

**Guidance from Sixty-eighth High Priest Nichinyo Shonin
On the Occasion of the May Kōsen-rufu Shōdai Ceremony
May 7, 2017
Reception Hall, Head Temple Taisekiji**

On this occasion of the May Kōsen-rufu Shōdai Ceremony, conducted here today at the Head Temple, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the large number of participants in attendance.

The month of May already has begun. I imagine both the priesthood and laity of each chapter have united in the spirit of *itai dōshin*, and are devoting themselves to their practice, day and night, aiming toward this year's shakubuku goals.

Shakubuku is the supreme Buddhist practice, which was established by our Founder Nichiren Daishonin, the True Buddha in the Latter Day of the Law. Shakubuku is the correct and best way to save all living beings in the Latter Day of the Law.

Today, Nichiren Shoshu is powerfully advancing, aiming toward our goal—to achieve a membership of 800,000 Hokkeko believers by 2021, the 800th anniversary of the advent of our Founder Nichiren Daishonin. In the challenge to achieve kōsen-rufu, it is not what you say but what you do that counts. Every member of each chapter must unite as one and do shakubuku in the spirit of *itai dōshin*.

“The Parable of the Poisoned Arrow” is one of the most famous Buddhist parables. It is contained in the Collection of Medium-Length Agama Sutras (*Chū-agon-kyō*).

You probably know this story. In simple terms, it goes as follows:

One of Shakyamuni's disciples begged his master to answer various questions: “Is this world everlasting? Or is it in flux? Will the world end? Is the Buddha still existing after his passing?” Shakyamuni did not answer these questions in a straightforward way. Instead, he responded by saying, “Suppose a man is wounded by a poisoned arrow [and people bring him to a surgeon]. Suppose the man should say, 'I will not let this arrow be

taken out until I know what sort of a person shot me. What is the name of the person? Was the person tall or short? Was the person a townsman or a villager? What is this arrow made out of? What is the name of the doctor who will examine me?' And, if he refuses to allow the arrow to be removed before all of these questions are answered, this person will die. What is most important is first to remove the poisoned arrow and provide first aid."

This parable warns us that we tend to postpone what we need to place emphasis on now. Instead, we focus our eyes on other issues. In other words, it is essential that we know what is most important right now.

What we must accomplish now, by any means, is for all the chapters to achieve their shakubuku goals, which they vowed to accomplish in front of the Gohonzon. Then, with these achievements, we should welcome the 800th anniversary of the advent of our Founder Nichiren Daishonin in 2021.

In the Goshō, *Attaining Enlightenment at the Initial Stage of Faith through the Lotus Sutra* (Hokke shoshin Jōbutsu-shō) the Daishonin teaches:

If they hear the Lotus Sutra, which enables people to attain Buddhahood, this [encounter] becomes the seed [of Buddhahood] for them, and they eventually will attain enlightenment without fail. Therefore, Tiantai and Miaole follow this notion and expound [in their commentaries] that one should tirelessly teach the Lotus Sutra. It is like those who falter and fall to the ground, but are able to use that very ground to push themselves up to stand again. In the same way, even if they descend into hell, they will rise again before long and attain Buddhahood. The people in the Latter Day of the Law will definitely fall into hell as a result of turning their backs on the Lotus Sutra. In any case, one should strongly teach and make people listen to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Those who follow and take faith in it will be able to attain enlightenment, and even those who slander it will likewise attain Buddhahood in the end through the poison-drum relationship.

(*Goshō*, p. 1316)

“The poison-drum relationship” is a metaphor expounded in the Nirvana Sutra. It is said that when a drum smeared with deadly poison is beaten, all those who hear the sound of the drum will instantly die. The poison-drum relationship also is called a reverse relationship. Teaching and making a slanderer listen to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra corresponds to forming a relationship with true Buddhism, which will be the cause for the attainment of Buddhahood for the slanderer.

Today, the priesthood and laity of Nichiren Shoshu are making concerted efforts, and the members of each chapter are moving forward, aiming toward our goal—to achieve a membership of 800,000 Hokkeko believers. At this time, I believe that it is essential for each of us to understand the significance of the poison-drum relationship. Then, we should feel certain that now, in the Latter Day of the Law, Myoho-Renge-Kyo of sowing the seed of the true cause is the great Law that can lead both those with positive and reverse relationships to the direct path of attaining Buddhahood. With this firm belief, we must devote ourselves to do shakubuku more than ever.

I sincerely pray for your further endeavors in your practice.