

Creating a Century of Humanism in Which All Can Shine—Part 1 [of 5]

Carrying Out the Practice of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging on a Global Scale

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Hello everyone. Welcome to SGI Canada's monthly study podcast for this month of August. I'm Sadaji. Although we don't usually have study meetings in August, during the pandemic a number of districts have decided to hold online study meetings in August to help everyone stay connected and encouraged. In any case, we provide study podcasts every month because we are publishing SGI President Ikeda's lectures every month.

Starting this month, we'll be studying President Ikeda's four-part lectures, "Creating a Century of Humanism in Which All Can Shine." In this first installment, we'll be learning about the spirit and actions of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging as our practice to build a century of humanism where we all shine.

As many of you know, the Lotus Sutra describes Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, who although disparaged by arrogant people, persevered in his practice of respecting everyone he encountered, saying "you will surely attain Buddhahood". Sensei interprets this practice of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging as a model of encouragement, and teaches us that it "is embodied in the action of encouraging the person right in front of us, and is at the core of our dialogue movement based on respect for the dignity of life and for all people."

We often hear the expressions "we are all Buddhas", "we are Bodhisattvas of the Earth" or "we are Bodhisattvas Never Disparaging" and some of you who are still new to Nichiren Buddhism may wonder who on earth we are.

The purpose of practising Buddhism is to attain Buddhahood for oneself and others. The expression "we are all Buddhas" means that everyone is a noble being, inherently possessing the Buddha nature and that everyone is capable of bringing it forth. Moreover, in the storyline of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha entrusts Bodhisattvas of the Earth with the

future of kosen-rufu. In this regard we are fulfilling the mission of Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Nevertheless, the Lotus Sutra does not illustrate the practice of Bodhisattvas of the Earth spreading the Law in the Latter Day of the Law. The Lotus Sutra does, however, describe the practice of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging respecting all people he encountered. The Daishonin regards this as a model for those who live in the Latter Day of the Law. Sensei explains:

[W]e are not only carrying on the mission of kosen-rufu as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, but are also joyfully spreading Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's practice of respecting all people in this troubled saha world in the evil age after the Buddha's passing.

Now let's move on to the first Gosho passage in which Nichiren Daishonin draws parallels between himself, as the votary of the Lotus Sutra of the Latter Day of the Law, and Bodhisattva Never Disparaging.

Under their protection [the protection of the heavenly gods and benevolent deities, as well as the bodhisattvas numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds who emerged from beneath the ground], he [the votary of the Lotus Sutra] will [establish and] spread abroad widely throughout Jambudvipa [the entire world] the object of devotion of the essential teaching, or the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo.

It was the same with Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, who lived in the Middle Day of the Law of the Buddha Awesome Sound King. He propagated widely throughout his land the teaching of twenty-four characters that begins, "I have profound reverence for you . . .," and was attacked with sticks of wood by the whole population. The twenty-four characters of Never Disparaging and the five characters of Nichiren are different in wording, but accord with the same principle. The end of the Buddha Awesome Sound King's Middle Day and the beginning of this Latter Day of the Law are exactly the same in method of conversion. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was a practitioner at the initial stage of rejoicing; Nichiren is an ordinary practitioner at the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth. (WND-1, 400; "On the Buddha's Prophecy")

Being aware that he is Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, the Daishonin carried out the practice and actions of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging.

The lecture describes the efforts of the members who had just joined at the time of President Toda. They took the words of the Gosho as their own. Emulating the behaviour of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, they persevered in reaching out to everyone they met or knew, and engaged them in dialogue. These members explained to them that they could definitely become happy through practising Nichiren Buddhism. Their conducts truly exemplified the humanism the Soka Gakkai promotes.

Sensei says:

Bodhisattva Never Disparaging did his best to engage and to share Buddhism with the person in front of him. Year after year, he tirelessly reached out and spoke with one individual after another. That is how he spread the “24-character Lotus Sutra”—that is, the Lotus Sutra’s humanistic philosophy of respect for all people.

Now let’s move onto the second Gosho passage from *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, which confirms the fact that each of us taking action for kosen-rufu is a “Bodhisattva Never Disparaging of the Latter Day of the Law.” This podcast omits the middle part of the text, but you can read the whole passage in *New Century*.

Point Ten, on the words “when they [the arrogant four kinds of believers] saw that [Bodhisattva Never Disparaging] had gained great transcendental powers, the power to preach pleasingly and eloquently, the power of great goodness and tranquility, and when they heard his preaching, they all took faith in him and willingly became his followers.” [LSOC20, 309–10]

The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings says: The word “heard” refers to the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth, the second of the six stages of practice. In effect, this passage concerns the daimoku [Myoho-renge-kyo] that [as volume ten of Tien-tai’s *Words and Phrases* says] is “preached in a forceful manner, though it angers them.”

...

In effect this is saying that now Nichiren and his followers, practitioners of the Lotus Sutra who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, are the bodhisattva Never Disparaging of the Latter Day of the Law. (*The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, p. 155)

The Daishonin is saying that because Bodhisattva Never Disparaging persisted in his sincere efforts, those arrogant people finally placed their faith in his words through the power of daimoku.

Based on this passage, Sensei discusses the Soka Gakkai's peace movement to build a century of humanism, which carries out the practice of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging in the present day. He comments:

[I]t is easy to respond to violence with violence, but that will not put a stop to the cycle of evil. At the same time, silently enduring violence without taking some action to stop it only encourages its growth. Instead, we must fight uncompromisingly, with a strong commitment to nonviolence, against violence of any form that violates human dignity. That is the practice of Buddhism,

He goes on to say:

Nichiren Buddhism exists for the welfare of all people. We must therefore act as Bodhisattva Never Disparaging did, respecting people and wishing to see them shine their brightest. We are not here to build our own happiness upon the misfortune of others. Rather, the purpose of the Soka Gakkai is to create an age in which all people can live with true dignity, to bring peace and happiness to all, and to ensure the safety and security of our global community.

We may face many challenges in the communities and the world we live. Sometimes we may feel powerless in the face of these challenges. Or, we may feel that our own problems are too great for us to engage with those around us. The story of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging tells us that each of us, sharing Buddhism with others and working together on our human revolution, is a certain and solid way to build happiness for ourselves and others, and to create a century of humanism. It's absolutely fantastic that the members in 192 countries and territories are working together on this with Sensei, isn't it?

He concludes this lecture by emphasizing:

What you do from this point on will determine our world's future...

The most important thing we can do is keep moving forward, reaching out courageously to those around us and cheerfully encouraging one another as Bodhisattvas Never Disparaging of Soka, for the sake of the happiness and victory of ourselves and others. Each step we take opens a great hope-filled path to the future.

The MG members are preparing for its general meetings to be held this month to next. Let's continue to conduct the practice of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging and expand friendship. If you have any questions or comments in relation to study, please feel free to send them to us at study@sgicanada.org. I hope you enjoy and have wonderful summer. See you next month.