

A Religion of Human Revolution – part 2

“Dialogue – Forging Human Ties Based on a Spirit of Great Compassion”

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Hi Everyone, Welcome to the podcast for our September study meetings. This month we're studying President Ikeda's lecture on Dialogue. This is part two in a twelve part lecture series titled “A Religion of Human Revolution.” It's on page 25 in the August New Century.

The subtitle for this lecture captures its essence: “Dialogue – Forging Human Ties Based on a Spirit of Great Compassion”.

Casting light on ‘dialogue’, President Ikeda discusses the February Campaign of 1952. Sensei describes how they were able to introduce 201 households in a single month.

Their success was based on three key elements:

First, they prayed sincerely for each person's happiness, based on compassion and empathy. Secondly, they engaged in dialogue with earnestness and tenacity. And thirdly, their efforts were fueled by the vow that they shared with their mentor to create a better, peaceful world.

President Toda often said that kosen-rufu begins with one-to-one, face-to-face dialogue, as demonstrated by Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin, who were unable to ignore anyone who was suffering or unhappy.

The first gosho quote for this lecture is from one of Nichiren Daishonin's five major writings: “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land.” The treatise begins with the host listening earnestly to the guest's concerns about the miserable state of society that was besieged by famines, epidemics and other calamities.

Here is the Gosho quote:

The host then spoke: I have been brooding alone upon this matter, indignant in my heart, but now that you have come, we can lament together. Let us discuss the question at length. (WND 1, 7)

The host responds that he shares the guest's concerns, opening the way for a dialogue on how to free all people from suffering, transform society, and create a brighter future for humanity.

By listening and responding to each of his guest's concerns, the host builds a relationship of understanding, empathy and trust. Sensei tells us;

Our dialogues start from compassionate prayer for others' happiness. When we base our lives on the Mystic Law, all of our efforts to reach out to, speak with, and enable others to form a connection with Buddhism will help them reveal their own inner potential.

At the close of this Gosho, the guest expresses his determination, saying: "It is not enough that I alone should accept and have faith in your words – we must see to it that others as well are warned of their errors" (WND-1, 26).

The dialogue ends with the guest and the host **making a shared vow**. Ultimately, this is the true aim of the dialogue that we are engaging in. Sensei says:

The dialogue carried out by the Soka Gakkai members is fueled by a belief in the Buddha nature of all people. Awakening the Buddha nature in others is key to realizing true happiness for ourselves and others. This is because a shared conviction in our own and others' potential for Buddhahood has the power to transcend all differences and become the foundation of shared happiness and shared peace. This is precisely the kind of dialogue that the world so badly needs today."

In the next section Sensei uses the example of "bodhisattva Never Disparaging" to illustrate the importance of compassion and perseverance as we make efforts to share Buddhism with others.

Here's the next Gosho passage:

The practice of making a bow of obeisance carried out by the bodhisattva Never Disparaging is based on the teaching that the people he bowed to were "all certain to attain Buddhahood" [LSOC20, 309] and therefore is an expression of pity and compassion. Hence, although the people might "take sticks of wood or tiles and stones and beat and pelt him"[LSOC20, 309] he

nevertheless persisted in his effort, “preaching to them forcefully, though it angered them”, an action that arose from his feelings of pity and compassion. Since we are taught that the Buddha mind is a mind of great pity and compassion, a bow of obeisance is made in acknowledgement of this pity and compassion. (*The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, pp. 163-64)

Another name for “Buddha” is “one who can persevere” or “one who can forbear.” Bodhisattva Never Disparaging illustrates the importance of persevering and maintaining an attitude of respect for the inherent Buddha nature of everyone, whether they welcome our invitation to practice or not.

It is easy to give up, or to have our feelings hurt when our efforts to talk with our friends about this Buddhism are rejected. But, like Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, we can have confidence that our compassionate actions infused with prayer and conviction are certain to help others form a connection with Nichiren Buddhism, regardless of whether they accept what we are saying. The Lotus Sutra teaches the “poison drum relationship” meaning that even through a reverse relationship, or opposition to our practice, individuals will be able to encounter this Buddhism again and eventually be open to embracing it. So we should remain confident and continue chanting earnestly for others’ happiness, unswayed by their immediate reactions whether negative or positive.

What exactly is “true compassion”? Sensei says that

True compassion is manifested as care and concern for others; as patience to persevere in helping others, believing that they will definitely change for the better; and as courage to overcome the fear that others may react negatively.

I think that this may resonate with many of us ... “the courage to overcome the fear that others may react negatively.”

When we are able to challenge this fear, and reach out in Buddhist dialogue, we polish our lives and grow – we expand our own state of life and strengthen our capacity for compassion.

The third gosho quote for this next section is from “The True Aspect of all Phenomena”:

At first only Nichiren chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, but then two, three, and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Propagation will

unfold this way in the future as well. Does this not signify “emerging from the earth? (WND-1, 385)

Sensei did not read this Goshō passage as Nichiren Daishonin’s “prediction” or “declaration”. He read it as his own vow to make this statement a reality. When Sensei began his first trip overseas in 1960, very few people were practising this Buddhism outside of Japan. He describes how he chanted as if to permeate the land with his daimoku, convinced that eventually a mighty stream of Bodhisattvas of the Earth would emerge. And now, with people happily practicing in 192 countries and territories, the seeds sown since 1960 have taken root around the world.

The word “kosen” of kosen-rufu means “to proclaim widely”. Without the practice of dialogue, Kosen Rufu- or widespread propagation of Buddhism cannot be achieved. The dialogues we undertake right here – where we are now – is our way of promoting human revolution for ourselves and others, and act as a driving force for transforming the world.

Now it’s up to us to challenge ourselves, every day, to chant to meet that one person who appears right in front of us – and summon up the courage to engage in a dialogue with them about how Buddhist humanism – chanting Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō can help them become happy, and help to make the world a better place.

There isn’t time in this podcast to cover everything in Sensei’s lecture, so I hope you will read the full lecture before your study meeting. And since the topic is “Dialogue”, be sure to allow time for the participants to share their experiences in making efforts to have dialogues with their friends about Buddhism. Have a great study meeting!