

NOTE: This is not intended as a prepared lecture. This only serves as a supporting reference for lecturers.

THE BUDDHISM OF THE SUN: ILLUMINATING THE WORLD

[5] "The Persecution at Tatsunokuchi"

"Casting Off the Transient and Revealing the True"—Manifesting Our Great Inherent Potential

—General References—

go to www.nichirenlibrary.org to access:

- *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vols. 1 & 2
- *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*
- *The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*
- *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR THIS LECTURE

1. President Ikeda's lecture series on the writing "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime" booklet, pp. 38–39 (**attached**)
2. *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 269 "The Opening of the Eyes" (**see Key Concept #1 on p. 2 of this reference sheet**)
3. *The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings*, vol. 2, pp. 1–95 (Tatsunokuchi Persecution—**see book**)

TERMS

- Buddha land (see *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*; www.nichirenlibrary.org)
- Casting off the transient and revealing the true (see *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary*; www.nichirenlibrary.org)
- True Cause (see *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary*; www.nichirenlibrary.org)

BACKGROUND HIGHLIGHTS

- "The Persecution at Tatsunokuchi" was written September 21, 1271, to Shijo Kingo, 9 days after the Tatsunokuchi Persecution.
- Events leading up to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution:
 - True Word Precepts priest Ryokan and his followers, attacked Nichiren due to their deep hatred of him.
 - Because Nichiren was gaining followers, which threatened leaders of other Buddhist schools, Ryokan influenced government officials to attack him.
 - A large group of soldiers, led by Hei no Saemon, attacked Nichiren at his dwelling in Kamakura and arrested him.
 - Though Nichiren was to be exiled to Sado Island, at midnight on September 21, he was secretly taken to the beach at Tatsunokuchi to be beheaded.
- Following this unsuccessful execution attempt, he was exiled to Sado as originally planned.

KEY PASSAGE #1:

At the time of my persecution on the twelfth, not only did you accompany me to Tatsunokuchi, but also you declared that you would die by my side. This can only be called wondrous . . . (WND-1, 196)

See LB, pp. 44–46

- Hearing of the plan to kill the Daishonin, Shijo Kingo (see the *Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*; www.nichirenlibrary.org) dashed barefoot to his side and accompanied him to Tatsunokuchi, prepared to die alongside him.
- **President Ikeda:** Nichiren declares that the bond of mentor and disciple linking him and Shijo Kingo, who faced the prospect of death alongside him at Tatsunokuchi, "can only be described as wondrous." (LB, p. 44)
- **President Ikeda:** As the sword was drawn, Kingo wept and said to the Daishonin, "These are your last moments!" But the Daishonin responded calmly that he could imagine no greater joy than giving his life for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, telling Kingo that he should smile and rejoice. (LB, pp. 45–46)
- Despite facing life-threatening persecution, Nichiren expressed his serene life state that was based on his dedication to the happiness of all people.

KEY PASSAGE #2

Because he died there for the Lotus Sutra, how could it be anything less than the Buddha land? . . . This being so, then every place where Nichiren meets persecution is the Buddha land. (WND-1, 196)

BASIC POINTERS FOR PREPARING A LECTURE ON THE WRITINGS

- Read the writing several times through.
- Read the lecture on the writing several times through.
- Create a concise explanation of the background:
 - When the letter was written, conditions of society and Nichiren's life at the time, the intent in composing the writing, etc.
- Make note of the title of the lecture—often the key message is conveyed in the title.
- Make note of the opening section(s) of the lecture—the key points are often included in the opening.
- Are there terms or concepts that need explanation?
- What are some key portions of the Goshō passage to emphasize?
- How do these key portions and correlating points connect to our lives today?
- What points do you want members to go home with?

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See LB, pp. 46–47

- **President Ikeda:** To remain unshaken when confronted with a persecution that might mean laying down one's life for the sake of the Lotus Sutra—that in itself is an expression of the sublime state of Buddhahood. No doubt this conviction prompted his assertion that the place where he endured such persecution could not "be anything less than the Buddha land." Since it is a Buddha land, the person who dwells there is a Buddha. (LB, p. 47)
- Nichiren makes clear that Shijo Kingo, who was prepared to offer his life for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, is also a Buddha.
- **President Ikeda:** In the age after the Buddha's passing, any place where people practice in exact accord with the Buddha's teaching is a place where the eternal Buddha constantly dwells. (LB, p. 47)
- This applies to all practitioners—the place where we dedicate our lives for kosen-rufu becomes a Buddha land.

KEY CONCEPT #1: Casting off the transient and revealing the true

Note: The following passage from "The Opening of the Eyes" is commonly referred to when talking about the concept of "casting off the transient and revealing the true."

On the twelfth day of the ninth month of last year [September 12, 1271], between the hours of the rat and the ox (11:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m.), this person named Nichiren was beheaded [at Tatsunokuchi]. It is his soul that has come to this island of Sado. (WND-1, 269)

See LB, p. 43 and pp. 47–50

- Nichiren implies that, though the ordinary person called Nichiren (Nichiren's transient identity) "died" at Tatsunokuchi, Nichiren, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law (Nichiren in his true identity), reached Sado safely to fulfill his mission.
- President Ikeda was told that he wouldn't live to be 30 years old, but he became the third president of the Soka Gakkai at the age of 32, and has since continued to dedicate his life to fulfilling his mission for kosen-rufu, even today at 88. (see LB, p. 43)
 - ❖ **Additional Reference:** See attached essay "Renewing Ourselves Every Day"—President Ikeda's personal vision for his personal journey for kosen-rufu
 - ❖ **Additional Reference:** My health was extremely poor, my wages continued to be in arrears, and I pushed myself beyond my limits day in and day out . . . Should you feel stuck, please challenge to overcome your own weakness, summoning the great power of faith. President Toda said that this is how to "discard the transient and reveal the true" in our own lives. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 78)
- **President Ikeda:** For us, the fundamental meaning of this is not that the Buddha has revealed himself to be an eternal Buddha superior to and divorced from ordinary people or living beings of the nine worlds (the life states from hell through to bodhisattva), but rather that it is a call for people to refocus on Shakyamuni as a human being. Or put another way, it is a call to adopt the human Shakyamuni Buddha as a model, emulating him so that they can awaken to the inherent greatness within their own lives. (LB, p. 48)
- **President Ikeda:** "Casting off the transient and revealing the true" means "revealing the true" for all people—that is, bringing forth the supremely noble life state inherent in our own lives and helping others do the same. We are Buddhas, and so is everyone else. "Casting off the transient and revealing the true" serves as the ultimate basis for our actions to respect all people. (LB, p. 49)
- **President Ikeda:** Committed to fulfilling his fundamental vow—at one with the great vow of the Buddha for the happiness of all humanity—he put his power and ability freely and fully to work, boldly facing every challenge while calling on people yet to awaken to their original inherent nature to live true to themselves. When awakened people take a stand, the significance of the Daishonin's "casting off the transient and revealing the true" is fully realized. (LB, p. 49)
- **President Ikeda:** Today, the Soka Gakkai must once again "cast off the transient and reveal the true." To do that, each member must stand up with an awareness of being a Bodhisattva of the Earth and with a commitment to fulfilling their vow as a genuine disciple of Nichiren Daishonin. (LB, p. 50)

KEY CONCEPT #2: True Cause

See LB, p. 50

- The spirit of "true cause" means always moving forward from this moment on. (see LB, p. 50)
- **President Ikeda:** "Casting off the transient and revealing the true" means striving in faith based on the spirit of "true cause," of continuously setting forth from the present moment. (LB, p. 50)

On Attaining *Buddhahood* in This Lifetime

Those whose hearts shine with a commitment to truth and justice never lose hope, even amid the greatest hardship or difficulty. Rather, they serve as a bright beacon illuminating the darkness of people's suffering, imparting inspiration, assurance and courage.

When we change, the world changes. The key to all change is in our inner transformation—a change in our hearts and minds. This is human revolution. We all have the power to change. When we realize this truth of life, we can bring forth that power anywhere, anytime and in any situation.

Nichiren Buddhism, based on the transformative principles of the Lotus Sutra, has made this great path of inner change available to all people, with the chanting of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo as its core practice.

This time, I'll discuss the passage in which Nichiren Daishonin outlines the basic attitude and approach to our fundamental practice of chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Changing Ourselves and Changing the Land

As I have already touched on at length, the entirety of Buddhism exists within our own lives. And the key to attaining Buddhahood—the ultimate transformation of our life-state—also lies in a change in our hearts, or minds.

To convey this point, Nichiren Daishonin here summarizes a point from the Vimalakirti Sutra:¹ “When one seeks the Buddhas' emancipation in the minds of ordinary beings, one

finds that ordinary beings are the entities of enlightenment, and that the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana”² (WND-1, 4).

“Ordinary beings are the entities of enlightenment” means that the wisdom for attaining Buddhahood (enlightenment) manifests in the lives of ordinary people steeped in earthly desires. Similarly, “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana” means that the Buddha life-state of true peace and tranquillity (nirvana) manifests in the lives of ordinary people tormented by the sufferings of birth and death. Here, Nichiren explains that Buddhas and ordinary people are not separated by an insurmountable divide; that the only thing setting them apart is the difference in the “minds of ordinary beings.”

Nichiren also cites the passage from the Vimalakirti Sutra that explains the difference between pure and impure lands. This passage—which Nichiren summarizes as “If the minds of living beings are impure, their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land”³—clarifies that there are not two separate lands; the only difference between pure and impure lands is “the good or evil of our minds.” The view shown here is one in which the pure land does not exist in some otherworldly realm but in the real world, and is achieved by people changing themselves inside. This is a dynamic and practical view of the pure land, based on the idea of “to purify Buddha lands” expounded in the Lotus Sutra (*The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, p. 117).

The Vimalakirti Sutra passage cited by Nichiren is from the “Inquiring about the Illness,”

or fifth, chapter. This chapter describes the exchange between Vimalakirti, an outstanding Buddhist lay believer and practitioner of the bodhisattva way who has fallen ill, and Manjushri, one of Shakyamuni's leading disciples, who is visiting him. When asked the cause of his illness, Vimalakirti replies, "Because all living beings are sick, therefore I am sick."⁴ This is a well-known passage that succinctly reveals the fundamental bodhisattva spirit of taking on others' sufferings as one's own.

Vimalakirti goes on to say that bodhisattvas choose to be born among living beings afflicted by delusion and to share in the sufferings of birth and death in order to instruct and guide those living beings to enlightenment. Moreover, bodhisattvas are never overwhelmed or swayed by suffering, because they have established a pure state of enlightenment within.⁵

Thus, the passages from the Vimalakirti Sutra cited by Nichiren clarify the meaning of Buddhahood and the pure land from the standpoint of a bodhisattva practitioner fighting amid the realities of daily life. Nichiren, therefore, states in conclusion, "When deluded, one is called an ordinary being, but when enlightened, one is called a Buddha" (WND-1, 4). In other words, the difference between ordinary people and Buddhas is nothing more than the difference between delusion and enlightenment in ordinary people's minds. How, then, can we transform delusion into enlightenment?

In the preceding passage, Nichiren explains that when people's hearts change, the land or their external environment can also change. At its foundation is a transformation from delusion to enlightenment.

As discussed earlier, what makes this transformation possible is the practice of chanting

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and, on a spiritual level, faith. Simply put, through faith we can overcome the ignorance or darkness that is the root of delusion and manifest the Buddhahood with which we are originally endowed.

Here, Nichiren uses an analogy to describe this fundamental potential for change, saying, "This is similar to a tarnished mirror that will shine like a jewel when polished" (WND-1, 4). In this way, he conveys that the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo—the means for defeating our inner darkness—serves to "polish" our lives.

All living beings are inherently entities of the Mystic Law. And inherently, the life-state of Buddhahood enables us to tap the limitless power of the Mystic Law within us freely and without hindrance, whenever and in whatever form it is needed. Nichiren likens this supreme state of life to a clear mirror that shines like a jewel. Yet even though we are an entity of the Mystic Law, we cannot bring forth the power of that Law if our lives are shrouded in ignorance. In such a benighted state, we are like a "tarnished mirror" that will not reflect anything. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the practice for polishing the tarnished mirror of our lives.

The Path for Polishing Our Lives: (1) Brave Challenge

Nichiren Daishonin says with regard to chanting as a practice for polishing our lives: "A mind now clouded by the illusions of the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but when polished, it is sure to become like a clear mirror, reflecting the essential nature of phenomena [i.e., the Dharma nature] and the true aspect of

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY RENEWING OURSELVES EVERY DAY

BY HO GOKU

In this new essay series, SGI President Ikeda uses his pen name Ho Goku — as he does in The New Human Revolution — to write the story-behind-the-story. We hope you will enjoy reading this new series, known as “Thoughts on The New Human Revolution,” in the Seikyo Shimbun, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper.

A new year. The sun of a grand state of being rises high. On the second day of the new year, I celebrate the start of the Year of Victory of the People with my dear and most esteemed fellow members at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall.

Today is also my 70th birthday. I have received greetings and congratulations from fellow members all over the world. I am humbled, yet also very happy.

Jan. 2 is also the publication date for volume 1 of *The New Human Revolution* in Japanese [published in English by the SGI-USA in 1995]. I hope it will offer some small encouragement to all of you. I thank all those who assisted with its publication and all my readers.



Just a month before my 30th birthday, I made the following entry in my beloved diary: “I have no life apart from working, advancing and living with all my might alongside President Toda. I have come to realize that I am who I am because of my mentor.”

So sickly was I that the doctors told me I probably wouldn’t live to 30. My mentor, Josei Toda, showed more concern for me than anyone. He continued to guide and encourage me with compassion and strictness. I spent my days and nights in an exacting, unceasing struggle to propagate Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

When my strength was sapped by ill health and exhaustion, Mr. Toda said to me: “You are waging a battle against the three obstacles and four devils. Take all your pain and suffering directly to the Gohonzon, and fight to overcome every obstacle.”

He also told me, “Live your life and forge your faith in such a way that you can meet death with dignity and composure whenever it should come.” His voice — the voice of a strict yet loving father — pierced the very depths of my being. On another occasion, Mr. Toda said to me: “I will give you my life! Live, in my stead, live long!”



My mentor breathed this life into me, and I triumphed over my fate, over being hounded by the demons of illness — and I reached the age of 30. Exalted, I recorded in my diary how I had spent each decade of my life and what my goals were for the decades ahead.

To the age of 10: Growing up the son of a humble seaweed harvester.

To the age of 20: Self-awakening and struggling against illness.

To the age of 30: Studying and practicing Buddhism, and making earnest efforts to defeat the demons of illness.

To the age of 40: Perfecting my study and practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings.

To the age of 50: Making a clear statement in society.

To the age of 60: Completing the foundation for the kosen-rufu movement in Japan.

But my diary says nothing about what happens after 60. I never thought I would live beyond that age.

Incidentally, it was in the autumn of my 57th year — a few months before I turned 58, the age at which Mr. Toda died — that I fell ill and was hospitalized.



If Mr. Toda were alive today, he would shortly turn 98. I am convinced that I have lived to see this 70th year because Mr. Toda shared a portion of his life force with me.

Victor Hugo began to write his great novel *Ninety-three* when he was 70. At about the same age, Leo Tolstoy began to devote his energies to writing his masterpiece *Resurrection*. Soon after becoming 70, founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi began publishing the journal *Kachi Sozo* (Value Creation), opening the way for fresh discussion and debate toward spreading the greatness of the Daishonin's teachings.

Now, with Ho Goku as my pen name, I am applying myself earnestly to writing volume eight of *The New Human Revolution*. The serialization of installments in the *Seikyo Shimbun* will resume shortly.

If I were to set down what I have accomplished from age 60 to the present, along with what I envisage for the decade ahead, it would read as follows:

To the age of 70: Establishing the principles of a new humanism.

To the age of 80: Completing the foundation for worldwide kosen-rufu.

From that point on, in accord with the Mystic Law and the undying, unaging nature of life expounded in Buddhism, I am determined to take the lead in kosen-rufu throughout eternity.



In a poem he wrote when he was more than 70, Goethe said:

*“Tell me! How you keep on renewing yourself?”
You can do it, too, if you always rejoice at what is great.*

My life is one great journey for kosen-rufu. Before me I see the hope-filled mountain range of the 21st century.

The third stage of life is synonymous with the third youth. An ancient Chinese maxim urges, “Renew yourself each day.”

I vow with the firmest determination to exert myself “bravely and vigorously” again this year (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 23).

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