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SACRED WORDS

Amitabha Buddha went to the Far West when he became a Buddha, while Sakyamuni stayed here, a land of patience.

Nichiren, *Joren-bo goshō*

Patience

By Rev. Shokai Kanai

Patience is written “忍” in Japanese and read “*nin.*” This character could be divided into an upper and lower portion. The upper character symbolizes a sword while the bottom is one’s mind. When one’s mind is not settled, the sword will come down and cut your mind. It not only cuts your mind but also hurts other people’s minds and bodies.

Buddhism teaches that this world is the land of patience. All living beings on the earth are always evolving, but they must learn to be patient during this process of evolution. According to Chapter Seven of the Lotus Sutra, during the era of the Great-Universal-Wisdom-Excellence Tathagata, Amitabha Buddha attained Buddhahood and went to the West, while Sakyamuni chose this earth for his world to expound the true dharma for the sake of all the suffering people.

In Chapter Eleven of the Lotus Sutra, Sakyamuni Buddha said that he is going to enter Nirvana soon and asked the congregation, “Who will expound the Lotus Sutra on this earth?” In Chapter Thirteen, 500 *Arahats* proudly spoke up and said, “We will do it but in some other world rather than this Saha-World because people of this Saha-World are arrogant and have few merits. They are angry, defiled, ready to flatter others and insincere.” Sakyamuni Buddha did not respond to them.

In other words, this is the place for us to endure patiently towards anger, defilement, flattery and insincerity. By being able to endure these matters, we will be able to evolve mentally and spiritually.

“*KIRERU*” or “To cut” is a new terminology for a mentally unstable person when he or she suddenly acts very violently. The original meaning of *kireru* is one’s state of mind above the limit of patience. Recent random shootings in America may be the result of either him or her not trying to take control of his or her rational minds and letting emotions dictate action.

Not only for these criminals but we too should all practice to be patient. In the last issue of *RADIANCE*, I mentioned that when you clean your house or yard, you will

change and that when you change, others will change. Even though you sometimes are lazy and want to avoid cleaning, you must continue to clean everyday and on a regular basis. The first step in becoming a Buddhist priest is to clean the altar, rooms, temple, and yard everyday. Even though the areas may seem clean, the priest to be must do this practice every day.

After cleaning is finished, the trainee must sit on his or her heels and sits up straight and then chanting practice starts. It is very important for the trainee to sit in that position during chanting practice. Lifestyles in Japan recently have dramatically changed as the younger generation do not sit on the floor as much and sit on chairs and sofas. As a result, many young priests cannot sit on floor in *seiza* style for more than a half hour.

The *seiza* style sitting is not only practiced by Buddhist priests but also by most Japanese traditions like tea ceremony and flower arrangement. They both start with sitting *seiza*. Even martial arts will start with sitting on the floor. All martial arts training halls enshrine one or a few Japanese gods at their most honorable place. Before they practice their daily training, the teacher and students sit on floor on their heels and bow towards the martial art gods and then to their teacher. They do the same bowing after finishing their training. Even Christians have to bow, otherwise he or she may be refused to be able to participate in martial arts at the hall.

When you sit up straight and inhale and exhale, you become more relaxed. I recommend that you to sit up straight on the floor and chant without moving your legs for at least ten minutes or so. This is a good start in training to become patient. This is also true for those practitioners in tea ceremony and floral arrangement.

Cleaning and sitting straight are good tools in training yourself in patience. I hope that we can promote security and peace of society through learning patience.

STUDY CLASS

By Rev. Shoda Douglas Kanai

Over these past several months in the Study Class on the Lotus Sutra, I have slowly gained the insight of the true teaching. It is extremely difficult to comprehend and sort through the esoteric language presented. What is one million *sumeru* worlds? What about lands adorned with lapis lazuli and lion like seats five hundred *yojanas* tall? Such incomprehensible descriptions can seem mystifying. It is only when I am able to step back and have my Buddha Consciousness take over that the words have greater meaning and I begin to comprehend the texts

Each class takes a chapter and breaks down the main components and expands on the meaning or is clarified. This makes it easier to learn, bit by bit. It is when we refer

back to the Senchu Murano version and highlight certain passages that it seems like the words are jumping off the page and into my mind. I feel as though the texts are alive and speaking to me. As I go through each phrase or verse, I get an “A-ha” moment; a moment of clarity, “So this is what it means!” or “Wow!” Slowly everything is starting to make sense. I can see where Nichiren Daishonin has taken passages and used it in his various letters. I also see areas where he justifies the importance of the Lotus Sutra and how he says that he is living embodiment of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Daishonin endured many persecutions and beatings for his beliefs. He was steadfast and with strong faith preached the Lotus Sutra to all. There are passages where it clearly states how difficult it is in spreading the true teaching. There will be many jealous people trying to stop and prevent the true teaching to be known. But, the Buddha also states that anyone who copies, keeps, reads, recites, makes offerings and expounds this sutra will be “covered by my robe. He also will be protected by the Buddhas of the other worlds.” Needless to say, Nichiren Daishonin knew that he had a mission to spread the true teaching, even at the threat of death. Deep down though, he knew as a true believer he would always be protected by the Buddha.

As I continue to study, I feel as though there is a fundamental understanding of the Lotus Sutra in my sub-conscious. It is like I have heard this all before. My father states that we are currently studying the Lotus Sutra because we have received it in our previous lives. The Lotus Sutra is difficult to hear and understand. It is not for everyone. Therefore, I feel special in being able to study the Lotus Sutra and the true teachings of the Buddha. Hopefully by being able to turn inward and tap into the sub-conscious mind, I can bring forward all my knowledge of the Lotus Sutra to consciousness to help me gain a greater understanding so that I may be able to spread the teachings to you.

(If you would like to receive the lectures of each chapter, please contact the temple. Rev. Shokai Kanai will send you the copy by e-mail.)

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