

Study for December 2018

A Religion of Human Revolution – Part 5

Happiness – Enabling All People to Lead Victorious Lives

Lecture presented by Mai Ogushi
SGI Canada Study Department

In this month of December, we will be studying Part 5 of “A Religion of Human Revolution” from president Ikeda’s lecture series “The Buddhism of the Sun—Illuminating the World.” The theme of this instalment is “happiness”.

I had many opportunities to do my human revolution whenever I faced an obstacle. Instead of blaming others and my environment, through my practice, I learned to reflect on myself before reacting to the situation. This process of looking inward every time I faced an obstacle enabled me to see exactly what I needed to change about myself and in my life. I chanted for my weaknesses as well as strengths and determined to become the best version of myself. Through doing my human revolution, I was able to overcome my obstacles one by one, deepen my faith and attain a life state where I felt happy amidst various challenges.

The wish of the Buddha is for every single individual, without exception to become happy, and that is the spirit of the Soka Gakkai. President Toda clearly stated: “The Soka Gakkai’s name will be recorded as ‘Soka Gakkai Buddha’ in the Buddhist scriptures of future ages.” These words were his deep and powerful conviction based on the story of Awesome Sound King Buddha in the Lotus Sutra.

According to the story, the first Awesome Sound King Buddha instructed and guided living beings to enlightenment, and the following Buddhas to appear after him were also named Awesome Sound King Buddha and they too, guided living beings to enlightenment. There were a succession of Awesome Sound King Buddhas who continued to appear, generation after generation. President Toda interpreted this story as countless Buddhas of the same name representing a harmonious community of practitioners, an organization, called Awesome Sound King Buddha that was forever striving to guide people to enlightenment.

And Soka Gakkai Buddha represents none other than the gathering of Bodhisattvas of the Earth dedicated to realizing the great vow for kosen-rufu, following in the footsteps of the first and second presidents of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, joined by the bonds of mentor and disciple.

President Ikeda teaches us, “It is important that we continue, as long as we live, to advance with the Soka Gakkai, a supremely noble gathering of Buddhas, uniting together harmoniously in the spirit of ‘many in body, one in mind.’ This is the path leading to eternal happiness.”

Now, I would like to share a passage from The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings.

One becomes aware of the Buddha vehicle within oneself and enters the palace of oneself. Chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is what is meant by entering the palace of oneself. (The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings, p. 209)

This Gosho passage teaches that we all possess the Buddha nature within our lives, and by chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, we can instantly bring forth our Buddhahood and attain a state of supreme happiness.

The “palace of oneself” referred to here is the Buddha nature that exists within each of us, without fail. The happiness we seek should be absolute happiness, which nothing can destroy. The Daishonin teaches that by chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, we can establish a state of absolute happiness.

President Ikeda explains that the heart of our Buddhist practice is chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo and fighting against our own fundamental darkness-the fundamental source of all suffering. In each moment of that struggle, our Buddha nature emerges.

Becoming a Buddha doesn’t mean we are free of sufferings. As long as we remain alive, we are engaged in a constant struggle with hardship. It is the Buddhist teaching that brilliantly opens the way for people to overcome the fundamental sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death. This is the true essence of a religion that exists for the happiness of human beings.

In “Reply to the Lay Priest Soya”, Nichiren Daishonin writes: “Hungry spirits perceive the Ganges River as fire, human beings perceive it as water, and heavenly beings perceive it as amrita [life-giving sweet dew]. Though the water is the same, it appears differently according to one’s karmic reward from the past” (WND-1,486).

Our perception accords with our state of life. When we change our perception, we will be able to see all of our problems and hardships as an opportunity to do our human revolution. That’s why it is important for us to keep chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, no matter what. Such earnest, determined prayer draws forth the Buddha wisdom and

transforms the world of suffering into the stage for our mission of helping all people become happy.

Now, I will read a passage from the Gosho, “Questions and Answers about Embracing the Lotus Sutra”.

Everywhere other than the Capital of Tranquil Light is a realm of suffering. Once you leave the haven of inherent enlightenment, what is there to bring you joy? I pray that you will embrace the Mystic Law, which guarantees that people “will enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences” [LSOC5, 136]. This is the only glory that you need seek in your present lifetime, and is the action that will draw you toward Buddhahood in your next existence. Single-mindedly chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and urge others to do the same; that will remain as the only memory of your present life in this human world. (WND-1, 64; “Questions and Answers about Embracing the Lotus Sutra”)

Nichiren Buddhism is a teaching of enlightenment and empowerment for those struggling amid the realities of this world. The only way to realize genuine happiness is to reveal the Buddhahood inherent in our own lives.

Buddhism teaches that our happiness and that of others is inextricably connected. There is no true happiness for ourselves alone without the happiness of others, and vice versa. Unsurpassed joy comes from courageously dedicating our lives to the mission of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, which is striving for the happiness of ourselves and others.

The Daishonin writes, “Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and urge others to do the same; that will remain as the only memory of your present life in this human world” (WND-1, 851).

We have vowed to achieve kosen-rufu in the remote past. No life is more noble or admirable than one dedicated to the realization of that vow. Those who energetically take action for kosen-rufu, in their own unique ways, are truly happy.

Nichiren Buddhism is the religion of human revolution. Human revolution is a struggle to become wiser, stronger, and lead better lives. People who embody fresh, vibrant faith as they engage in this kind of Buddhist practice can powerfully bring forth the life state of Buddhahood and build sound happiness.

Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin taught others the path to attaining Buddhahood, the realization of happiness by all people. The Soka Gakkai's movement for peace and happiness carries on this true spirit and lineage of Buddhism.

The spiritual baton of kosen-rufu that President Makiguchi, President Toda, and President Ikeda have run with tirelessly has now been passed and is being carried on by the youthful Bodhisattvas of the Earth around the world. President Ikeda says that he has complete confidence that, as the SGI continues to develop and grow, the baton will be passed on to successive future generations on an ever deeper and broader level.

President Ikeda says that the life of the Buddha will pulse in our organization without end as long as we keep forging ahead as a harmonious community of practitioners, working together in the beautiful unity of "many in body, one in mind" that has been passed on through the spirit of oneness of mentor and disciple. This is the key to ensuring that the Soka Gakkai will continue into perpetuity. Now is the time for us to do just that.

This concludes the podcast for December and of 2018. Have a wonderful holiday and let's look forward to the Year of Soka Victory–Toward Our 90th Anniversary in 2019!!