



DISCUSSION MEETING TOOLBOX

In August 1962, Soka Gakkai President Daisaku Ikeda began a series of lectures on *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, Nichiren Daishonin’s commentary on the Lotus Sutra. The participants: representatives of the student division, whom he sought to train as future leaders of the Soka Gakkai, while at the same time making Nichiren’s profound philosophy accessible in contemporary terms. In volume 6 of *The New Human Revolution*, President Ikeda addresses the student division members on the significance of reading Nichiren Daishonin’s writings out loud. He appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto.

READING THE GOSHO ALOUD

When we read Nichiren Daishonin’s writings, we should do so with the profound conviction that we are reading the truth.



Shin’ichi Yamamoto then opened the Gosho and began to talk about the overall significance and background of *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings* . . .

“These teachings represent the pinnacle of human philosophy and thought, covering a broad spectrum of principles concerning religion, life, human happiness, the universe and society, in terms of both faith and daily living.”

When Shin’ichi had given the students a basic overview of the writing’s structure, he said: Now let’s begin our study of the ‘Orally Transmitted Teachings,’ exploring it together both in principle and in practice!”

He then asked for a volunteer to read its opening lines aloud . . .

The Orally Transmitted Teachings state, “*Namu* derives from Sanskrit and here [in Japan] it means devotion . . .” (*Gosho zenshu*, p. 708)

When the reader finished, Shin’ichi said with some severity: “What lackluster reading! When we read the Gosho, we should do so with the profound conviction that we are reading the truth, the absolute truth—that this is exactly how it is. In other words, we should read with faith, seek with faith and understand with faith.

“Western philosophy may begin from

doubt, but when we are studying Buddhism, we must begin with faith. Even Shariputra, who was said to be foremost in wisdom among Shakyamuni’s disciples, attained enlightenment not through his knowledge or intellectual powers but through faith.”

. . . .

A solemn atmosphere pervaded the room. With serious expressions, everyone sat up straight and listened to Shin’ichi Yamamoto.

“The Gosho is scripture, a compilation of the Buddha’s words,” he continued. “Each word and phrase is important. And especially when it comes to ‘*The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*,’ if we seek to understand it deeply, we should first read it aloud again and again in a clear, strong voice—to the point where we have practically memorized it.

“Also, we should read the Gosho in action, word and thought. This means resolving to live according to it, sharing its philosophy with others and practicing its teachings ourselves. Our actions must match our convictions. That is the attitude with which to approach the study of Buddhism, and it is also a basic premise of Eastern philosophy.” (vol. 6, pp. 280–82)



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