

## The *Gosho*, a vivid chronicle of the lifelong struggle of the Daishonin

“Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism. You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if it is only a single sentence or phrase.”

*The True Aspect of all Phenomena – WND. Page 386*

Nichiren Daishonin searched for a way to allow people to completely transform their life condition at its roots and attain indestructible happiness, while changing social reality at the same time. What he discovered is as important nowadays as it was in his time.

His search was not merely limited to the study of written documents. It was a struggle that inspired his whole being. The existence of the Daishonin was a series of struggles to lead people towards enlightenment. In the *Gosho*, the collection of his teachings, we often read sentences like, “**only I, Nichiren**”, or “**at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law**”. Both express the profound spirit of the Daishonin to totally assume

responsibility for taking the lead at the forefront of the forthcoming ten thousand years and more, i.e., the whole duration of the Latter day of the Law, in order to reveal and spread for the first time the Law that allows human beings to connect with their maximum potential.

The truth is, the words of the Daishonin irradiate the determination to take the initiative as the central character in the movement for achieving the happiness of all people. In a word, the *Gosho* is a chronicle which records the intense lifelong struggle of the Daishonin throughout his existence. In order to accomplish his mission he underwent great persecutions and left behind a tremendous teaching. The *Gosho* crystallizes his

spirit, his action, and his teaching. Therefore, we must read it as the essential writing for this age.

We can also say that the Gosho is inseparable from the Lotus Sutra, known as the **“King of Sutras”**. The Daishonin emphasised the objectivity and universality of the Lotus Sutra. In his search for a teaching leading people towards enlightenment, Nichiren Daishonin went directly to the Lotus Sutra and it was this teaching that offered him the answers in which it states that all human beings can manifest the state of Buddhahood.

It is not about becoming a Buddha in some hypothetical time in the future. The first half of the Lotus Sutra, also known as the theoretical teaching, only explains the idea of enlightenment literally as something destined to happen in a future existence. But the “Life Span” chapter (16th) contained in the second half or essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, reveals that all human beings are able to become Buddhas now, in this existence.<sup>1</sup>

In an age where society as much as the religious world suffers the consequences of chaos and confusion, that which can lead people to happiness and transform the tendency of the time is a teaching that gives each person the power to extract his own innate Buddhahood. In other words, the possibility of achieving happiness and peace is to cultivate the vast potential of the human being. Without developing the life condition of the people there cannot be



a profound solution to the problems of society.

When we focus more deeply on the idea of relieving the suffering of people expounded in the Lotus Sutra we see that it reflects a true humanistic spirit. The Daishonin, totally aware of the nature of the Latter Day of the Law, revealed this humanistic aspect of the Lotus Sutra in his teaching.

We speak of an idea centred, above all, and fundamentally, on the human being and we speak also of discovering that in the life

of a person there is an immense reserve of potential.

Buddhist humanism is not based upon a fixed theoretical framework; it is based on the potential that each person has to achieve his human revolution by cultivating his inherent Buddha nature.

**“Buddha nature”** refers to a life that has become aware of the Mystic Law and is based on it. The term doesn’t imply in any way that human beings are the only ones endowed with a singular or special quality.

1) The *Gosho* “The Teaching, practice, and proof” states; “Among those twenty, the most vital is the “Life Span” chapter’s revelation that the Buddha first attained enlightenment numberless major world system dust particle *kalpas* ago. People may well wonder what this revelation means. Explain that it teaches that common people like ourselves, who have been submerged in the sufferings of birth and death since time without beginning and who never so

much as dreamed of reaching the shore of enlightenment, become the Thus Come Ones who are originally enlightened and endowed with the three bodies. That is, it reveals the ultimate principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. From this perspective, you should firmly establish that the Lotus Sutra is the most profound among all the Buddha’s teachings.” WND, p.479

**The great desire of making all people happy is a humanistic manifestation of the life of the Buddha.**

The inflexible belief that only human beings are noble and worthy of respect can lead to **“anthropocentrism”** which disparages and takes away value from other living beings. All living beings are entities of the Mystic Law and as such are equal. In that sense, all forms of life are connected to the Mystic Law and therefore, endowed with the Buddha nature. This is expounded in the doctrine of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, which explains that all living beings of the Ten Worlds inherently possess the state of Buddha.

Among all forms of life, human beings are the only ones capable of manifesting the strength of Buddhahood in their personality and actions. That’s why, the decisive factor is the heart, the spirit.

The Gosho is, in fact, a teaching about the human heart. The key lies in practising exactly as the Gosho teaches. Anyway, Buddhist humanism is always based upon the premise of practising to transform our own lives. This could be named **“empiric humanism”** or **“transforming humanism”**. Other than the name we give it, the main thing is to take actions or carry out a practice

which is orientated towards change within ourselves and, therefore, in others.

## **BUDDHISM IS ACTION**

In a word, the Latter Day of the Law is an **“age of conflict”** a period in which everything moves towards confrontation and conflict. The inner strength to resist the trend of the time comes from the firm conviction in the fact that both we as well as others possess the potential of Buddhahood. And the practice of respecting others comes down to acting based upon this conviction.

*Kosen-rufu* consists in expanding the network of people who share that vision and go forward towards it. It was the Daishonin who started the current of *kosen-rufu* in order to reverse the current of this **“age of conflict”**.

**“The deeper the roots, the more prolific the branches. The farther the source, the longer the stream.”**<sup>2</sup> The Daishonin states that his struggle is the root and the source of the movement to lead people to happiness during the ten thousands years of the Latter Day of the Law.<sup>3</sup> The truth is, he made it possible for the flood of *Kosen-rufu* to flow from the

most essential level, that which connects us with the Buddha nature latent in our life.

*Kosen-rufu* will only be possible when, through firm faith in the Mystic Law, we win over the fundamental darkness lying at the core of all conflicts and discord. Throughout the *Gosho*, the Daishonin states that the flow of *Kosen-rufu* originates from **“The great desire for widespread propagation”**<sup>4</sup>

Buddhism is a teaching concerned with action. This means that we must make a personal determination and then act accordingly to honour that commitment without hesitating in the face of any obstacles that may arise. If we are not fighting to open a way towards progress there is no way we can call what we are doing **“Buddhist practice”**. We can only enter the path of the Buddha through tireless effort, through practice and study, based upon the same determination that the Buddha upheld.

The great desire of making all people happy is a humanistic manifestation of the life of the Buddha. That’s why we are able to understand it and adopt it as our own.

2) WND, p. 736. “On Repaying Debts of Gratitude”

3) The Gosho “On Repaying Debts of Gratitude” states: “If Nichiren’s compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myohorenge-kyo 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.”. WND, p.736. “On Repaying Debts of Gratitude”

4) See WND, p.217.