

《Lecture in Praise of Nichiren Daishonin  
December 2012, Oko Lecture

## The Practice that is Appropriate for the Times

The year 2009 marked a great juncture commemorating the 750th anniversary of Nichiren Daishonin's writing of the *Risshō ankoku-ron* (On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism), in which he revealed the significance of upholding true Buddhism within a world full of heresy. A General Meeting was held at the Head Temple Taisekiji, where 75,000 believers assembled to celebrate this occasion. During this Great Assembly, we received from our High Priest Nichinyo Shonin immediate objectives for us to achieve, as we strive to accomplish kosen-rufu. They are:

- 1) To increase the membership of all Hokkeko chapters by 50 percent by the year 2015, when we will be celebrating the auspicious occasion of the 770th anniversary of the birth of Second High Priest Nikko Shonin.
- 2) To achieve a membership of 800,000 Hokkeko believers by the year 2021, when we will be celebrating the auspicious occasion of the 800th anniversary of the advent of the Founder Nichiren Daishonin.

We, the priests and lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu, are putting forth our utmost efforts every day to advance toward successfully achieving these objectives.

Now, let us once again remind ourselves of the reason why Nichiren Daishonin wrote and submitted the *Risshō ankoku-ron* to the sovereign. Nichikan Shonin, the Twenty-sixth High Priest of the Head Temple, in his *Commentary on the Risshō ankoku-ron* (*Risshō ankoku-ron guki*), explained the reason for the Daishonin's writing of this treatise:

In the first year of Shōka (1257), great tremors shook the ground and comets left long traces [in the sky]. Stormy winds, rain, and famines relentlessly continued for months. Our master was aware of the source of these irregularities. They were solely caused by collective slander by the entire nation.

(*Gosho Mondan*, p. 4)

In the eighth month of 1257 (first year of Shōka), a tremendous earthquake occurred in the capital city of Kamakura, and it completely destroyed the temples, shrines, and houses, and took the lives of numerous people. Even those few whose lives were spared went on to experience conditions of living hell, as epidemics and famine spread swiftly following the earthquake. Prior to and following the great earthquake, the people experienced tremendous natural calamities. The entire society was in total confusion and chaos as a result of the relentless occurrence of disasters. Nichiren Daishonin looked upon this reality and calmly analyzed the fundamental cause for these disasters. It was apparent that the cause was the collective slander by the entire nation. In other words, the people had turned their backs on true Buddhism and were upholding erroneous doctrines.

Nichikan Shonin continued its explanation:

The sovereign and ministers did not realize this. If one witnessed such slander and did not condemn it, he cannot be considered a disciple of the Buddha. If one saw such wrong and failed to admonish it, he cannot be considered a loyal subject. Thus, the Daishonin created this treatise and submitted it to Tokiyori.

(*Gosho Mondan*, p. 4)

The shogun, the regents, their retainers, and all of the commoners of Japan did not understand the essential cause of all the calamities. Nichiren Daishonin felt that he could not be a disciple of the Buddha if he witnessed slander and did not condemn it. He also felt that he could not be a loyal subject if he saw wrongdoing and failed to admonish those who were committing it. Therefore, with enormous compassion and tremendous courage, he wrote the *Risshō ankoku-ron*, the doctrine for the salvation of the entire world, and submitted it to the sovereign. Although Hōjō Tokiyori was a retired regent, he still held actual power. Thus, the Daishonin addressed him and sternly urged him to awaken to the truth.

“If one witnesses slander and does not condemn it, he cannot be considered a disciple of the Buddha.” These words keenly touch our hearts. The purpose for the true Buddha’s advent into this world was to save all mankind, by refuting heresy and revealing the truth. Since we are all the disciples of the Buddha, we also must cultivate deep in our hearts, the spirit of refuting heresy and revealing the truth. We must put this into actual practice by doing shakubuku, day and night.

Environment in Japan and the entire world today are no different from those in Kamakura during the Daishonin’s lifetime. In particular, Japan experienced the Great Eastern-Japan Earthquake on March 11 of last year and suffered from devastating damages. The precious lives of many people were lost and, many animals and plants were killed. Also, many villages, towns and cities were destroyed, and industries were annihilated. The opening paragraph of the *Risshō ankoku-ron* precisely describes these environments:

In recent years there have been unusual occurrences in the heavens and natural disasters on earth. Famine and epidemics rage in all lands beneath the skies and in every corner of the realm. Dead cattle and horses are everywhere, and human skeletons clutter the streets. More than half of the population has already perished, and there is not a single person who does not mourn. (*Gosho*, p. 234; *The Gosho of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol.2, p. 1)

Moreover, unusual weather have caused torrential rains and destroyed numerous houses and took the lives of people. This summer, the temperatures were abnormally high, and many persons succumbed to heat stroke. There is continued instability in politics and the economy. Due to the desolation in the hearts of people, there have been repeated occurrences of unimaginably tragic crimes and accidents. These all are caused by lack of faith in true Buddhism, resulting from the widespread growth of heretical religions and doctrines. These are all the negative effects of the lack of religious sentiment and morals among the Japanese people.

The same is true of conditions worldwide. There is widespread permeation of erroneous doctrines. There is confusion and delusion in politics and the economy. There is desolation in the hearts of people. And there are the negative consequences of environmental destruction on a global scale. When we are faced with this reality, how can we remain quiet, as individuals who walk on the path of compassion?

Shakubuku is neither theory nor an action that we are forced to do by others. We were born into this world of delusion and evil, and we yearn to save those who are writhing in pain and suffering from troubled human relationships and other difficulties caused by their own negative karma. We also yearn to actualize the will of Nichiren Daishonin to achieve kosen-rufu. Shakubuku is our compassionate action that naturally wells forth from within us, based on our sincere desire to assist in this way. Our High Priest Nichinyo Shonin has taken this precious Buddhist practice and provided us with a framework in the form of his designated objectives.

We cannot achieve physical fitness without exerting a certain amount of pressure in training our bodies. We cannot truly acquire knowledge and intellect unless we seriously engage in our studies. The same is true for shakubuku. Even if we are well aware of the importance of shakubuku, it is difficult to get motivated unless we establish great objectives to attain. In fact, the designated objectives for 2015 and 2021 are not easy to achieve, but they are not impossible, since there are Hokkeko chapters that already have fulfilled them. Even in the most difficult of situations, continuous effort will enable us to achieve our ultimate objectives without fail.

Nichiren Daishonin stated:

A practitioner with faith like flowing water is one who upholds faith without ever slackening, like the water that never ceases to flow, day and night.  
(*Gosho*, p. 1856)

The Daishonin urges us to advance with devotion without ever slackening or stopping, like the water that continues to flow swiftly without ever standing still.

At times, we may feel down about our own incredibly foolish ways, and we may also be distressed ourselves when we face an obstacles in our lives and be just flustered. Even if we feel that we are far from achieving enlightenment, we will be able to find a way to achieve it, without fail, if we carry through our faith with strong devotion. In our Hokkeko activities, there will be times of having their great momentum, and other times when the conditions are stagnant, although each activity is performed. However, if we calmly analyze both the good and bad times and continue to do what we must do without ever slackening, we definitely will be able to develop and grow in our lives.

The current designated objectives represent goals that will enable us to accomplish kosen-rufu. We must look upon these as once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to polish and improve our personal faith and assiduously do shakubuku.

Our High Priest Nichinyo Shonin presented the following directions:

Now is the time, in the Latter Day of the Law, to propagate the great Law of Myoho-Renge-Kyo throughout the world, for the salvation of all mankind, which the Daishonin, the True Buddha, chanted in the infinite past of *kuon-ganjo*. It is essential for us to uphold faith that is appropriate for the times.

(*Collection of the High Priest's Directions [Goshinan shū]*, vol.5, p. 26)

What is the goal of our faith? It is to establish our own life condition of happiness through our practice of true Buddhism. Furthermore, it is to construct true world peace, by striving to achieve kosen-rufu. As we proceed to accomplish these objectives, we must cultivate an awareness and conviction that we serve the Buddha. We must do shakubuku with great confidence in our words and deeds.

When the Hokkeko believers in Japan and the entire world strive to do Shakubuku with a solid unity of many in body, one in mind (*itai dōshin*) like the relationship between fish and water, the great objective of kosen-rufu can be achieved without fail, exactly according to the golden words spoken by Nichiren Daishonin.

Based on this conviction, it is important, first of all, to achieve our shakubuku objectives for each year, without fail, so that we can increase the number of Hokkeko believers by 50 percent by the 770th anniversary of the birth of Nikko Shonin in the year 2015. Furthermore, we must promote the achievement of kosen-rufu, through fulfilling the objective to increase the membership to 800,000 by 2021.

Let us all joyfully chant Daimoku every day and profoundly take a faith in the true Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin. Let us do the actual practice of shakubuku to the best of our ability, in order to propagate true Buddhism.