

Lecture in Praise of Nichiren Daishonin
December 2017, Oko Lecture

“Consider Your Official Duties of Work to be Your Practice of the Lotus Sutra”

How does Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism apply to our daily lives in society? In the Gosho, *Reply to a Believer* (Dannotsubō-gohenji), the Daishonin states:

As such, you will be practicing the Lotus Sutra for the entire day—all twelve zodiacal hours each day....Consider your official duties of work to be your practice of the Lotus Sutra. This is what is meant by the passage, “All elements of life and work are never contrary to the true reality [of all phenomena].”

(*Gosho*, p. 1220)

What would happen in society if there were no standards of morals and ethics? What would happen if people did as they pleased and lived life according to their own whims? Normalcy would never prevail in society, and conflicts among people would arise constantly. Even in a unit as small as a single family, if each member behaved selfishly, without any regard for others, the family likely would come apart.

Thus, society needs a teaching that expounds a line of reasoning and a course of logic that people recognize as correct and true. And the people could live their days in peace and tranquility if they followed that teaching.

Ancient China and Greece produced numerous exceptional ideologists and philosophers who expounded the proper course of life that people should pursue. As a result, people have managed to create a humane world and have lived life accordingly. The following phrase from *The Opening of the Eyes* (Kaimoku-shō) describes life prior to those times:

People were the same as birds and beasts.

(*Gosho*, p. 523)

Thus, the people lived their lives similar to animals.

In time, sagely sovereigns and wise people appeared and expounded the merits of establishing standards in society. However, with the passage of time, the three poisons of greed, anger, and stupidity gradually intensified in the hearts of the people. Let us take the single example of greed, the first of the three poisons. It is expounded in the scriptures that even if Mt. Sumeru were turned into a mountain of pure gold, and even if it were doubled in size, it would be inadequate to satisfy the desires of a single human being. Thus, the desires of people are truly limitless.

There are people who enjoy lives of affluence and comfort. However, even for such people who are satisfied with what they have, it is difficult for them not to desire even more things. And, as individuals accumulate more things, the three poisons of greed, anger, and stupidity intensify in their hearts. Furthermore, the delusion and confusion in the minds of the people cannot be overcome by conventional teachings. As a result, chaos gradually spreads throughout the world.

In order to save the people from confusion and distress, Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in India and expounded Buddhism. Based on the doctrine of cause and effect, and the teaching of the three existences of life throughout the past, present, and future, Buddhism is a superior teaching that instructs the people in the world how they should think and behave. Then, Buddhism spread to China and to Japan.

Eventually, following the periods of the Former and Middle Days of the Law, came the Latter Day of the Law. This is the age when the power of Shakyamuni's Buddhism wanes and is extinguished. In this period, the hearts of the people manifest extreme devastation, and there is continuing confusion and chaos throughout the world. It is a time when warfare, tremendous natural disasters, and epidemics cause suffering for huge numbers of people. The Latter Day of the Law represents a period when the confusion and chaos would continue indefinitely, if true Buddhism were not propagated.

At this time, in the Latter Day of the Law, Nichiren Daishonin made his advent into this world. Despite the fact that Buddhism had spread, people were unable to distinguish the true teaching. Thus, the Daishonin refuted the erroneous teachings, since in this era, it is absolutely necessary to propagate the five and seven characters of Myoho-Renge-Kyo, the foundation of Buddhism and the core essence of the Lotus Sutra.

The Expedient Means (*Hōben*; second) chapter of the Lotus Sutra expounds the ten factors of life in the following way:

The true entity of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, inherent cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end.

(*Hokekyō*, p. 89; *The Lotus Sutra*, Watson, p. 24)

The first of these factors is appearance (*nyoze sō*). Appearance means manifestation. For example, the chaotic state of today's world represents appearance (*nyoze sō*). When such an appearance exists first, the other factors—nature, entity, power, influence, inherent cause, relation, latent effect, and manifest effect—will follow suit consistently from beginning to end (*homatsu kukyō tō*). Thus, results or karmic effects of unhappiness will come about without fail.

The world today is overflowing with material things, and there are many people who are wasteful. However, it is also true that the discrepancies among people and countries are also intensifying. Tragic terrorist incidents have been

occurring everywhere, and there has been an extremely serious deterioration of the human spirit.

In order to save the world from chaos and suffering, Nichiren Daishonin expounded the *Risshō ankoku-ron* (On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism) to admonish the powerful authorities of the time.

True world peace only can come about when the people uphold correct faith in true Buddhism. The Benefits of the Teacher of the Law (*Hosshi kudoku*; nineteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra contains the following passage about the relationship between the society in which we live and true Buddhism:

...and the doctrines that they preach during that time will conform to the gist of the principles and will never be contrary to true reality. If they should expound some text of the secular world or speak on matters of government or those relating to wealth and livelihood, they will in all cases conform to the correct Law.

(Hokekyō, p. 494; *The Lotus Sutra*, Watson, p. 263)

The various principles in the world may be different in the ways they are expressed or expounded, depending on their significances and objectives. However, they are not different in the slightest from the truth expounded in the Lotus Sutra, as the true entity of all phenomena. This means that the books on ideologies and philosophies of the secular world; the various discourses in politics, economics, and law; and all forms of industry for us to make a living are no different from the principles expounded and upheld in true Buddhism.

In the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, Buddhism was contrasted with secular laws, and it was described as the doctrine that regulated the secular laws. However, according to the Lotus Sutra, the ultimate teaching of Buddhism, secular laws are in themselves Buddhism. The Lotus Sutra is a teaching that comprehensively includes all secular principles.

Nichiren Daishonin teaches us this doctrine in the Goshō, *A Comparison between the Lotus Sutra and Other Sutras* (Shokyō to hokekyō to nan-i no koto):

Buddhism is like the body and society like the shadow. When the body is twisted, so is the shadow.

(Goshō, p. 1469)

Furthermore, in the *True Object of Worship* (Kanjin no honzon-shō), the Daishonin states:

When the heavens are clear, the land is distinctly revealed. In the same way, when one understands the Lotus Sutra, he can fathom the ways of the world.

(Goshō, p. 662)

There may be some among you who have thought that embracing Buddhism is something different from what ordinary people do, but this is not the case. When we face the Gohonzon, chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, and conduct Gongyō, we are not doing anything that is distinct from secular principles. On the contrary, the Daishonin stated, “Consider your official duties of work to be your practice of the Lotus Sutra.” This means: “You must think of your day-to-day work as your practice of the Lotus Sutra and cherish it.” His instructions reveal that secular laws are contained within Buddhism.

When we go to work in a company, when we do domestic chores at home, when students assiduously focus on their studies—all these actions in the secular world are connected to Buddhism. They all are a part of practicing the Lotus Sutra. Thus, Nichiren Daishonin instructs us to put forth our best efforts in our daily work and studies.

In *On Emperor Sushun* (Sushun tennō-gosho), the Daishonin states:

The true significance of Lord Shakyamuni's advent into this world was manifested in his behavior as a human.

(*Gosho*, p. 1174)

Our attitude and actions as we earnestly exert ourselves in our daily work, chores, and studies will encourage people to trust us, and this will be tremendously powerful in promoting shakubuku.

High Priest Nichinyo Shonin gave us the following guidance:

Our behavior in daily life is truly significant. Our conduct every day is, in fact, the propagation of the Law....In order to correctly lead many people, we must put forth our utmost efforts to uphold strong faith that encompasses the three categories of action—thoughts, words, and deeds. We should cultivate the power of persuasion, just like Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (Fukyō) did. And, in order to achieve this, we must maintain our Buddhist practice everyday and ordinary daily actions without ever slackening. It is important to always keep this in mind.

(*Collected Sermons of High Priest Nichinyo Shonin*
[Goshinan-shū], vol. 3, p. 29)

Let us all be constantly mindful of our invaluable actions, as we advance ever more vigorously toward our objective of establishing a membership of 800,000 Hokkeko believers by 2021, the 800th anniversary of the advent of our Founder, Nichiren Daishonin.