

November 2020 *Living Buddhism*, pp. 54–63

**“THE BUDDHISM OF THE SUN: ILLUMINATING THE WORLD” [58]
CREATING A CENTURY OF HUMANISM IN WHICH ALL CAN SHINE—PART 2
SHARING NICHIREN BUDDHISM—**

THE COMPASSIONATE PRACTICE FOR REALIZING HAPPINESS FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND REGARDING BUDDHIST STUDY IN THE SGI

- 1) Our understanding of Nichiren Buddhism has deepened significantly since the 1991 priesthood issue—reflected when, in 2014, we affirmed the correct spirit and practice of Nichiren Buddhism in the Soka Gakkai rules and regulations. What Nichiren Shoshu teaches is completely different from the teachings and writings of Nichiren Daishonin, which form the foundation of SGI study.
- 2) SGI is a “living” religion with a “living” philosophy, meaning that the application of the core unchanging principles of Buddhism is always adapting to changing times and circumstances.
- 3) Even for longtime members, it is important to continue studying current materials. Our mentor’s explanations of Nichiren’s writings in his monthly lectures represent this “living” Buddhism.

GOALS FOR PRESENTERS

- 1) Let’s learn together: Rather than lecturing on his lectures, the goal of our monthly presentations is to study the material with fellow members. With this in mind, presenters should aim to read the material several times and share 2 or 3 key points that inspire them, rather than attempting to cover every point.
- 2) Let’s unite with the heart of our mentor: Sensei strives to encourage members through his lectures, just as Nichiren did through his writings. Let’s chant and strive to convey this spirit as we study with fellow members and apply these teachings in our daily lives, efforts in society and advancement of kosen-rufu.

BASIC POINTS FOR PRESENTING “THE BUDDHISM OF THE SUN” LECTURES

- ⇒ Read the full lecture several times.
- ⇒ Read the footnotes, as they often provide additional background information. (LB, p. 63)
- ⇒ Chant abundant daimoku before your presentation to grasp and convey Sensei’s heart.
- ⇒ During the presentation, have someone read aloud key Goshō excerpts and your selected passages from the lecture. Ensure the reader has the opportunity to prepare well ahead of time.
- ⇒ Encourage participants to also read the lecture and find their own points of inspiration.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



The Shared Struggle of Mentor and Disciple to Spread the Mystic Law (Nov LB, 55–56)

- *The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace*, part 3, pp. 236–39
- *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 24, pp. 185–88



The Spirit of Sharing Buddhism Is the Spirit of the Buddha (LB, 57)

- *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 5, pp. 51–52
- NHR-25, 109–13
- June 2019 LB, “The Buddhism of the Sun” [41], pp. 48–57



What We Pray for Is Reflected in Our Life State (LB, 60)

- November 2019 LB, “BOS” [46], 51–54
- NHR-1, 268–69



The Practice for Breaking Through Fundamental Ignorance (LB, 60–61)

- *The Opening of the Eyes* Lecture Series, pp. 159–60
- June 2019 LB, “The Buddhism of the Sun” [41], pp. 48–57
- NHR-14, 19–20



We Owe a Debt of Gratitude to All Living Beings (LB, 61–62)

- *The Opening of the Eyes: SGI President Ikeda’s Lecture Series*, pp. 57–58
- August 2004 LB, pp. 33–34 (see attached)



K E Y P O I N T S

teachers in India, China, or Japan during the Former and Middle Days of the Law.

IKEDA: Nichiren transfers to Dozen-bo all the benefit he has obtained from propagating the supreme teaching of the Three Great Secret Laws, which he has revealed to enable all people over the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law to attain enlightenment. Since Dozen-bo was the teacher under whom he began his Buddhist studies, Nichiren could best repay his debt of gratitude to him by actualizing *kosen-rufu* — the widespread propagation of the correct teaching for the happiness of all humanity — which is the ultimate aspiration of Buddhism.

The Practice of Compassion Is the Highest Form of Repaying Debts of Gratitude

MORINAKA: Many people today seem to regard the concept of repaying debts of gratitude as some outmoded feudal remnant.

IKEDA: This arises from the tendency to view a benefit or favor received as a unilateral, top-down transfer — as in the case of a benefit a lord bestows on a vassal or a parent on a child. Viewed this way, receiving a favor or benefit from someone takes on an aspect of obligation that constrains and binds the beneficiary.

But the Daishonin's view of debts of gratitude is much more universal, based as it is on the fundamental Buddhist principle of dependent origination.²

SAITO: The Chinese characters the sutras used to denote “repaying debts of gratitude” (Jpn. *ho'on*; Chn. *bao en*) appear to be translated from the Sanskrit expression *krita-jna*, which literally means “acknowledging (*jna*) what has been done on one's behalf (*krita*).”

IKEDA: We could never have become the individuals we are without the help and support of many people. To recognize and profoundly appreciate this and in turn exert ourselves for others is the original meaning of acknowledging what has been done on our behalf and of repaying our debt of gratitude.

The Lotus Sutra, which expounds the universal attainment of Buddhahood, defines the ultimate form of repaying gratitude as repaying the debt we owe to all living beings. This, in other words, represents the practice of compassion, the practice of *kosen-rufu* — that is, widely propagating the Mystic Law for the happiness of all humankind. In the Lotus Sutra, the desire to repay

>> Buddhism's Ultimate Aspiration

“Since Dozen-bo was the teacher under whom he began his Buddhist studies, Nichiren could best repay his debt of gratitude to him by actualizing kosen-rufu — the widespread propagation of the correct teaching for the happiness of all humanity — which is the ultimate aspiration of Buddhism.” (p.33)

>> The Practice of Compassion

“The Lotus Sutra, which expounds the universal attainment of Buddhahood, defines the ultimate form of repaying gratitude as repaying the debt we owe to all living beings. This, in other words, represents the practice of compassion, the practice of kosen-rufu — that is, widely propagating the Mystic Law for the happiness of all humankind. In the Lotus Sutra, the desire to repay one's debt to all living beings accords with the vow of the Buddha to help all people attain enlightenment.” (pp.33–34)

>> Suffering People Are Our Benefactors

“The presence of suffering and unhappy people kindles our altruistic commitment; they are therefore our benefactors. In addition, evil people who persecute and attack us are also great benefactors in that they enable us to develop and strengthen ourselves.” (p.34)

>> Firmly Securing the Path

“Establishing the Gohonzon, however, did not mean that [Nichiren] had fulfilled his vow to lead all people to enlightenment; it ‘merely’ opened a path. The ultimate fulfillment of his vow, we can surmise, lay in his firmly securing the path — the flow — of kosen-rufu, into the eternal future.” (p.35)

>> The Buddha's Emissaries

“Doubting the effectiveness of the great beneficial medicine, people refuse to take it and instead slander and abuse those who proffer it. But, through the presence of the Buddha's emissaries, who, despite persecution, spread the greatness of this medicine, people eventually take it and benefit from it.” (p.36)

>> A Harmonious Community of Believers

“Also vital in propagating the correct teaching in the evil age after the Buddha's passing is the existence of a harmonious community of believers, a network of Bodhisattvas of the Earth who have inherited the Daishonin's vow. Such a community facilitates comrades in faith in rallying together. It is the place where they can confirm their mission as ‘followers of Nichiren’ and their bond as Bodhisattvas of the Earth committed to advancing kosen-rufu with ‘the same mind as Nichiren.’” (p.39)



Stephanie Sydney

one's debt to all living beings accords with the vow of the Buddha to help all people attain enlightenment.

SAITO: With regard to this debt, the Daishonin writes: "Were it not for [all living beings], one would find it impossible to make the vow to save innumerable living beings. [Also, were it not] for the evil people who persecute bodhisattvas, how could those bodhisattvas increase their merit?" (WND, 43)

The "vow to save innumerable living beings" is the first of the four universal vows³ that bodhisattvas make when first embarking on the path of Buddhist practice. This is the vow to save all people from suffering.

IKEDA: It is the first vow because developing the compassionate commitment to work for the happiness of all people is the first step along the path of attaining Buddhahood.

The presence of suffering and unhappy people kindles our altruistic commitment; they are therefore our benefactors. In addition, evil people who persecute and attack us are also great benefactors in that they enable us to develop and strengthen ourselves. This is what the Daishonin teaches.

MORINAKA: In a discussion of "Belief and Understanding," the

fourth chapter of the Lotus Sutra, in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," Nichiren teaches that by upholding the Lotus Sutra and leading all people to enlightenment, living beings can repay their enormous debt to the Buddha.

IKEDA: Nichiren's view of gratitude is precisely the view found in the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, it accords perfectly with the Buddha's vow to enable all people to attain enlightenment.

That is why the Daishonin proclaims that he has fulfilled his vow after revealing the Three Great Secret Laws, which, in the cover letter accompanying "On Repaying Debts of Gratitude," he describes as "matters of the utmost importance" (WND, 737).

Establishing the Path of Kosen-rufu into the Eternal Future

MORINAKA: Yes. This is an extremely well-known passage we have all read many times: "If Nichiren's compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity, for it has the beneficial power to open the blind eyes of every living being in the country of Japan, and it blocks off the road that leads to the hell of incessant suffering. Its benefit surpasses that of Dengyo and T'ien-t'ai and is superior to that of Nagarjuna and Mahakashyapa.

"A hundred years of practice in the Land of Perfect Bliss cannot compare to the benefit gained from one day's practice in the impure world. Two thousand years of propagating Buddhism during the Former and Middle Days of the Law are inferior to an hour of propagation in the Latter Day of the Law" (WND, 736).

Dozen-bo

Dozen-bo was a priest of Seicho-ji, a temple in Awa Province (present-day southern Chiba Prefecture), where Nichiren Daishonin entered the priesthood. The Daishonin studied under Dozen-bo from age 12. When the Daishonin first declared his teaching at Seicho-ji in 1253, Dozen-bo was afraid to oppose the local steward Tojo Kagenobu, who was enraged by the Daishonin's refutation of the Nembutsu, and he failed to stand up to defend his former student. Immediately after the Komatsubara Persecution of 1264, however, Dozen-bo visited the Daishonin at Hanabusa in Saijo, Awa Province, and asked whether he could attain Buddhahood in spite of his long-standing adherence to the Nembutsu. In response, the Daishonin refuted the Nembutsu teaching and urged that Dozen-bo devote himself to the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. While it appears that Dozen-bo subsequently aroused some faith in the Daishonin's teaching, his life came to an end without his full conversion.