

On “Protection from Without”

In the following passage from the Goshō, *Reply to Matsuno* (Matsuno dono- gohenji), Nichiren Daishonin teaches us about our attitudes and actions in faith and practice as believers:

It is essential for you, as a lay believer, to single-mindedly chant Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō and also make offerings to the priests. Furthermore, in order to practice exactly as the [Lotus] Sutra teaches, you must propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability. (Goshō, p. 1051)

Here, the Daishonin explains the significance of chanting Daimoku without any distractions; striving to do our best to present Gokuyo offerings to the three treasures of the Buddha, the Law, and the priesthood; and advancing with devotion in our efforts to conduct shakubuku.

Our daily activities of serving and protecting the three treasures are the fundamental basis of our practice to attain enlightenment. Safeguarding the three treasures in this way is known as “protection” (literally “protection from without” [*gego*]).

The *Bylaws of Nichiren Shoshu* (Nichiren shōshu shūki) clearly specify the following:

Lay believers are those who believe in the doctrine of Nichiren Shoshu; who belong to its temple or place of worship; who rely on it for funerals, celebrations, and memorials; and who strive to continue to permanently protect the Head Temple and the temple or place of worship of their affiliation. (*Regulations and Bylaws of Nichiren Shoshu* [Shūsei shūki], p. 80)

The believers of Nichiren Shoshu have the precious mission of protection. They provide protection from without (*gego*) to Head Temple Taisekiji, where the Dai-Gohonzon is enshrined and where the High Priest resides. They also protect the local temple or propagation center where they are registered as a member.

In the *Letter to Soya-nyūdo* (Soya nyūdō dono-motogoshō), Nichiren Daishonin teaches:

The Nirvana Sutra states, “Within, there are disciples who understand the immeasurably deep doctrine. Without, there are pure-minded lay believers. Thus, is Buddhism perpetuated into eternity.” (Goshō, p. 790)

In Nichiren Shoshu, the High Priest—who has received the transmission of the Lifeblood Heritage of the Law entrusted to a single person—and the entire priesthood have protected the absolutely accurate transmission of the true teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. In other words, “protection from within” (*naigo*) refers to the protection of Buddhism from within the priesthood. This is the responsibility of the High Priest and the Nichiren Shoshu priests, who must ensure “the perpetuation of the Law (*ryōbō kujū*)”, by leading people to the true Law and correctly transmitting it.

The act of providing protection of the development and prosperity of true Buddhism from the outside, through the pure faith and practice of the believers, is “protection from without” (*gego*). Specifically, by cultivating correct faith through attending ceremonies and meetings, such as the monthly Kōsen-rufu Shōdai Ceremonies, Oko Ceremonies, and area meetings, believers should protect the local temple, propagation center, or the meeting hall of their affiliation in various ways.

Another way of providing this protection from without is for us to provide sincere Gokuyō offerings to the Gohonzon and to exert our utmost efforts for the development and prosperity of the temple. Additionally, the actions of preparing and helping with various ceremonies and meetings, maintaining and cleaning the temple building and grounds, and other such physical activities are also regarded as “protection from without”.

True Buddhism can be correctly and purely transmitted and protected into the future only when both protection from within and protection from without are achieved.

It is essential for us to protect the local temple, propagation center, or meeting hall of our affiliation, never failing to maintain our sincere spirit to provide protection, regardless of what may happen. Our spirit and actions will produce great benefits that will lead to our individual happiness. Moreover, we will gain the extremely robust power that will enable us to overcome difficulties in our lives.

In *On Emperor Sushun* (Sushun tennō-gosho), Nichiren Daishonin teaches us:

The principle of manifestation from within and protection from without (*naikun gego*) is a critically important teaching in Buddhism. The Lotus Sutra states, “I profoundly respect you.” The Nirvana Sutra says, “Every living being possesses the Buddha nature.”...What is hidden will bring forth manifest benefits. (Gosho, p. 1170)

“Manifestation from within” (*naikun*) literally means “to send forth a fragrance from within.” It describes how the Buddha nature in the depths of the lives of the people is drawn out and enables them to attain benefits by doing correct Buddhist practice. Through these benefits, the people are able to expiate negative karma from their past lifetimes and, as a result, they are able to provide protection for themselves.

One of the virtues of this “manifestation from within” is that it is not limited to one person. It influences the individual’s environment in various ways, by providing good karmic relationships. In other words, our Buddha nature from within our lives is activated when it encounters the true teaching. Then as we carry out Buddhist practices and accumulate benefits, we are protected by the Buddha, the Law, and the guardian deities by the benefits. Thus, we are able to receive protection from the outside. This is the “protection from without” that appears.

We tend to form attachments to things that are externally visible, and we lose sight of things that are internally hidden. However, it is critically important to amass true virtues and benefits within our lives.

We must exert our utmost efforts in our practice for ourselves and for others by doing various activities, including serving the Gohonzon, performing morning and evening Gongyō and Daimoku, doing shakubuku, helping the new members to grow and develop, and presenting Gokuyō offerings. The Gohonzon will watch over us as we perform these precious activities, and we will receive protection as a result.

High Priest Nichinyō Shonin stated:

There is a phrase: “Cherry, plum, peach, and damson.” The cherry, plum, and others respectively possess unique characteristics. The same is true for us. We all protect Nichiren Shoshu. Each of us, in our own unique position—the cherry in the way appropriate for the cherry and the plum in its own way—provides solid protection. This is also true for protecting the temple. We must be mindful of how to protect the Gohonzon in the temple. In other words, we do not have to be the

same as everyone around us. This was the case with the ten major disciples of Shakyamuni, who protected their master and their group in ancient times. We, as individuals, must demonstrate our strengths in our respective areas of expertise and form a solid unity of the heart. By so doing, we will be successful in doing shakubuku and bring prosperity to Nichiren Shoshu. As a result, we can powerfully protect the Gohonzon. *(Shingyō yōmon, vol. 3, p. 60)*

Let us sincerely follow the directions of High Priest Nichinyo Shonin and the guidance of our teacher priests, as we make the best use of our individual specialties and talents to provide the “protection from without,” and courageously work toward the development and prosperity of Nichiren Shoshu.