

## **Our Shared Struggle as Bodhisattvas of the Earth Is a Source of Hope for Transforming This Troubled Age**

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Hello everyone, welcome to the June study podcast!

In June, we are celebrating the Toronto Day on June 21 commemorating the 41<sup>st</sup> anniversary of President Ikeda and Mrs. Ikeda's 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to Canada from June 21 to 25, 1981; the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sensei's poem, "A Rainbow over Niagara" on June 10, 1987; and the birthday of President Makiguchi on June 6, 1871. All these events marked important milestones for kosen-rufu in Canada.

This month we are studying Sensei's lecture "Our Shared Struggle as Bodhisattvas of the Earth Is a Source of Hope for Transforming This Troubled Age", the 67<sup>th</sup> installment of the series "The Buddhism of the Sun, Illuminating the World."

In this lecture we learn that being the Soka Gakkai members we are the Bodhisattvas of the Earth with the mission of bringing hope to the troubled world. The important thing is to manifest the power within us and move forward with wisdom and strength.

In the history of humanity, when we overcome a crisis with courage and wisdom, humanity will rise to new heights. An example is the Black Plague in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Even with the current unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, Sensei firmly believes that the Buddhism of the Sun will illuminate the darkness of humankind with its brilliant light.

Soka Gakkai was founded on November 18, 1930. This was also the publication date of the first volume of President Makiguchi's *The System of Value-Creating Education* and the public debut of the name Value-Creating Education Society which was the forerunner of Soka Gakkai.

"Value-creating education" is a system of methodology for fostering individuals capable of creating value, which is the purpose of life. It aims to elevate and enrich each person's character toward that end. And because happiness lies in value creation, Soka education nurtures people who work for the happiness of others and their own. The focus is always on

human beings.

In *The Geography of Human Life* authored by President Makiguchi, it views humanity's future direction should be the pursuit of "humanitarian competition." "The goals of humanitarian competition are not solely self-interested but consist of striving to protect and improve both our own and others' lives. It means engaging consciously in a collaborative life."

In *The System of Value-Creating Education*, President Makiguchi spoke of a three-step process: moving from a dependent life, to an independent life, and then a contributive life. A contributive life is the bodhisattva way of life, the spirit of altruistic practice taught in Mahayana Buddhism. President Makiguchi also declared that unless we carry out bodhisattva practice, we cannot attain Buddhahood.

Around the time of President Makiguchi's death on November 18, 1944, President Toda who had been pouring his life into reading the Lotus Sutra in his own prison cell, awakened to his identity as a Bodhisattva of the Earth. President Toda stated, "We are all Bodhisattvas of the Earth who have chosen to be born in the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law in accord with our vow for kosen-rufu!"

In the first Goshō passage, we will study a passage from "On the Five Guides for Propagation," and reaffirming how the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are uniquely equipped to lead people to enlightenment in the troubled age of the Latter Day of the Law.

**But the great bodhisattvas as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds who emerged from the earth have, first of all, lived in this saha world for an incalculably long period of time; second, they have been disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha since the far distant past, when he first set his mind on and attained enlightenment; and third, these bodhisattvas were the first persons in the saha world to receive the seed of Buddhahood from the Buddha. Therefore, in terms of the bonds of karma from the past that tie them to the saha world, they surpass the other great bodhisattvas. (WND-2, 550)**

The Daishonin explains that the Mystic Law, expressed as the "five characters of Myōhō-rensō-kyō", is the essential teaching for the enlightenment of all people in the Latter Day of the Law and that none other than the Bodhisattvas of the Earth will spread

it in the suffering-filled saha world.

In the “Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One” (21<sup>st</sup>) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni entrusts this task to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who are as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds led by Bodhisattva Superior Practices. He then offers three characteristics that define them.

First, they make this troubled saha world their home to fulfill their mission.

Second, they are the direct disciples of the Buddha since his enlightenment in the remote past.

Third, they are the bodhisattvas who were first to receive the seed of Buddhahood from the Buddha and in turn sow the seeds of Buddhahood in the Latter Day of the Law undeterred by any obstacle.

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth share a strong bond with the Buddha from the remote past. They are bodhisattvas linked by a profound karmic connection and mission, who choose to be born in the Latter Day of the Law in which inhabitants are having inferior capacity to understand the Law. However, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are firm in resolve, have no fear and undefeated by any adversity. The Soka Gakkai is a gathering of Bodhisattvas of the Earth making this saha world the stage for their endeavours.

The life state of bodhisattva as stated by Sensei, is “the state of altruism, the joy of helping others.” When we, as practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism, pray and take action for the happiness of others, we expand our own state of life and carry out our human revolution together with them.

The next section is from a letter titled “Wu-lung and I-lung” addressed to the lay nun Ueno, the mother of Nanjo Tokimitsu.

**[The “Expedient Means” (2<sup>nd</sup>) chapter of the Lotus Sutra] states, “If there are those who hear the Law, then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood”. This passage means that, if there are a hundred or a thousand people who uphold this sutra, without a single exception all one hundred or one thousand of them will become Buddhas. (WND-1, 1099)**

The Daishonin quotes “If there are those who hear the Law, then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood.” These words are a powerful expression of the Buddha’s original vow to enable all living beings to attain Buddhahood. It is also an important documentary proof confirming that the Lotus Sutra is the great teaching of universal enlightenment.

“Not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood” focus on the happiness of each individual is the heart of the Lotus Sutra. The fact that the Daishonin offered these words to many of his disciples who were struggling with adversity illustrates his deep compassion and resolve to lift their spirits and prevent them from becoming unhappy.

We pray for the happiness of each person, encouraging them and taking action to help them, even while dealing with our own hardships or storms of destiny.

Buddhism, especially the Lotus Sutra, teaches that all people possess the supremely noble Buddha nature and that anyone can make it shine. Each person’s life is an infinitely precious and respectable treasure tower. From the view of the Lotus Sutra, everyone, without exception, possesses innate dignity and worth.

In *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, Nichiren Daishonin says: “The treasure towers are none other than all living beings, and all living beings are none other than the complete entities of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.” The grand adventure of kosen-rufu, of striving to actualize the goal of universal enlightenment.

The Daishonin’s teaching resonates with the concept of dignity that is a core principle of human rights. Dignity plays an essential role in creating a peaceful world.

Bodhisattvas of the Earth are people of action who embody the Lotus Sutra’s spirit of respect for all people. They are courageous champions who wield the “sharp sword” of faith to vanquish the fundamental ignorance inherent in life, the root of deep-seated mistrust. This is the mission of the Soka Gakkai.

The mentors and disciples of Soka, summoned by deep mystic bonds, have now assembled here. Passing on the flame of our noble mission to one person and then another, let us continue to expand our great network of Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

The Soka Gakkai’s 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2030 is now within sight. This decade will be a crucial decade for us to secure the foundation of worldwide kosen-rufu as a powerful force for peace.

Burning with the great vow of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, let us be united to forge ahead cheerfully on the journey of happiness and victory, the journey of human revolution, and the journey of the shared struggle of mentor and disciple.

Thanks very much for your long attention.