

THIS IS THE TIME, ABOVE ALL ELSE

GUIDANCE FROM SIXTY-EIGHTH HIGH PRIEST NICHINYO SHONIN • ON THE OCCASION OF THE OCTOBER KOSEN-RUFU SHODAI CEREMONY • OCTOBER 2, 2022 • RECEPTION HALL, HEAD TEMPLE TAISEKIJI

On this occasion of the October Kosen-rufu Shodai Ceremony, conducted here today at the Head Temple, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all of you for participating at all costs, based on firm faith, while the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is still raging and we are facing obstacles under various circumstances.

As this year's slogan, "Let's Do Shakubuku Now!" in the poster from the Commemorative Committee for the 800th Anniversary of the Advent of Our Founder Nichiren Daishonin indicates, this year, "The Year of Advancement with the Spirit to Repay our Debt of Gratitude," is a significant year for each of us to stand up with determined resolution, and exert our utmost efforts to perform shakubuku toward the achievement of kosen-rufu of the entire world. Through these efforts, we will be able to repay our debt of gratitude.

Now, when the novel coronavirus prevails globally, we must once again read in reverence the Daishonin's true intention expounded in his *Rissho ankoku-ron*. Then, we must resolutely perform shakubuku, as taught by the golden words, "One's life is insignificant while the Law is supreme. You should be willing to give your life to propagate the Law," in order to overcome the current difficulty. The Treasure Tower (*Ken hoto*; eleventh) chapter of the Lotus Sutra states as follows:

This sutra is hard to uphold. Thus, if there is someone who upholds it even for a short time, I will surely rejoice and so will all the other Buddhas. (*Hokekyo*, p. 354)

This verse was expounded after the six difficult and nine easy acts were taught in the Treasure Tower (*Ken hoto*; eleventh) chapter. It suggests how immense the benefit of upholding Myoho-Renge-Kyo is. Now, when Japan and the rest of the world are undergoing chaotic conditions, I strongly feel that we must unite as one based on the spirit of *itai doshin*, and shakubuku as many people as possible, aiming toward the achievement of kosen-rufu of the entire world.

The Daishonin teaches the following in "Questions and Answers between a Sage and a Foolish Man" (*Shogu mondo-sho*):

As for the practices, there are shoju and shakubuku. If one carries out shakubuku during the period when shoju should be practiced, this will be inappropriate. On the other hand, if one performs the practice of shoju during the era when shakubuku must be used, this will be an offense. Thus, it is of foremost importance to know first whether the present time is for shoju or shakubuku.

The time to practice shojū is when the Lotus Sutra spreads throughout the nation and there is not a single evil teaching or master. At that time, one should withdraw to the forests and devote oneself to the practice of observing one's mind and the Law, carrying out the practices such as the five practices, the six practices, and the ten practices.

However, during the time of shakubuku, one should not act in this manner. When erroneous doctrines of various sects become rampant and compete against each other, gaining acclaim by taking the stance that their respective doctrines are superior to others; and when incorrect teachings are viewed as equal to the correct Law, and Mahayana and Hinayana followers fight with each other over what is correct — this is the time, above all else, to refute these slanderers. This is the practice of shakubuku. The Lotus Sutra and Nirvana Sutra both state that if one is unaware of this principle and is mistaken about the implementation of shojū and shakubuku, one will be far removed from receiving the benefit of attaining Buddhahood. Rather, one will fall into hell. This is also clearly stated in the interpretations provided by Tiantai and Miaole. What I mention here is critical in conducting Buddhist practices. (*Gosho*, p. 402)

We must once again read respectfully the golden words expounded in this Gosho passage—"when incorrect teachings are viewed as equal to the correct Law, and Mahayana and Hinayana followers fight with each other over what is correct— this is the time, above all else, to refute these slanderers."

When the whole world is manifesting the chaotic conditions of the defiled age of the Latter Day of the Law, we must know that now is the time for each of us to stand up with firm resolution and shakubuku as many people as possible, aiming toward the achievement of kosen-rufu of the entire world. I sincerely hope that you will achieve unity based on the spirit of *itai doshin* and devote yourselves to your shakubuku practice more than ever.

NICHIREN SHOSHU MONTHLY JANUARY 2023