motivated by the desire to chronicle the truth for the future. Leaving a written record of his predictions of internal strife and foreign invasion coming to pass would help people of future times to appreciate his immense foresight and wisdom.

He clarifies, however, that the fulfillment of his predictions is not an indication of his own ability but rather is proof of the accuracy of Buddhism's correct teaching. ...

[We] of the SGI, sharing bonds of mentor and disciple with the first three presidents, have inherited Nichiren Daishonin's spirit. We have launched a movement of confident, awakened individuals dedicated to the cause of worldwide kosen-rufu, the Buddha's wish and decree—a movement that is now an unstoppable force around the globe.

No matter what slander or criticism we might encounter, if we continue to speak out and leave a clear record of the truth, our victory will be assured. During the early years of the Soka Gakkai's history, the number of defamatory articles in the print media about our organization increased in direct proportion to our phenomenal membership growth in Japan. ...

Mr. Toda remained unperturbed by these events, remarking calmly: “They write sensational articles about us because they know it will boost their sales. ... They can’t possibly surprise us with anything they write, because they haven’t the least clue what they’re writing about.” And he declared: “We of the Soka Gakkai have faith; we have the Gohonzon. Everything we have achieved is a result of the benefit of our faith in the Gohonzon. ... Faith is at the heart of everything. Remaining steadfast in our Buddhist practice is what matters.”

With this invincible conviction, the Soka Gakkai has achieved victory after victory. Irrespective of the times or circumstances, we will win in the end as long as we never discard our faith.<sup>4</sup>

### **Truly Noble Are Those Who Uphold and Propagate the Law With Selfless Dedication**

[*The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra* states,] “One’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one’s life in order to propagate the Law.” Because my body is insignificant, I am struck and hated, but because the Law is supreme, it will spread without fail. If the Lotus Sutra spreads, my mortal remains will be respected, and if my remains are respected, they will benefit the people. (WND-I, 615)

**The Law**, the ultimate truth or reality, is eternal and indestructible. Accordingly, if there are individuals willing to give their all to spreading the Law, kosen-rufu can definitely be realized. On the other hand, if there is no one willing to spread the Law with such a selfless, ungrudging spirit, then kosen-rufu will end up an empty dream.

Who was it that strove all out for Buddhism?

Nichiren and his followers. If the Mystic Law is great, then those who spread it are also great. The Daishonin says that if, through his selfless efforts, he succeeds in propagating the Law, then his life will be forever adorned with the immeasurable benefit that derives from that action. He also promises that the disciples who have supported him throughout will likewise enjoy everlasting good fortune and benefit. ...

Naturally, selfless dedication to propagating the Law in Nichiren Buddhism in no way indicates a feudalistic self-annihilation or self-sacrifice for some greater public good. Buddhism’s purpose is to help all people attain genuine happiness and thereby transform the karma of humankind. On an individual level, by sharing the Mystic Law with others, we can change our own karma and fundamentally transform our state of life. Such efforts represent the surest and most direct path to realizing happiness for ourselves and others.<sup>5</sup>

### **Great Benefits Derive From Opening the Eyes of People Throughout the World**

The benefits that come from opening the eyes of even one blind person are beyond description. How then is it possible to describe the benefits that derive from opening the blind eyes of all the Japanese people, and from giving the gift of sight to all human beings throughout Jambudvīpa and the other three continents? (WND-I, 615)

**Today**, just as 700 years ago, humankind is in need of a fundamental guiding philosophy that can serve to awaken or “open the eyes” of the people. Such a philosophy is found in the Lotus Sutra’s teachings of universal enlightenment and respect for all people. This philosophy holds that when we rise above differences of ethnicity and culture and discard all barriers, we come to see that all people inherently

**Irrespective of the times or circumstances, we will win in the end as long as we never discard our faith.**

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possess the same noble Buddha nature and have been born in this world to fulfill their highest potential. Every person is worthy of supreme respect. And when each person brings his or her innate Buddhahood to shine to the fullest, the world will change. A great human revolution in the life of just one person can change the world's destiny.<sup>6</sup>

## 'In Matters of Buddhism, the Words of the Sutras are What Must Come First'

**I may be a foolish man, but I am surely not inferior to a fox or a demon. The noblest people in the present age are in no way superior to Shakra or the boy Snow Mountains, yet because of my low social position, they have rejected my wise words. That is why the country is now on the brink of ruin. How lamentable! (WND-1, 616)**

**The malicious words** of those who spoke ill of Nichiren only exposed their own ugly snobbery and prejudice.

In "The Supremacy of the Law," Nichiren dismisses their jeers by citing the examples of Shakra who respectfully learned Buddhism from a fox, and the boy Snow Mountains who took a demon as his teacher to discover the Buddha way (see WND-1, 616). He rebukes his critics by saying that to devalue a teaching based on the teacher's outward status is to reject the conduct of such admirable models of seeking spirit as Shakra and Snow Mountains. ...

In Buddhism, the standard is always the superiority and depth of the teaching and not the social status of the person who teaches or spreads it. ...

Social position, titles, academic degrees and the like are irrelevant in the realm of the Soka Gakkai. Truly respectable are those who have a seeking spirit in faith. Furthermore, it is vital that we treasure those who take action for

kosen-rufu. These must forever remain our guiding principles.<sup>7</sup>

## Citadels of the People Built Through the Bonds of Mentor and Disciple

**If anything at all happens, please come over here. I will welcome you. Let us die of starvation together among the mountains. And I would imagine that your daughter, Oto, has become a fine, intelligent girl. I will write you again. (WND-1, 616)**

**Buddhism is not** sentimentalism, self-pity or shallow sympathy. Nichiren spoke of "giving the gift of sight to all human beings throughout Jambudvipa and the other three continents" (WND-1, 615). As these words indicate, he dedicated his life to widely propagating the Mystic Law and expounding the correct teaching with the world as his stage, and he steadfastly refused to be defeated by the life-threatening persecutions that assailed him. He possessed the resolute strength to uphold the truth without wavering and the warmth to embrace all people.

The vigorous spirit to refute falsehood and the compassion to embrace others, in other words, are two sides of the same coin. Genuine humanism lies in having both qualities.

The Daishonin and Nichimyo shared a pure and solid bond of mentor and disciple. Nichiren had forged such spiritual bonds with many followers. No devilish power or authority could sever these bonds, which had survived countless hardships and persecutions. ...

In closing, I present to you these words of indomitable conviction by Mr. Toda, which remain forever engraved in my heart: "The Soka Gakkai will transform this troubled world we live in. Let's rouse our courage, unite and forge ahead on the great path of kosen-rufu!"<sup>8</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, p. 116.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 147–48.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 149–50.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 151–52.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 155–56.

## Notes

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# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

## THE ESSENCE OF BUDDHISM LIES IN ONE'S 'BEHAVIOR AS A HUMAN BEING'

**The Ikeda Wisdom Academy** is an SGI-USA youth leaders advanced study movement. While the following material is for this youth leaders study program, all SGI-USA members can read the following excerpts as part of their personal study of *The Teachings for Victory*, volume 1, by Ikeda Sensei.

### Chapter 10

#### "The Three Kinds of Treasure" —Part 1 of 3

*Nichiren Daishonin wrote "The Three Kinds of Treasure" for a disciple in dire circumstances to teach him the importance of one's own behavior in a time of adversity. In this lecture, Ikeda Sensei explores how Nichiren explains the way to "take strong and wise action to break through any hardship."*<sup>1</sup>

**Buddhism manifests in** one's behavior. The Law is invisible to the eye, but it can be discerned in the conduct of those who correctly practice the

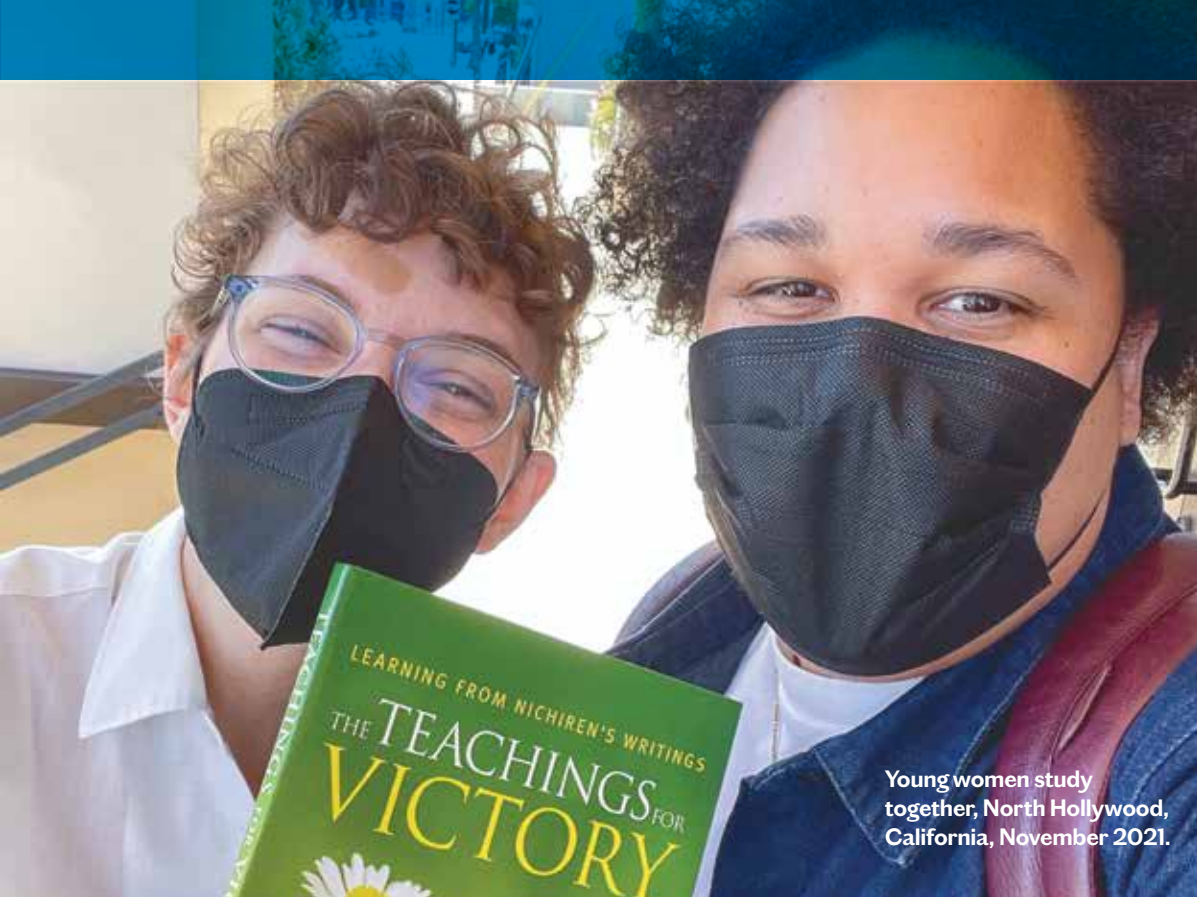
Buddhist teachings. This is because their actions exemplify the great merit of the Law. ...

Buddhism shines the spotlight on individuals who, just as the Buddha does, show through their actions unceasing respect for people.

For the next three installments, we will study "The Three Kinds of Treasure." In this letter addressed to Shijo Kingo, dated September 1277, Nichiren teaches his loyal disciple the importance of being a person of wisdom and how crucial one's behavior can be in a time of adversity.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Sincerity and Integrity Are the Springboards for Overcoming Adversity**

**Shijo Kingo had** been undergoing severe trials. In an earlier letter, Nichiren Daishonin quoted him as saying that great hardships had showered down on him like rain (see "The Difficulty of Sustaining Faith," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 471). Three years prior (in 1274), Kingo had tried to convert his lord, Ema Mitsutoki, to the Daishonin's teaching, but this only resulted in Ema marginalizing Kingo. From that time on, spiteful fellow retainers spread



Young women study together, North Hollywood, California, November 2021.

false accusations about Kingo and tarnished his good name. Attempts were even made on Kingo's life. Ema's disfavor also continued, causing tremendous hardship for Kingo and his family. This hardship took various forms, most conspicuously his being ordered to relinquish his existing fief and accept a smaller one. ...

Then, as a consequence of spurious accusations leveled against him in connection with an alleged incident at the Kuwagayatsu Debate of June 1277, Kingo suddenly found himself in danger of having all his lands confiscated. Ema pressed him to recant his faith in the Lotus Sutra or else be stripped of his fief. But Kingo chose faith without the slightest hesitation or doubt. He immediately sent a pledge to this effect to Nichiren. And the swift reply he received contained the famous lines: "This life is like a dream. One cannot be sure that one will live until tomorrow. However wretched a beggar you might become, never disgrace the Lotus Sutra" ("A Warning against Begrudging One's Fief," WND-I, 824).

Another consistent piece of advice Nichiren gave Shijo Kingo was to not be fawning or

servile. Servility is tantamount to destroying one's own dignity or self-esteem. Even worse, behaving in a cowardly or servile manner toward devilish functions will prevent one's Buddhahood from shining forth.

We must firmly stand up to devilish functions that bring misery to people. When confronted by people of dignity and integrity, devilish functions will always make a fast retreat. This is just like foxes fleeing when they hear the mighty roar of the lion king or like darkness vanishing the instant the sun comes out. ...

What is admirable about Shijo Kingo is how he always sought Nichiren's guidance and followed it unerringly. Because he strove in a spirit of oneness with his mentor, he could triumph magnificently over all obstacles. The mentor-disciple relationship is the driving force for victory in life and in kosen-rufu. This is an eternally unchanging principle of Buddhism.

When Shijo Kingo faithfully put his mentor's instructions into practice, profoundly determined never to disgrace the Lotus Sutra or behave servilely, his situation changed dramatically. It happened that Ema became seriously

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ill, and Kingo, who was knowledgeable in medicine, was called on to treat him. He was thus presented with a great opportunity to win back his lord's trust. This was only a few months after the threat of having his fiefs confiscated.

But the outcome of this chance to improve his relationship with his lord was still very uncertain. And Kingo's trying circumstances remained unchanged, with no immediate solution in sight. He still faced hostility from fellow retainers as well as continuing discord with his brothers. Meanwhile, the underhanded scheming of Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji, a temple in Kamakura, and others aimed at discrediting Kingo also continued unabated.

Yet, precisely because significant developments were taking shape—including glimmers of a positive turnaround—it was crucial that Shijo Kingo not grow overconfident or negligent. He would need to proceed carefully and cautiously toward resolving the situation. And it was imperative that he pay even greater attention to the people and things around him and secure victory through his wise behavior. This is the concrete guidance that the Daishonin offers Shijo Kingo in this letter, advising him in detail on how to view and challenge the situation confronting him. ...

The Daishonin explains to his embattled disciple that the key to breaking through adversity ultimately lies in wise action and one's own humanity. This applies not only to Shijo Kingo. Our actions, as well, reflect our faith and determine victory or defeat in our Buddhist practice.<sup>5</sup>

## The Wise Always Have Appreciation for Their Benefactors

**I am most grieved over your lord's illness. Although he has not professed faith in the Lotus Sutra, you are a member of his clan, and it is thanks to his consideration that you are able to make offerings to the sutra. Thus, these**

**may become prayers solely for your lord's recovery. Think of a small tree under a large one, or grass by a great river. Though they do not receive rain or water directly, they nonetheless thrive, partaking of dew from the large tree or drawing moisture from the river. The same holds true with the relationship between you and your lord. To give another example, King Ajatashatru was an enemy of the Buddha. But because Jivaka, a minister in the king's court, believed in the Buddha and continually made offerings to him, the blessings accruing from his actions are said to have returned to Ajatashatru. ("The Three Kinds of Treasure," WND-1, 848)**

**Having followed in** the footsteps of his father, Shijo Kingo was a second-generation samurai retainer of the Ema family, which was directly related to one of the Hojo regents who ruled the Kamakura military government. Both father and son had been loyal to the Ema family in times of grave peril. It is therefore not difficult to imagine that his lord would have placed deep trust in Kingo. The latter only incurred his lord's disfavor after he tried to convert him to Nichiren Daishonin's teachings.

Subjected to unjustified harassment and disciplinary action, including transfer to another estate in a remote province, Kingo, it appears, even considered suing Ema. Nichiren, however, urges him to exercise restraint, writing in another letter from the same period: "As vassals, you, your parents, and your close relatives are deeply indebted to your lord" ("The Eight Winds," WND-1, 794); and "Even if he never shows you the slightest further consideration, you should not hold a grudge against your lord" (WND-1, 794). Ingratitude ranks among the very worst kind of human conduct, as it incurs evil karma.

Nichiren tells Shijo Kingo that rather than resenting his lord, who is directly bringing pressure to bear on him, he should focus on battling the real adversary—namely, the workings of the "three obstacles and four devils"

## To practice the Mystic Law is to proceed along the path of victory; **all virtue will manifest in visible form without fail.**

manifesting in Ema's actions. Far more deserving of blame, he points out, is Ryokan, whose villainous schemes were largely behind the persecution of the Daishonin's followers and the false assumptions made by Kingo's lord. He declares that Ryokan is the epitome of the group known as "arrogant false sages"—one of the three powerful enemies of Buddhism. It is an admonition to recognize the true nature of such negative and obstructive forces.

Following Nichiren's guidance, Kingo conducted himself with wisdom and utmost sincerity in his daily life and interactions with others. As a result, when illness struck, Ema sought treatment from Shijo Kingo, who was renowned as an "excellent physician" ("On Prolonging One's Life Span," WND-1, 955). ...

Regarding truth or error in terms of the Law or teaching, Nichiren Buddhism maintains a rigorous attitude, but when it comes to people's sufferings, it always has a spirit of tolerance and compassion. Nichiren would do whatever he could to help those suffering, even if they were people who slandered the Law. Thinking of their plight, he exclaimed, "How tragic, how pitiful ...!" ("The Selection of the Time," WND-1, 578). At heart, he was indignant over human suffering (See "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land," WND-1, 7). The essence of Buddhism is found in the heartfelt wish for the happiness of each person. ...

In a family ... if one person radiates the brilliance of the Mystic Law, then all family members, including those who do not practice Nichiren Buddhism, will be protected. Individuals can similarly illuminate their workplaces and their communities. That is how vast and immeasurable the benefit of the Mystic Law is. Accordingly, from the standpoint of our Buddhist practice, it is important that we ourselves, irrespective of what others may do, become like the large tree or the great river in this analogy.<sup>4</sup>

### **Buddha Nature Manifesting Itself From Within and Bringing Forth Protection From Without**

**Buddhism teaches that, when the Buddha nature manifests itself from within, it will receive protection from without. This is one of its fundamental principles. ... What is hidden turns into manifest virtue. (WND-1, 848)**

**We possess this** Buddha nature, and it is up to us to awaken to and manifest it. By practicing Nichiren Buddhism, the Mystic Law comes to permeate one's life and exert its influence (see WND-1, 848)—that is, our Buddha nature, once revealed, pervades our lives in the same way that burning incense imbues our clothing with its fragrance. ...

Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon, the object of devotion in Nichiren Buddhism, is in fact the same as summoning forth and praising the Buddha nature inherent in our own lives and residing in all things in the universe. In response to the sound of our chanting, through which we reveal our Buddha nature, all benevolent forces throughout the universe move into action to protect us. This principle succinctly expresses the unique character of Nichiren Buddhism, which is completely different from faith that pins hope for salvation on some external power. ...

Next, Nichiren continues, "What is hidden turns into manifest virtue." Unseen virtue turns into conspicuous reward. To practice the Mystic Law is to proceed along the path of victory; all virtue will manifest in visible form without fail. When we forge ahead with this deep, unshakable conviction, our future will open up in wonderful ways we could never have imagined. This is the conviction and the declaration of Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.<sup>5</sup>

### **Never Be Defeated by Lies and Defamation**

**The heavenly devil knew about this from before, and he therefore possessed your colleagues, causing them**

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**to invent that preposterous lie in order to prevent you from making offerings to the Lotus Sutra. Since your faith is profound, however, the ten demon daughters must have come to your aid and caused your lord's illness. He does not regard you as his enemy, but since he once acted against you by giving credit to the false accusations of your colleagues, he has become seriously ill, and the malady persists. (WND-1, 848)**

**Devilish forces always** spin lies. In this passage, Nichiren Daishonin indicates that devils invariably resort to fabrications and false accusations to discredit people. ...

Nichiren says that the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, the culminating persecution that nearly saw him beheaded, was due to “endless slanders” (“On Repaying Debts of Gratitude,” WND-1, 728). Slander means a twisting of the facts to malign another person. Devilish functions constantly employ such means to persuade the powerful to bring down people of integrity and justice. This is the insidious, manipulative working of the devil king. Those who fall into the category of “arrogant false sages”—the most fearful of the three powerful enemies—also employ false accusations and misinformation to incite the ruling authorities to persecute the votary of the Lotus Sutra. In contrast to those who qualify as arrogant lay people or arrogant priests—the two other powerful enemies—arrogant false sages never personally come out into the open; they do not directly strike any blows. This is the true nature of the devil king of the sixth heaven.

In view of this principle, Nichiren asserts that such devilish functions are behind Shijo Kingo's present circumstances. In short, the devil king has influenced people connected to the Ema family, causing them to lie so that Kingo will come under fire.

Silently, imperceptibly, devilish functions

wreak havoc and destruction in people's hearts. Having the wisdom to discern the true nature of such functions reduces them in power by half. Courage—which equates to the power of faith—is what ultimately defeats devilish functions. ...

How the protective functions of the universe manifest will differ widely depending on the particular circumstances. In Kingo's case, protection appeared in the form of Ema falling ill—the result, Nichiren surmises, of Ema himself succumbing for a time to the deception of devilish forces. But because this event led Ema to regain his trust in Kingo, he, too, in keeping with the above principle, shared in the benefit of the Lotus Sutra. This clearly seems the result of Ema's own good fortune.<sup>6</sup>

## Justice Is Proven by Realizing Victory

**“Though evils may** be numerous, they cannot prevail over a single great truth” (“Many in Body, One in Mind,” WND-1, 618). It all comes down to one great truth or good. When mentor and disciple unite, devilish functions can definitely be defeated. When this victory is secured, a new page opens.

It is no exaggeration to say that the drama enacted by Shijo Kingo is a brilliant testament to his having won because of his upright, humanistic behavior—in other words, the forces of the Buddha vanquishing all devilish forces.

The times today also call for humanism. Humanistic action will no doubt become increasingly important in the future. Josei Toda once said, “You can talk about sincerity and integrity all you want, but unless your actions match your words, it's pointless.” Our actions are what matter. The world is now waiting and yearning for the humanistic behavior that SGI members exemplify.<sup>7</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, p. 161.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 162–64.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 165–66.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 167–68.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 169–70.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

## Notes

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# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

## ‘TREASURING EACH PERSON’—THE GUIDING SPIRIT OF OUR ACTIONS AS GENUINE PRACTITIONERS OF NICHIREN BUDDHISM

The Ikeda Wisdom Academy is an SGI-USA youth leaders advanced study movement. While the following material is for this study program, all SGI-USA members can read the following excerpts as part of their personal study of *The Teachings for Victory*, volume 1, by Ikeda Sensei.

### Chapter 11

#### “The Three Kinds of Treasure” —Part 2 of 3

*Nichiren Daishonin addressed “The Three Kinds of Treasure” to a disciple who was facing dire circumstances to teach him the importance of one’s own behavior in a time of adversity. In this lecture, Ikeda Sensei focuses on the importance of supporting and encouraging each person.*

To treasure each person—this is the foundation of Nichiren Buddhism. As the saying goes, “One is the mother of ten thousand” (“Conversation between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 131). The enlightenment of one person opens the way for all people to attain enlightenment. Nichiren Daishonin states, “When the dragon king’s daughter attained Buddhahood, it opened up the way to attaining Buddhahood for all women of later ages” (“The Opening of the Eyes,” WND-1, 269). This is a case of “one example that stands for all the rest” (WND-1, 269). ...

Mr. Toda always reassured [those struggling with all kinds of worries]: “It’s going to be all right!” “You’ll definitely become happy by practicing Nichiren Buddhism.” He also always cited Nichiren’s writings when he gave encouragement, careful to explain: “This is what the Daishonin teaches. These aren’t my words.” All who came to see him were revitalized by his confident guidance and left with a new,



Young men encourage one another by studying together at the SGI-USA Chicago Culture Center, December 2021.

purposeful spring in their step. While grappling with their own karmic challenges, they followed Mr. Toda's lead to become emissaries of happiness in their local areas, supporting and encouraging their fellow members and fostering many capable people for kosen-rufu. ...

It is evident in Nichiren's writings that he always based his guidance and encouragement on a keen understanding of the character and specific circumstances of whomever he was addressing. This is particularly apparent in "The Three Kinds of Treasure." His expressions of concern and meticulous advice throughout this letter overflow with his boundless compassion for his disciple Shijo Kingo, who was then facing the greatest challenge of his life.<sup>1</sup>

### Leaders Must Be Infinitely Thoughtful and Considerate

**As things stand now, I have a feeling you are in danger. Your enemies are sure to**

**make an attempt on your life. ... A cart, as long as it has two wheels, does not lurch all over the road. Likewise, if two men go together, an enemy hesitates to attack. Therefore, no matter what faults you may find with your younger brothers, do not let them leave you alone even for a moment. ("The Three Kinds of Treasure," WND-1, 848-49)**

In saying "As things stand now," Nichiren turns the focus to Kingo's course of action going forward. First, he expresses concern that Kingo's life is still in grave danger. Naturally, Kingo would have been aware that certain parties were actively seeking to eliminate him. But he may well have thought, *I'll be fine because I'm practicing Buddhism. ...*

He wishes to impress on Kingo the importance of having allies in order to successfully weather the present crisis. Specifically, Nichiren instructs him to cultivate cordial relations with

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

his younger brothers, even if they have made mistakes in the past and have various shortcomings. He further points out that if Kingo is always accompanied by his brothers, his enemies will refrain from attacking him.

The reason for the Daishonin's strong insistence that Kingo under no circumstances travel alone was that the situation still remained so tense that he might be ambushed at any moment. He is deliberately strict here, because Kingo has just overcome one difficult hurdle by obtaining an opportunity to regain his lord's trust, putting him at a most crucial juncture.<sup>2</sup>

## Faith Is a Struggle With Our Own Inner Darkness

**Your face bears definite signs of a hot temper. But you should know that the heavenly gods will not protect a short-tempered person, however important they may think he or she is. If you should be killed, even though you might attain Buddhahood, your enemies would be delighted, but we would feel only grief. This would indeed be regrettable. (WND-1, 849)**

The Daishonin's description likely captures a key aspect of Kingo's personality. Kingo tended to be extremely single-minded and acted with a zealous sense of right and wrong. But this could sometimes work to his disadvantage. Therefore, Nichiren tells him bluntly that the Buddhist gods will not protect someone who is short-tempered (see WND-1, 849).

Of course, when it comes to attaining Buddhahood, there is certainly no discrimination based on personality. Anyone's personality can shine brightly when illuminated by the Mystic Law. And it is by fully utilizing each person's unique personality that our movement for kosen-rufu can achieve perfect and harmonious development.

We can surmise, however, that Nichiren purposely adopts a stern tone here in order to dispel Kingo's innate darkness. ...

There was a very real danger that his hot temper might get the better of him and exacerbate the situation. Carried away by their own views of right and wrong, people often forget to be circumspect or consider others' feelings, causing friction and resentment. Nichiren worried that with Kingo, it could create an opening for devilish forces to take advantage; hence, the reason for his unvarnished words.

Nichiren further points out that if Kingo were to antagonize others and lose his life as a result, his enemies would rejoice while his fellow practitioners of the Mystic Law would be filled with sorrow. Here, the Daishonin teaches Kingo that his victory does not stop with him alone but is deeply connected to the victory of the entire community of Nichiren's followers. Consequently, he advises Kingo to exercise the utmost care and take precautions for his own safety.<sup>3</sup>

## An Evil Age Rife With Jealousy

**While your foes busy themselves plotting against you, your lord places greater confidence in you than before. Therefore, although they appear to have quieted down, inwardly they are no doubt seething with hate. (WND-1, 849)**

[Nichiren] understood the nuances of Kingo's situation. He also deeply recognized the frightening human tendency to malign and tear others down out of jealousy, rivalry and resentment. This tendency is all the more apparent in the strife-filled saha world of the Latter Day of the Law, an evil age when people are swayed by greed, anger, foolishness, arrogance and doubt.

Nichiren himself had consistently triumphed

**We must ... remain unswayed in the depths of our lives,** while at the same time flexibly respond to whatever develops. This is the Buddhist wisdom of the Middle Way.

in the struggle against the three powerful enemies of Buddhism—arrogant false sages represented by corrupt and jealous priests in the thrall of devilish functions, along with arrogant priests and arrogant lay people in league with them. ...

A quote by the Japanese intellectual Kiyoshi Miki has stayed with me since my youth. He said: “Jealousy is always insidious. ... Rather than prompting people to raise themselves to the same level as the person they are jealous of, it usually spurs them to bring that person down to their own level.” He also noted, “Jealousy comes from insecurity.”

There is nothing to fear once we realize that jealousy lies at the heart of all attempts to obstruct the progress of the community of believers that correctly upholds the Buddha’s teachings. The important thing is that we have courage combined with wisdom and mindful behavior. Our behavior as human beings, as taught in Buddhism, is the key to victory. ...

Of course, Buddhism is a teaching that enables each of us to live with complete freedom. It gives us the power to act with unconstrained energy and cheerfulness. But as “for the time being” indicates, Buddhism also means exercising the utmost care, prudence and wisdom in our conduct at crucial moments. At such times, it is vital that we bring forth wisdom most appropriate to the situation and create the greatest possible value. We must, therefore, remain unswayed in the depths of our lives, while at the same time flexibly respond to whatever develops. This is the Buddhist wisdom of the Middle Way.<sup>4</sup>

### **A Wise Person Triumphs Amid Life’s Harsh Realities**

**Probably you are well aware of it, but let me cite the Buddha’s prediction about what the latter age will be like. In**

**essence he states: “It will be a muddled age in which even sages will find it difficult to live. They will be like stones in a great fire, which for a while seem to endure the heat but finally char and crumble into ashes ....” Thus the saying goes, “Do not remain in the seat of honor too long.”**

**Many people have plotted to undo you, but you have avoided their intrigues and emerged victorious. Should you lose your composure now and fall into their trap, you will be, as people say, like a boatman who rows his boat with all his might only to have it capsize just before he reaches the shore, or like a person who is served no hot water at the end of his meal.**  
(WND-1, 849)

**Through earnest efforts** in exact accord with Nichiren’s guidance, Kingo had overcome the tense situation with his lord, showing actual proof of victory based on strong faith. It is a reality of life and society, however, that the seeds of future defeat are often sown in times of victory—just as the seeds of future victory may be sown in times of defeat. Nichiren points out that should Kingo lose his composure now and fall into the trap of those plotting against him (see WND-1, 849)—that is, should he foolishly antagonize others and make matters worse by losing his temper, thereby playing into the hands of his enemies—then all his efforts to achieve a positive outcome will have been in vain. ...

Next, the Daishonin mentions the “night watchmen of Egara” (WND-1, 849), whom he also later refers to as the “four night watchmen” (WND-1, 850). ... If Kingo is on friendly terms with these night watchmen and they frequently visit his home, the Daishonin further states, it will deter attacks from enemies, who do not wish to be seen (see WND-1, 850).

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Although Shijo Kingo and the four night watchmen were all Nichiren's followers, relations among them seem to have been strained. Nichiren counsels Kingo on this point as well. Fortunate is the disciple who has such a concerned and caring mentor.

He urges Kingo to be cordial toward the four night watchmen. He says, "However disagreeable it may be to you, you should associate with them amicably" (WND-1, 849–50). ...

Rather than viewing this guidance as directed only to Shijo Kingo, we should take it as an eternal guideline for all practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism. To be on good terms with everyone, to treasure our fellow practitioners—these principles also apply to the SGI. When solidly united, we can overcome obstacles and negative forces and make great strides forward for kosen-rufu. Devilish functions constantly seek to sow division. If fellow practitioners engage in petty infighting, they will only undermine one another, making it possible for devilish forces to gain advantage.<sup>5</sup>

## Behavior Infused With Respect for Others

**But since you are hot-tempered by nature, you might not take my advice. In that case, it will be beyond the power of my prayers to save you. (WND-1, 850)**

**Throughout his writings,** Nichiren makes the point that unless he and his disciples are united in purpose and resolve, their prayers, their goals and aspirations will not be realized. Probably no other follower had put his life on the line to protect Nichiren to the extent Shijo Kingo had. But if Kingo gave in to his temper and acted rashly, forgetting all about his commitment to act in a spirit of oneness with his mentor, he would wind up again foolishly ruled by deluded impulses. In that case, Nichiren says, no matter how fervently

he prays for Kingo, it will be to no avail. ...

Having advised Kingo to ally himself with the night watchmen, Nichiren writes: "You must hurry and talk with these four men and report to me how the matter goes. Then I will fervently pray to the heavenly gods for your protection."

This is a key point of personal guidance. The process doesn't just end once the guidance and encouragement are given. The person giving guidance must continue to chant wholeheartedly for the other person's happiness. We see that Nichiren always did precisely that. ...

Shijo Kingo had been confronted with many challenges: the displeasure of his lord; slander, false rumors and attacks by fellow retainers; his elder brother's betrayal; discord with his younger brothers; and strained relations with a number of fellow practitioners. Nichiren was concerned about each of these situations and gave pertinent advice on how to deal with them. From this letter, we can sense how much Nichiren cared about Shijo Kingo, supporting and guiding him with an affection surpassing even that which one might expect from a family member.

Indeed, the Daishonin thoroughly treasured each follower. Showing thoughtful consideration to each person is an expression of Buddhist humanism. ...

The Buddhist concept of "behavior as a human being" (WND-1, 852) constitutes a philosophy of action offering a new model of conduct for the human race. The world is in urgent need of people who practice and base their actions on humanism. The conduct of SGI members in cherishing and valuing each person is being lauded around the globe as a model of humanity for a new age.<sup>6</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, pp. 175–76.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 177–78.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 178–79.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 179–80.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 181–83.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 184–86.

## Notes

This image shows a single page from a notebook or ledger. It features a series of evenly spaced, thin grey horizontal lines running across the entire width of the page. The background is plain white, and there are no margins, text, or other markings present.

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

## THE ULTIMATE KEY TO VICTORY IN LIFE IS ACCUMULATING THE TREASURES OF THE HEART

**The Ikeda Wisdom Academy** is an SGI-USA youth leaders advanced study movement. While the following material is for this study program, all SGI-USA members can read the following excerpts as part of their personal study of *The Teachings for Victory*, volume 1, by Ikeda Sensei.

### Chapter 12

#### “The Three Kinds of Treasure” —Part 3 of 3

*In the closing section of “The Three Kinds of Treasure,” Nichiren Daishonin emphasizes that vital to winning in life is accumulating treasures of the heart, which we can gain by respecting others and striving in our Buddhist faith and practice.*

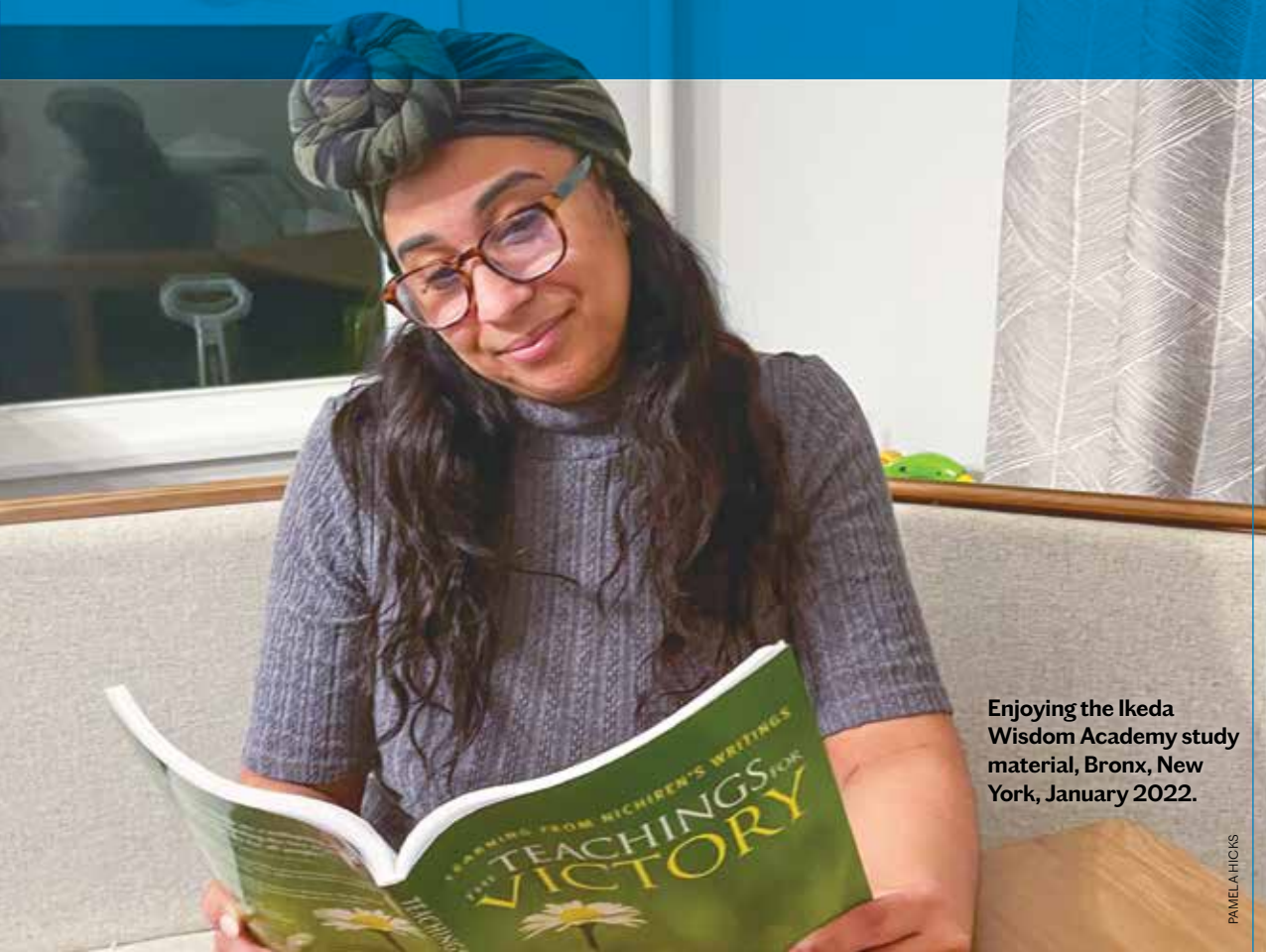
**The heart is** our unsurpassed treasure in life. It is endowed with tremendous potential and

supreme nobility. Its depth and breadth can be expanded infinitely, and its strength can be developed without bounds. The French author Victor Hugo wrote, “There is a spectacle greater than the sea, and that is the sky; there is a spectacle greater than the sky, and that is the human soul.”

How can we expand the inner realm of our lives, develop inner strength and accumulate treasures of the heart so that we can lead better lives? The answer is found in practicing the Mystic Law. ...

In “The Three Kinds of Treasure,” Nichiren praises his disciple’s faith, explaining that [Shijo] Kingo could take the first step toward victory based on the principle of “manifesting the Buddha nature from within and bringing forth protection from without” (see “The Three Kinds of Treasure,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 848). ...

To achieve unshakable victory, we need to challenge ourselves in earnest to change our karma. This is also the practice of human revolution, in



Enjoying the Ikeda Wisdom Academy study material, Bronx, New York, January 2022.

PAMELA HICKS

which we strive to break through our inner darkness or ignorance. Carelessness is the greatest enemy. If we allow ourselves to grow complacent and lose our fighting spirit, then the shortcomings or negative tendencies that arise from our fundamental darkness will resurface. For that reason, the Daishonin consistently emphasizes the point that faith is life's ultimate treasure.

In this installment, let us once more study Nichiren's teaching that the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all.<sup>1</sup>

### **Always Return to the Prime Point of the Oneness of Mentor and Disciple**

**Over and over I recall the moment, unforgettable even now, when I was about to be beheaded and you accompanied me, holding the reins of my horse and weeping tears of grief. Nor could I ever forget it in any lifetime to come. If you should fall into hell for some grave offense, no matter how**

**Shakyamuni Buddha might urge me to become a Buddha, I would refuse; I would rather go to hell with you. For if you and I should fall into hell together, we would find Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra there ... But if you depart from my advice even slightly, do not blame me for what may happen. ("The Three Kinds of Treasure," WND-1, 850)**

**The Lotus Sutra** is based on the spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple. Nichiren Buddhism, too, is a teaching of mentor and disciple. Our prime point as practitioners, therefore, is our vow to struggle together with our mentor. If we constantly return to this prime point of mentor and disciple, we will never become deadlocked.

In this passage, Nichiren Daishonin reaffirms the incident that became the prime point in his relationship with Shijo Kingo as mentor and disciple. It took place during the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. As Nichiren was being taken to the

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

execution grounds, Kingo gripped the reins of his mentor's horse and declared that he was prepared to die at his side. ...

If the Daishonin and Kingo—mentor and disciple upholding steadfast faith in the Mystic Law—were to fall into hell, then Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra would also definitely be found there. In that case, Nichiren explains, it would no longer be hell but rather the realm of Buddhahood. ...

As long as Kingo doesn't lose sight of this spirit to struggle together with Nichiren, he can triumph in any place and situation, based on the principle that "hell itself can instantly be transformed into the Land of Tranquil Light." But if he is defeated by his own weakness, losing his temper and lacking consideration for those around him, he will veer from the path of oneness with his mentor. This is why Nichiren repeatedly warns him to be careful. ...

The key to victory lies in aligning our hearts with the heart of our mentor who faithfully embodies and propagates the Law. If we ignore our mentor's guidance and simply base ourselves on our own vacillating minds, we cannot complete the arduous path of Buddhist practice.<sup>2</sup>

## Lamenting Over Our Problems Slows Our Spiritual Development

**Do not go around lamenting to others how hard it is for you to live in this world. To do so is an act utterly unbecoming to a worthy man. (WND-1, 850)**

**Here, Nichiren Daishonin** especially admonishes against lamentation and self-pity. This passage gets at the heart of people's readiness to bewail matters that are beyond their control. Everyone is susceptible to doing this. Even Kingo, who was prepared to lay down his life alongside Nichiren at a crucial moment, had trouble with human relations because of his

rigidity and singlemindedness. He may have given in to complaining in spite of himself. In advising Kingo not to lament to others, the Daishonin underscores that complaining about one's troubles or misfortunes is the way of life of the foolish, not the wise. ...

Complaining nurtures one's inner weakness and negativity and becomes a cause for stagnation. Here, Nichiren teaches Kingo that doing away with complaint and instead pursuing his own human revolution head-on is the sure path to victory in life.<sup>3</sup>

## Become a True Winner in Life

**It is rare to be born a human being. The number of those endowed with human life is as small as the amount of earth one can place on a fingernail. Life as a human being is hard to sustain—as hard as it is for the dew to remain on the grass. But it is better to live a single day with honor than to live to 120 and die in disgrace. Live so that all the people of Kamakura will say in your praise that Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo [Shijo Kingo] is diligent in the service of his lord, in the service of Buddhism, and in his concern for other people. (WND-1, 851)**

**Nichiren offers this** specific guidance to his disciple out of a wish for him to succeed on a fundamental level: "Live so that all the people of Kamakura will say in your praise that Nakatsukasa Saburo Saemon-no-jo is diligent in the service of his lord, in the service of Buddhism, and in his concern for other people." It implies three particular areas in which Kingo needs to be victorious: rebuilding a relationship of mutual trust with his lord, continuing to make unwavering efforts as a practitioner of the Mystic Law and winning the trust of those around him. The

## Fundamental victory derives from **the inner brilliance of our humanity that naturally draws others' admiration.**

treasures of the heart will shine in all these endeavors. In other words, we are truly victorious when we bring forth the brilliance of our Buddha nature in all aspects of our lives. ...

In short, fundamental victory derives from the inner brilliance of our humanity that naturally draws others' admiration. It could also be said that an important part of our struggle for kosen-rufu is for each of us to win such trust and respect in society. ...

Shijo Kingo's relations with those around him—with Lord Ema and the members of his lord's family, and with his own colleagues, brothers and fellow practitioners—were far from smooth. There were probably instances when his doggedness created problems. Without resolving such issues, he could not become a winner in faith.

That's why Nichiren urges him to constantly work on polishing his character and show actual proof by realizing a great human revolution. It was his wish that Kingo, as the central figure among his followers in Kamakura, would develop into an admirable leader in society and lead a life of profound significance and meaning. This compassionate spirit was no doubt behind the Daishonin's guidance encouraging him to win the praise of the people in Kamakura.<sup>4</sup>

### **A Thoroughly Polished Character Is Priceless**

**More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all. From the time you read this letter on, strive to accumulate the treasures of the heart! (WND-1, 851)**

The above passage is the most well-known in this writing. "Treasures in a storehouse" indicates material assets. "Treasures of the body" means such things as health or acquired

skills. "Treasures of the heart," on one level, means an inner richness, wealth or abundance. On a more fundamental level, it means faith and the brilliance of the Buddha nature polished through faith. ...

Kingo faced the possibility of losing his estate, which, of course, represented an extremely important source of income for him and his family. But the Daishonin insists that far more valuable than the treasures of the storehouse and the body are the treasures of the heart. The accumulation of these inner treasures, he says, is the basis for all victory.

The fact that Kingo had been challenging his situation based on faith in the Mystic Law corresponds to placing the highest value on the treasures of the heart. As a result, he had been victorious so far. That is probably why Nichiren clarifies this point as a universal and unchanging guideline for victory in all areas of life.

And actually, when we base ourselves on the treasures of the heart, the true value and worth of treasures of the storehouse and the body also become apparent in our lives. In short, we need to make accumulating the treasures of the heart our fundamental purpose in life. If we lose sight of this elemental objective, seeking merely to accumulate treasures of the storehouse and the body, it will only give rise to attachment. Fear of losing such material or physical treasures can then become a cause of suffering. Therefore, what is important above all, what is the correct sense of purpose in life, is to accumulate treasures of the heart.<sup>5</sup>

### **Our Behavior as Human Beings**

**The heart of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings is the Lotus Sutra, and the heart of the practice of the Lotus Sutra is found in the "Never Disparaging" chapter. What does Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's profound respect for**

**people signify? The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being.**

**Respectfully.**

**The wise may be called human, but the thoughtless are no more than animals. (WND-1, 851-52)**

**Deeply apprehending** the truth that—when viewed from the fundamental perspective of life—everyone is a Buddha, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging bowed in reverence to all he met, no matter how he was persecuted and attacked. This is the behavior of one who truly embodies the spirit of the Lotus Sutra. ...

The treasures of the heart may be invisible to the eye. But when these inner treasures are given concrete expression as respectful actions toward others, they demonstrate and prove to others the power of the Mystic Law and the Buddha nature.

Viewing treasures of the heart as the most valuable of all reflects a sense of values concerned with what is most important and precious in life. Showing respect to others in our actions, meanwhile, constitutes the standard for our behavior as Buddhists based on this sense of values. ...

In short, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's actions of respect for others constitute the fundamental cause for manifesting our Buddhahood. Such actions are crucial if we hope to gain enlightenment. The aspiration of leading all people to enlightenment would just be a pipe dream unless the Buddha taught the importance of our behavior as human beings. That is why Nichiren asserts that this is "the purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings."

Nichiren also always demonstrated respect for others through his actions. The Buddha nature will manifest in the lives of those who arouse and maintain faith in the Mystic Law, no

matter how evil the times. Their behavior will definitely pulse with the fundamental wisdom of the practical philosophy of respect for others.

Nichiren's practice of *shakubuku*, of rigorously refuting error, is also grounded in compassion for the individual in error and concern for the happiness of the people. It is also an expression of his fervent wish for the peace and security of the land. Shakubuku is a struggle to refute the erroneous and reveal the true out of respect for everyone's Buddha nature.

Because shakubuku in Nichiren Buddhism is based on respect for others, it aims to refute the error of those who disrespect others. Premised on this understanding, Nichiren indicates that, even in the evil and slanderous age of the Latter Day, we need to act prudently and respectfully rather than simply rushing in to refute error.

Fully and unequivocally stating the truth is also shakubuku. The Latter Day of the Law is an age rife with distrust and fear stemming from a society in which people are not respected, and life is held in low regard. In such an age, shakubuku means standing up alone and resolutely holding high the banner of respect for human beings and the sanctity of life. This, too, is the courageous practice of shakubuku. ...

The SGI is taking action to pioneer a magnificent path of intercultural and interfaith dialogue toward finding answers to those very questions. Transcending all differences, surmounting barriers of ethnicity and nationality, we are constructing a realm of broad and open exchange among human beings. The philosophy of the SGI is based on the Lotus Sutra's teaching of showing respect for others through our actions, as well as the principle that all change begins from within ourselves and from accumulating treasures of the heart.<sup>6</sup>

#### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, pp. 191-92.
2. *Ibid.*, 192-93.

3. *Ibid.*, 193-94.
4. *Ibid.*, 194-95.
5. *Ibid.*, 195-96.
6. *Ibid.*, 197-200.

## Notes

[illegible]

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

## STRIVING FOR KOSEN-RUFU IN THE SPIRIT OF THE ONENESS OF MENTOR AND DISCIPLE IS THE KEY TO TRUE ‘PEACE AND SECURITY IN THIS EXISTENCE’

**The Ikeda Wisdom Academy** is an SGI-USA youth leaders advanced study movement. While the following material is for this study program, all SGI-USA members can read the following excerpts as part of their personal study of *The Teachings for Victory*, volume 2, by Ikeda Sensei.

### Chapter 1

#### “On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings”—Part 1 of 3

*Nichiren Daishonin addressed “On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings” to all his followers, urging them to courageously uphold and spread the Buddha’s teachings, taking on any opposition they are bound to face along the way.*

**The title of this** letter literally translates as “On Practicing as the Buddha Teaches.” Here, “as the Buddha teaches” can also be interpreted to mean “as the teacher expounds.” Nichiren set an

example for his disciples by reading the correct teaching of the Lotus Sutra with his life and practicing as the Buddha teaches. He waged a confrontation of words to “refute the erroneous and reveal the true,” holding high the banner of universal enlightenment. ...

Mr. Toda made a large double circle in red next to the title “On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings” in his copy of Nichiren’s writings to indicate the special importance of this writing. As his loyal and devoted disciple, I also read this letter countless times, engraving in my heart Nichiren’s spirit to refute error in the realm of Buddhism. ...

“On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings” outlines how genuine disciples strive to realize Buddhism’s lofty ideals, unafraid of hardships, just as their teacher instructs. It is an important writing that contains the essence of the oneness of mentor and disciple. Let us engrave it deeply in our lives for the continuing development of kosen-rufu and the SGI’s enduring victory into the eternal future of the Latter Day of the Law.



Young men encourage one another through study in Richmond, California, February 2022.

## The Challenges of Propagating the Mystic Law in the Latter Day

**Dated the fifth** month of 1273, “On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings” was composed at Ichinosawa on Sado Island during Nichiren Daishonin’s exile. As the postscript indicates, it is addressed “To all my followers,” along with the instruction, “Keep this letter with you at all times and read it over and over” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 396). In this writing, Nichiren encourages his disciples to emulate his example of practicing the Lotus Sutra as the Buddha teaches and to diligently uphold their faith.

In his day, exile to Sado was tantamount to a death sentence; most people condemned to this remote isle never returned alive. During his time there, Nichiren’s life was in constant danger. In “On the Buddha’s Prophecy,” dated one month later, he writes, “The chances are one in ten thousand that I will survive the year or even the month” (WND-1, 402).

Undaunted by indescribable hardships and privations, Nichiren proclaimed his struggle as

the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law to illuminate the darkness shrouding humankind with the light of universal enlightenment. The previous year, in the second month of 1272, he had composed “The Opening of the Eyes,” which reveals the object of devotion in terms of the Person. This was followed in the fourth month of 1273, just one month prior to “On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings,” with “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” which reveals the object of devotion in terms of the Law. With the completion of these two important treatises, Nichiren had established the doctrinal framework for his teaching for the enlightenment of all people into the eternal future.

The rest was now up to his disciples. He knew that everything would hinge on individuals genuinely committed to the correct teaching. If such dedicated disciples rose to action, *kosen-rufu* could be achieved without fail. ...

At the beginning of this writing, Nichiren states, “Those who are born in this land and believe in this sutra when it is propagated in the Latter Day of the Law will be subjected to

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

hatred and jealousy even greater than that which arose in the lifetime of the Thus Come One.” This is based on the Lotus Sutra passage “Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?” (*The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, p. 203).

His purpose in making this statement is to deepen his followers’ awareness of their mission to propagate the Mystic Law in this latter age and to prepare them for the opposition they are bound to incur along the way. Those fainthearted and afraid of hardship cannot realize the momentous undertaking of kosen-rufu. True disciples are those who stand up with the same ardent commitment as Nichiren to guide people to enlightenment and who have the dauntless strength to face obstacles head-on with selfless dedication. The joy of struggling together with one’s mentor, sharing the same purpose, is also a source of boundless strength that helps one rise above all manner of hardships.<sup>2</sup>

## **“No Matter What Happens, Be Fearless!”**

What is more, once you become a disciple or lay supporter of the votary who practices the true Lotus Sutra in accord with the Buddha’s teachings, you are bound to face the three types of enemies. Therefore, from the very day you listen to [and take faith in] this sutra, you should be fully prepared to face the great persecutions of the three types of enemies that are certain to be more horrible now after the Buddha’s passing. Although my disciples had already heard this, when both great and small persecutions confronted us, some were so astounded and terrified that they even forsook their faith. Did I not warn you in advance? (WND-1, 391)

**Nichiren clearly states** that those who practice as the Buddha teaches are bound to be assailed by the three powerful enemies and meet with persecutions even more severe than those during Shakyamuni’s lifetime. ...

As for the three powerful enemies, these are manifestations of the workings of the devil king of the sixth heaven, or heavenly devil—the most fearful of the three obstacles and four devils. As the teacher waging an unrelenting battle against the onslaughts of these enemies, Nichiren constantly warned his followers that they were certain to encounter obstacles far worse than those experienced during Shakyamuni’s time. Nevertheless, some grew fainthearted and stopped practicing. It got to the point, writes Nichiren, where “999 out of 1,000 people ... gave up their faith” (“Reply to Niiama,” WND-1, 469).

Whether disciples triumph over devilish functions or are defeated by them will have a decisive impact on the spread of the Mystic Law in the Latter Day. Nothing is more painful for the teacher than to see disciples defeated by such obstacles.<sup>3</sup>

## **The True Nature of the “Battle Between the Provisional and the True Teachings”**

This is indeed an accursed time to live in this land! However, the Buddha has commanded me to be born in this age, and it is impossible for me to go against the decree of the Dharma King. And so, as the sutra dictates, I have launched the battle between the provisional and the true teachings. Donning the armor of endurance and girding myself with the sword of the wonderful teaching, I have raised the banner of the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo, the heart of the entire eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra. ... (WND-1, 392)

## Whether disciples triumph over devilish functions or are defeated by them will have a **decisive impact on the spread of the Mystic Law in the Latter Day.**

**The Daishonin indicates** that, far from simply waiting to be subjected to hardships, he has actively embarked on the “battle between the provisional and the true teachings.” ...

The Latter Day is a time when Buddhism falls into serious decline and all but perishes. Confusion reigns as to what constitutes the Buddha’s correct teaching, with rival schools incessantly quarreling and disputing the validity of the different teachings they advocate. In addition to this confusion and disorder in the realm of Buddhism, people also become confused and disordered, and the land is imperiled as a result. ...

In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni states that among his teachings there are those he expounded as expedient means (the provisional teachings, or the three vehicles) and one that contains his true intent (the true teaching, or the one vehicle). He then instructs that, after his passing, his disciples should honestly discard the expedient teachings and spread the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra. It is, therefore, the duty of votaries of the Lotus Sutra who appear in the Latter Day, when the Law is in danger of disappearing, to carry on the “battle between the provisional and true teachings” so as to make a clear distinction between them. The purpose of this battle is solely to prevent the correct Buddhist teaching from perishing.

Those who clarify the differences between the provisional teachings and the true teaching in the Latter Day, when the Buddha’s teachings are in complete disarray, are certain to incur resentment and hostility from the established Buddhist schools, whose religious authority is based on the claimed supremacy of various provisional sutras. It is sure to unleash a storm of criticism, misunderstanding, and persecution. Consequently, those who wage this battle must do so with the recognition that this is “an accursed time” and don the “armor of endurance” so that they can withstand the inevitable fierce onslaughts.

The most powerful weapon in this battle is the Lotus Sutra itself, in which the Buddha clearly distinguished between the provisional teachings and the true teaching. Hence, Nichiren uses the expression, the “sword of the wonderful teaching.” Nothing can cut through or refute error as incisively as the Buddha’s own words. The practice of refuting erroneous teachings in the realm of Buddhism is ultimately a struggle of compassion fought with the force of reason. If it were to be waged with anything other than reason—for example, authority or brute force—then it would not be the battle of ideas commanded by the Buddha. ...

The “banner of the five characters of Myohorenge-kyo, the heart of the entire eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra” refers to Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the essence of the Lotus Sutra. It is the banner of the forces who champion the correct teaching. It is the “banner of propagation of the Lotus Sutra” (“The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon,” WND-1, 831), carried by the practitioners who widely proclaim the Mystic Law—a teaching of universal enlightenment—and refute error that plunges people into suffering.

The “five characters of Myohorenge-kyo” constitute the name of the Buddha nature of all living beings, and chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the practice that makes it possible for both ourselves and others to manifest this Buddha nature from within. This means that each of us has the power to unfurl the banner of victory in our lives. Ultimately, the “battle between the provisional and the true teachings” is a struggle for human victory, one in which we aim—through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo based on strong faith in the Mystic Law—to overcome all suffering and misfortune and open the way to happiness for everyone. ...

In this passage, Nichiren also speaks of repulsing the attacks of enemies and defeating them. I would especially like our youth division members to emulate this spirit and have the unflagging determination to eradicate all roots

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

of evil that cause people suffering and misery. To achieve kosen-rufu, we need to defeat the devilish nature or negativity that resides and proliferates in the human heart.<sup>4</sup>

## Tenacious Dialogue and Shining Humanity

**“The Lotus Sutra is the teaching of shakubuku, the refutation of the provisional doctrines.” True to the letter of this golden saying, in the end, every last one of the believers of the provisional teachings and schools will be defeated and join the retinue of the Dharma King. The time will come when all people will abandon the various kinds of vehicles and take up the single vehicle of Buddhahood, and the Mystic Law alone will flourish throughout the land. ... There cannot be the slightest doubt about the sutra’s promise of “peace and security in their present existence.” (WND-1, 392)**

Nichiren Daishonin is not saying here that one school of Buddhism will gain dominance over all the other schools—even though he noted that the “eight and ten schools” of the day were in disarray and quarreled endlessly among themselves, a defining feature of an age of conflict. What he means is that the Mystic Law—the ultimate essence of the Buddha’s enlightenment, which is also the original source of the various Buddhist schools—will come to function as the fundamental guiding principle of society without opposition or impediment.

[This passage] refers to a situation where people readily accept the correct teaching upon hearing it, without slander or opposition. It is a time when the benefit of this teaching—the Law for the enlightenment of all people that the Buddha demonstrated with his life and taught to others—spreads widely among the people. This

also signifies “establishing the correct teaching” in terms of Nichiren’s principle of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land.”

Mr. Makiguchi referred to “major good” as an aspect of the spiritual value that would be realized through spreading the Mystic Law. Mr. Toda, meanwhile, espoused “human revolution” for all humankind. Inheriting their legacy, I have taken the further step of emphasizing the “dignity and sanctity of life” as the spiritual value to be shared and toward which all humanity should aspire.

Kosen-rufu is the most difficult of undertakings. It involves an inner transformation in people’s lives. Faith in the Mystic Law is a self-motivating force. Steadfast efforts in one-to-one dialogue are indispensable to nurturing that faith, giving each person confidence in his or her potential to change from within.

Nichiren speaks of all people abandoning the various other vehicles and taking up the single vehicle of Buddhahood. The Law does not spread through coercion. As such, the ideal described in the aforementioned quote will only be realized when the humanism of Nichiren Buddhism gains widespread acceptance, becomes the philosophical current of society and develops into humankind’s shared value. Kosen-rufu cannot be accomplished without tenacious dialogue and the shining humanity of those who spread the Law. ...

When we exert ourselves in our Buddhist practice, our Buddhahood is powerfully activated. Our lives come to brim with supreme joy. There is no tragic self-sacrifice in the Nichiren Buddhist spirit of “selfless dedication” or “not begrudging one’s life.” When we vigorously challenge ourselves, joy always pulses vibrantly in our lives.<sup>5</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 2, pp. 1–17.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 9–12.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 12–15.

## Notes

[illegible]

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study *for*  
SGI-USA Youth Division

## THE COMPASSIONATE PRACTICE OF SHAKUBUKU

**The Ikeda Wisdom Academy** is an SGI-USA youth leaders advanced study movement. While the following material is for this study program, all SGI-USA members can read the following excerpts as part of their personal study of *The Teachings for Victory*, volume 2, by Ikeda Sensei.

### Chapter 2

#### “On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings”—Part 2 of 3

*In this lecture, Ikeda Sensei explains the spirit of shakubuku.*

**Kosen-rufu**, or the widespread propagation of the Law, is the “practice of Buddhas” arising out of the profound compassion Buddhas have for all living beings, and it is also the “practice of bodhisattvas” undertaken by disciples who make this compassionate spirit of Buddhas their own.

The true power for spreading the Mystic Law is born when all of us, as practitioners, directly connect our lives to the correct teacher of the

Law and the true mentors of kosen-rufu. ...

If we faithfully exert ourselves as the Buddha teaches, we can break through any obstacle. Practicing in accord with the Buddha’s teachings means disciples challenging themselves in the same spirit as their teacher or mentor. When we unerringly walk the path of mentor and disciple, we can bring forth unlimited power. The mentor’s lofty and expansive life state can inspire us to win in our own struggles. ...

When we bring forth the powers of courageous faith and practice that accord with the Buddha’s teachings, the infinite powers of the Buddha and the Law will manifest without fail. To deepen our understanding of this essential Nichiren Buddhist teaching, let us continue studying “On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings” in this chapter, focusing on the way of faith and practice for advancing with the same spirit as our mentor.<sup>1</sup>

#### **The ‘One Buddha Vehicle’ as the Correct Basis of Faith**

**I insist that this is wrong. The most important thing in practicing the Buddhist teachings is to follow and**

Young women encourage each other through studying the Ikeda Wisdom Academy study material, New Orleans, March 2022.



CONSTANCE THOMPSON

**uphold the Buddha's golden words, not the opinions of others.**

• • •

**The Buddha himself concluded that one's practice accords with the Buddha's teachings only when one bases one's faith firmly on the standard of these sutra passages, believing fully that "there is only the Law of the one vehicle." ("On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings, *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 393)**

**Just before this** section, Nichiren Daishonin poses the question: "How should one practice if one is to be faithful to the Buddha's teachings?" (WND-1, 392). He then explains the correct way of faith in the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law.

The true intent of the Buddha, Shakyamuni, is revealed in the Lotus Sutra. His aim is to clarify that all vehicles are contained in the one Buddha vehicle (see WND-1, 392) and that all people have the potential to attain enlightenment. "All vehicles" indicates the teachings

other than the Lotus Sutra expounded by Shakyamuni in accord with the different capacities of the people. They specifically refer to the "three vehicles," the teachings expounded for the voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones and bodhisattvas, respectively. But Shakyamuni's true purpose in expounding these teachings was to cultivate the people's capacity so that he could ultimately teach them the "one Buddha vehicle"—the sole vehicle by which people can attain the state of Buddhahood. As such, it is the only teaching in the Buddha's vast body of sutras that can lead all humanity to enlightenment in the Latter Day. And it is fully and clearly revealed by Shakyamuni in the Lotus Sutra.

The Lotus Sutra not only discloses the Buddha's true intent of helping all people attain Buddhahood but also reveals the name of the great Law that is the key to enlightenment: Myoho-enge-kyo—the wonderful Law, or Mystic Law. It also expounds the principle of the "true aspect of all phenomena," which serves as the theoretical basis for the universal attainment of Buddhahood. ...

The Lotus Sutra also elucidates the great vow of kosen-rufu—the vow to widely spread the correct teaching to enable all living beings to attain Buddhahood. It asserts that devoting one's life to this great vow or aspiration is the true and eternal bodhisattva way.

The Lotus Sutra thus teaches from a variety of angles that the one vehicle of Buddhahood represents the Buddha's true intent. In fact, it showcases this supreme teaching from beginning to end. Further, the sutra describes how those who hear and embrace the Lotus Sutra arouse faith in the one vehicle of Buddhahood and cast off the delusion that prevents them from attaining enlightenment. The causality of attaining Buddhahood is thus engraved in their lives, enabling them to manifest the supreme benefit of enlightenment in this lifetime. The Lotus Sutra is the sole sutra that not only provides a concrete teaching but also explains how it should be practiced and the benefit that will ensue from such a practice.

It is imperative, therefore, that those who would practice the Lotus Sutra in accord with the Buddha's teachings embrace faith solely in that sutra. If they fail to comprehend the Buddha's true intent and place greater importance on earlier teachings, which the Buddha expounded as expedient means, it could cause them to veer from the path of faith in the one vehicle of Buddhahood. ...

The schism in Japanese Buddhism during Nichiren's time—as characterized by the reference to the “eight or ten schools”—highlighted the danger of the Law's decline as a result of people losing sight of the one Buddha vehicle. To overcome this danger, Nichiren called on people to embrace faith in the Lotus Sutra—the only sutra that fully expounds the supreme sanctity of life and respect for all people in both principle and practice, thereby opening the way to universal enlightenment.

The decline of the Law also directly

threatened the people's happiness and welfare; it could lead to conditions that would bring about conflict and war (for instance, the calamities of internal strife and foreign invasion that the Daishonin predicted would occur), thus destroying the peace and tranquility of the land and society.

To overcome this danger, the mission of Nichiren's disciples awakened to the Lotus Sutra's true teaching is to foster active, self-motivated individuals possessing steadfast faith in the one Buddha vehicle.<sup>2</sup>

## The Two Types of Practice— Shoju and Shakubuku

**Anyone who practices Buddhism should first understand the two types of practice—shoju and shakubuku. All the sutras and treatises fall into one or the other of these two categories. Though scholars in this country may have studied Buddhism extensively, they do not know which practice accords with the time. ... The two millennia of the Former and Middle Days of the Law required the spread of the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana teachings, but the first five hundred years of the Latter Day call for only the Lotus Sutra, the pure and perfect teaching of the one vehicle of Buddhahood, to be spread abroad widely. (WND-1, 394)**

In the previous section, Nichiren Daishonin discussed practicing the Buddha's teachings in the Latter Day in terms of faith. Now, he discusses this in terms of practice. ...

Nichiren sets forth the single practice of embracing the “five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo” (accepting and upholding the Gohonzon) as the fundamental practice of the Lotus Sutra in

## [Nichiren] demonstrated through his own actions that the **practice of shakubuku is vital in terms of refuting slander of the Law and, as such, constitutes a crucial aspect of Nichiren Buddhism.**

the Latter Day of the Law. ...

Shoju, here, as indicated in several of the teachings, refers to a practice of solitary and quiet devotion. The Lotus Sutra expounds both shoju, as seen in the “Peaceful Practices” chapter, and shakubuku—that of asserting the truth of the supreme teaching to all people—as seen in “Bodhisattva Never Disparaging,” the twentieth chapter. Fundamentally, both types of practice—shoju and shakubuku—are necessary, depending on the time.

Accordingly, strict adherence to shoju that rejects shakubuku or strict adherence to shakubuku that rejects shoju runs counter to the original teaching of there being two ways of practice. ...

In this writing, Nichiren illustrates the importance of the time, noting that even in such endeavors as farming, a clear recognition of the time or season is crucial. In the realm of Buddhism, too, there are appropriate times, respectively, for the Hinayana, the provisional Mahayana or the true Mahayana (Lotus Sutra) teachings to be disseminated for the benefit of humanity (see WND-1, 393).

Time, here, does not simply mean the passage of time. It indicates clearly delineated eras characterized by significant shifts in people’s receptivity to the Law after Shakyamuni’s passing—in other words, it refers to the three time periods known as the Former Day, Middle Day and Latter Day of the Law. It is also a comprehensive recognition of the time that takes into account the spiritual condition of the people, the state of society and of the country, the teachings and beliefs that prevail there, and so on.

Nichiren clarifies that the two millennia of the Former Day and the Middle Day of the Law marked the time for the spread of the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana teachings (see WND-1, 394). During these periods, many people had the capacity to understand the Buddha’s teachings. ...

The Latter Day is an age when the correct

Buddhist teaching is in danger of being lost; it is an evil age defiled by the five impurities, teeming with negative influences that confuse people’s minds. At such a time, none of the Buddha’s pre-Lotus Sutra teachings have the power to guide the people and the age in the direction of lasting happiness.

The Latter Day is also an age when the devilish nature that slanders the Law and denigrates the one Buddha vehicle is rampant. The Daishonin inscribed the object of devotion, the Gohonzon, which represents the ultimate revelation of the Law (Nam-myoho-rence-kyo) in which we should place our faith in order to attain Buddhahood. He also set forth the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo as a regular practice designed to help us maintain steadfast faith. In this way, he established the Buddhism of sowing that directly activates the innate Buddha nature of people in the Latter Day. Furthermore, he demonstrated through his own actions that the practice of shakubuku is vital in terms of refuting slander of the Law and, as such, constitutes a crucial aspect of Nichiren Buddhism.<sup>5</sup>

### **A Lofty Spiritual Struggle to Refute the Erroneous and Reveal the True**

**When one must face enemies, one needs a sword, a stick, or a bow and arrows. When one has no enemies, however, such weapons are of no use at all. In this age, the provisional teachings have turned into enemies of the true teaching. When the time is right to propagate the teaching of the one vehicle, the provisional teachings become enemies. When they are a source of confusion, they must be thoroughly refuted from the standpoint of the true teaching. Of the two types of practice, this is shakubuku, the practice of the Lotus Sutra. With**

**good reason T'ien-t'ai stated, "The Lotus Sutra is the teaching of shakubuku, the refutation of the provisional doctrines." (WND-1, 394)**

**In light of** their function in the Buddha's teachings, the provisional sutras were expounded as expedient means to cultivate people's capacity for understanding and ultimately guide them to the one Buddha vehicle of the Lotus Sutra. In the defiled Latter Day, however, influential Buddhist schools based themselves on different provisional teachings and proclaimed them to be the Buddha's ultimate teaching. Some even openly slandered the Lotus Sutra and were so blinded by delusion that they instructed others to discard faith in it. In that sense, Nichiren says, the provisional teachings have turned into "enemies of the true teaching," "enemies of the Lotus Sutra."

In such an age and land, if one wishes to lead all people to enlightenment through practicing the Lotus Sutra, it is essential, Nichiren declares, to thoroughly refute the error of those who adhere to the provisional teachings and who are influenced by devilish functions to slander the Lotus Sutra. This is the essence of Nichiren's commitment to shakubuku. ...

It is also clear in light of the sutras that one who dares point out the errors of the other Buddhist schools of the day and propagate the Mystic Law is certain to be assailed by the three obstacles and four devils and face opposition from the three powerful enemies. But Nichiren could not ignore the misfortune and suffering that loomed over the people, nor could he turn a blind eye to the correct Buddhist teaching being obliterated. Driven by an irrepressible impulse, he waged a powerful struggle for the happiness of all people, practicing with selfless devotion and valuing the Law more than his own life. This is the true significance of the Daishonin's shakubuku spirit. ...

Expressing genuine concern for all people

means upholding a philosophy of respect for others and battling negative functions that cause people suffering, while refusing to condone violence or oppression that threatens human dignity or equality. If we observe views that justify using human lives as a means to an end or that divides and discriminates against people, then we must vigorously denounce the misguided teachings or ideas that form the spiritual soil for such thought. It is a battle against the fundamental darkness or ignorance that plunges people's lives into suffering and misery. This is the essence of the "battle between the provisional teachings and the true teaching" and the crux of the shakubuku spirit in Nichiren Buddhism. ...

It is possible for us to join together with other religions and philosophies that share the values of respecting human beings and the dignity of life in what Mr. Makiguchi termed "humanistic competition" channeled toward eradicating human misery and suffering. Indeed, it is an indispensable requirement of religion in the twenty-first century to denounce all abuses of human dignity.

As SGI members, we engage in a lofty spiritual struggle to refute the erroneous and reveal the true through our daily efforts—respectful conduct toward all people like that epitomized by Bodhisattva Never Disparaging; a strong commitment unshaken by opposition or obstacle; a readiness to stand up against inhumanity and injustice; a wonderful example of winning trust in our immediate environment and promoting understanding of Nichiren Buddhism. I wish to declare that such efforts constitute the practice of shakubuku in modern times.<sup>4</sup>

#### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 2, pp. 21–22.

2. Ibid., pp. 22–25.

3. Ibid., pp. 25–28.

4. Ibid., pp. 28–30.

## Notes

[illegible]

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

## ENCOUNTERING GREAT OBSTACLES IS PROOF OF PROPAGATING THE CORRECT TEACHING FOR ATTAINING BUDDHAHOOD IN THE LATTER DAY OF THE LAW

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### Chapter 3

“On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings”—Part 3 of 3

*Ikeda Sensei conveys in this lecture the importance of disciples who practice the Buddha’s teachings with the same spirit as Nichiren Daishonin.*

#### Propagating the Correct Teaching Rouses Opposition From the Three Powerful Enemies

Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, who is carrying out the practice of shakubuku in strict accordance with the Lotus Sutra? Suppose someone, no

matter who, should unrelentingly proclaim that the Lotus Sutra alone can lead people to Buddhahood, and that all other sutras, far from enabling them to attain the way, only drive them into hell. Observe what happens should that person thus try to refute the teachers and the doctrines of all the other schools [that base themselves on these provisional teachings]. The three powerful enemies will arise without fail. (“On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 394)

Prior to this section, Nichiren Daishonin explained the way of faith and practice for those who wish to correctly carry out the Buddha’s teachings in the Latter Day of the Law. He clarified that the way of faith true to the Buddha’s intent is to believe only in the Lotus Sutra—the one Buddha vehicle that enables all people to attain enlightenment. He also explained that the practice appropriate for the Latter Day of the Law is the practice of shakubuku as taught in the Lotus Sutra—the staunch



refuting of those forces that slander the Lotus Sutra and seek to obstruct people's happiness.

Having affirmed these essential points, Nichiren identifies the votaries who practice the Buddha's teachings with correct faith and in a manner appropriate to this evil latter age.

First, in this section, he asks, "Now, in the Latter Day of the Law" indicates a time "when the true and the provisional teachings are utterly confused" (WND-1, 394). ... Unless this confusion is rectified, it will give rise to an age when "quarrels and disputes prevail, and the pure Law is obscured and lost." That is why the practice of shakubuku is crucial. It is necessary to clarify that the Lotus Sutra (the true teaching) alone can lead all people to enlightenment, whereas the other sutras (the provisional teachings) not only fail to do so but ultimately cause people to fall into a state of inner hell or suffering. ...

During Nichiren's time, which marked the start of the Latter Day of the Law, a wide assortment of Buddhist schools proliferated, with each asserting that the different provisional teachings on which they based their respective doctrines were the Buddha's ultimate teaching. Consequently, far from guiding people

to an understanding of the true Lotus Sutra teaching, these schools propounded doctrines that denigrated it. There was, as Nichiren noted, utter confusion among the provisional and true teachings. Therefore, it was necessary to refute the provisional sutras, clarifying that they do not lead to enlightenment and that only the Lotus Sutra does.

Nichiren says that when anyone—no matter who—carries out shakubuku, the three powerful enemies are sure to appear. The practice of shakubuku as taught in the Lotus Sutra indicates the kind of refutation I have just described, which is based on the correct teaching for attaining Buddhahood; it is not by any means motivated by intolerance or self-righteousness. ...

Because carrying out shakubuku as taught in the Lotus Sutra is the correct way of practice in the Latter Day—serving to both protect the Law and free people from suffering—it is inevitable that opposition and resistance will arise from arrogant forces. Unless we grasp this principle, we will not understand the true nature of the great obstacles that befall the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.<sup>1</sup>

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

## The Characteristics of the Three Powerful Enemies

**To further clarify** this point, let's review the concept of the three powerful enemies once again. ...

These are the three powerful enemies—arrogant lay people, arrogant priests and arrogant false sages. ...

The arrogance of these ignorant, perverse and evil people, respectively, arises from the workings of the inherent darkness or ignorance in their lives. This inner darkness is the source of earthly desires and other deluded impulses, leading people to unhappiness and misery. The fundamental form of this darkness is ignorance to the truth that all things and phenomena are entities of the Mystic Law. It is this fundamental ignorance, for instance, that prevents a person from believing or understanding the correct teaching when they hear it and that creates tendencies to reject it or even seek to destroy it. Here, we see the fearfulness of ignorance.

The fundamental darkness inherent in human life gives rise to the ultimate devilish function—what Buddhism refers to as the “devil king of the sixth heaven.” Those who oppose and attack the votary of the Lotus Sutra are ruled by this insidious negative function. ...

Elsewhere, Nichiren states: “The single word ‘belief’ is the sharp sword with which one confronts and overcomes fundamental darkness or ignorance” (*The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, pp. 119–20). Mr. Toda also frequently emphasized that “the sharp sword of faith is the only means for defeating the devil king of the sixth heaven.” When we vanquish fundamental ignorance through faith in the Mystic Law, the fundamental nature of enlightenment, or Dharma nature, with which our lives are inherently endowed, will well forth. The Dharma nature is the ultimate truth of all phenomena to which the Buddha became awakened in his own life.

Attaining Buddhahood, in a sense, means winning in this struggle between darkness and enlightenment. Through the practice of shakubuku, those who uphold the Lotus Sutra can bring forth the fundamental nature of enlightenment in their own lives and help others do the same.<sup>2</sup>

## Waging a Struggle of Profound Compassion Amid Great Obstacles

**Our teacher, the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, practiced shakubuku during the last eight years of his lifetime, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai for more than thirty years, and the Great Teacher Dengyo for more than twenty. I have been refuting the provisional doctrines for more than twenty years, and the great persecutions I have suffered during this period are beyond number. I do not know whether they are equal to the nine great persecutions suffered by the Buddha, but surely neither T'ien-t'ai nor Dengyo ever faced persecutions as great as mine for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. They encountered only hatred, envy, and slander, whereas I twice incurred the wrath of the rulers and was exiled to remote provinces. Furthermore, I was nearly beheaded at Tatsunokuchi, wounded on the forehead [at Komatsubara], and slandered time and again. My disciples have also been exiled and thrown into prison, and my lay supporters have been evicted and had their fiefs confiscated. How can the persecutions faced by Nagarjuna, T'ient'ai, or Dengyo possibly compare with these? Understand then that the votary who practices the Lotus Sutra exactly as the Buddha teaches will without fail be attacked by the three powerful enemies. (WND-1, 394–95)**

**[Nichiren] stood up alone and bore the full brunt of all obstacles and attacks**—like a roof protecting the people from harm or a pillar supporting the nation amid disorder and confusion.

Here Nichiren Daishonin looks at the kinds of persecutions that befell Shakyamuni and votaries of the Lotus Sutra of later ages, such as the great teachers T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo. All three encountered fierce opposition through proclaiming the correct teaching of the Lotus Sutra and refuting erroneous teachings. ...

Because Nichiren Daishonin, the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day, spread the Law of sowing (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo), which is the fundamental cause for attaining Buddhahood, he encountered far more intense persecution than that faced by T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo during the Middle Day of the Law. The crucial point is that overcoming adversity in the course of propagating the correct teaching is what marks one as a genuine votary of the Lotus Sutra. By triumphing over daunting obstacles, one can prove the power of the Law.

Even amid great persecutions, Nichiren demonstrates an invincible state of life brimming with the “boundless joy of the Law.” Speaking of his greatest crisis, he states: “I survived even the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. ... By now, the devil king must be thoroughly discouraged” (*Gosho zenshu*, p. 843). These words reveal his triumphant state of life in having overcome all adversity and vanquished the devil king of the sixth heaven. ...

[Nichiren] stood up alone and bore the full brunt of all obstacles and attacks—like a roof protecting the people from harm or a pillar supporting the nation amid disorder and confusion. He did so to create an enduring solidarity of good that would forever be dedicated to realizing individual and collective happiness. His efforts were coupled with his keen ability and wisdom to discern the invisible roots of evil and misfortune and to encourage suffering people in a way that would inspire them or revitalize their lives. No obstacles or powerful enemies could sway this towering spirit in which compassion and wisdom were one and inseparable.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Shared Commitment of Mentor and Disciple to Practice as the Buddha Teaches**

**In the more than two thousand years that have passed since the Buddha's advent, Shakyamuni himself, T'ien-t'ai, and Dengyo were the only three who perfectly carried out the Buddha's teachings. Now in the Latter Day of the Law, Nichiren and his disciples and lay believers are just such practitioners. If we cannot be called votaries faithful to the Buddha's teachings, then neither can Shakyamuni, T'ien-t'ai, or Dengyo. (WND-1, 395)**

**This is Nichiren** Daishonin's important conclusion to this writing. He clearly identifies the votaries or practitioners faithful to the Buddha's teachings. ...

The essential point here is that Nichiren does not say that it is him alone. He uses the word *we*, which includes all his disciples—priests and laity—clarifying that those who exert themselves in Buddhist practice with his same selfless and altruistic spirit to propagate the Law are also votaries acting in perfect accord with the Buddha's teachings. Here, we can see the boundless compassion of the Buddha of the Latter Day.

The oneness of mentor and disciple is the cornerstone of Nichiren Buddhism. And true attainment of Buddhahood is found in the shared struggle of mentor and disciple to practice as the Buddha teaches. ...

As the teacher, Nichiren Daishonin has but one wish and that is for dedicated disciples—a multitude of Bodhisattvas of the Earth—to appear and take action in all spheres with his same aspiration. Because he seeks genuine disciples, he urges his followers to pursue his same obstacle-fraught path. And being genuine disciples, they regard all hardships and trials for the sake of the Law as a source of pride. There is

# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

profound significance in the Daishonin identifying the votaries of the Latter Day as “Nichiren and his disciples and lay believers.” Doubtless, these words also arose from his immense compassion for those who had been striving alongside him through great adversities in a spirit of shared commitment to propagating the correct teaching. ...

Putting the Buddha’s teachings into practice requires that genuine disciples stand up and take earnest action. From there, the great river of kosen-rufu flows powerfully. We of the SGI have inherited this great river of universal enlightenment and, in the present age, have continued to propagate the correct teaching in the same spirit as Nichiren, while battling various obstacles. ...

Because we champion the highest good, we must keep fighting and win without fail. This is the Soka Gakkai spirit pulsing in the hearts of the first three presidents; the spirit of practicing as the Buddha teaches is the pride of the Soka Gakkai, the “king of the religious world.”<sup>4</sup>

## Establishing the Eternal Life State of Buddhahood

**Life flashes by in but a moment. No matter how many terrible enemies you may encounter, banish all fears and never think of backsliding. Even if someone were to cut off our heads with a saw, impale our bodies with lances, or shackle our feet and bore them through with a gimlet, as long as we are alive, we must keep chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Then, if we chant until the very moment of death, Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions will come to us instantly, exactly as they promised during the ceremony at Eagle Peak. Taking our hands and bearing us on their shoulders, they will carry us to Eagle Peak. ...**

**How can such joy possibly be described! (WND-1, 395-96)**

**When Nichiren’s disciples** dedicate themselves to the Mystic Law with the same spirit as their teacher, who is the foremost votary of the Lotus Sutra, then, together with him, they will attain a state of absolute happiness over the three existences, guaranteeing victory as well as peace and security in both life and death. In “On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings,” Nichiren thus declares, “When our prayers for Buddhahood are answered and we are dwelling in the true land of Tranquil Light, we will experience the boundless joy of the Law.” He promises that those who base their lives on the Mystic Law can achieve this state of absolute happiness. Therefore, at the end of this passage, he writes, “How can such joy possibly be described!”

As disciples, there is nothing more honorable than steadfastly walking the path of faith we have vowed to our mentor we will follow. Nichiren assures his followers that their prayers for Buddhahood will be fulfilled and they will come to dwell in the “true land of Tranquil Light,” enjoying immense peace of mind. Therefore, no matter what great obstacles may arise, they have absolutely nothing to worry about or fear. From the eternal viewpoint of the Buddha of the Latter Day, he assures them that they will “experience the boundless joy of the Law.” There is no greater happiness than this.

As indicated by the line “If we chant until the very moment of death,” it all depends on whether we continue chanting wholeheartedly for the happiness of ourselves and others until the end of our lives. This is the essence of faith based on practicing the Buddha’s teachings in a spirit of oneness with our mentor.<sup>5</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 2, pp. 38-40.

2. Ibid., 40-41.

3. Ibid., 43-45.

4. Ibid., 45-47.

5. Ibid., 47-49.

## Notes

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# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

## VIBRANT CHANTING OPENS THE GREAT PATH TO ABSOLUTE VICTORY

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### Chapter 8

#### “King Rinda”

*Ikeda Sensei discusses how to effectively and powerfully chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to relieve suffering, unlock our life force and dynamically invigorate society.*

**Nam-myoho-renge-kyo** is the ultimate law of the universe, the fundamental rhythm of life itself. Through the practice of chanting, we can bring forth our inner Buddhahood and increase the splendor and power of our lives.

Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with deep faith, even if just a single recitation, has infinitely vast and immeasurable power to revitalize our lives. Thus, amazing benefit is bound to manifest when we continue chanting day after day,

assiduously summoning forth the power of faith and the power of practice. ...

In this writing, Nichiren Daishonin emphasizes the tremendous mission and honor he and his followers share in chanting and propagating Nam-myoho-renge-kyo—the source of fundamental life force—at a time when the country is filled with great anxiety and turmoil at the prospect of a second Mongol invasion. ...<sup>1</sup>

#### **Our Voices When Chanting Call Forth Our Fundamental Life Force**

**Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha addressed prayers to the Buddhas of the three existences and the ten directions, whereupon a white swan immediately appeared. When the white horses caught sight of the white swan, they whinnied in a single voice. No sooner had the king heard the single neigh of the horses than he opened his eyes. As two white swans, and then hundreds and thousands of them appeared, the hundreds and thousands of white horses were instantly filled with joy and began neighing. The king’s**



**complexion was restored to its original state, like the sun reemerging from an eclipse, and the strength of his body and the perceptive powers of his mind became many hundreds and thousands of times greater than they had been before. The consort was overjoyed, the great ministers and high officials took courage, the common people pressed their palms together in reverence, and the other countries bowed their heads. (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 986)**

**When Nam-myoho-renge-kyo** is chanted powerfully and pervades everything, then all living beings in the Ten Worlds will be invigorated and society will be peaceful and secure. To illustrate this point, the Daishonin relates the Buddhist parable of King Rinda and the white horses, which I would now like to summarize here.

There was once a wise and worthy ruler named King Rinda. When he heard white horses neighing, his life state was invigorated, and he flourished and thrived. As a result, his realm did too. The people were happy and secure, the weather was mild and seasonable

and the kingdom enjoyed peace with its neighbors. These white horses, however, only neighed when they saw white swans. So when all the white swans disappeared from the kingdom one day, the white horses ceased to neigh. As a result, the king and his people grew weak and listless, unpredictable weather visited the land, famines and epidemics occurred and neighboring countries began to attack.

First, the king commanded non-Buddhist teachers to offer prayers, but the white swans did not return. Then, Bodhisattva Ashvaghosha came forth and prayed to the Buddhas of the three existences and the ten directions, whereupon the white swans immediately appeared, and the white horses began to neigh joyfully. King Rinda recovered from his feeble state, gaining countless times the physical strength and mental acuity he had before. The people were also revived, and peace and prosperity were restored to the kingdom.

The Daishonin employs this famous parable to illustrate the power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in easily accessible terms. ...

We must remember the words “The voice does the Buddha’s work” (see *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, p. 4). Had the neighing of the white horses been weak and

hesitant, King Rinda would probably not have regained his powers to the extent he did. Similarly, when it comes to chanting, it's important that we constantly strive to strengthen our faith and deepen our practice. Our conviction in faith and persistence in practice are the cornerstones of chanting.

Our invincible prayer—overflowing with the power of faith and the power of practice—can break through the darkness that shrouds our lives and the lives of others and call forth the magnificent dignity and strength of the Buddha nature that is inherent in all living beings. Through chanting, we can expand the realm of happiness and joy and bring forth a world filled ever more with the positive energy and peace of mind that is a reflection of Buddhahood.<sup>2</sup>

## Vibrantly Chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo to Our Heart's Content

**The image of** the neighing of the white horses, though just a metaphor, has something deeply significant to say about how we should chant. In other words, our chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo should be light, refreshing, and vibrant, like a noble steed galloping freely across the vast open plains.

It's also important that we chant honestly and openly, just as we are. All of us face times of worry, anguish, or sadness in our lives. When we do, we can feel free to go straight to the Gohonzon with our suffering and chant about it wholeheartedly, just like a child seeking its mother's warm embrace. ...

If we've done something we regret, we can chant with a determination never to repeat the same mistake, making our prayer the first step toward a new and better future. When we face a decisive challenge, we can chant strongly and courageously with the firm resolve to win. When battling the three obstacles and the four devils, we can chant with the heart of a lion king, filled with confidence that we'll vanquish those negative

functions. When we're faced with the opportunity to transform our karma, we can infuse our prayer with an unwavering resolve not to be defeated. When we're happy about something, we can chant with a deep spirit of appreciation and gratitude. ...

Chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is the only way to truly polish our lives at the deepest level. Those who put chanting first can thoroughly polish their lives that have been clouded by darkness and make them shine like a bright mirror, reflecting the Dharma nature. Chanting is a process of polishing and forging our lives, which is why our faith is so important.

Consequently, the benefit of chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is absolutely not dependent on the amount we chant. What matters is that we chant to our own heart's content, the amount that feels right and satisfying for us. ...

At the same time, sincerely resolving to chant a specific amount is also an expression of faith. We can chant the amount we've decided on each day, while continually renewing and deepening our resolve. ...

Faith that ignores the importance of self-transformation; faith that lacks clear focus and determination, merely waiting for salvation from some external source; faith that abandons all striving and challenge out of fear and a desire to escape reality; faith that expects benefits to magically appear without making any personal effort—such faith is completely contrary to that which is taught in Nichiren Buddhism. ...<sup>3</sup>

## The Three Poisons Intensify the Three Calamities

**In a country where the three poisons [of greed, anger, and foolishness] prevail to such a degree, how can there be peace and stability?**

**In the kalpa of decline, the three major calamities will occur, namely, the calamities of fire, water, and wind.**

If we've done something we regret, we can chant with a determination never to repeat the same mistake, **making our prayer the first step toward a new and better future.**

**And in the kalpa of decrease, the three minor calamities will occur, namely, famine, pestilence, and warfare. Famine occurs as a result of greed, pestilence as a result of foolishness, and warfare as a result of anger.**

**At present the people of Japan number 4,994,828 men and women, all of them different persons but all alike infected by the three poisons. And these three poisons occur because of their relationship with Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. So all of these people at the same moment set out to curse, attack, banish, and do away with Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions. This is what leads to the appearance of the three minor calamities. (WND-1, 989)**

In a kalpa of decrease, when people's life force wanes the three calamities of famine, pestilence, and warfare occur, and Nichiren Daishonin notes that there is a close connection between such calamities and the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness, which pollute people's lives. ...

T'ien-t'ai says to the same effect in his *Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*: "Because anger increases in intensity, strife of arms occurs. Because greed increases in intensity, famine arises. Because foolishness increases in intensity, pestilence breaks out" (OTT, 33). He also refers to how the three calamities arise owing to the prevalence of the three poisons and how these calamities then go on to intensify the three poisons in people's lives, thereby creating a vicious, never-ending cycle that leads to the age itself becoming polluted and degenerate. ...

In the Great Collection Sutra, the calamity of famine is expressed as "high grain prices" ("On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land," WND-1, 10). This calamity is particularly caused by intensified greed in people's hearts, which eventually comes to dominate society as a whole.

Unfortunately, even today in the twenty-first century—so far removed in time from the age when Shakyamuni expounded his teachings—this phenomenon of disaster caused by human greed remains. ...

Epidemics, meanwhile, are said to be caused by the poison of foolishness. It's certainly true that even today, in spite of remarkable advances in scientific knowledge, many illnesses still spread because of our ignorance of their causes. ...

Warfare, lastly, is ascribed to the poison of anger. Anger, here, refers to the deep and intense feeling of rage and burning resentment that can arise from thwarted desires. There is a terrible destructive force in the fiery magma of anger that wells up at frustration, discrimination, betrayal, insult or exploitation by others. When that suppressed negative energy explodes, it can manifest as violence or aggression and even escalate into warfare. These eruptions of hatred and malice in the forms of nationalism or of economic, ideological or religious conflict are often the cause of war and armed conflict in our present age. ...

In the age Nichiren lived the three calamities were constantly occurring in various forms. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the source of the life force of the universe and the seed for attaining Buddhahood. The Daishonin declares that the increased confusion of the times was being caused by slander of the Mystic Law, which was polluting the lives of the Japanese people with the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Driving Force for Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land**

**And now I wonder what karma from past existences has caused Nichiren and his associates to become the proponents of the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra? It seems to me that at present Brahma, Shakra, the gods of**

**the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, the Sun Goddess, Great Bodhi-sattva Hachiman, and all the major and minor gods of the 3,132 shrines throughout Japan are like King Rinda of past times, that the white horses are Nichiren, and the white swans are my followers. The neighing of the white horses is the sound of our voices chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. When Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, and the others hear this sound, how could they fail to take on a healthy color and shine with a brilliant light? How could they fail to guard and protect us? We should be firmly convinced of this! (WND-1, 989–90)**

**Nichiren Daishonin** notes that the country and the people have fallen into a negative cycle of the three poisons fueling the three calamities that threatens their very existence—a cycle set in motion through the error of misguidedly upholding erroneous teachings while slandering the correct teaching. To save Japan from this destructive course, the Daishonin called on people to chant and propagate Nam-myoho-rence-kyo—the Mystic Law that is the fundamental source of life force and the heart of the Lotus Sutra, the “lord of the five flavors.”

Nichiren returns to the story of King Rinda, mentioned earlier. He asserts that just as the neighing of the white horses, sustained by the white swans, revived King Rinda and restored vigor and prosperity to his kingdom and its people, the sound of Nichiren and his followers chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo will increase the strength and brilliance of the benevolent forces of the universe and definitely activate their protective functions.

Even when the very survival of the country and its people is in question, those who confidently chant and propagate the Mystic Law can

tap the fundamental life force of the universe in their own lives and stand up as agents of positive change in such a time of peril.

In this passage, the followers who are likened to white swans are none other than a gathering of disciples who are just such agents of change. Following the lead of their teacher, the Daishonin, who embodied the fundamental transformative power of the Mystic Law and stood up to open the way to enlightenment for all people, they chanted Nam-myoho-rence-kyo with the same strong conviction as he and taught others to do the same.

Our mission as practitioners of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day who chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is to employ this great beneficial medicine of the Mystic Law to win a decisive victory in the battle against the ever-intensifying maladies caused by the three poisons. ...

The more troubled and confused the times, the more powerful the unity of the oneness of mentor and disciple becomes. When mentor and disciple are united in chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, it becomes the most powerful means for overcoming negative karma, dispelling the dark clouds looming over society and achieving the ideal of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land.” Chanting is the fundamental force for transforming karma. No matter how heavy the chains of karma, we can break free of them through the mystic function of chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, which brings forth the inherent power of our life. ...

We who chant based on the shared vow of mentor and disciple and dedicate our lives to kosen-rufu have absolutely nothing to fear.<sup>5</sup>

#### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 2, p. 127.
2. Ibid., 132–34.

3. Ibid., 134–35.

4. Ibid., 136–37.

5. Ibid., 138–39.

## Notes

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# IKEDA WISDOM ACADEMY

Advanced Study for  
SGI-USA Youth Division

## NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM: WISDOM FOR REALIZING HAPPINESS FOR ALL HUMANITY

**The Ikeda Wisdom Academy** is an SGI-USA youth leaders advanced study movement. While the following material is for this study program, all SGI-USA members can read the following excerpts as part of their personal study of *The Teachings for Victory*, volume 2, by Ikeda Sensei.

### Chapter 9

#### “The Kalpa of Decrease”

*Ikeda Sensei explains in this lecture that Nichiren Buddhism has the power to help people transform great evil into great good.*

“**The Kalpa of Decrease,**” the writing we will study in this chapter, affirms that putting into practice the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism constitutes the “fundamental path to happiness for all people.”

A “kalpa of decrease” refers to a period when people’s vitality or life force wanes both spiritually and physically, owing to the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness intensifying in their lives. The present era in which we find ourselves

is regarded as belonging to a kalpa of decrease.

In such an age, the wisdom of Nichiren Buddhism is indispensable if we are to live with strength and integrity, unaffected by the three poisons, and achieve true happiness. This is because Nichiren Buddhism offers profound and perceptive insights into how we can overcome the inner delusions—characterized by the three poisons—that are the root cause of unhappiness.<sup>1</sup>

#### **The Intensity of Three Poisons in the Latter Day of the Law**

**The present age [of the Latter Day of the Law] is such that neither the non-Buddhist scriptures, the Hinayana sutras, the Mahayana sutras, nor the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra has any effect. The reason is that the enormity of the greed, anger, and foolishness in people’s hearts is equal to the superiority of the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment [Shakyamuni Buddha] in great good. ... The extremity of greed, anger, and foolishness in people’s hearts in the impure world of the latter**



Young men's division members deepen their faith through study in Chandler, Arizona, June 2022.

RYAN HAYASHI

**age makes it difficult for any worthy or sage to control.**

**This is because, though the Buddha cured greed with the medicine of the meditation on the vileness of the body, healed anger with the meditation on compassion for all, and treated foolishness with the meditation on the twelve-linked chain of causation, teaching these doctrines now makes people worse and compounds their greed, anger, and foolishness. (“The Kalpa of Decrease,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 1120–21)**

**In this writing**, the Daishonin indicates that the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness are the fundamental evil that weakens people’s vitality or life force. Because these poisons intensified in the Latter Day of the Law, the influence of people’s “evil wisdom” had come to outstrip that of the “good wisdom” of Buddhism (see WND-I, 1120). ...

Nichiren declares that, in the Latter Day, the three poisons could not be controlled even by the wisdom of great good of Shakyamuni

expounded in the teachings thus far. This was because, although people followed Shakyamuni’s teachings, their attachment to partial or expedient provisional doctrines had caused them to lose sight of the all-important aims of universal enlightenment and overcoming suffering that are the Buddha’s true intent. In the Latter Day, the Daishonin notes, these teachings of Shakyamuni no longer had the power to make positive use of and spread the wisdom of Buddhism and revitalize people’s lives and society as a whole.

When we come to deeply understand the Buddha’s intent of universal enlightenment as articulated in the Lotus Sutra, we realize how important it is for each of us to develop our full potential and take action for kosen-rufu, which carries the struggle of human revolution forward from one person to another.<sup>2</sup>

**A Person of Wisdom and a Worthy Ruler Acting in Tandem for the People’s Welfare**

**Now in this latter, evil age, great evil arises less from secular wrongdoing**

than in connection with the doctrines of the religious world. When people today, who are unaware of this, endeavor to cultivate roots of good, events that lead to the ruin of the world occur all the more. Although superficially it may seem to be an act of good to provide support to the priests of the Tendai, True Word, and other schools of the present age, in reality it is a great evil surpassing even the five cardinal sins and the ten evil acts.

For this reason, in order that peace reign in the age, if a wise man existed in the world with wisdom like that of the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, and if he met with a worthy ruler like King Sen'yo and if together they devoted themselves to putting an end to these acts of good and committed the great evil of censuring, banishing, cutting off alms to, or even beheading those persons of the eight schools [of Buddhism] who are thought to be [persons] of wisdom, then the age may be pacified to some extent. (WND-1, 1121)

Here, Nichiren asserts that error in the realm of Buddhism causes more harm and suffering to the people than wrongdoing in the secular realm. He denounces the Buddhist schools in Japan of his day for espousing erroneous teachings that contributed to the misfortunes of the people. These schools, he said, were guilty of slandering the Law by going against the Buddha's intent set forth in the Lotus Sutra—that is, discrediting the teaching that all people have the potential to attain enlightenment.

Shakyamuni's basic wish was to enable all human beings to attain Buddhahood, as expressed most succinctly in his great vow in the Lotus Sutra "to make all persons equal to

me, without any distinction between us" (*The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, p. 70). The essence of this Buddhist ideal is for us to recognize all people can bring forth their infinitely noble Buddha nature and, based on that, to respect each other and build a peaceful society. ...

Unfortunately, during the Daishonin's day, the existing Buddhist schools had lost sight of the Buddha's true intent and the fundamental ideals of Buddhism. They had become attached to partial or provisional teachings from the sutras expounded prior to the Lotus Sutra. Moreover, in the process of touting the teachings of their own schools as the ultimate truth of Buddhism, they slandered the Lotus Sutra and rejected the Buddhist wisdom that teaches respect for all human beings. ...

The lay followers of the various Buddhist schools ... were taken in by the priests' religious authority and appearance of respectability and failed to see the true situation. As a result, though they thought they were accumulating good causes through their Buddhist practice, they were in fact, frighteningly enough, steeping themselves in the poison of slander of the Law. It was as if the healing medicine that people thought they had been prescribed was actually toxic. ...

The Daishonin indicates that the only way for this situation to be remedied was for a wise person possessing the wisdom of the correct teaching and a worthy ruler to join together to put a stop to this great evil. ...

A true person of wisdom in the Latter Day of the Law must embody not only the great good wisdom of the correct Buddhist teaching but also be able to detect error, fight against it and strive earnestly to free people from the hold of false teachings. Nichiren stood up as that person to engage in this struggle without begrudging his life. He was determined to convey the fearful nature of slander of the Law

We ... have a personal mission and social responsibility to appeal to others' conscience through **the power of words, dialogue and ideas, and actualize a peaceful and prosperous society.**

to the people of Japan. Undeterred by any obstacles or persecution, the Daishonin continued his efforts to educate people to the fact that the seemingly devout, self-renouncing priests of the day were actually guilty of the great evil of destroying Buddhism. ...

A “worthy ruler” here represents a social entity that acknowledges a person of wisdom. Today, in our democratic society, the “worthy ruler” corresponds to a wise and awakened citizenry. Such a citizenry is vital if a peaceful and prosperous society is to be realized. As people grow wiser and stronger, the ideals of the sanctity of life and the absolute importance of peace will become more widely and deeply accepted and established in society. And this will lead to more people rejecting self-centered ideas that give rise to discrimination and war, which inflict human suffering. In other words, even if corrupt priests go unpunished, if the people become wise and are able to recognize evil for what it is and stop its spread, it will be cut off at its root. Ultimately, people themselves must strive to prevent the negative workings of life from manifesting and holding sway. ... To create such a society, it is crucial to widely spread the philosophical principles of the sanctity of life, respect for all people and peacebuilding.

We, as practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism, have a personal mission and social responsibility to appeal to others' conscience through the power of words, dialogue and ideas, and actualize a peaceful and prosperous society.<sup>5</sup>

### **To Know the Fundamental Causes and Manifestations of Good and Evil**

**This is explained in the first volume of the Lotus Sutra where it says, “The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. In the phrase “consistency from beginning to end,” “beginning”**

**indicates the root of evil and the root of good, and “end” indicates the outcome of evil and the outcome of good. One who is thoroughly awakened to the nature of good and evil from their roots to their branches and leaves is called a Buddha. ... The Lotus Sutra states, “[The doctrines that they preach ... ] will never be contrary to the true [aspect]” [LSOC, 304]. T'ien-t'ai commented on this, saying that “no worldly affairs of life or work are ever contrary to the true [aspect].” A person of wisdom is not one who practices Buddhism apart from worldly affairs but, rather, one who thoroughly understands the principles by which the world is governed. (WND-1, 1121)**

**In this section** of “The Kalpa of Decrease,” the Daishonin refers to the doctrines of the “true aspect of all phenomena” and “three thousand realms in a single moment of life” expounded in the Lotus Sutra. The “true aspect of all phenomena” is the reality of the world exactly as the Buddha wisdom perceives it. The Buddha wisdom perceives the true aspect of not only visible external phenomena but also the good and evil life conditions of living beings in the Ten Worlds, as well as the causes behind them.

When meeting people, a Buddha ponders the true reality of their life condition, the goodness or evil in their heart, their suffering and joy, the causes that have led them to unhappiness and misfortune. By doing so, a Buddha can accurately grasp what they need to do to positively transform their state of life, and then compassionately preaches the teaching that will help free each person from suffering—a teaching designed to inspire the particular individual to embark on a path of inner transformation.

Stated another way, a Buddha is one who thoroughly understands the root of good

(enlightenment to the essential nature of phenomena) and the root of evil (fundamental darkness or ignorance), as well as the branches and leaves that sprout from those roots (the diverse manifestations of good and evil, suffering and joy, that express themselves in the real world). The correct teaching of Buddhism by its very nature is a teaching of transformation that allows each person to move out of negative cycles and onto a beneficial path of good.

In this section, the Daishonin quotes a passage from “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law,” the 19th chapter of the Lotus Sutra: “[The doctrines that they preach ... ] will never be contrary to the true [aspect]” [LSOC, 304], and T’ien-t’ai’s commentary on this asserting that “no worldly affairs of life or work are ever contrary to the true [aspect].” ...

The affairs of daily life, all without exception, are in themselves Buddhism. The illuminating light of the wisdom of Buddhism shines in the midst of the darkness of our troubled, tortured world, imparting hope, courage and reassurance. ...

Buddhism does not exist apart from human society. A truly wise person is one who takes action to contribute to society and guides it in a positive direction through the power of Buddhist wisdom and compassion. Meanwhile, a society imbued with the wisdom of Buddhism will prosper and thrive.<sup>4</sup>

## Great Evil Portends Great Good

**Great evil portends the arrival of great good. If all of Jambudvīpa [the entire world] were to be thrown into chaos, there could be no doubt that [this sutra would] “be widely propagated throughout Jambudvīpa.” (WND-1, 1122)**

A society’s growth and development depend upon the ideals and philosophies valued by the

people who make up that society.

The society of the Daishonin’s day refused to recognize the truths he presented to it. It condoned slander of the Law that brought suffering down upon the people. It was difficult for such a society to grow and prosper soundly, given that it granted legitimacy to erroneous Buddhist schools that either ignored or made an empty pretense of working for people’s happiness.

But the light of wisdom of the correct teaching of Buddhism shows its true worth in times of great confusion and turmoil. The Daishonin clearly believed that the darkest hour of night was but a prelude to a dawn of people’s awakening—an opportunity for change, a turning point. “Great evil portends the arrival of great good,” he writes. He is saying in effect: “There’s no need for pessimism. I, Nichiren, possessing the sun-like wisdom of the Buddha, have appeared in response to this dark time. Great evil portends the arrival of the great good of kosen-rufu.” How inspired and heartened the Daishonin’s followers must have been by his resolute conviction. ...

Precisely because the Latter Day of the Law is a time of seemingly insoluble challenges, we can take action to transform things, overturning evil practices of the past, carrying out radical reevaluations and starting at the source to find solutions for change. Such thoroughgoing transformation will, quite naturally, meet with resistance, but it is the only way to open a new path forward. The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin is a teaching of unwavering commitment to the positive transformation of reality—a teaching that makes it possible for us to change this troubled saha world into a realm of peace and happiness without fail.<sup>5</sup>

### Notes:

1. *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 2, p. 144.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 146–47.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 148–50.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 151–52.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 154–55.

## Notes

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