

## The Importance of Doing Shakubuku

High Priest Nichinyo Shonin stated:

As the sutra indicates, “Each and every person throughout all mankind possesses the Buddha nature” (Nirvana Sutra [*Nehan-gyō*]). All people inherently have the Buddha nature within themselves. Therefore, as we conduct shakubuku to them, when they encounter the mystic Law (*Myōhō*) through our shakubuku and form a karmic bond with it, their Buddha nature definitely will manifest itself, and it will initiate its innate function as the Buddha nature. Thus, it is important to perform shakubuku with the conviction that those people eventually will attain enlightenment without fail. This very conviction is most essential in doing shakubuku. It is important to sincerely relay to others with our entire body and soul that they will become happy, without fail, if they uphold this faith and practice.

(Collected Sermons of High Priest Nichinyo Shonin [*Goshinan-shū*], Vol. 17, p. 69)

The High Priest teaches that the life condition of true happiness can be opened forth by the mystic Law. We, who uphold the correct doctrine and practice of Nichiren Daishonin, are fortunate to have known the way to create true happiness, which is the common objective of all mankind. Therefore, as the High Priest instructs, we must teach and lead all the people in the world to the mystic Law of the Buddhism of the sowing of the true cause. We must do shakubuku to lead them to true happiness. Furthermore, shakubuku is a fundamental Buddhist practice taught by the Buddha, so that we, ourselves, can achieve a life condition of happiness.

The Lotus Sutra expounds that the Latter Day of the Law, in which we live, is an evil age defiled by the five impurities. This is a time when the people are influenced by their own arbitrary views, earthly desires, and erroneous doctrines. This causes their individual lives and society as a whole to become impure. In fact, these grave conditions have become strikingly apparent in various aspects in multiple countries around the world. We see daily reports of conflicts throughout the globe. There have been horrific terrorist attacks such as the recent indiscriminate killing sprees, various atrocious crimes, distressing incidents, and the sad refugee crisis.

In these modern times, full of confusion and delusion, most people in the world are as yet unaware of the true teaching. They do not know that Nichiren Daishonin is the True Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law and that the teachings expounded by Nichiren Daishonin is the sole and absolute truth.

There are no causes other than erroneous teachings for the incredible disasters and incidents that have been occurring. This was expounded in the following excerpt from the *Risshō ankoku-ron*. The Daishonin states:

...all people have gone against the correct Law and become wholly devoted to evil doctrines....Seizing this opportunity, devils and demons rush in, bringing disasters and calamities.

(*Gosho*, p. 234; *The Gosho of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2, p. 3)

Herein lies the reason for the advent of the True Buddha Nichiren Daishonin into this world and his precious instruction to save all mankind. The Daishonin states the following in the *Gosho*, *On the Buddha's Behavior* (Shuju onfurumai- gosho):

I have taught this doctrine to save all the people of Japan who have slandered the Lotus Sutra and are destined to fall into the hell of incessant suffering. (Gosho, p. 1059)

This means that Nichiren Daishonin is propagating the mystic Law, in order to remove the suffering caused by the people who are slandering the Lotus Sutra and to enable them to gain true benefits. In other words, shakubuku is none other than the compassionate practice of “removing suffering and giving joy” (*bakku yoraku*). We, the priests and lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu, are the only ones who understand the preciousness of shakubuku and are able to perform this practice.

The Buddha’s great compassion is manifested in the teachings that he propagates to save all mankind. Shakubuku represents the tremendously compassionate behavior of the Buddha. Nichiren Daishonin states the following in his Gosho, *The Day Before Yesterday* (Issakujitsu-gosho):

The Buddha’s advent into this world is solely to save all mankind. (Gosho, p. 476)

Thus, Nichiren Daishonin endured persecutions in order to propagate the Law, and his shakubuku efforts toward the deluded masses were based on his compassion for them and his desire to bring them salvation. We, as disciples and followers of Nichiren Daishonin, must make his sentiment our own. In *Establishing the Four Bodhisattvas as the Object of Worship* (Shibosatsu zōryu-shō), the Daishonin states:

Those who claim to be the disciples of Nichiren and practice the Lotus Sutra must do as I do. (Gosho, p. 1370; *Selected Gosho Passages of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 211)

Second High Priest Nikko Shonin teaches us the following in the *Twenty-six Admonitions of Nikko* (Nikko yukai okimon):

Until kōsen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability, without begrudging your life. (Gosho, p. 1884)

Both Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin teach us to make shakubuku the most important element of our faith and practice. Therefore, as priests and lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu, we have the precious mission and role to perform shakubuku. We must never lose sight of this fundamental spirit.

The Daishonin presents admonitions in numerous writings, explaining that those who do not possess the spirit of true appreciation for their debts of gratitude and do not show it in their actions cannot achieve a life condition of happiness. In *Four Debts of Gratitude* (Shion-shō), he states:

Common mortals in the Latter Day of the Law, although benefiting from the virtues of the three treasures, do not even try to repay their debts of gratitude. Therefore, how can they expect to complete all the practices of the Buddha way and attain Buddhahood?

(Gosho, p. 268; *Selected Gosho Passages of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 216)

Therefore, doing shakubuku represents the true practice of repaying our debts of gratitude, as we offer our appreciation to the three treasures of the Buddha, the Law, and the priesthood.

Twenty-sixth High Priest Nichikan Shonin teaches the following in his *Exegesis on Repaying Debts of Gratitude* (Hō’on-sho mondan):

Refuting heretical doctrines is none other than an act of repaying your debts of gratitude.. Propagating the true Law is none other than offering your appreciation for the benefits that you have received.... Thus, if you refute heresy without begrudging your life and if you propagate the true Law, you cannot help but repay all your debts of gratitude. (Mondan, p. 384)

In other words, through the actual practice of shakubuku, which is a practice of compassion and true repayment of our debts of gratitude, all people in the entire world can uphold true Buddhism and achieve kōsen-rufu. This will result in the establishment of a peaceful and tranquil society called the Buddha land. High Priest Nichinyo Shonin stated:

In doing shakubuku, even if the person with whom you share this Buddhism opposes you at the time and you are unsuccessful, he will eventually attain enlightenment without fail, based on the karmic bond created by receiving the shakubuku from you....In particular, today, in the Latter Day of the Law, not only those who have positive relationship with true Buddhism, but also those who possess a reverse relationship with it and initially oppose this faith can be saved in the future, without fail, based on their karmic bond with the true Law that they established when you enabled them to encounter and listen to the mystic Law of the Three Great Secret Laws.

(Collected Sermons of High Priest Nichinyo Shonin [*Goshinan-shū*], Vol. 17, p. 59)

It is a matter of course that various obstacles will compete with one another to impede our efforts, when we teach others about the true Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin. However, we must never be timid or cowardly in telling people about this precious Buddhism. Without doing shakubuku, we cannot achieve salvation for either those with a positive relationship with true Buddhism or those who possess a reverse relationship with it. We must foster a strong conviction and nurture compassion in our hearts as the disciples and believers of Nichiren Daishonin, so that we can exert our utmost efforts in doing shakubuku—planting the seed of the Buddhism of the sowing, based on the golden words of our master Nichiren Daishonin and the directions of our High Priest.