

## Chapter 20

### Never-Despising Bodhisattva

Lecture #44 (August 10, 2011)

Lecture #45 (August 24, 2011)

#### SUMMARY

The previous chapter revealed that those who keep, read, recite, expound, or copy the Lotus Sutra will be able to obtain eight hundred merits of the eye, nose, and body and twelve hundred merits of the ear, tongue, and mind. Thus, we are encouraged to do the five practices (of keeping, reading, reciting, expounding, and copying the Lotus Sutra). On the other hand, this chapter reveals the practice of bowing to others without performing the above mentioned five practices. Never-Despising Bodhisattva kept the practice of only bowing to the four kinds of devotees and praising them, saying, "I respect you deeply. I do not despise you because you will be able to practice the Way of Bodhisattvas and become Buddhas." In actuality, Never-Despising Bodhisattva was Sakyamuni Buddha himself in his previous existence. Although this chapter seems not to encourage doing the five practices, it says, "If I (the Buddha) had not kept, read or recited this sutra or expounded it to others in my previous existence, I should not have been able to attain the Buddhahood."

#### EXPLANATIONS

**"Anyone who speaks ill of or abuses or slanders the bhiksus, bhikusunis, upasakas or upasikas who keep the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, will incur the retributions previously stated." (P.285, LL.5~8):**

Bhiksus are male priests and monks. Bhikusunis are nuns. Upasakas are laymen while upasikas are laywomen.

In Chapter 3, "A Parable," it says, "In my lifetime or after my extinction, some will slander this sutra and despise the person who reads or recites or copies or keeps this sutra. When their present lives end, they will fall into the Avici Hell. They will live there for a kalpa and will have their rebirth in the same hell. Their rebirth will be repeated for innumerable kalpas." (See P. 81) Avici means no interval. Those who fall into Avici Hell will constantly receive pain and suffering for thousands of years. Therefore, we should not speak ill of our Dharma friends, otherwise we may fall into the Avici Hell after death.

**"At that time there lived a Bodhisattva called Never-Despising. He took the form of a bhiksu. Great-Power-Obtainer! Why this bhiksu was called Never- Despising? It was because every time he saw bhiksus, bhikusunis, upasakas or upasikas, he bowed to them and praised them, saying, 'I respect you deeply. I do not despise you. Why is that? It is because you will be able to practice the Way of Bodhisattvas and become Buddhas.' He did not read or recite sutras." (P.286, LL.21~29)**

It is not easy to bow at people and praise them by saying, "I respect you deeply. I do not despise you. It is because you will be able to practice the way of Bodhisattvas and become

Buddhas." Why could he do that? Never-Despising Bodhisattva probably bowed at one's Buddha nature. When we face the Gohonzon and bow, the Gohonzon bows to us, too, because the names of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities, disciples and other people are written on both sides of the Odaimoku, just as we put our right and left palms together. The Gohonzon is written more like a mirror image although names written left and right sides are different; they are the names of the same levels among the Ten Realm of our minds.

"I respect you and never despising you" is Nichiren Shu's propagation campaign this year and next three years. Its sub-campaign is to respect any lives; therefore, we practice not to kill any living being in vain and have grace before meal to respect all lives of food.

**"When he said this, people would strike him with a stick, a piece of wood, a piece of tile or a stone. He would run away to a distance, and say in a loud voice from afar, 'I do not despise you. You will become Buddhas.'" (P. 287, LL.6~9):**

Why did the bodhisattva bow as he did even though others tried to harm him with a stick, a tile, or a piece of stone? It was because he wished them to make "*en*" or be in a relationship with the Buddha's teachings. It was the cultivation of Buddha Seeds within themselves. Even though others speak ill of, abuse, or slander the Dharma-Practitioner at least, they make contact with him, a practitioner of the sutra. In the prelude to Nichiren Shu service, we always read "Kaikyo-ge," Verses for Opening the Sutra, which contains the following sentence: "All beings, believing or even slandering the teaching, shall attain their Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra." Those who slander the Lotus Sutra will be also saved with the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, that is, the teaching of Everyone Is Able to Attain Buddhahood."

**"When he was about to pass away, he heard a voice in the sky, which was the twenty thousand billion gathas of the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, which had been expounded by the Powerful-Voice-King Buddha. Having kept all these gathas, he was able to have his eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind purified as previously stated." (P.287, LL.11~16):**

"A voice in the sky" means a voice from the spiritual realm that transcends place and time. It is a voice from the eternal world, a voice from the universe. It is important for a dying person to hear the voice of our chanting of the sutra and the Odaimoku. Reverend Shokai Kanai always explains to members of his temple to chant the Odaimoku at someone's deathbed. Even after someone has passed away, he tells the family of the deceased to have a pillow service at the side of the deceased as soon as possible. It says that the sense of hearing maintains even after the heart beat stops. By chanting the sutra and Odaimoku, the six senses of the deceased will be purified.

**"Having his sense-organs purified, he was able to prolong his life for two hundred billions nayuta more years. (P. 287, LL.16~17):**

Even though all human beings are in the cycle of birth and death countless times, one whose six sense organs are purified is able to live long in the spiritual realm without the sufferings of worldly matters. He stays in the spiritual realm for a LONG time.

**"The Never-Despising Bodhisattva at that time was no one but me. If I had not kept, read, or recited this sutra or expounded it to others in my previous existence, I should not have been able to attain Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi so quickly. (P.288, LL.7~11):**

The Never-Despising Bodhisattva was a previous existence of Gautama Siddhartha who became a Buddha. Chapter 19 explains to us to exercise the five practices after the Buddha's extinction while Chapter 20 reveals the bodhisattva who never exercises the five practices. However, the above quotation explains to us that without the practices in his previous lives, the Never-Despising Bodhisattva would not have been able to attain Buddhahood so quickly. Therefore, we must still keep, read, recite, expound, and copy the Lotus Sutra for quicker attainment of Buddhahood.

**"The four kinds of devotees who always abused that Bodhisattva at that time are now present here in this congregation in the persons of the Five Hundred Bodhisattvas, bhiksunis and upasakas. Now they do not falter in seeking Anuttara-Samyak-Sambodhi." (P.288, LL.22~28):**

The four kinds of devotees (500 of them) in the congregation were former abusers and slanderers against the Never-Despising Bodhisattva. Although they were in hell, they had made "*en*" or a contact with the Lotus Sutra, and they were able to listen to the Buddha Sakyamuni preaching the Lotus Sutra. It was their karma. Whether they believed or slandered, they shall attain Buddhahood through this sutra. We might also have been slanders before, but we are fortunately now able to attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra.

In your daily lives, there may be some conflict among members of your family or at your work. At that time, you may not be able to bow to your parents, spouse, a child, or a co-worker by putting your palms together *in gassho*. But try to do so when they are not facing you, then you can do it. Put your palms together in respectful position behind the person, you can do it. Because of your changed attitude of respecting them, they will change their attitude, too. Respect each other. It is the teaching of the Never Despising Bodhisattva.

The spirit of the Never-Despising Bodhisattva is to respect everyone regardless of one's race, religion, education, age, background, and others. The history of human being has sought to establish a peaceful, secure and ideal land on this earth. All religions, ideologies, and countries sought for the same goal; however, if one insists superiority than others, he or she or it disrespects others then turns to fighting and killing. The Lotus Sutra always emphasizes that everyone is equal because he or she has Buddha nature or a seed to become a Buddha who is an ideal person. The Never-despising Bodhisattva was the former life of the Buddha. If everyone practices the spirit of the bodhisattva, the peaceful, secure, and ideal land will be establish on this earth. Thus to respect others is fundamental practice for world peace and security.