

## **The Brilliant Light of Humanistic Philosophy (4)**

# **Basing Ourselves on the Writings of Nichiren Daishonin—Our Hearts Resounding with the Lion’s Roar of Shared Struggle!**

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Hello everyone! My name is Sachie Motohashi and I will be presenting the study material for the April study meeting. This lecture from Ikeda Sensei is titled “Basing Ourselves on the Writings of Nichiren Daishonin – Our Hearts Resounding with the Lion’s Roar of Shared Struggle!”

I hope you and members in your district have been enjoying this new series since January.

In this instalment, Ikeda Sensei highlights the importance of Nichiren Daishonin’s writings, referred to as “Gosho” in Japanese. Gosho means “honorific writings” and refers to the collection of the Daishonin’s works and individual letters and treaties he wrote. In your district study meetings, if there are guests, new practitioners or younger members, it may be beneficial for senior members to share their experience in reading the gosho and the impact it has had on their lives. Sensei does so at the beginning of this lecture when he says:

Hearing Mr. Toda’s lectures always inspired me to study further on my own. When I returned home late at night after Gakkai activities, though tired, I would push myself to read the Gosho. Reading just a single page flooded my heart with the light of hope, filled me with courage to take on fresh challenges, and roused a surge of strength to win again tomorrow. I would record inspiring passages from the Gosho in my diary. In addition, many times in the midst of our shared struggles, I also read the Gosho with close seniors in faith and other fellow members.

I can just imagine Ikeda Sensei doing just so!

Although Sensei refers to Gosho lectures, the way we engage with the Gosho in the

district may be different. In my own district, in advance to the study meeting, we split up the study material into various parts and we take turns presenting our parts, adding relevant experiences and guidance along the way. In this way, we all get to share our impressions, what we found encouraging and struggles and victories in our daily lives.

Sensei states that the two Goshō passages from this lecture inspired members to develop their faith and take action for kosen-rufu.

The first Goshō passage in this lecture is from a Goshō titled “Reply to the Lay Nun Nichigōn”.

**I placed the written petition, dated the eighth day of the eleventh month [November 8] in the third year of Koan (1280), in which you [the lay nun Nichigōn] expressed your prayer, along with your offerings of one thousand coins and an unlined robe made of thread spun from bark fibre, before the Lotus Sutra [the Gohonzon], and I spoke to the gods of the sun and moon about it. Now there is no need to attempt to surmise yourself how things will go. Whether or not your prayer is answered will depend on your faith; [if it is not] I will in no way be to blame.**

**When water is clear, the moon is reflected. When the wind blows, the trees shake. Our minds are like the water. Faith that is weak is like muddy water, while faith that is brave is like clear water. Understand that the trees are like [the Buddhist] principles, and the wind that shakes them is like the recitation of the sutra [Lotus Sutra]. (WND-1, 1079; “Reply to the Lay Nun Nichigōn”)**

It is a very short Goshō – just two paragraphs in total. The recipient is thought to have been either the relative of a central figure among the believers or the mother of a priest who converted to Nichiren Daishōnin’s teachings.

Through this letter, we learn that the lay nun Nichigōn had strong and steady faith and had written to the Daishōnin about an earnest wish she hoped to realize. The Daishōnin tells her that he will pray for its fulfillment but “Whether or not your prayer is answered will depend on your faith; [if it is not] I will in no way be to blame”. He continues on to say:

The Gohonzon possesses the immeasurable and boundless power of the Buddha and power of the Law. But it is our own faith—our power of faith and power of practice—that matters. That is what enables us to actually manifest the limitless power of the Mystic Law, the fundamental law permeating the entire universe; to show actual proof of its benefit; and to embody it in our own lives.

We all have experiences of showing actual proof in this practice through prayer. However, when we are in the midst of a struggle, when the victory feels so far away, it can feel so impossible. It is during this time that we can rely on our fellow practitioners to encourage us and chant with us. I know I have done so many times. The simple message of “I’m thinking of you” or “Do you want to chant together” can instill hope and courage, willing us to sit in front of the Gohonzon. Ikeda Sensei says:

[The Daishonin] also likens the principles of Buddhism to trees and the practice of reciting the Lotus Sutra to the wind that stirs the trees. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo before the Gohonzon for our own and others’ happiness, and striving based on the Daishonin’s writings will open the way to a life of victory rich with benefit, in which all our desires are fulfilled.

The second Goshō passage is from a Goshō titled “Letter from Sado”. His intention for this letter was to dispel any fear and doubt in his disciples’ hearts after being nearly executed during the Tatsunokuchi Persecution and being exiled to Sado Island.

**There are also those who appeared to believe in me, but began doubting when they saw me persecuted. They not only have forsaken the Lotus Sutra, but also actually think themselves wise enough to instruct me. The pitiful thing is that these perverse people must suffer in the Avichi hell [the hell of incessant suffering] even longer than the Nembutsu believers.**

**An asura contended that the Buddha taught only eighteen elements, but that he himself expounded nineteen. The non-Buddhist teachers claimed that the Buddha offered only one way to enlightenment, but that they had ninety-five. In the same way, the renegade disciples say, “Though the priest Nichiren is our teacher, he is too forceful. We will spread the Lotus Sutra in a more peaceful way.” In so asserting, they are being as ridiculous as fireflies laughing at the sun and moon, an anthill belittling Mount Hua, wells and brooks despising the river and the ocean, or a magpie mocking a**

**phoenix. (WND-1, 306; “Letter from Sado”)**

This Gosho passage may be trickier to understand as it contains some more names and terms that may be new to some. It may be beneficial to explain terms such as “Avichi hell”, “Nembutsu believers”, “asura” and “Mount Hua”. You can always access the website: [Nichiren library.org](http://Nichirenlibrary.org) for the online Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism.

The criticism the practitioners voiced during the Daishonin’s time is paralleled to when first and second Soka Gakkai presidents experienced persecutions and disciples abandoned their faith. Ikeda Sensei shares that:

Mr. Makiguchi used to say: “To be despised by fools is the greatest honour.” And he called out to his disciples: “Give me a single lion over a thousand sheep!”

Mr. Toda, declaring that “a lion seeks no companion,” stood up alone to fulfill the great vow of spreading the Mystic Law and launched an unprecedented struggle for kosen-rufu.

Soka mentors and disciples are a gathering of lion kings. Heartily laughing off shallow criticisms, we forge ahead boldly and vigorously with the “heart of a lion king,” advancing as brightly and vibrantly as the rising sun.

These two Gosho passages illustrate the strength and courage of practitioners. Certain Gosho passages resonate with us deeply and I encourage you to find and share a passage or passages that can be a source of hope for you.

I recall a time when I suddenly received terrible news over the phone. I was alone and although devastated, mystically, a Gosho passage where Nichiren states “But still I am not discouraged” emerged in my head. It helped me pull myself out of the deep sadness that the news had brought and as soon as I got home, I sat in front of the Gohonzon and managed to muster the courage to have hope.

There are many meaningful passages that have been sources of encouragement when we need it the most. I hope that you have a wonderful study meeting, and can take the opportunity to share how the Gosho is not just study material but a source of great hope and encouragement! If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out at [study@sgicanada.org](mailto:study@sgicanada.org)