

Session 4 – July

Chapter 1: The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin (1)

—Nichiren Daishonin’s Life and Teachings—

3. Kosen-rufu

2) “Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” and Kosen-rufu

The purpose of practicing Nichiren Buddhism, in addition to attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime on an individual level, is to secure happiness for both oneself and others. As guidelines for practice in order to secure happiness for oneself and others amid the realities of society, Nichiren Daishonin stressed the importance of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land” and kosen-rufu.

“Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land”

Nichiren Buddhism is a teaching that enables people to transform their life condition and develop a state of absolute happiness in the course of this lifetime. In addition, through such a profound inner transformation in each individual, it aims to achieve peace for society as a whole.

Nichiren Daishonin sets forth the principle for realizing peace in his treatise “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land.”

“Establishing the correct teaching” means promoting faith in and acceptance of the correct teaching of Buddhism as the foundation for people’s lives and making the Buddhist teaching of respect for the dignity of life the fundamental motivating principle of society. “For the peace of the land” means realizing peace and prosperity in society as well as safety and security for all individuals in their daily lives.

In addition to indicating the nation as a political institution centering on the ruling authorities, the “land” in “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” refers, on a deeper level, to the basis of people’s daily lives and sustenance. In that sense, it refers not only to the social structure formed by human beings, but also the land itself—the natural environment.

Nichiren Daishonin’s belief that the people are the central presence in the land may perhaps also be discerned in his frequent usage, in the original manuscript of “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” of the Chinese character for “land” (also, “country” or “nation”) written

with the element for “people” inside a rectangular enclosure, rather than the characters using the element for “king,” or that suggesting a military domain, inside a rectangular enclosure, which were more commonly used.

The Daishonin also wrote, “A king sees his people as his parents” (“Offerings in the Snow,” WND-2, 809), asserting that those in power should make the people their foundation. He further warned that rulers who “fail to heed or understand the afflictions of the populace” will fall into the evil paths (see “On the Protection of the Nation,” WND-2, 92).

While “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” was written to realize peace in Japan at that time, its underlying spirit is to achieve peace and security for the people and, further, to actualize peace for the entire world and happiness for all humanity into the distant future.

The Daishonin wrote this treatise and remonstrated with the ruling authorities out of his wish to put an end to the sufferings of the people of his day. He was showing, through his own example, that practitioners of Buddhism must not content themselves with a Buddhist practice that consists solely of praying for their own enlightenment. Rather, basing themselves on the principles and spirit of Buddhism, they must actively engage in seeking solutions to the problems and issues facing society.

In “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” Nichiren Daishonin wrote: “If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquillity throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?” (WND-1, 24).

The self-centered attitude exemplified by averting one’s gaze from society’s problems and withdrawing into a realm of religious faith alone is sternly repudiated in Mahayana Buddhism.

The Soka Gakkai today is engaged in efforts to resolve global issues in the areas of peace, culture, education, and human rights, based on the principles and ideals of Nichiren Buddhism. These efforts, too, directly accord with the principle and spirit of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land” articulated by the Daishonin.

Kosen-rufu

The aim of Buddhism is to share and spread the correct teaching that embodies the Buddha’s enlightenment, and guide all people toward attaining the life state of Buddhahood and realize peace and prosperity for all humanity.

For that reason, Shakyamuni Buddha states in the Lotus Sutra: “After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it [this teaching] abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa [the entire world] and never allow it to be cut off, nor must you allow [negative forces such as] evil devils, the devils’ people, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas, kumbhanda demons, or others to seize the advantage!” (“Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King,” chap. 23, LSOC, 330).

This passage states that in the “last five-hundred-year period”—meaning this present period of the Latter Day of the Law—the Mystic Law should be “spread abroad widely” throughout the entire world. (“Spread abroad widely” here is a translation of the Chinese characters pronounced *kosen-rufu* in Japanese.)

In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha also entrusts the mission of widespread propagation, or *kosen-rufu*, in the Latter Day of the Law to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who, as his disciples from the unimaginably remote past, are the bodhisattvas who have thoroughly forged themselves.

During the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, countless multitudes of such bodhisattvas emerge from the earth. Led by Bodhisattva Superior Practices, they vow to propagate the Mystic Law, the essence of the Lotus Sutra, after Shakyamuni’s passing.

Shakyamuni in turn predicts that after his death these Bodhisattvas of the Earth will appear in this suffering-filled world and, like the sun and the moon, illuminate the darkness of people’s lives and lead them to enlightenment.

Kosen-rufu Is the Fundamental Spirit of Nichiren Daishonin

In exact accord with the aforementioned passage of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin strove to spread the great Law of Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō in the evil age of the Latter Day, while enduring numerous life-threatening persecutions.

The Daishonin refers to the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law, or *kosen-rufu*, as follows:

The “great vow” refers to the propagation of the Lotus Sutra [Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō]. (OTT, 82)

If Nichiren’s compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity, for it has the beneficial power to open the blind eyes of every living being in the country of Japan, and it blocks off the road that leads to the

hell of incessant suffering. (“On Repaying Debts of Gratitude,” WND-1, 736)

When I, Nichiren, first took faith in the Lotus Sutra, I was like a single drop of water or a single particle of dust in all the country of Japan. But later, when two people, three people, ten people, and eventually a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, and a million people come to recite the Lotus Sutra [chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] and transmit it to others, then they will form a Mount Sumeru of perfect enlightenment, an ocean of great nirvana. Seek no other path by which to attain Buddhahood! (“The Selection of the Time,” WND-1, 580)

From these passages we can clearly see that achieving kosen-rufu, the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law, is the fundamental spirit of Nichiren Daishonin.

The Daishonin also repeatedly urged his followers to dedicate their lives to kosen-rufu, attain Buddhahood, and actualize the principle of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land.”

The Soka Gakkai—Making Kosen-rufu a Reality

The Soka Gakkai is a harmonious gathering of Buddhist practitioners who have inherited and carry on the Daishonin’s spirit, spreading the Mystic Law just as he taught in his writings.

The Daishonin wrote: “If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth” (“The True Aspect of All Phenomena,” WND-1, 385). The Soka Gakkai, which has spread the Mystic Law in the same spirit as the Daishonin, is the organization of Bodhisattvas of the Earth fulfilling the mission of kosen-rufu.

Until the appearance of the Soka Gakkai seven hundred years after the Daishonin’s death, no one had been able to widely spread the Mystic Law. It is the Soka Gakkai that has made the predictions of Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin a reality. This is proof that the Soka Gakkai is the organization that has emerged to carry out the mission of kosen-rufu, acting in accord with the Buddha’s intent.

The Soka Gakkai is making kosen-rufu a reality, spreading the Mystic Law throughout the entire world, just as the Lotus Sutra teaches.