

Living True to our Vow to Awaken the Buddha Nature in All People

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Hi Everyone,

My name is Kate Greco - Welcome to the November Study Podcast.

I hope that you enjoyed either writing our introductory study exam, or helping others prepare for it last month!

This month we're studying "Living True to our Vow to Awaken the Buddha Nature in All People", from Sensei's study lecture series, "The Buddhism of the Sun Illuminating the World."

In an essay entitled "Study for Deepening our Faith", Sensei says, "Those who study with the firm resolve to strive their hardest based on the Daishonin's writings are able to tap limitless power." Quoting President Toda, Sensei says, "We must study the Gosho with an expansive state of life as vast as the Pacific [Ocean]. Otherwise, we cannot begin to approximate the Daishonin's spirit."

He goes on to say, "We should always strive to read the Gosho with deep faith so that we can internalize the Daishonin's spirit and exert ourselves just as the Daishonin's teaches." (*From Today Onward*, Sept 2023, p. 37)

In this month's study we will learn about Nichiren's determined vow to guide all humanity to happiness. And the importance of our vow for kosen-rufu - united in the spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple.

As we listen to the first Gosho passage, we are encouraged by President Toda to "Seek to connect with Nichiren Daishonin's immense compassion, his towering conviction, his ardent spirit to save people from suffering, and his solemn and unswerving commitment to kosen-rufu."

I, Nichiren, am the richest man in all of present-day Japan. I have dedicated my life to the Lotus Sutra, and my name will be handed down in ages to come. If one is lord of the great ocean, then all the

gods of the various rivers will obey one. If one is king of Mount Sumeru, then the gods of the various other mountains cannot help but serve one. If a person fulfills the teaching of “the six difficult and nine easy acts” of the Lotus Sutra, then, even though he may not have read the entire body of sutras, all should follow him. (WND-1, 268; “The Opening of the Eyes”)

Despite the fact that Nichiren was exiled on Sado Island, in the bitter cold, with very poor shelter, little food and no warm clothing in the harsh winters, he considered himself the “richest man in all of present-day Japan.”

Why?

He was able to feel this way because he had an incredibly expansive life state. He was aware of his mission to spread the correct teaching of Buddhism, and he was dedicating his life to the Mystic Law as the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Sensei says, “by meeting and overcoming persecution, thus reading the Lotus Sutra with his life, he protected the heart and essence of Buddhism and proved the truth of the Lotus Sutra’s predictions [concerning the propagation of the Law in this evil latter age].

When we awaken to our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and embrace Nichiren Daishonin’s vision to spread this teaching for the sake of human happiness, we too are “the richest people.”

Through his courageous examples, maintaining a high life condition and conviction in his mission, the Daishonin is inspiring us to have courage as well, to face any adversity in our own lives with strong faith and unshakable confidence.

In “The Opening of the Eyes,” Nichiren describes the six difficult and nine easy acts.

You can see the description of these in the footnotes - but I’ll give you a quick explanation.

The six difficult acts are:

- 1 - To propagate the Lotus Sutra widely
- 2 - To copy it or cause someone else to copy it
- 3 - To recite it even for a short while
- 4 - To teach it to even one person
- 5 - To hear of and accept the Lotus Sutra and inquire about its meaning
- 6 - To maintain faith in it

Examples of the nine easy acts are:

- 1 - Teaching innumerable sutras other than the Lotus Sutra
- 2 - Walking across a burning prairie carrying a bundle of hay on one's back without being burned
- 3 - Kicking a major world system into a different quarter

I think you get the idea. Shakyamuni was calling on his disciples to continue to propagate the Lotus Sutra after his passing, and making them aware of how difficult this would be.

In the “Opening of the Eyes”, the Daishonin writes:

Persons like myself who are of paltry strength might still be able to lift Mount Sumeru and toss it about; persons like myself who are lacking in supernatural powers might still shoulder a load of dry grass and yet remain unburned in the fire at the end of the kalpa of decline.... But such acts [counted among the nine easy acts] are not difficult, we are told, when compared to the difficulty of embracing even one phrase or verse of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law [which is counted among the six difficult acts]. (WND-1, 239–40)

The Daishonin is telling us that he understands the “six difficult and nine easy acts” described in the Lotus Sutra, and has triumphed over various exiles and persecutions, demonstrating with his very life, the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra, and his mission as its votary.

Sensei tells us:

The path to attaining Buddhahood lies in winning the great battle against our fundamental ignorance and dedicating our lives to spreading the Mystic Law. The life of the Buddha pulses in this unremitting struggle for kosen-rufu. Striving our hardest for this cause enables us to build lasting happiness. That is why the Daishonin calls on us to keep in mind the message of the six difficult and nine easy acts and devote ourselves to fulfilling the great vow to lead all people to enlightenment.

In this next Gosho passage, from “The Protection of the Ten Demon Daughters” Nichiren is expressing his appreciation for the gift he received from his disciple, Toki Jonin... and showing compassion and concern for Toki's ailing wife.

I have received the string of coins you sent and reported your sincerity to the Lotus Sutra. The ten demon daughters are certain to protect you without fail.

Even so, please tell the lay nun that I am concerned about her.

With my deep respect.

(GZ, new ed., 1343; “The Protection of the Ten Demon Daughters”)

This short letter shows us Nichiren’s compassion and efforts to encourage his disciples.

You can read about the “Ten demon daughters” in the footnotes. They are another example of the protective workings of the universe whose protection we can activate through our efforts to deepen our faith and make efforts for kosen-rufu. The heavenly deities, or the protective forces of the universe will definitely protect us, when we chant and do our best to take action for kosen-rufu.

The best kind of action we can take, is to follow Nichiren’s example of caring for one another...To support and encourage people. Using our voices to do the Buddha’s work we help one person after another to chant, to study the Gosho and Sensei’s writings, and to gain hope when we share our experiences, and sincerely care for them.

I expect that many of you have concrete experiences of the protection you have encountered as a result of your Buddhist practice! I have had many, throughout my years of practice.

Sensei says,

Encouragement has the power to revitalize those crushed by suffering
Encouragement has the power to awaken the Buddha nature in all people
Worldwide kosen-rufu starts with forging bonds of encouragement with those around us. Indeed, strengthening such bonds, one after another, is itself the driving force for worldwide kosen-rufu.

We will always encounter negative forces. It’s unavoidable! But what we do in the face of this will determine everything. At these moments, we can recall the message contained in the six difficult and nine easy acts, and re-determine to use our Buddhist practice to overcome our challenges. That’s Part One.

Part Two is to share our experiences with others, and to reach out to encourage the people around us – to show genuine compassion and help them to have hope that they too can overcome every difficulty.

It isn’t easy for us to imagine the distant future- 100 or 200 years into the future, or to imagine that the actions that I take today have any impact on that distant future.

But President Toda predicted that, “Two centuries from now, history will show that we of the Soka Gakkai have been on the right path. Future generations will attest to it beyond doubt.”

So – our take-away from this month’s study is this:

- We should strive to connect with Nichiren Daishonin’s spirit when we study his writings,
- Our vow to practice for self and others, to care for others will activate the protective workings of the universe, and
- The actions we take today, remembering our vow as bodhisattvas of the earth will continue to contribute to elevating the life state of humankind far into the future.

Let’s do our best to commemorate the founding of the Soka Gakkai at our District General Meetings this month, to make these meetings “guest friendly” and to reach out to invite our friends to these gatherings!

Thanks for listening!