

**Lecture in Praise of Nichiren Daishonin**  
**February 2011, Oko Lecture**

## **The Practice of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging** *(Fukyō bosatsu)*

I hope that you have welcomed 2011, “The Year of Taking Action to do Shakubuku,” with much vigor and enthusiasm. As you know, the points of action for this year are:

1. To forge ahead toward kosen-rufu through consistent Gongyo and Shodai.
2. To follow through with our shakubuku activities and achieve our goals.
3. To encourage those who have not yet made a pilgrimage to the Head Temple to go on tozan.

We are currently advancing with devotion to successfully achieve our goals for 2015 and 2021. In order to achieve these objectives, shakubuku is absolutely indispensable.

The topic of my sermon this month is “The Practice of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (Fukyō).” Indeed, the focus of my talk today is the practice of shakubuku. I hope this lecture will help you in your future shakubuku efforts.

First and foremost, the practice of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging represents the practice of worship, as described in the following passage from the Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (*Fukyō*; twentieth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra:

At this time there was a bodhisattva monk named Never Disparaging. Now, Gainer of Great Authority, for what reason was he named Never Disparaging? This monk, whatever persons he happened to meet, whether monks, nuns, laymen or laywomen, would bow in obeisance to all of them and speak words of praise, saying, “I have profound reverence for you, I would never dare treat you with disparagement or arrogance. Why? Because you are all practicing the bodhisattva way and are certain to attain Buddhahood.”

*(Hokekyo, p. 499; The Lotus Sutra, Watson, pp. 266-267.)*

Nichiren Daishonin stated the following about the practice of worship:

In the Latter Day of the Law, neither Mahayana nor Hinayana can provide benefits. Hinayana preserves only its teaching and not its practice or proof. Mahayana retains only its teaching and practice and not its conspicuous or inconspicuous proofs. In addition, the two types of sects—provisional [Mahayana] and Hinayana—established during the Former and Middle Days of the Law, cling ever more strenuously to their devotions in the Latter Day of the Law. Those who uphold Hinayana condemn Mahayana, and those who uphold the provisional doctrines denounce the true teachings. As a result, slanderers abound throughout the country. The number of people who descend into the evil paths from embracing [erroneous] Buddhist doctrines is greater than all the dust particles that make up the earth, and the number of those who attain Buddhahood by practicing the true Law is fewer than the specks of dust that one can place on a fingernail.

Under such conditions, the guardian deities have forsaken the land and only heretical gods and evil demons linger, as they possess the bodies and minds of the sovereign, the subjects, the priests, and nuns, to revile and disgrace the votary of the Lotus Sutra. If in this age, however, after the passing of the Buddha, a person discards his evil attachments to the four flavors and three doctrines [of the provisional teachings] and embraces the Lotus Sutra, the true Mahayana teaching, he, as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, will receive the protection of all the guardian deities and the Bodhisattvas of the Earth from a thousand infinite worlds. Based on their powerful protection, he will establish the true object of worship of the essential teaching, manifested by the five characters of Myoho-Renge-Kyo, and propagate it throughout the entire world to achieve kosen-rufu. For example, the same is true of Bodhisattva Fukyō, living during the Middle Day of the Law under Ion'nō Buddha, who propagated his doctrine containing the twenty-four characters and offered profound respect to all people. He suffered tremendous persecutions throughout the land, as he was attacked by staves and sticks.

Although the words of the twenty-four characters of Fukyō and my five characters are different, the essence is the same. [Propagation in] the end of the Middle Day and the beginning of the Latter Day is entirely the same. Bodhisattva Fukyō represents one who rejoices on hearing the Lotus Sutra (*sho zuiki*) and I, Nichiren, am a common mortal who is at the stage of first hearing the name of the Law (*myōji*).

(*Gosho*, p. 676)

This describes none other than Nichiren Daishonin's practice to lead all people, as the true Buddha. It is essential for us, the priests and lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu, to embrace and uphold the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and to do shakubuku as a routine practice in our daily lives. We can call it our "everyday shakubuku that we routinely do in

our ordinary, casual clothes.” Another passage in the Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (*Fukyō*; twentieth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra reads:

Many years passed in this way, during which this monk was constantly subjected to curses and abuse. He did not give way to anger, however, but each time spoke the same words, “You are certain to attain Buddhahood.” When he spoke in this manner, some among the group would take sticks of wood or tiles and stones and beat and pelt him. But even as he ran away and took up his stance at a distance, he continued to call out in a loud voice, “I would never dare disparage you, for you are all certain to attain Buddhahood!”

(*Hokekyō*, p. 501; *The Lotus Sutra*, Watson, p. 267)

No matter what persecution Bodhisattva Never Disparaging encountered, he never grew angry and he never gave up his practice of revering people. In the same way, we must never be influenced by the superficial aspects of those with whom we share Buddhism through shakubuku. It is important to never give up. In order to do shakubuku successfully, we constantly must speak earnestly to the Buddha nature of the people we address.

There are various ways to greet one another in countries around the world. Among these, the greeting in India is slightly different from others. A person joins his palms and fingers together at his chest and bows his head, as he says, “Namaste.” I was told that “Namaste” means, “I revere you from the bottom of my heart.” When I learned of this, I was extremely impressed, thinking that this is a befitting greeting for the country where Shakyamuni expounded the Lotus Sutra. I imagined how Bodhisattva Never Disparaging conducted his practice to revere all people. I further delved into this topic and took a look at the entries in the *Oxford Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. I found “Námas” among the words with the root “Nam.” It means:

Námas (noun): bow, obeisance, reverential salutation, adoration (by gesture or word)

(*A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 528)

This dictionary was first published in 1899, and my copy is the third edition, published in 1979. I have no way of confirming whether this word and the current greeting in India are one and the same. However, I learned that it is a word with “Nam” in its root. When I learned that “adoration by gesture or word” is a nuance of this word, I was immediately reminded of the passage from the “Orally Transmitted Teachings” (*Ongi kuden*), which reads:

“Namu” is a Sanskrit word, and it means “to uphold or revere.”

(*Gosho*, p. 1719)

Thus, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was using a word expressing this strong sentiment in his endeavor to lead people to true Buddhism.

This greeting, which is still practiced in India today, has lost the significance of guiding the people to the Buddha path. However, we must follow the example of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging and sincerely strive to lead people to true Buddhism. This is the key to achieve absolute success in our shakubuku efforts.

As indicated in our points of action for this year, the driving force for our shakubuku efforts is based our performance of Gongyo and Daimoku and going on tozan pilgrimages. Nichikan Shonin wrote the following in his *Exegesis on the "True Object of Worship"* ("Kanjin no honzon-shō" mondan):

When one is successful in the practice for oneself (*jigyō*), his practice for others (*keta*) will naturally follow without fail.

(*Mondan*, p. 219)

We must practice for ourselves by continuing to do Gongyo and chant Daimoku, and our hearts must be full of joy from practicing true Buddhism. Otherwise, our words will lack enthusiasm. The Gohonzons that we worship are all emanations of the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of the Essential Teaching. The Dai-Gohonzon was inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin, fulfilling the true purpose of his advent into this world, and it possesses his sacred spirit. If we do not sincerely uphold and yearn for the Dai-Gohonzon, we cannot manifest true benefits in our lives. When put into action, this earnest yearning for the Dai-Gohonzon is none other than the tozan pilgrimage. The Daishonin stated the following in his Goshō, "Letter to Nichimyo Shonin" ("*Nichimyo shonin-goshō*"):

Even if one were to witness a person who could cross the great oceans while holding Mount Sumeru on his head, one could never meet a woman like you. Even if one should come across an individual who is able to make rice by steaming sand, one could never meet a woman like you. Let it be known that Shakyamuni Buddha, Tahō Buddha, the manifestations of all the Buddhas of the ten directions, the great bodhisattvas such as Jōgyō and Muhengyō, and the deities such as Bonten, Taishaku, and the Four Heavenly Kings will all provide you with constant protection, much like a shadow that always follows the body. You are the greatest votary of the Lotus Sutra of all the women in Japan. For this reason, I will follow the example of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (Fukyō) and bestow upon you the Buddhist name Nichimyo Shonin.

(*Goshō*, p. 606)

Nichiren Daishonin compares Nichimyō Shonin to Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (Fukyō) and showers great praise upon her for overcoming various obstacles in her sincere yearning to visit him, all the way from Kamakura to Sado. The greater the difficulties of going on tozan, the greater the benefits will be of overcoming those difficulties.

In reality, for those going through challenging times, who are barely able to survive from day to day, going on a tozan pilgrimage may seem like a dream within a dream. However, if we follow the example of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging and do shakubuku with a single-minded determination to lead all people to true Buddhism, we can change our life circumstances without fail. The above Goshō passage states, “Shakyamuni Buddha, Tahō Buddha, the manifestations of all the Buddhas of the ten directions, great bodhisattvas such as Jōgyō and Muhengyō, and deities such as Bonten, Taishaku, and the Four Heavenly Kings will all provide you with constant protection, much like a shadow that always follows the body.” This is applicable to all of us.

The High Priest stated the following in his “New Year’s Address”:

In this “Year of Taking Action to do Shakubuku,” we must embrace and believe in the true purpose expressed in the *Risshō ankoku-ron*. This is the doctrine of admonition for the purpose of accomplishing shakubuku. It was written by Nichiren Daishonin, the founder of true Buddhism and the True Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, who possesses the wisdom and perspective that transcend the ten directions and the three existences.

I sincerely pray that each Hokkeko group will achieve solid unity between priesthood and laity, based on the principle of *itai dōshin*. I further pray that all of you, without exception, will participate in our great shakubuku campaign, and take action to achieve the objectives set forth for the years 2015 and 2021. I would like to conclude my New Year’s address by earnestly praying for your increased devotion and advancement.

(NSM, Feb. 2011, p. 5)

Let us take these directions to heart and do shakubuku. Let us strive to achieve our shakubuku goals for this year as soon as possible, and advance together with great devotion.