

THE BUDDHISM OF THE SUN: ILLUMINATING THE WORLD

[3] “Aspiration for the Buddha Land”

Our Lives and Activities for Kosen-rufu Are Dedicated to the Realization of Lofty Ideals

—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

The World of Nichiren Daishonin’s Writings, vols. 2 & 3

BACKGROUND HIGHLIGHTS

- “Aspiration for the Buddha Land” is a letter Nichiren Daishonin addressed to Toki Jonin soon after arriving at Tsukahara on Sado Island where Nichiren had been exiled after the Tatsunokuchi Persecution.
- He composed this letter on November 23, 1271—what would be December 26 in the modern calendar—when he was 50.
- In the letter, Nichiren expresses that even amid the direst circumstances, his fighting spirit only burns brighter and that a crucial moment for kosen-rufu has arrived.
- He suffered under harsh winter conditions while lacking adequate food and shelter, and he was in danger of being assassinated. Conditions were so severe that he felt compelled to send back young priests who accompanied him there (see attached timeline).
- But his mind remained serene, filled with joy at dedicating his life to the Mystic Law.
- Since his youth, President Ikeda has studied this writing.
- This lecture was originally published in July 2015: 70th anniversary of Josei Toda’s release from prison on July 3, 1945. July 3 is also the day in 1957 that Daisaku Ikeda was arrested and imprisoned on fraudulent charges of election law violation in Osaka; founding of YMD on July 11, 1951; founding of YWD on July 19, 1951.

TERMS (See *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*)

- Tatsunokuchi Persecution (see also “The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra,” WND-1, 765–68)
- Three powerful enemies
- Three kinds of treasure

Key passage #1

The secret Law that is the one great reason the Buddhas make their advent will be spread for the first time in this country. How could Nichiren not be the one who will do this? (WND-1, 213).

See LB, 31–33

- “The secret Law” refers to Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the fundamental Law by which all people can attain enlightenment.
- **President Ikeda:** This is a grand declaration that it is he who is propagating the great Law that can free all people of the Latter Day from suffering at the most fundamental level. Though he might be bound by the laws of the land, he remains free in spirit. He is indeed a lion king, a great champion of life.
- ❖ **Additional Resource:** In “The Selection of the Time,” Nichiren recounts telling Hei no Saemon: “Even if it seems that, because I was born in the ruler’s domain, I follow him in my actions, I will never follow him in my heart

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?

(WND-1, 579). This passage was included in *Birthright of Man: A Selection of Texts*, a collection of inspiring quotes on human rights compiled by UNESCO.

Key Passage #2

You absolutely must not lament over my exile. It says in the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter and in the “Never Disparaging” chapter [that the votary of the Lotus Sutra will meet with persecution] (WND-1, 214).

See LB, 33

- **President Ikeda:** When we dedicate ourselves to the great vow for kosen-rufu, our lives open up limitlessly. We attain a vast state of life that enables us to calmly survey the problems and struggles we may be facing and triumph over them. That’s why the Daishonin writes in this letter, **“You absolutely must not lament”** (WND-1, 214).
- It is an honor to encounter hardships and persecutions. They prove that those who do are votaries of the Lotus Sutra.
- **President Ikeda:** The struggles we may encounter in real life are all part of our Buddhist practice for our spiritual development, enabling us to do our human revolution and attain Buddhahood. If we chant with that spirit and conviction, the courage we need to confront those challenges will well forth from within us. That in itself is what it means to manifest the life state of Buddhahood.
- ❖ **Additional Resource:** Bodhisattva Never Disparaging’s spirit of forbearance in *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 5, p. 97.

Key passage #3

Life is limited; we must not begrudge it. What we should ultimately aspire to is the Buddha land (WND-1, 214).

See LB, 33

- **President Ikeda:** Because both Nichiren and his disciples were facing a situation of life-threatening peril, he urges them to live out their lives for the sake of Buddhism and to aspire for the eternal Buddha land [the life state of Buddhahood] without begrudging their lives.
- **President Ikeda:** Because our lives are so infinitely precious, how we live them is extremely important. The time for death comes to us all. When we face that solemn reality head-on, we realize the importance of striving to live each moment of our lives in the most meaningful way.
- ❖ **Additional Resource:** Living fulfilling, regret-free lives, see March *Living Buddhism*, p. 15 & pp. 42–43.

See LB, 33–34

“It is rare to be born a human being . . . Life as a human being is hard to sustain” (“The Three Kinds of Treasure,” WND-1, 851).

- Through the three kinds of treasures, Nichiren urges us to live in the most worthwhile and meaningful way.
- The treasures of the heart are the source of genuine, indestructible value.
- In the context of eternity, a single lifetime may be just a fleeting moment, but a genuine religious philosophy enables us to create eternal value in that single moment.

See LB, 35

“You must not spend your lives in vain and regret it for ten thousand years to come . . . My followers, cut short your sleep by night and curtail your leisure by day and ponder this! You must not spend your lives in vain and regret it for ten thousand years to come” (“The Problem to Be Pondered Night and Day,” WND-1, 622).

- What is it that Nichiren wishes his disciples to ponder? “High-ranking priests who keep the precepts and yet hold distorted views”(WND-1, 621)—priests who are respected for their seemingly exemplary behavior but who are in fact corrupt and self-serving.

- Priests in Nichiren's day failed to protect the Buddhist teachings.
- In modern times, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, spoke out to assert what was just and right in terms of Buddhism, just as the Daishonin had taught. As a result, Japanese militarist authorities imprisoned them.
- In contrast, fearing persecution, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood compromised, incorporating elements of State Shinto.
- The Daishonin's spirit is alive in the mentor-disciple relationship of Soka.
- When Sensei was young, doctors said he wouldn't live beyond 30. Yet knowing how limited his life was, he gave his all in being a model of how a true disciple lives for the sake of future generations.
- **President Ikeda:** Because I have dedicated myself to my Buddhist practice in this spirit, I am certain that I have received the benefit of prolonging my life through dedication to the Mystic Law.
- **President Ikeda:** Let us therefore live this moment to the fullest. If we fail to take action, begrudging our effort, we won't leave anything meaningful behind. Let's continue striving energetically for kosen-rufu, treasuring the Law and sparing no effort. When we dedicate this precious existence to sharing Buddhism with others, we will never have any cause to "regret for ten thousand years to come" (WND-1, 622).

See LB, 37

- **President Ikeda:** The life of one individual is limited. But a person's prayers, their vow or commitment, and their efforts for kosen-rufu flow on forever across generations. The good fortune we accumulate through faith and the benefit we gain from sharing Buddhism with others are imperishable. The efforts we make based on our great vow to work for kosen-rufu and the happiness of others become a source of boundless good fortune and benefit for both ourselves and for all those in our environment with whom we share a profound connection.

See LB, 38–39

- We are still only in the opening stages of a magnificent endeavor that will continue forever.
- Message to the youth:
 - Win over the challenges in your daily lives with courage and perseverance. The way to do that is to stand up and take action to fulfill your mission of spreading the Mystic Law in the place where you are right now.
 - Firmly pledge your lives to fulfilling the great vow for kosen-rufu, and then to follow through in pursuit of your ideals. In that way, you can lead a deeply meaningful life, one that is free of all regrets.
 - The vow of your youth will be the inner light guiding you for as long as you live. Therefore, you must never lose that light on any account.
 - Let's keep advancing in life and in realizing kosen-rufu.

Additional Reference for April 2016 *Living Buddhism* Study Lecture

TIMELINE OF EVENTS SURROUNDING THE WRITING OF “ASPIRATION FOR THE BUDDHA LAND”

Events in 1271

October 10: Nichiren leaves the village of Echi in Sagami Province, begins travel to Sado Island
(WND-1, 206; *Gosho zenshu*, p. 951)

October 10: Nikko Shonin accompanies Nichiren

October 21: Arrives in Teradomari, Echigo, after 12 days
(WND-1, 206; GZ, 951)

October 22: Writes a letter to Toki Jonin
(WND-1, 206; Gosho, 951)

October 22: Sends a young priest back to Toki Jonin, who had arranged for the priest to support Nichiren during his exile on Sado
(WND-1, 210; GZ, 951)

October 28: Arrives in Sado (Matsuga-saki)
(WND-1, 769; GZ, 916)

November 1: Taken to a small hut at Tsukahara on Sado
(WND-1, 769; GZ, 916)

November 16: Mongols officially proclaim the start of the Yuan dynasty

November 23: Nichiren writes “Aspiration for the Buddha Land” addressed to Toki Jonin

November 23: Nichiren sends back some young priests from Sado
(WND-1, 214; GZ, 956)

November: Nichiren starts writing the “Opening of the Eyes,” which he had been working on for a year
(WND-1, 772)

