



STUDY RESOURCE MATERIAL

*for*

# **Gosho Study Meeting**

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# ON PRACTICING THE BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

## Striving for Kosen-rufu in the Spirit of Oneness of Mentor and Disciple Is the Key to True "Peace and Security in This Existence"

### LECTURE 1

On examination [of the Lotus Sutra], we find that those who are born in this land and believe in [and practice] this sutra when it is propagated in the Latter Day of the Law will be subjected to hatred and jealousy even greater than that which arose in the lifetime of the Thus Come One....

[O]nce 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? I have been teaching you day and night directly from the sutra, which says, "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?"...

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-renge-kyo, the heart of the entire eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra. Then, drawing the bow of the Buddha's declaration, "I have not yet revealed the truth", and notching the arrow of "honestly discarding the provisional teachings", I have mounted the carriage drawn by the great white ox and battered down the gates of the provisional teachings. Attacking first one and then another, I have refuted opponents from the eight or ten schools, such as the Nembutsu, True Word, Zen, and Precepts. Some have fled headlong while others have retreated, and still others have been captured to become my disciples. I continue to repulse their attacks and to defeat them, but legions of enemies exist who oppose the

single Dharma King and the handful who follow him. So the battle goes on even today.

[The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai states:] “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. When the people all chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the wind will no longer buffet the branches, and the rain will no longer break the clods of soil. The world will become as it was in the ages of Fu Hsi and Shen Nung. In their present existence the people will be freed from misfortune and disasters and learn the art of living long. Realize that the time will come when the truth will be revealed that both the person and the Law are unaging and eternal. There cannot be the slightest doubt about the sutra’s promise of “peace and security in their present existence”. (WND-1, 391–92)

The Chinese character *myo* of *myoho*, or Mystic Law, has the meaning of ‘to open’.

Open the way with prayer based on the shared commitment of mentor and disciple!

Open the way with the courage to forge ahead bravely and vigorously!

Open the way with the wisdom to perceive the essential truth amid changing circumstances!

Open the way with self-assured and confident action!

Since the time of its first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai has grown and developed by pioneering new frontiers for kosen-rufu, always maintaining a direct connection to Nichiren Daishonin and basing everything on his writings, the Goshō. This will remain the Soka Gakkai’s prime point for all time. This fundamental spirit, which is also the key to faith for absolute victory, is highlighted in the Daishonin’s writing ‘On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings’.

The title of this letter literally translates as 'On Practicing as the Buddha Teaches'. Here, 'as the Buddha expounds' can also be interpreted to mean 'as the teacher expounds'. The Daishonin personally set an example for his disciples in reading the correct teaching of the Lotus Sutra with his life and practicing as the Buddha teaches. He waged a struggle of words to 'refute the erroneous and reveal the true', holding high the banner of universal enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> And he did so in the Latter Day of the Law, an 'age of conflict',<sup>2</sup> when people lose sight of the Buddha's correct teaching and grow confused in their thinking and direction, which results in an environment of incessant strife. The Daishonin's great struggle of refutation, or shakubuku, provoked attacks by the three powerful enemies,<sup>3</sup> just as the sutra predicts. However, by boldly confronting and triumphing over these devilish functions, he proved the veracity of the Lotus Sutra. For us of modern times, practicing as the Buddha teaches means to practice in accord with the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

The final chapter of Mr Makiguchi's *Kachi Ron* (Theory of Value) in the revised edition by Mr Toda, the second president of the Soka Gakkai, concludes with the following words, including some famous lines from 'On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings':

Only when the correct teaching of Buddhism that elucidates the very essence of human existence comes to be widely disseminated will it be possible to truly create a Land of Tranquil Light<sup>4</sup> that brings unsurpassed happiness to all people. As the Daishonin writes: "[The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai states:] 'The Lotus Sutra is the teaching of shakubuku, the refutation of the provisional doctrines.'<sup>5</sup> ... There cannot be the slightest doubt about the sutra's promise of 'peace and security in their present existence'.<sup>6</sup>

Creating a Land of Tranquil Light that actualizes the sutra's promise of true 'peace and security in this existence' was the ardent wish of Mr Makiguchi and Mr Toda, and the conclusion of Mr Makiguchi's treatise on value. Mr Makiguchi gave his life to the struggle to realize this ideal, refusing to submit to the unjust persecution of Japan's wartime militarist authorities. He practiced in exact accord with the Daishonin's teachings.

Mr Toda made a large double circle in red, next to the title 'On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings' in his copy of the Goshō, 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 the Daishonin's spirit to refute error in the realm of Buddhism.

I fondly recall studying 'On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings' with members who gathered at my apartment when I was the leader of the young men's division 1st Corps. Many years later, I also lectured on this writing for representatives of the high school division. Nothing gives me greater joy than studying the Daishonin's writings and putting them into practice together with the youth who will shoulder the future. I hope that today's youth division members will seriously study the sublime philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin and, in doing so, strengthen their conviction in faith and develop their ability to speak to others articulately about their Buddhist practice.

'On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings' outlines how genuine disciples strive to realize the lofty ideals of Buddhism, unafraid of hardships, just as their teacher instructs. It is an important writing that could be said to contain the essence of 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.



**On examination [of the Lotus Sutra], we find that those who are born in this land [of Japan] and believe in [and practice] this sutra when it is propagated in the Latter Day of the Law will be subjected to hatred and jealousy even greater than that which arose in the lifetime of the Thus Come One. (WND-1, 391)**

## The challenges of propagating the Mystic Law in the Latter Day

Dated May 1273, 'On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings' was composed at Ichinosawa on Sado Island, during the Daishonin's exile. As the letter's 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" (WND-1, 396). In this writing, the Daishonin encourages his disciples to emulate his example of practicing the Lotus Sutra as the Buddha teaches and diligently uphold their faith.

In the Daishonin's day, exile to Sado was tantamount to a death sentence; most of those condemned to this remote isle never returned alive. During his time there, the Daishonin's life was in constant danger. In 'On the Buddha's Prophecy', dated one month later (intercalary May 1273), he writes: "The chances are one in ten thousand that I will survive the year or even the month" (WND-1, 402).

Undaunted by the indescribable hardships and privations he faced, the Daishonin 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 February 1272, he had composed 'The Opening of the Eyes', which reveals the object of devotion in terms of the Person.<sup>7</sup> This was followed in April 1273, just one month earlier, with 'The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind', which reveals the object of devotion in terms of the Law.<sup>8</sup> With the completion of these two important treatises, the Daishonin 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 who were genuinely committed to the correct teaching; if such dedicated disciples rose to action, kosen-rufu could be achieved without fail. This conviction of the Daishonin is vividly conveyed in 'On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings' and 'On the Buddha's Prophecy'. These two writings could be viewed as constituting the Daishonin's enduring words of guidance for all his disciples.

'On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings' represents an impassioned call to his disciples who devote themselves selflessly to the Law. He urges them that now is the time to stand up and undertake the practice of shakubuku — that is, undertake efforts to refute the erroneous teachings rampant in the realm of Buddhism. 'On the Buddha's Prophecy', by contrast, is about actualizing the ideal of the westward transmission of the correct teaching of Buddhism and its widespread propagation throughout the world in the distant future.

In other words, the grand vision of the Daishonin's Buddhism of the people, a teaching for the enlightenment of all humanity, can only be realized when there are genuine disciples advancing, uniting their hearts with their mentor — disciples who strive for kosen-rufu "like Nichiren" or "with the same mind as Nichiren". That is why the Daishonin calls on his disciples to take on the noble

task of advancing kosen-rufu in the Latter Day with the spirit of not begrudging their lives.

At the beginning of this writing, the Daishonin states: “[T]hose 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 hatred and jealousy even greater than that which arose in the lifetime of the Thus Come One” (WND-1, 391). 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?” (LSOC10, 203).

The Daishonin’s 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 who are 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 the Daishonin 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.

In the next passage, the Daishonin explains why practitioners of the Lotus Sutra are destined to encounter far more intense opposition in the evil age of the Latter Day than during Shakyamuni’s time. There are significant differences between the two ages. First of all, the person expounding the Law in Shakyamuni’s day was the Buddha, whereas the person expounding the Law in the Latter Day is “an ordinary practitioner”. Also, the disciples in Shakyamuni’s time were “great bodhisattvas and arhats”,<sup>9</sup> while the disciples in the Latter Day “come from among evil people defiled by the three poisons”<sup>10</sup> (WND-1, 391). Even during the time when the Buddha preached the Law and his teachings were practiced by outstanding disciples, there were many who regarded him and his community of believers with hatred and jealousy. The Daishonin notes that it is only natural, therefore, that even greater hostility and resentment should arise in the Latter Day when the Law is being expounded by a teacher who is ostensibly an ordinary practitioner and his disciples are people whose lives are steeped in the three poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness.

He therefore notes: “People shun the good teacher and associate with evil teachers” (WND-1, 391). Even though people may have the fortune to encounter the good teacher Nichiren

Daishonin, their inability to properly distinguish between good and evil, true and false, causes them to distance themselves from him and instead draw close to erroneous teachers. That is the sad reality of the Latter Day.



**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 [powerful] 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? I have been teaching you day and night directly from the sutra, which says, "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?" (LSOC10, 203) (WND-1, 391)**

**"No matter what happens, be fearless!"**

This next passage from 'On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings' has become an unforgettable point of reference for me. Shortly after having my fateful encounter with Mr Toda and embarking on the path of faith as a Soka Gakkai member, I took these golden words to heart and engraved them in my life.

The Daishonin 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. In my youth, I accepted this and resolved to dedicate myself to kosen-rufu with the spirit of a revolutionary who was ready to give his life for the cause if need be. I was the disciple of Mr Toda, a great leader of kosen-rufu who had gone to prison for his beliefs and had waged a heroic spiritual struggle. I knew that casting my lot with such a mentor would most certainly mean facing great persecutions on the path ahead. And I fervently vowed that I would remain utterly fearless at such times.

In this passage, the Daishonin rebukes the inner weakness of those disciples who foolishly allow themselves to be defeated by fear and cowardice and abandon their faith when persecutions of various kinds — some large, some small — begin to appear.

Mr Toda was incredibly strict when he lectured on this passage. I recall one such instance at a study session he led in a small room at his company offices in Tokyo's Ichigaya area. He spoke with great passion, determined to impress upon his true-hearted disciples the rigorous path of practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. "No matter what happens, be fearless! Never retreat even a single step!" he said. His guidance was so strict because he had faithfully inherited the Daishonin's spirit.

I remember being intensely struck and inspired by his words, learning for the first time the rigor and commitment of genuine faith and how the true purpose of Gakkai activities perfectly accords with the Daishonin's teachings.

At the end of this passage in 'On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings', the Daishonin says that he has been telling his followers day and night about the sutra's warning: "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?" It is solely out of the wish for his disciples to remain fearless in the face of persecution that he has repeatedly done so.

As for the three powerful enemies, these are manifestations of the workings of the devil king of the sixth heaven, or heavenly devil,<sup>11</sup> which is the most fearful of the three obstacles and four devils.<sup>12</sup> From his standpoint as the teacher who was waging an unremitting battle against the onslaughts of these three types of enemies, the Daishonin constantly warned his followers that they were certain to encounter obstacles far worse than those experienced during Shakyamuni's time. Nevertheless, some of his followers grew fainthearted and stopped practicing. It got to the point, writes the Daishonin, where "999 out of 1,000 people ... gave up their faith" ('Reply to Niigama', 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 readily defeated by such obstacles.

In 'The Opening of the Eyes', the Daishonin also writes:

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)

This passage describes how easy it is for people to grow faint-hearted when actually faced with hardship or persecution. When such difficulties arise, that is the 'crucial moment' — the time when our faith is put to the test.



**This is indeed an accursed time to live in this land! However, the Buddha has commanded me to be born [here] in this age, and it is impossible for me to go against the decree of the Dharma King [the Buddha]. And so, as the [Lotus] 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 [of the Mystic Law], I have raised the banner of the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo, the heart of the entire eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra. Then, drawing the bow of the Buddha's declaration, "I have not yet revealed the truth",<sup>13</sup> and notching the arrow of "honestly discarding the provisional teachings",<sup>14</sup> I have mounted the carriage drawn by the great white ox<sup>15</sup> and battered down the gates of the provisional teachings. Attacking first one and then another, I have refuted opponents from the eight or ten schools,<sup>16</sup> such as the Nembutsu [Pure Land], True Word, Zen, and Precepts. Some have fled headlong while others have retreated, and still others have been captured to become my disciples. I continue to repulse their attacks and to defeat them, but legions of enemies exist who oppose the single Dharma King and the handful who follow him. So the battle goes on even today. (WND-1, 392)**

### **The true nature of the "battle between the provisional and the true teachings"**

In this passage, the Daishonin declares that he has set in motion

the “battle” between the provisional teachings and the true teaching.<sup>17</sup> He also offers an answer to the question held by many people in society at the time as well as some of his followers — namely, why those who practice the Lotus Sutra as the Buddha teaches should face fierce opposition from the three powerful enemies, even though the sutra assures them of “peace and security in this existence”. In this writing, the Daishonin responds to this question from the following three perspectives.

First, he cites the examples of Buddhist practitioners of the past such as Shakyamuni, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (who represents Shakyamuni in a previous lifetime),<sup>18</sup> the Chinese priest Chu Tao-sheng,<sup>19</sup> the Tripitaka Master Fa-tao,<sup>20</sup> the Venerable Aryasimha,<sup>21</sup> the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai<sup>22</sup> of China, the Great Teacher Dengyo<sup>23</sup> of Japan and others. Though all of them were votaries of the Lotus Sutra who practiced according to the Buddha’s teachings, he notes, they encountered harsh persecution (cf. WND-1, 391–92).<sup>24</sup>

Second, the Daishonin explains that one who is a true votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day undertakes the “battle between the provisional and the true teachings” in accord with the Buddha’s decree and carries out extensive activities to propagate the Mystic Law. This is in the passage that we are presently discussing.

Third, the Daishonin declares that a genuine votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day aspires for the realization of a truly ideal society embodying “the principle that both the person and the Law are unaging and eternal” (cf. WND-1, 392). He further clarifies that this ideal society will be one that perfectly matches the Lotus Sutra’s description of “peace and security in this existence”.

The passage we are currently considering, which presents the second perspective, elucidates the essence of the Daishonin’s own struggles as the sutra’s votary. He 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 summed up by the line: “This is the age of conflict in which the pure Law has been lost” (WND-1, 392). In other words, 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 engaging in incessant quarrels and disputes over 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 such an age when the Law is on the brink of disappearing from society, votaries of the Lotus Sutra uphold the correct Law and clarify the correct teaching in order to prevent it from being lost forever. They also uphold the ideal of establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land in order to free people from suffering and put a halt to the country's ruin.

This is what it means to "practice as the Buddha teaches". In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni addresses his bodhisattva disciples and urges them to undertake this struggle after his passing. Hence, the Daishonin's reference above to the "command of the Buddha" and the "decree of the Dharma King" (cf. WND-1, 392).

In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni states that among his teachings there are those that 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).<sup>25</sup> 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 the two. The purpose of waging this battle is solely to prevent the correct teaching of Buddhism 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 schools of Buddhism, 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 fierce onslaughts that will inevitably befall them.

The most powerful weapon in this "battle" is the Lotus Sutra itself, in which the Buddha made a clear distinction between the provisional teachings and the true teaching. Hence, the Daishonin 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 shakubuku, or refuting erroneous teachings in the realm of Buddhism, is ultimately a struggle of compassion fought with the force of reason. If this struggle were to be waged with anything other than reason — if it relied, for example, on authority or power, or on brute force — then it would not be the battle of ideas commanded by the Buddha. Resorting to such means would amount to a negation of Buddhism itself and would be indicative of the most deplorable decline of the Law in the Latter Day.

The “banner of the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo, the heart of the entire eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra” refers to the daimoku of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, which is 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 Myoho-enge-kyo” constitute the name of the Buddha nature of all living beings,<sup>26</sup> and chanting Nam-myoho-enge-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 life. Ultimately, the “battle between the provisional and the true teachings” is a struggle for human victory, one in which we aim — through earnestly chanting daimoku based on strong faith in the Mystic Law — to overcome all suffering and misfortune and open the way to happiness for everyone.

The votary who holds aloft the “banner of the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo” can shoot down the workings of devilish functions by employing the “bow and arrow” of the Buddha's words, “I have not yet revealed the truth” and “honestly discarding the provisional teachings”.<sup>27</sup>

Also, the “great white ox cart” signifies the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra that can carry all people to the destination of enlightenment. It is a vehicle magnificent in size and grandeur, imparting boundless peace of mind to all who ride in it. It can travel freely anywhere, without being bound, in order to free people from suffering.<sup>28</sup>

The Daishonin says: “I have mounted the carriage drawn by the great white ox and battered down the gates of the pro-

visional teachings. Attacking first one and then another, I have refuted [all] opponents.... So the battle goes on even today" (WND-1, 392). This passage conveys the Daishonin's dynamism and boundless vigor. It brims with his unrestrained passion and energy to fight tirelessly for kosen-rufu. The Daishonin's words are meant to sweep away all doubt as to why those who practice the Lotus Sutra as the Buddha teaches don't enjoy a "peaceful and secure existence in this existence" [because earnestly working for the cause of kosen-rufu is what constitutes leading a peaceful and secure existence]. The activities of SGI members since the pioneering days of our movement reflect the same vigor and strength as conveyed here by the Daishonin.

Discussing this passage, Mr Toda said: "We mustn't let harmful errors go unchallenged. We must stay on the offensive against them, continuing to press forward and thoroughly refuting them." Mr Toda was a leader dedicated to guiding all people to true and lasting happiness. He was also a great warrior who was firmly determined to refute the erroneous and reveal the true in the realm of Buddhism. He always brimmed with this spirit, the spirit of refutation, to do battle against error and wrongdoing.

In this passage, the Daishonin 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 keep fighting until all roots of evil that cause people suffering and misery are eradicated. To achieve kosen-rufu, we need to defeat the devilish nature or negativity that resides and proliferates in the human heart.

At the end of this passage, the Daishonin says: "Legions of enemies exist who oppose the single Dharma King and the handful who follow him. So the battle goes on even today" (WND-1, 392). The first three Soka Gakkai presidents, connected by the bonds of mentor and disciple, have always taken action with the unwavering resolve to keep fighting for kosen-rufu. Amid the rising tide of Japanese militarism, Mr Makiguchi boldly stood up alone to revive the Daishonin's Buddhism in modern times. Mr Toda also stood up alone amid the devastation of postwar Japan to rebuild the Soka Gakkai and achieve the goal of a membership of 750,000 households. And I, the third president, stood up alone as Mr Toda's disciple and embarked on a momentous journey for worldwide kosen-rufu.

Kosen-rufu is a continuous struggle between the forces of the Buddha and devilish functions. It is indeed the case that "the

battle goes on even today". The true brilliance of the life state of Buddhahood shines in this spirit of unceasing challenge. This is something that is clearly illustrated by those who practice in accord with the Buddha's teachings.



**[The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai states:] "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 [the three vehicles] and take up the single vehicle of Buddhahood, and the Mystic Law alone will flourish throughout the land. When the people all chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, the wind will no longer buffet the branches, and the rain will no longer break the clods of soil. The world will become as it was in the ages of Fu Hsi and Shen Nung.<sup>29</sup> In their present existence the people will be freed from misfortune and disasters and learn the art of living long. Realize that the time will come when the truth will be revealed that both the person and the Law are unaging and eternal. There cannot be the slightest doubt about the sutra's promise of "peace and security in their present existence" (LSOC5, 136). (WND-1, 391-92)**

## Tenacious dialogue and shining humanity

This passage clarifies in terms of both reason and the Buddha's intent that the Lotus Sutra's promise of "peace and security in this existence" is definitely not false.

"The Lotus Sutra is the teaching of shakubuku, the refutation of the provisional doctrines" — this is a well-known passage from T'ien-t'ai's *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*. It means that shakubuku in context of the Lotus Sutra refers to refuting the doctrines of the provisional teachings.

In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni himself refutes these teachings, so in the battle between the provisional and the true, those who are attached to the former are ultimately refuted by the

Buddha himself. If they are sincere disciples of the Buddha, when they realize this fact they will be moved to follow the Buddha's true intent.

In the above passage, the image of all believers of the provisional teachings coming to correctly abide by the Buddha's intent is described as "joining the retinue of the Dharma King", while the concept of all the provisional teachings being integrated into the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra is described as "all vehicles becoming the one Buddha vehicle"<sup>30</sup> (cf. WND-1, 392).

"The time when ... the Mystic Law alone will flourish throughout the land" indicates the time when the Mystic Law — the ultimate Law for attaining Buddhahood to which the Buddha became enlightened — is duly accepted and upheld as the correct teaching of Buddhism. It is a time when slander and disbelief in the Mystic Law are swept away and Buddhism based on this supreme law of life comes to prosper and flourish.

The 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 or ten schools"<sup>31</sup> of the day were in disarray and quarrelled endlessly among themselves, which is one of the defining features 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.

The words, "When the people all chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo..." describe the establishment of a spiritual framework supportive of kosen-rufu. It 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 the Daishonin'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 stressing the 'dignity and sanctity of life' as the spiritual value toward which all humanity should aspire and share.

Kosen-rufu is the most difficult of undertakings. That's because it involves an inner transformation in people's lives. Faith in the Mystic Law is a self-motivating force. Steadfast efforts in one-on-one dialogue are indispensable to nurturing that faith in each person, giving them confidence in their potential to change themselves from within.

The Daishonin speaks of "all people abandoning the various kinds of vehicles and taking up the single vehicle of Buddhahood" (cf. WND-1, 392). 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 Daishonin's Buddhism gains widespread acceptance, becomes the philosophical current of society and develops into a shared value of humankind. Kosen-rufu cannot be accomplished without tenacious dialogue and the shining humanity of those who spread the Law.

In that sense, the great dialogue movement built by the SGI based on Buddhist humanism could rightly be called a miracle of the present day. We are the sole organization that is carrying out the Buddha's decree in the modern world and faithfully practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism just as he taught. As a result, we have been able to triumph over countless adversities and vigorously advance kosen-rufu.

The humanistic network of the SGI, based on the Daishonin's Buddhism, has grown to encompass 192 countries and territories. In Japan and other locations around the globe, many new SGI facilities are under construction and increasing numbers of community leaders and friends in countless areas enjoy participating in SGI events. This is all due to the trust that members in each country have won through their tireless efforts to reach out to others through dialogue and fostering friendships in their communities and neighborhoods. Such actions truly embody the Daishonin's conviction that "the Mystic Law alone will flourish". The Daishonin declares that when the Mystic Law widely prevails, an age of "peace and security in this existence" will be realized without fail.

The Daishonin then offers an image of what the world could be like when kosen-rufu is achieved. He writes: "The wind will no longer buffet the branches, and the rain will no longer break the clods of soil" (WND-1, 392). When we believe in the Mystic Law, which provides a fundamental basis for the sanctity of life, and chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, the world of peace and security

that is apparent to everyone will emerge. As in the ideal ages of the legendary Chinese rulers Fu Hsi and Shen Nung, peace, prosperity and happiness will come to permeate the land.

The Daishonin also says: “The time will come when the truth will be revealed that both the person and the Law are unaging and eternal” (WND-1, 392). The principle “the Law is unaging and eternal” means that the workings of the Mystic Law — which encompass, sustain, and give rise to all phenomena — neither decline nor cease to operate. On one level, this could be taken to mean that all things are harmonized and function to create value amid diversity. The principle “the person is unaging and eternal”, on the other hand, of course, does not mean that we don’t grow old or die; but rather, that through faith in the Mystic Law, we are able to establish a state of life pervaded by the four noble virtues of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity. It is a state of life in which we are not perturbed or defeated by the sufferings of aging or death. As Shakyamuni clarified, these sufferings arise from illusion or ignorance of the true nature of life. In an age when the power of the Mystic Law is freely manifested, people will naturally gain confidence in the Mystic Law and break through ignorance or darkness.

In this way, the struggle for *kosen-rufu* by those who correctly practice the Buddha’s teachings will give rise to an ideal society in which all are able to enjoy “peace and security in this existence”. This goal of peace and security, however, is not to be found merely in some ideal society in the distant future. It actually describes the life state of those who faithfully practice the correct teaching of the Lotus Sutra to realize happiness for themselves and actualize a secure and peaceful land. This is clear from the preceding passages that describe the Daishonin’s own struggles. His dynamic stance in fighting for *kosen-rufu* undefeated by any hardship is a shining example of genuine “peace and security in this existence”. This is the true meaning of this concept in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

When we exert ourselves in our Buddhist practice, our Buddhahood is powerfully activated. Our lives come to brim with supreme joy. There is no sense of tragic self-sacrifice in the spirit of ‘selfless dedication’ or ‘not begrudging one’s life’ taught in the Daishonin’s Buddhism. When we vigorously challenge ourselves, joy always pulses vibrantly in our lives.

The Daishonin concludes ‘On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings’ with the words: “How can such joy possibly be

described!" (WND-1, 396). And in the closing passage of 'The Opening of the Eyes' — a writing in which he embarks on a still more detailed discussion of practicing as the Buddha teaches — he expresses the tremendous inner joy he feels, saying: "For what I have done, I have been condemned to exile, but it is a small suffering to undergo in this present life and not one worth lamenting. In future lives I will enjoy immense happiness, a thought that gives me great joy" (WND-1, 287).

The struggle for kosen-rufu is a succession of hardships. These very efforts, however, also enable us to manifest the life state of Buddhahood, which is accompanied by unsurpassed joy. Those who strive all-out for kosen-rufu always savor such a deep sense of happiness and fulfillment. There is no greater "peace and security in this existence" than that found in the life state of one who truly understands the Buddhist principle that "great obstacles lead to enlightenment".

A steadfast commitment to striving for kosen-rufu as the Daishonin teaches, firmly grounded in the Goshō, is the key to achieving a life of enduring happiness and hope.



## NOTES

1. This is a reference to the fact that the Lotus Sutra opened the way to the enlightenment of all people, whereas the provisional pre-Lotus Sutra teachings had denied the possibility of attaining enlightenment in this lifetime to persons of the two vehicles (voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones) as well as women and evil people.
2. Age of conflict: An age of quarrels and disputes. A reference to a description of the fifth five-hundred-year period in the Great Collection Sutra, which says that, in this age — which corresponds to the Latter Day of the Law — rival Buddhist schools will quarrel endlessly among themselves and Shakyamuni's correct teaching will be obscured and lost.
3. Three powerful enemies: Three types of arrogant people who persecute those who propagate the Lotus Sutra in the evil age after Shakyamuni Buddha's death, described in a 20-line verse section of the 'Encouraging Devotion' (13th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. The Great Teacher Miao-lo (711–782) of China summarizes them as arrogant lay people, arrogant priests and arrogant false sages.
4. Land of Tranquil Light: Also, Land of Eternally Tranquil Light. The Buddha land, which is free from impermanence and impurity. In many sutras, the actual saha world in which human beings dwell is described as an impure land filled with delusions and sufferings, while the Buddha land is described as a pure land free from these and far removed from this saha world. In contrast, the Lotus Sutra reveals the saha world to be the Buddha land, or the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light, and explains that the nature of a land is determined by the minds of its inhabitants.
5. T'ien-t'ai, *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.
6. Translated from Japanese. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, *Kachi Ron* (Theory of Value), edited by Josei Toda (Tokyo: Daisanbunmei-sha, 1979), 192–93.

7. The object of devotion in terms of the Person: The Daishonin clarifies that he is the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law who possesses the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent, and who will lead the people of the Latter Day to enlightenment.
8. The object of devotion in terms of the Law: The Daishonin clarifies that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the fundamental Law for attaining Buddhahood that all people of the Latter Day should revere.
9. Arhat: One who has attained the highest of the four stages that voice-hearers aim to achieve through the practice of the Hinayana teachings, that is, the highest stage of Hinayana enlightenment.
10. Three poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness: The fundamental evils inherent in life that give rise to human suffering. In Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, the three poisons are regarded as the source of all illusions and earthly desires. The three poisons are so called because they pollute people's lives and work to prevent them from turning their hearts and minds to goodness.
11. Devil king of the sixth heaven: Also, devil king or heavenly devil. The king of devils, who dwells in the highest or the sixth heaven of the world of desire. He is also named Freely Enjoying Things Conjured by Others, the king who makes free use of the fruits of others' efforts for his own pleasure. Served by innumerable minions, he obstructs Buddhist practice and delights in sapping the life force of other beings. The devil king is a personification of the negative tendency to force others to one's will at any cost.
12. Three obstacles and four devils: Various obstacles and hindrances to the practice of Buddhism. The three obstacles are (1) the obstacle of earthly desires, (2) the obstacle of karma and (3) the obstacle of retribution. The four devils are (1) the hindrance of the earthly desires, (2) the hindrance of the five components, (3) the hindrance of death and (4) the hindrance of the devil king.
13. A line from the Immeasurable Meanings Sutra. "In these more than forty years, I have not yet revealed the truth" (LSOC2, 15), Shakyamuni says, indicating that all the teachings he expounded in the preceding period of more than 40 years were expedient and provisional teachings and that he had not yet revealed the truth.
14. Nichiren Daishonin here cites the phrase "honestly discarding expedient means" (LSOC2, 79) from the 'Expedient Means' (2nd) chapter of the Lotus Sutra with a slight alteration. With these words, too, Shakyamuni indicates that the teachings he expounded in the preceding period of more than 40 years are provisional and, as such, should be discarded.
15. "The carriage drawn by the great white ox" symbolizes the supreme vehicle of Buddhahood, described in the parable of the three carts and the burning house that appears in the 'Simile and Parable' (3rd) chapter of the Lotus Sutra.
16. Eight or ten schools: The eight schools are the eight major schools of Buddhism in Japan before the Kamakura period (1185–1333). They are the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, Precepts, Dharma Characteristics, Three Treatises, Flower Garland, Tendai, and True Word schools. The addition of the Pure Land (Nembutsu) and Zen schools, which emerged early in the Kamakura period, produces the ten schools, as they are often referred to collectively in Japanese Buddhist works.
17. The provisional teachings are the teachings that Shakyamuni Buddha expounded as expedient means to lead people to the true teaching. According to T'ien-t'ai's doctrine, they include all the teachings expounded before the Lotus Sutra. The provisional teachings reveal only partial aspects of the truth that the Buddha attained. In contrast, the true teaching is the teaching in which Shakyamuni Buddha directly revealed his enlightenment, expounding the truth he attained in its entirety. T'ien-t'ai defined the true teaching as the Lotus Sutra.
18. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging: A bodhisattva described in the 'Bodhisattva Never Disparaging' (20th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. This bodhisattva — Shakyamuni in a previous lifetime — would bow in reverence to everyone he met. However, he was attacked by arrogant people, who beat him with sticks and staves and threw stones at him. The sutra explains that his practice of respecting others' Buddha nature became the cause for him to attain Buddhahood.
19. Chu Tao-sheng (d. 434): Also known as Tao-sheng. A disciple of Kumarajiva in China. He argued that all people possess the Buddha

- nature and that even *icchantikas*, people of incorrigible disbelief, can attain Buddhahood. The elder priests attacked him for these views and expelled him from the community of priests and he retired to a mountain in Su-chou (modern-day Suzhou Province in China).
20. Fa-tao (1086–1147): A priest who remonstrated with Emperor Hui-Tsung of China's Sung dynasty when the emperor supported Taoism and attempted to suppress Buddhism. He was branded on the face and exiled.
  21. Aryasimha (n.d.): The last of Shakyamuni Buddha's 23 or 24 successors, who lived in central India during the sixth century. When Aryasimha was propagating Buddhism in Kashmir in ancient India, King Mirakutsu, who was hostile to Buddhism, destroyed many Buddhist temples and stupas and executed a number of monks. Aryasimha was among those beheaded by the king.
  22. T'ien-t'ai (538–597): Also known as Chih-i. The founder of the T'ien-t'ai school in China. Commonly referred to as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai. His lectures were compiled in such works as *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* and *Great Concentration and Insight*. He spread the Lotus Sutra in China and established the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life.
  23. Dengyo (767–822): Also known as Saicho. The founder of the Tendai (T'ien-t'ai) school in Japan. Often referred to as the Great Teacher Dengyo. He refuted the errors of the six schools of Nara — the established Buddhist schools of the day — elevated the Lotus Sutra and dedicated himself to the establishment of Mahayana ordination center on Mount Hiei.
  24. In 'On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings', the Daishonin writes: "Shakyamuni Buddha faced the nine great persecutions for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. In the distant past, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was likewise attacked with staves, tiles, and stones. Chu Tao-sheng was banished to a mountain in Su-chou, the Tripitaka Master Fa-tao was branded on the face, and the Venerable Aryasimha was beheaded. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai was opposed by the seven schools of the north and the three schools of the south and the Great Teacher Dengyo was hated by the six schools [of Nara]. The Buddha and these bodhisattvas and great sages were all votaries of the Lotus Sutra, yet they suffered great persecutions" (WND-1, 391-92).
  25. The three vehicles are the teachings expounded for voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, and bodhisattvas, respectively. The one vehicle of Buddhahood means the teaching that enables all people to attain Buddhahood and corresponds to the Lotus Sutra.
  26. In 'Conversation between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man', the Daishonin writes: "Myoho-rence-kyo is the Buddha nature of all living beings. The Buddha nature is the Dharma nature, and the Dharma nature is enlightenment.... The Buddha nature that all these beings possess is called by the name Myoho-rence-kyo. Therefore, if you recite these words of the daimoku once, then the Buddha nature of all living beings will be summoned and gather around you. At that time the three bodies of the Dharma nature within you — the Dharma body, the reward body, and the manifested body — will be drawn forth and become manifest. This is called attaining Buddhahood" (WND-1, 131).
  27. See notes 13 and 14, respectively.
  28. The Daishonin writes: "These large carriages drawn by white oxen are able to fly at will through the sky of the essential nature of phenomena" ('On the Large Carriages Drawn by White Oxen', WND-2, 976).
  29. Fu Hsi and Shen Nung were legendary kings who constructed ideal societies in ancient China. It was said that during their reigns people's hearts were at peace, agriculture was abundant, and there were no disasters.
  30. "All vehicles" means the three vehicles — namely, the two vehicles of voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones, plus the vehicle of bodhisattvas. The "one Buddha vehicle" means the Lotus Sutra, which is the one teaching that can enable all people to attain Buddhahood. The 'Expedient Means' (2nd) chapter of the Lotus Sutra explains: "In the Buddha lands of the ten directions / there is only the Law of the one vehicle, / there are not two, there are not three, / except when the Buddha preaches so as an expedient means" (LSOC2, 69).
  31. See note 16.