

Chapter 14

PEACEFUL PRACTICE

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Summary

Chapter 14 is the last chapter of the *shakumon*迹門 (Buddha does not yet reveal his eternal nature, but appears as a being bound by limitations of time and space or through the teaching by the historical Buddha. The historical Buddha is emphasized from Chapter 1 to 14.

Let us review the past several chapters. In Chapter 10, “The Teacher of the Dharma,” the Buddha explains how profound it is to teach the Lotus Sutra to others and requests someone to expound this sutra after his death. In Chapter 11, “Beholding the Stupa of Treasures,” Many-Treasure Buddha appeared from the underground, went into the sky and proved the truth of the sutra. Sakyamuni and Many-Treasure Buddha sat side by side inside the stupa and again were requested to expound the Lotus Sutra three times. In Chapter 12, “Devadatta,” Sakyamuni gave assurance of attaining Buddhahood even to Devadatta who was a representation of evil and also gave assurance of attaining Buddhahood to an eight year old daughter of the Dragon King. Enlightenment was possible due to the result of practicing the sutra in their previous lives. Thus, the Buddha proved how important and valuable it was to expound the teachings of the sutra.

In Chapter 13, “Encouragement for Keeping The Sutra,” Medicine-King Bodhisattva and another twenty thousand Bodhisattvas vowed to Sakyamuni Buddha that they would keep, read, recite and expound the Lotus Sutra, but they said they would do so in some other worlds rather than on this earth. They said this because the people of this world have many evils. They did not have much patient for the evil people. Then, there were eighty billion nayuta of bodhisattvas who made up their minds to expound the sutra and vowed to endure any physical hardship or persecution on this earth. They were very patient and ready to expound the sutra even at the cost of their lives. Thus, Chapter 13 discusses the hardship for the preachers and teachers of the Dharma.

In contrast, Chapter 14 tends to emphasize the preachers' spiritual readiness for those in the beginner's stage. They should not seek glory, vanity, selfish profit, and so forth. They must practice the four kinds of peaceful practices of **body, mouth, mind** and **vows**.

Explanations

Manjusri says, “They made a great vow to protect, keep, read, recite and expound this Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma in the evil world after your extinction because they are following you respectfully.” (P.210, LL.6~9)

This phrase is the continuation from the preceding chapter. Seeing Yasodhara Bhikusuni’s assurance of attaining Buddhahood by the Buddha, the eighty billion nayuta Bodhisattva-mahasattvas vowed to the Buddha. Although they have reached the stage of firm practice, they are still beginners; therefore, Manjusri asked the following question to the Buddha: Question: **“World-Honored One! How should an ordinary Bodhisattva-mahasattva expound this sutra in the evil world after your extinction?”** (P.210, LL.9~11)

Answer: **“The Buddha said to Manjusri Bodhisattva, ‘A Bodhisattva who wishes to expound this sutra in the evil world after my extinction should practice four sets of things.’”** (P.210, LL.13~15)

The Four Sets of Peaceful Practice to Expound the Sutra 弘經の四安樂行

1. Peaceful practice of the body
2. Peaceful practice of the mouth
3. Peaceful practice of the mind
4. Peaceful practice of the vows

Peaceful Practice of the Body 身安樂行

“He should not approach kings, princes, ministers or other government directors. He should not approach heretics, aspirants for the teaching of Brahman, Nirgranthas, writers of worldly literature, writers of non-Buddhist songs or praise, ...” (P.210, LL.26~the end of page)

There are two practices of the body - Performing proper practices 行処 (*gyo-sho*) and approaching proper people 親近処 (*shingon-sho*). Performing proper practices mean that the preachers should always practice the virtue of patience, be mild and meek for the sake of the Buddha Dharma. They should not be rash and timorous. They should not attach themselves to anything, nor should they not be attached to non-attachment.

Because we trust the Buddha’s true teachings and his original vow to save all sentient beings, we are able to be patient. We must always keep in our mind not to exceed one way or the other.

Approaching Proper People 親近處

1. A preacher should avoid people with great political power, such as kings, ministers, or other high government officials.
2. He should not approach those who preach heresy, or who waste time writing about worldly affairs.
3. He should not approach people who entertain the public by risking their lives or the lives of others.
4. He should not approach those who make their living by killing living beings.
5. He should not approach, question or should not stay with any persons who seek the teaching of the Lesser Vehicle. If he is approached by them, he should expound the Dharma with moderation, but not request any payment.
6. He should not expound the Dharma to any woman he desires.
7. He should not approach eunuchs.
8. He should never enter anyone's house uninvited.
9. He should not be too friendly with a woman, even to expound the Dharma to her.
10. He should not keep young children with him.

These rules sound discriminatory, but it is not so. These are for the preachers' attitude of the mind; that is to say, not to be influenced by those people, to avoid being too friendly and not to echo these people's opinions. The Lotus Sutra is the teaching of equality; therefore, we must teach the Dharma to everyone, but we must be careful not to be influenced by these people's earthly opinions.

“The Bodhisattva also should know the following truth. *All things are insubstantial* 空. They are as they are. Things are not perverted. They do not move. They do not go. They do not turn. They have nothing substantial just as the sky has not.” (P.211, Last Paragraph)

The Bodhisattva who preaches for salvation of other people must comprehend the doctrine that *Nothing Is Eternal*, he should not be attached to this doctrine **only**, because there is also the Eternal Teaching ("*Myo-Ho*") and the Eternal Buddha. The Lotus Sutra emphasizes the transcendental equality among differences, and the differences within equality. Everyone's potentiality of attaining Buddhahood is the teaching of equality, but we must realize that there are many different ways to lead people to Buddhahood.

Peaceful Practice of the Mouth 口安樂行

“Second, Manjusri! A Bodhisattva who wishes to expound this sutra in the decline of the teaching after my extinction should not point out the faults of other people or sutras. He should not despise other teachers of the Dharma. He should not peak of good points or bad points or the merits or demerits of others. ...” (P.216, First Paragraph)

This paragraph explains the Peaceful Practice of the Mouth. They are:

1. A preacher of this sutra should not point out the faults of other sutras or their adherents.
2. They should not despise other preachers of the Dharma.
3. They should not speak of either the merits or the demerits of the preachers, and should not mention "hearers" by name when criticizing their teachings or even when praising them.
4. They should not feel hostile toward anybody and should freely answer any questions addressed to them.

In Senchu Murano's translation, the word "*negate*" in the Kumarajiva's translation is missing. "*Negatte*" means pleasure or desire as in "*I am superior to another*", but it contains the meaning that one must point out his or her mistakes as well.

The preacher must not joyfully point out the faults of others and must not joyfully despise other preachers, but he or she must point out the mistakes of others. Nichiren Daishonin criticized other sects and priests; however, he never belittled other sects or priests. He uses respectful or honorable words to address them. For comparison, Kubota Tsugunami and Yuyama Akira translated the same sentence: "When he expounds or recites this Sutra he should not take pleasure in talking about the faults of people or of the Sutra." Bunno Kato translates it: "He takes no pleasure in telling of the error of others of the sutras." They use the terms, "not take pleasure" or "he takes no pleasure" for the term, "*negatte*." The point is for us to never criticize others joyfully.

Peaceful Practice of the Mind 意安樂行

“Again, Manjusri! A Bodhisattva ... should not nurse jealousy against others or flatter or deceive them. He should not despise those who study the Way to Buddhahood.” (P.218, Fourth Paragraph)

This paragraph explains the peaceful practices of the mind, maintaining the right mental attitude while expounding the Lotus Sutra. There are four points:

1. A Bodhisattva must not be jealous of others, or flatter them or deceive them.
2. He should not despise anyone who studies the way to Buddhahood by any other method, speak ill of them or point out their faults.
3. He should not disturb or perplex those who seek any of the Three Vehicles and never tell them, "You are far from enlightenment. You cannot attain the knowledge of the equality and differences of all things because you are licentious and lazy in seeking enlightenment."
4. He should not get involved in meaningless quarrels with the followers of other schools of thought.

If one does this third peaceful practice, he or she will be able to expound the Dharma without disturbance. This method is called "*sho-ju*" in Japanese.

Shoju (摺受) is to lead and to convince them by respectfully accepting and understanding their viewpoints and situations. But this does not mean compromising the truth.

On the other hand, *Shakubuku* (折伏) is the way to approach opponents, the way to show them their errors, and the way to make them awaken to their illusions. *Shoju* and *Shakubuku* are the two opposite attitudes in leading sentient beings: the *passive* and *aggressive*.

Both aspects, *Shoju* and *Shakubuku*, can be seen harmoniously interrelated depending on the time and the situation of the hearers' level of understanding. The Lotus Sutra reveals both attitudes; *Shoju* is seen in Chapter 14, while Aggressive preaching or *Shakubuku*, in Chapters 13 and 20. Although the two methods seem to be entirely different, they have the same goal - to save others. In our times, the way of *shoju* seems more appropriate, but it must be flavored with the spirit of *shakubuku*. Either way depends on personal preference because some people enjoy debate while others like mutual discussion.

Peaceful Practice of the Vow 誓願安樂行

“Again, Manjusri! A Bodhisattva ... should have great loving-kindness towards laymen and monks, and great compassion towards those who are not Bodhisattvas.” (P.220, Third Paragraph):

This paragraph explains the peaceful practices of resolution. The preacher should have great loving-kindness toward both clergy and laity as well as great compassion toward those who are not Buddhists. The reason is that people do not understand that the Buddha uses expedient teachings according to the capacities of listeners; otherwise, they will neither believe it nor understand it. Therefore, when a Bodhisattva attains supreme-perfect-enlightenment, he or she will resolve to lead all people to the Lotus Sutra by means of his acquired supernatural powers and wisdom, to guide those who do not understand to the meaning of the Dharma.

Thus, we must vow to lead all sentient beings to Buddhahood with great compassion that the listeners are able to trust the preachers. At the end of services we often make a vow in *The Four Great Vows*, "Sentient being are innumerable, I vow to save them all." Because of these vows and practice to expound the teachings of the Buddha, the deities protect us.

Protection by Heavenly Being Day and Night 諸天晝夜常為法故爾衛護之

“The gods in the sky will always serve him in order to hear the Dharma from him. ... the gods will protect him day and night for the sake of the Dharma so that the hearer may rejoice because this sutra was, is and will be protected by the supernatural powers of the past, present and future Buddhas.” (P.220, LL.27~33)

When we behave immorally, we do not follow the laws of the universe and do not practice righteousness, then, gods will leave us; thus all kinds of disasters will happen. In 13th century Japan, many disasters happened such as big earthquakes, big fires, extremely strong winds, famines and plagues occurring one after another.

Seeing these disasters, Nichiren Daishonin wrote to submit a warning to the Kamakura Military Government to follow the path of righteousness. The warning letter is called ‘Rissho Ankoku Ron.’ In this letter he described that many strange phenomena in the sky, natural calamities on earth and epidemics spread throughout Japan were caused by the leaders of Japan not following the path of righteousness. Oxen and horses lay dead at crossroads and the streets were filled with skeletons. Many lost their lives and the survivors suffered dearly from these disasters. The majority of the population perished and all were stricken with grief. The Shogunate ordered Buddhist Temples and Shinto Shrines to pray for recovery. However, there were no signs of improvement.

‘*Rissho*’ means to establish the right teaching, that is, to believe in the Lotus Sutra. ‘*Ankoku*’ refers to guiding Japan and all countries to pursue the path to peace by establishing a world of the Buddha. It does not aim to merely protect countries, but to make them peaceful (without fighting) and to bring spiritual tranquility. Nichiren’s wish was to make this world the Buddha Land through faith in the Lotus Sutra.

As Nichiren’s followers, we must practice righteousness revealed in the sutra. He simplified the practice by chanting the sacred title of the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, that is, “NAMU MYO-HO REN-GE KYO.” ‘*Namu*’ means devotion to chant the sacred title. The chanting of the sacred title is referred to *O-daimoku*. This means to vow and to follow the universal laws; therefore, deities in the sky will come listening to the chanting and wish to hear the contents of the sutra. By listening to the righteous teachings of the universe, gods protect those of us who practice the sutra.

The Lotus Sutra is the supreme teaching, superior to any other sutras; therefore, even gods wish to hear the one true teaching. The Buddha explained this through a parable as follows:

A Parable of a Brilliant Gem in the Top-knot 頭頂宝珠のたとえ

“Suppose a powerful wheel-turning-holy-king, demanded surrender of the kings of smaller countries by threat of force. They did not obey his demand. He led soldiers and went and suppressed them. He was very glad to see that some soldiers distinguished themselves in war. According to their merits, he gave them paddyfields, houses, villages, cities, garments or ornaments; or various treasures. ... But he did not give a brilliant gem which he was keeping in his top-knot to anyone because the gem on the head of the king was the only one in the world. If he had given it to anyone, the followers of the king would have been much surprised. (P.221, Second Paragraph)

Manjusuri! I (Buddha) am like the king. I obtained the world of the Dharma by my powers of dhyana (meditation) -concentration and of wisdom and became the king of the triple world. But the kings of the *Maras* (Evils) did not assent to my demand for surrender to me. Therefore, my army led by generals, that is, by sages and saints, fought with them. I was glad to see that some distinguished themselves in war. In order to cause them to rejoice, I expounded many sutras to the four kinds of devotees. I gave them the treasures of the Dharma such as dhyana-concentrations, emancipations, the roots without *asravas* (illusion) and the power without *asravas* and also the city of Nirvana, telling them that they had already attained extinction. Although I led them by giving these things to them and caused them to rejoice, I did not expound to them the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma. (P.221, Third Paragraph)

This Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma is the treasury of the hidden core of the Buddhas, of the *Tathagatas* (one who has followed the path). It is superior to all the other sutras. I kept it in secret and refrained from expounding it for the long night. Now I expound it to you today for the first time.” (P.222, Third Paragraph)

When we destroy our evils, illusion, and wrong views, the Buddha gives us the prize of the Lotus Sutra at the end. Sakyamuni concludes by stating the rewards which will accrue to those who uphold the Lotus Sutra in the future as follows:

**“He will not be struck with swords or sticks. He will not be poisoned.” 天諸童子以為給使
刀杖不加毒不能害 (P.224, Second Paragraph from the bottom)**

If we keep the above-mentioned four peaceful practices, gods will protect us day and night. A Nichiren Shu priest who performs *Kito* blessing always quotes the above sentences during blessing and during their prayers. Nichiren Daishonin also wrote these sentences on some Mandala Gohonzons. We remind ourselves that these Four Peaceful Practices are for the ordinary person and beginner priests, not for the well trained master of the practioner of the Lotus Sutra (法華經の行者) like Nichiren. The real practioner of the sutra must endure any hardships that befall him, such as being spoken ill of, being exiled, being threatened execution, arson and endure other perils revealed in Chapter 13. Nichiren Daishonin was the one who was the real practioner of the Lotus Sutra. All of these persecutions and hardships did befall him.

“Anyone who seeks the enlightenment of the Buddha and wishes to expound this sutra in peaceful ways after my extinction should practice these four sets of things. Anyone who reads this sutra will be free from grief, sorrow, disease or pain. His complexion will be fair. He will not be poor, humble or ugly. ... He will not be struck with swords or sticks. He will not be poisoned.”

So if we follow the four sets of practices of our bodies, minds, mouths, and vows, we will be free from grief, sorrow, disease, and pain. We will be with less sickness and less anguish. Many Nichiren Shu priests and followers tend to live longer than the average lifespan. Even the faces of the dead appear peaceful.

“He will not be struck with swords or sticks” is the complete opposite of Chapter 13 which says, “People will speak ill of us, abuse us and threatened us with swords or sticks.”(P.206) Many *kito* performing priests do not read chapter 13 to avoid the negative association which would increase the hardship that would befall on him. Thus, whether you go with *shakubuku* (aggressive) or *shoju* (passive) type of expounding the sutra, will depend on the individual, congregation and the circumstance of the society.

Chapter 14 is the end of the first half of the **Lotus Sutra** which reveals the historical Buddha Sakyamuni as a being bound by limitations of time and space of birth and death. This section is called "*Shakumon* 迹門." The last half of the sutra reveals "*Honmon* 本門" or the Buddha's eternal nature. All Buddhist denominations except Nichiren Buddhists remain with the historical Buddha Sakyamuni, because they have yet to learn about the concept of the Eternal Buddha. Instead, they bring Amitabha 阿彌陀Buddha and Maha-Vairocana 大日Buddha as their true saviors. Only Buddha Sakyamuni has the three virtues of the Buddha, *Dharma-kaya* 法身, *Sambhoga-kaya* 報身 and *Nirmana-kaya* 応身. Amitabha and Maha-Vairocana have never existed in our history on this earth, so they are lacking in the virtue of *Nirmana-kaya*. We will study these three virtues in later chapters.