

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
 [7] “On Persecutions Befalling the Sage”—Part 2 [of 2]
 “The Spirit of a Lion King Is the Soka Gakkai’s Founding Spirit”

—General References—

go to www.nichirenlibrary.org to access the most up-to-date information:

- *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. Background of “On Persecutions Befalling the Sage” (www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/wnd-1/Content/138)
2. *The World of Nichiren Daishonin’s Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 157–185: On lions and lion kings

BACKGROUND HIGHLIGHTS

Some events of the Atsuhara Persecution:

- On June 27, 1275, Nichiren writes, “Be sure to urge all those in Suruga to remain united in their faith!” (“Letter to Joren-bo,” WND-2, 572). Suruga is the region encompassing Atsuhara Village.
- In 1276, Nichiren’s disciples, Echigo-bō Nichiben, Shimotsuke-bō Nisshū and Shō-bō Nichizen were expelled from Ryusen-ji by Gyōchi, the temple’s acting deputy chief priest. Nichiren’s disciple Mikawa-bō Raien abandoned his faith.
- On February 23, 1278, Nichiren wrote “Letter to Misawa,” encouraging unity among his disciples being persecuted in Suruga by local authorities. In the letter, he writes: “Please tell the people of Suruga that they should unite firmly in faith” (WND-1, 894).
- In April 1279, Nichiren’s disciple Shirō was attacked by Gyochi and sustained a knife wound during an archery contest at a local shrine. And in August 1279, Nichiren’s disciple Yashirō was beheaded by Gyochi. Gyochi accused Nichiren’s own disciples for both incidents.
- On September 21, 1279, 20 of Nichiren’s disciples were arrested on false charges.
- On October 1, 1279, the Daishonin wrote “On Persecutions Befalling the Sage.”

OPENING POINTS

See August 2016 *Living Buddhism*, p. 42

- Lions are often referred to in Buddhism as symbols of fearlessness and the stand-alone spirit.
- **SGI President Ikeda:** The Soka Gakkai is a gathering of lions. When each of us becomes a lion, we can triumph over any form of adversity.
- Young people around the world, youthful lions, are carrying on the legacy of the three founding Soka Gakkai presidents, promoting kosen-rufu in their communities and countries.
- **President Ikeda:** The spirit of a lion king is indeed the founding spirit of the Soka Gakkai and the starting point of our movement. Inheriting this spirit, we have carried on the struggle for kosen-rufu to the present day.

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 are some possible questions that might come up?
- What points do you want members to go home with?

KEY PASSAGE #1:

Each of you should summon up the courage of a lion king and never succumb to threats from anyone. The lion king fears no other beast, nor do its cubs. Slanderers are like barking foxes, but Nichiren's followers are like roaring lions. (WND-1, 997)

See LB, pp. 43–44

- The phrase “Each of you should summon up the courage of a lion king” captures the essence of Nichiren Buddhism. “Each of you” refers to the fact that each person possesses within the courage of a lion king.
- Faith grounded in the spirit of oneness with our mentor is the basis for summoning forth this courage.
- **President Ikeda:** The courage of a lion king is the spirit of the mentor who has fearlessly opened the way for kosen-rufu. When we share that spirit as our own, we cannot fail to bring forth the courage of a lion king in our lives. (p. 43)
- **President Ikeda:** When we strive with the same spirit as our mentor, we will never be deadlocked. Asking ourselves what our mentor would do, mustering all our wisdom and strength to respond to our mentor's hopes—that spirit is what awakens the state of a lion king within us and gives rise to the courage to triumph over every difficulty and challenge. (p. 44)
- The spirit of a lion king: unwavering commitment; invincible spirit; courageous; undefeated; sincerely persevering in Buddhist practice; fearless.
- **President Ikeda:** Faith is another name for the courage to always keep moving forward. (p. 44)

KEY CONCEPT #1: The “Lion King” in Nichiren's Writings

See LB, pp. 44–45

- Numerous references to the lion king in Nichiren's writings.
- Uses the example of a lion king to refer to his enlightened, victorious state of life.
- The lion king is also used to symbolize the Buddha and the Lotus Sutra. Those who embrace this sutra, he repeatedly stresses, will fearlessly and confidently be victorious.
- Nichiren refers to the “lion's roar” of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.
- **President Ikeda:** The key to battling obstacles or negative forces exists within our own hearts. No matter how formidable an obstacle or devilish function may be, there is no reason to fear it . . . The key to victory is to remain undefeated in spirit. “It is the heart that is important” (“The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra,” WND-1, 1000). Victors in spirit are victors in life. (p. 44)
- **President Ikeda:** Disciples who embrace the great aim of kosen-rufu and follow the example of a great mentor who is filled with compassion, courage and wisdom will never be defeated. The lion king is always victorious. The lion cubs must resolve to become lion kings, too. Now is the time for them to do so. Nichiren's disciples should all encourage one another that the time to stand up resolutely as lion kings has arrived. This is the Daishonin's message to his disciples. (pp. 44–45)

KEY PASSAGE #2:

Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month. Should you slacken in your resolve even a bit, devils will take advantage. (WND-1, 997)

See LB, pp. 45–46

- Everything depends on the strength of our faith.
- **President Ikeda:** The degree to which the heavenly deities protect us depends on the strength of our faith. If we are lazy, apathetic or negligent, devilish functions or negative influences can take advantage, find a way into our lives and destroy both our bodies and our minds. (p. 45)
- How to win over devilish functions? Ask ourselves: Am I becoming arrogant and self-satisfied? Am I not improving myself? Am I doing my best for kosen-rufu? And “keep moving forward, challenging and improving ourselves day after day.” (p. 45)
- **President Ikeda:** Devilish functions can find no way into the lives of those who are striving hard in their Buddhist practice—in other words, those who are constantly bringing forth the state of Buddhahood from

within them. Those who continually press ahead can build a vast and expansive state of life. This is the purpose of Buddhism. (p. 46)

KEY PASSAGE #3

Tell them to be prepared for the worst, and not to expect good times, but take the bad times for granted. (WND-1, 998)

See LB, pp. 46–47

- The benefits of faith emerge in various forms.
- **President Ikeda:** When we have the resolute faith to not be swayed by any circumstances and to keep pressing ahead on our chosen path, unlimited wisdom and courage will well forth from within us and the way to victory in every area will unfold. We can unfailingly transform our problems and our karma. (p. 46)
- We grow from facing adversity.

KEY CONCEPT #2: The Common Traits of Those Who Abandon Their Faith

See LB, p. 47

- They are cowardly; 2) they are unreasoning or unheeding; 3) they are greedy; 4) they are doubting.
- **President Ikeda:** When all is said and done, the common feature of all who abandon their faith is that they do not center their lives on the Law, which should be their foundation, or the teacher who instructs them in that Law. Instead, they are centered on themselves. They are selfishly arrogant and ungrateful. That is the essence of those who abandon faith in the Mystic Law.

KEY CONCEPT #3: The Gohonzon Is the “Banner of Propagation of the Lotus Sutra”

See LB, pp. 47–48

- The Gohonzon is the object of devotion for accomplishing kosen-rufu and bringing happiness to all people.
- **President Ikeda:** The Gohonzon is the “banner of propagation of the Lotus Sutra.” . . . But for more than 700 years, no disciples emerged who could genuinely fulfill this great vow of such fundamental importance. In the 20th century, Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda awakened to their mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, and for the first time carried out the compassionate work of broadly propagating Buddhism among the people and initiated the great progress of kosen-rufu, in exact accord with the Daishonin’s teachings. (pp. 47–48)
- **President Ikeda:** We are taking action day after day with a vow to realize kosen-rufu. In actuality, the Soka Gakkai is the only organization carrying out the Daishonin’s great aim of worldwide kosen-rufu. (p. 48)

KEY CONCEPT #4: Soka’s Path of Mentor and Disciple

See LB, p. 48

- **President Ikeda:** The mentor-disciple relationship is the ultimate expression of faith . . . I have single-mindedly walked the path of oneness of mentor and disciple. This is my greatest pride and honor in life.
- **President Ikeda:** The new era of worldwide kosen-rufu is one where Bodhisattvas of the Earth forge ahead on the great path of mentor and disciple everywhere around the globe. A new era has dawned. The entire world is awaiting the Buddhism of lion kings. The curtain has risen on the true stage of Soka mentor and disciples.