

Celebrating May 3—A Proud Citadel of Ordinary People with the Mission of Bodhisattvas of the Earth

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Hi everyone. Welcome to SGI Canada's monthly study podcast. I'm Sadaji. We have made a fresh start as we head into our 100th anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai. In this last month of 2020, we'll be studying President Ikeda's special lecture entitled "Celebrating May 3—A Proud Citadel of Ordinary People with the Mission of Bodhisattvas of the Earth", which was first published in Japanese in May last year. We will resume the study of the six-part lecture series "To My Friends of Each Division" in January.

In the opening paragraphs, President Ikeda talks about the SGI movement in terms of the development of global citizenship. SGI members around the world have been building solidarity among people across borders and various differences. In this instalment, Sensei reaffirms that the Soka Gakkai is a gathering of Bodhisattvas of the Earth, a great global network of people united by a shared vow for kosen-rufu.

Now let's read the first Gosho passage

Thus we may say that the bodhisattvas who emerge from the earth are the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching. The word "essential" or "original" represents the merits handed down from the past of numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago, the merits that are without beginning and without end.

These bodhisattvas are possessors of the essential or original Law. The original Law is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. . . . The accepting and upholding of this original Law is expressed in the single word "belief" or "faith." The single word "belief" is the sharp sword with which one confronts and overcomes fundamental darkness or ignorance. The commentary [T'ien T'ai's The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra] says, "Belief means to be without doubt." You should think about this. (From *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*,

pp. 119–20)

In the 15th chapter of the Lotus Sutra, during the ceremony in the air, Shakyamuni summons Bodhisattvas of the Earth to entrust them with the propagation of the Lotus Sutra after his passing. With the awareness that we are Bodhisattvas of the Earth, the SGI members around the world are spreading the humanistic philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism widely, transcending all manners of differences.

President Ikeda teaches us:

Anyone who stands up to spread the Mystic Law is a Bodhisattva of the Earth... The above passage states that the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are “possessors of the essential or original Law.” They are the “true disciples” who have embraced the original Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and have vowed to dedicate their lives to propagating it in the strife-filled saha world.

I used to chitchat during meetings when I started practising. My youth division leader often commented, “you must have been chitchatting during the ceremony in the air in the last row of the assembly.” It’s a good memory.

Going back to the Gosho passage, the Daishonin states, “The accepting and upholding of this original Law is expressed in the single word ‘belief’ or ‘faith.’ The single word ‘belief’ is the sharp sword with which one confronts and overcomes fundamental darkness or ignorance.” Fundamental darkness or ignorance is our inability to believe that everyone is capable of becoming a Buddha, everyone has unlimited possibilities. The “sharp sword” of faith is what enables us to defeat fundamental darkness and “build a strong network of people dedicated to spreading the Mystic Law, the great teaching of respect for the dignity of life, in the saha world.”

I just want to mention one thing for those of you who study this passage for the first time. Here he doesn't say "to never doubt" but "to be without doubt". Buddhism doesn't reject having doubts. Rather, by questioning and seeking answers, we can develop our understanding and faith, and have absolute conviction. That is the meaning of the phrase “Belief means to be without doubt.”

President Ikeda then speaks about the great path of the Middle Way, which is the foundation of our movement to open a new page of happiness and peace for all people.

He quotes a passage from "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime" to clearly explain the Buddhist concept of the Middle Way. The Middle Way is not merely a middle course between two opposing concepts, but a higher perspective that embraces both. He then comments from a practical perspective:

There are many dualities in our world—existence and nonexistence, good and evil, materialism and spiritualism, capitalism and communism, natives and foreigners, the majority and the minority, self and others, and so forth.

When we cling to such dualities, we tend to favour one side and reject the other.

The Buddhist view of the Middle Way, however, is entirely different. It does not reject either side, because both involve human beings. Genuine Buddhism is an all-encompassing teaching. Living the great path of the Middle Way is about making positive use of everything and creating fresh value.

He continues to say:

The Middle Way is definitely not an easy path to follow. It is a truly difficult path requiring tremendous wisdom; a great and honourable path traversed by champions of the spirit. This wisdom is born from living according to the principle of always striving to work with, among, and for the people.

The Middle Way is a way of life based on an unassailable belief in the dignity of all, valuing each individual and remaining rooted firmly in the soil of the people.

Now let's move on to the second Gosho passage that emphasizes that Bodhisattvas of the Earth carry out Buddhist practice amid the realities of this world.

The sutra reads, "As the light of the sun and moon can banish all obscurity and gloom, so this person as he advances through the world can wipe out the darkness of living beings" [LSOC21, 318; "Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One" chapter]. Consider carefully what this passage signifies. "This person as he advances through the world" means that the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law will witness the advent of Bodhisattva Superior Practices, who will illuminate the darkness of ignorance and earthly desires with the light of the five characters of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. In accordance with this passage, Nichiren, as this bodhisattva's envoy, has urged

**the people of Japan to accept and uphold the Lotus Sutra. (WND-1, 993;
“Letter to Jakunichi-bo”)**

Bodhisatva Superior Practices is a leader of Bodhisattvas of the Earth as depicted in the Lotus Sutra. In this passage, out of humility, the Daishonin alludes that he fulfills the role of Bodhisatva Superior Practices. President Ikeda focuses on the phrase “This person as he advances through the world.” Buddhism is not a teaching to simply seek peace of mind, but Bodhisattvas of the Earth carry out their practice in the midst of this real world to help people become happy and improve society.

I believe we all struggle to balance our SGI activities and daily lives with competing priorities such as work, school and parenting. Here, Sensei discusses this in terms of the principle of the Middle Way, and encourages us by saying:

Those who consistently tackle these challenges are truly people of wisdom living in accord with the Middle Way as they put faith into practice in daily life and Buddhism into action in society.

The crux of the phrase “this person as he advances through the world” is “advances”—in other words, practising or taking action.

“The practice of Myoho-rence-kyo”, chanting and spreading the Mystic Law, is carried out in the real world. Everything in life has meaning and is part of our Buddhist practice toward achieving our human revolution.

Towards the end of this article, Sensei shares his experiences of having dialogues with people around the world. He says:

I have been able to make friends and build trust among my fellow global citizens, transcending national or political divisions and differing value systems and irrespective of religious beliefs.

We, who live in Canada, are spearheading and developing a great network of people united by a shared vow for kosen-rufu. and it is now passed on to the youth division and future division members.

December is a running start to next year as well as the pinnacle of this year’s activities.

Let's put what we have learned in this article into practise by reaching out to others. Thank you for listening today. I wish you all well during this challenging time, and see you in 2021, the "Year of Hope and Victory". Bye for now.