

The Nichiren Buddhist International Center

29490 Mission Blvd.
Hayward, CA 94544

Telephone: (510) 690-1222

Fax: (510) 690-1221

Web site: www.nichiren-shu.org

E-mail: NBIC@nichiren-shu.org

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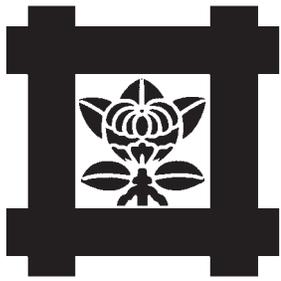
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Risshō Ankoku in the 21st Century — Creating a Peaceful and Secure Country through Establishing the Correct Teachings of Buddhism in 21st Century

**Bishop Tansei Iwama –
Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shu**

The *Risshō Ankoku Ron* (*Treatise for Creating a Peaceful and Secure Country through Establishing the Correct Teachings of Buddhism*) is one of Nichiren Shōnin's most representative works. Nichiren Shōnin's life's work began and ended with the *Risshō Ankoku Ron*, to such an extent that Nichiren Shōnin's entire life of religious propagation was based on the spirit of the *Risshō Ankoku Ron*.

The Kamakura era in Japan, when Nichiren Shōnin began propagating the Lotus Sutra, was beset with continuous natural disasters, famine, plague, and other calamities that caused great suffering to the general populace. When Nichiren Shōnin witnessed the conditions throughout his society, he questioned himself, "Why are so many continuous disasters occurring?" and "Why do the people suffer so?" These questions became the underlying reasons for Nichiren Shōnin's research and later policies, as he thought all of Japan must be saved from this suffering as soon as possible. In response to this, Nichiren Shōnin first of all, began reading all of the Buddha's sutras which resulted in him authoring the *Risshō Ankoku Ron* and at the age of 39, submitting it to the authorities of the Kamakura gunate. However, this resulted in Nichiren Shōnin having to also endure numerous hardships and persecutions, all for the sake of the Dharma.

So what are the contents of what Nichiren Shōnin was attempting to teach all of us throughout the *Risshō Ankoku Ron*? He taught us, by first establishing and adhering to the correct teachings of Buddhism that the people and entire country would begin to enjoy security. Spiritual incorrectness brings about disharmony in the environment and natural disasters occur because evil demons are



Environment • Peace • Life

able to creep into the crevices and live in the people's arrogant hearts. Furthermore, if the principle of human morality is abandoned, society falls into confusion — just as when the body bends, its shadow follows.

If correct principles are lost, a peaceful society will undoubtedly fall into disarray. The terms of “Risshō” (Establishing the Correct [Teachings of Buddhism]) and “Ankoku” (a Peaceful and Secure Country) are one entity and not to be taken as opposing entities. If the correct Dharma of Buddhism is established with its society, then that nation will become stable and secure. If you seek a tranquil country, then you must first convert the heart of all of its society into the realm of correct Buddhist teachings. The significance of the existence of Buddhism lies here. These are the main ideals behind the *Risshō Ankoku Ron*.

Happiness and unhappiness throughout the world, it is not simply a matter of examining a single person's heart, but an issue that applies to the society at large. When faced with the reality of the world facing natural disasters, calamities and war, society itself becoming ill, and all society being forced to equally endure suffering, it makes no sense to simply attempt to save a single individual. To save all the world, it becomes necessary to plant correct principles in society as well as in politics. As long as politics are not based on correct principles, a truly peaceful and secure country and society will not come about. Based on this theorem, Nichiren Shōnin remonstrated with the highest authority of the Kamakura government in an attempt to spiritually revolutionize all society, starting from the top.

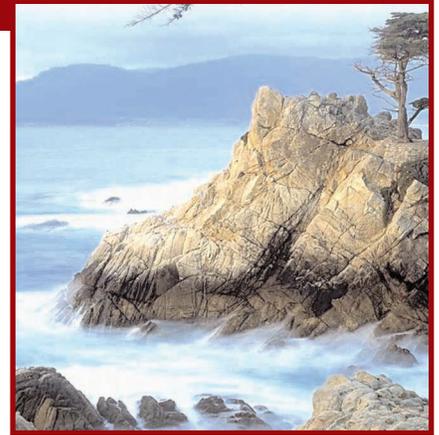
This spirit, found throughout the *Risshō Ankoku Ron*, is based on Nichiren Shōnin's great compassion and heart of empathy for all mankind. He especially felt much empathy for all those around

him. Nichiren Shōnin took on the sufferings of society and all individuals around him as his own, and it is in the *Risshō Ankoku Ron* that puts strong emphasis on the Buddhist principle of compassion which he repeated throughout his entire life. Shortly before passing away and while ill in bed, Nichiren Shōnin summoned his disciples and lectured on the *Risshō Ankoku Ron*, which demonstrates the importance of this treatise to Nichiren Shōnin.

The *Risshō Ankoku Ron* is not merely a classical literary work from 740 years ago, and should not be approached as such. It is instead, a work that should be continually read from the standpoint of modern times. Taking faith only due to natural disasters, while over-emphasizing the importance of protective deities or demons and hell, or combining religion with political authority, is nothing other than superstition and self importance.

Don't just laugh at Buddhism as being nonsense in comparison to modern civilization. Even the high caliber of our 21st Century which developed the scientific civilization of today, have not been able to resolve the following issues of: the environment and humankind, desires and happiness, correct principles (or righteousness) vs. evil ways, society and religion. In actuality, we must realize that our world has deteriorated far worse than even the 13th Century world of Nichiren Shōnin. The *Risshō Ankoku Ron* faces these issues head on and presents us with solutions, and illustrates the necessity for us to once more re-examine the dangerous conditions of our modern world.

We are striving throughout all of Nichiren Shū today to actualize the principles contained within the *Risshō Ankoku Ron*, praying for the wellbeing of all life throughout the planet, using the theme of protecting “Environment



- Peace - Life” as we promote the chanting of the *Odaimoku*. We do this as each and every one of us cares for the earth, as each and every one of us erects peace as the basis of our hearts, and as each and every one of us treasures the dignity of all life. This is something that any one can do, and I hope that you all will indeed encourage those around you to do the same.

Nichiren Shōnin stated in the *Itai Doshin Ji*, “Nothing can be accomplished by a person who is at cross-purposes with him or herself, let alone to say of hundreds of thousands of people. However, if united in spirit, your objective will, without a doubt, be obtained.”

Even though the country we live in is different, we have all embraced and carry on the very heart of our Founder, Nichiren Shōnin. Now is the time for all of us to chant the *Odaimoku* with strong faith and make great strides forward in our Buddhist faith and practice, as well as in daily life.

In closing, please allow me to offer my prayers to all to join hands together and strive to accomplish *Kaiki Myōhō* (all beings under the heavens and within the four seas returning to Myōhō Renge Kyo), the spirit of the *Risshō Ankoku Ron* and peace throughout this world.

Namu Myōhō Renge Kyo
(From Bishop Iwama's sermon at Los Angeles Temple's 90th Anniversary)

The Lotus Sutra for children

by Rev. Koge Matsumoto Translated by Rev. Shokai Kanai
 (The book was written for grandparents and parents to read to their children.
 The content is very deep but easy for all to understand.)

THE PRINCE IS ŚĀKYAMUNI BUDDHA (VOLUME 1)

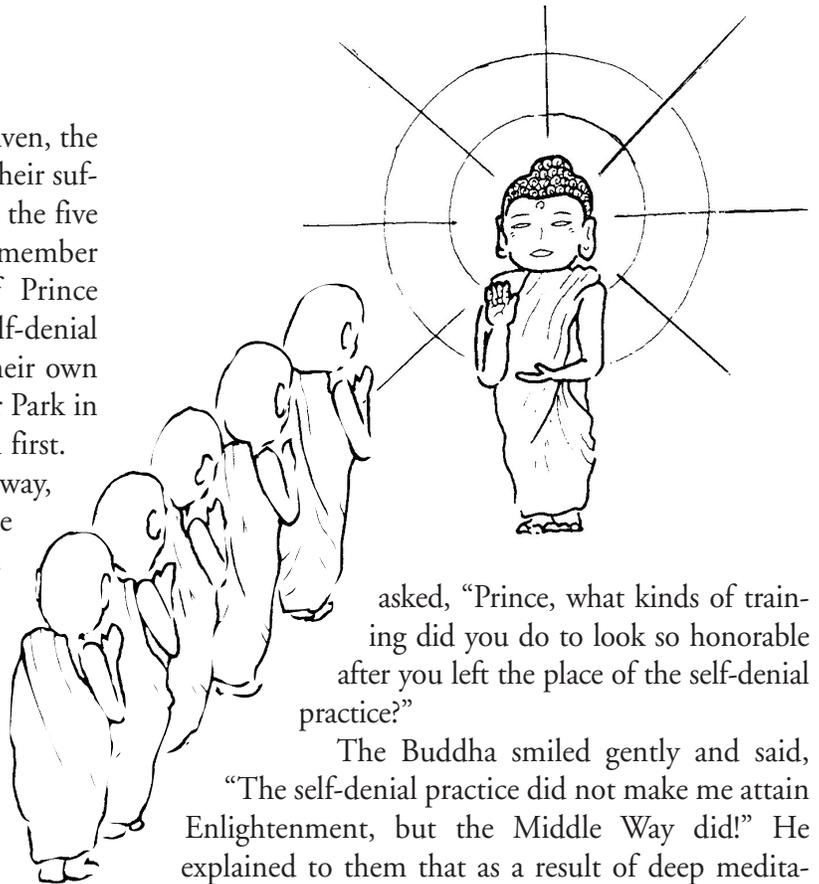
~ Chapter 17 ~ FIRST SERMON

After returning from the Realm of Heaven, the Buddha had to save the people on earth from their sufferings. Guess who He taught first? He taught the five monks including Kaunidinya. Do you remember them? They were the original servants of Prince Siddhartha. When the Prince gave up the self-denial practice, they deserted Him and continued their own practice of asceticism in the woods called Deer Park in Varanasi, India. The Buddha went to see them first. When the five monks saw the Prince from far away, they talked to each other, saying, “The Prince who could not handle the hard training and quit the self-denial practice is not worth serving any more. We have nothing to do with him. Let’s pretend not to see Him when He comes to us!”

So at first they tried not to see Him; however a strange thing happened. Against their wills, their bodies automatically moved toward the Buddha. The five monks lined up in a file and welcomed Him. They were surprised that their bodies moved without intending to. They put their palms together in Gassho and bowed to Him.

When they released their bows and looked at Him, the five monks were shocked to see the noble appearance of the Prince. He looked so different compared to the time of his self-denial practice. His whole body was dazzling with radiance. Once they worshipped Him, their angry minds and worries disappeared immediately and they felt peace.

Then, Kaunidinya, representing the five monks



asked, “Prince, what kinds of training did you do to look so honorable after you left the place of the self-denial practice?”

The Buddha smiled gently and said, “The self-denial practice did not make me attain Enlightenment, but the Middle Way did!” He explained to them that as a result of deep meditation under a Bodhi tree, he attained the One and Only Truth in the Universe and became a Buddha. The five monks were impressed with Him and were so happy they shed tears of joy. They said, “How lucky we are! We deserted you, but we are able to see you again. You are not the Prince any more but the Buddha who attained perfect Enlightenment!”

One after another, each said, “Oh, Buddha, please excuse our wrong doings and lead us with your honorable teachings.” They apologized and appreciated the Buddha coming back to them.

– Chapter 18 –

THE THREE TREASURES

The Buddha then expounded the teachings of “the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.” That is to say, one must clearly understand the Four Noble Truths in order to attain true Enlightenment. First, one must know clearly, “Life is full of all kinds of sufferings.”

Second, one should know that “The cause of suffering is to cling.” One should not cling to money, fame or even to a special person. Money changes hands. Don’t pester your parents about money too much. Don’t waste money. Resist the desire to have all sorts of things.

Third, “Destroy the desire to cling to things.” Then, your sufferings will end, and you will attain Enlightenment.

Fourth and finally, the Buddha revealed “The eight paths in order to enter a state of no suffering and not to cling.”

The Eightfold Path is:

1. Right View: to see things in the right way,
2. Right Thought: to think matters in the right way,
3. Right Speech: to talk using the right words,
4. Right Behavior: to act in the right way,
5. Right Livelihood: to make the best use of things and living beings,
6. Right Effort: to practice Buddha’s teachings in the right way,



7. Right Mindfulness: to pray in the right way,
8. Right Concentration: to repent in the right way.

The Buddha said that if you can keep and practice the Eightfold Path, you can destroy sufferings and then attain Enlightenment.

Listening to the Buddha, the five monks rejoiced with tears and thanked Him. “Oh, Buddha, we would like to express our appreciation from the bottom of our hearts. Until now, we thought our way of practice was the best, but we understand that we were clinging to the self-denial practice and could not understand the right way to be free from suffering and distress. Please make us your first disciples. We would like to serve you and hear from you more. We sincerely beg of you. Please feel pity for us and let us be your disciples!” Of course the Buddha delightedly accepted their requests. They were always near the Buddha and listened to Him until his death at the age of 80.

The first sermon at Deer Park is called “The First Turning Wheel of the Dharma,” which means that as a wheel turns and goes from place to place, Buddha’s teachings spread from place to place. When the Buddha explained the teachings to the people, the Three Treasures were established. They are the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

The most important among the three is the Buddha, who is Buddha Śākyamuni. The second is the Buddha’s teachings such as the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. This is called Dharma, or Law. The third is the Sangha, who were the five monks, but now includes all Buddha’s disciples, priests and followers.

The Three Treasures are the core of Buddhism.

– Chapter 19 –

THE MOST VENERABLE TEACHING

What is the most important teaching among all of the Buddha’s teachings? It is “The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, or the Lotus Sutra in short. I would like to explain the sutra, chapter by chapter for you to understand easily. However, I almost forgot to say some important things. I will tell you these things in the next two chapters.



妙法蓮華經
MYŌ HŌ REN GE KYO

— Chapter 20 —

**THE COMPASSIONATE
TEACHING TO HIS HOME KINGDOM**

Buddha Śākyamuni walked around India to preach various teachings to a lot of people in many different ways and in many places. One day, He stopped by His hometown, Kapilavastu Castle. He expounded the Dharma to His wife, Princess Yashodhara, His only child, Rahula, and His father, King Shuddhodana.

The people of the Śākya Clan of the kingdom were very sad when they heard that the princely heir had renounced the principedom and had started the homeless life of a monk. However, when the prince became a Buddha and returned to His hometown, the people around the kingdom gathered to see the Him, even for just a glance.

The Buddha kept the promise made with Princess Yashodhara at the time He had left the castle. The promise was that He would return to the palace after attaining Enlightenment. He talked to her at length about the following teachings: “Once we are born, we must die,” “Once we meet, we must be apart sooner or later.”

The soul is eternal. It exists while it is changing. Life on this earth is for everyone to repent the wrongdoings in their past lives. One must live through

his or her life even if life is full of suffering, even if one is not blessed, or even if one is handicapped. You must live through no matter what. When you live through this life, you are able to repent the wrongdoings in your previous lives. Your next life will match the karma in your present life.

It is useless to complain to others about your sufferings. If you suffer in this life, it may be caused by wrongdoings in your previous lives. In order not to carry on these sufferings and distresses in your next life, you must live the Eightfold Path. Thus, the Buddha expounded the Dharma to the people in the kingdom.

— Chapter 21 —

REAL HAPPINESS

Listening to the Buddha’s stories, those who had been worried and distressed, slowly became courageous. The souls that were born as a human being felt happier and courageously practice the Buddha’s teachings throughout their lives. When the time comes for a person to die, one thinks solemnly that it is time to say “Good-bye” to everyone on earth and to be born in the next life. One will not be afraid to die.

Live through this life in the right ways. When you get old and die, you need not to be afraid. The Buddha will probably be proud of you and put His hand on your head and say, “You did well!” You will be very happy.

More details are revealed in the Lotus Sutra. Real happiness is to meet with the Lotus Sutra. I will introduce you to the Lotus Sutra next.



The Lotus Sutra Expounds the Attainment of Buddhahood for Women – Part 2

(From the booklet, "Think of Human Rights" published by the Department of Provision of Human Rights of Nichiren Shu in March 31, 2000.)

■ The Dragon princess reveals her true aspect

To clear Śāriputra's beliefs about women and the five impossibilities (Lotus Sutra pg. 201, Murano version), the Dragon-king's daughter offered a very precious gem to the Buddha. This act of offering the gem worth one thousand million Sumeru-worlds or the great universe, intimates attainment of Buddhahood. The Buddha received the gem immediately.

The Dragon-king's daughter said, "Look at me with your supernatural powers! I will become a Buddha [even] more quickly," than the length of time that the Buddha took to receive the gem.

Then the Lotus Sutra states: "the congregation saw that the daughter of the dragon-king changed into a man all of a sudden, performed the Bodhisattva practices, went to the Spotless World in the south, sat on a jeweled lotus-flowers, attained perfect enlightenment, obtained the thirty-two major marks and the eighty minor marks [of the Buddha] and [began to] expound the Wonderful Dharma to the living beings of the worlds of the ten quarters."

When they saw the daughter becoming a Buddha and expounding the Dharma, all living beings including Bodhisattvas and Sravakas bowed to that Buddha with great joy. Innumerable living beings received merits of the Dharma such as reaching the stage of irrevocability and obtaining the assurance of their future attainment of enlightenment. The Devadatta Chapter concludes as Accumulated-Wisdom Bodhisattva, Śāriputra and all the other living beings in the congregation received and understood the Dharma faithfully and in silence.

Only the Buddha knew that the Dragon-

king's daughter had attained Buddhahood. The congregation could not believe only with the proof of Manjusri and the daughter that she had attained Buddhahood prior to becoming a man. Upon becoming a man, the daughter revealed the thirty-two major marks and offered the merit of the Dharma and made them believe faithfully.

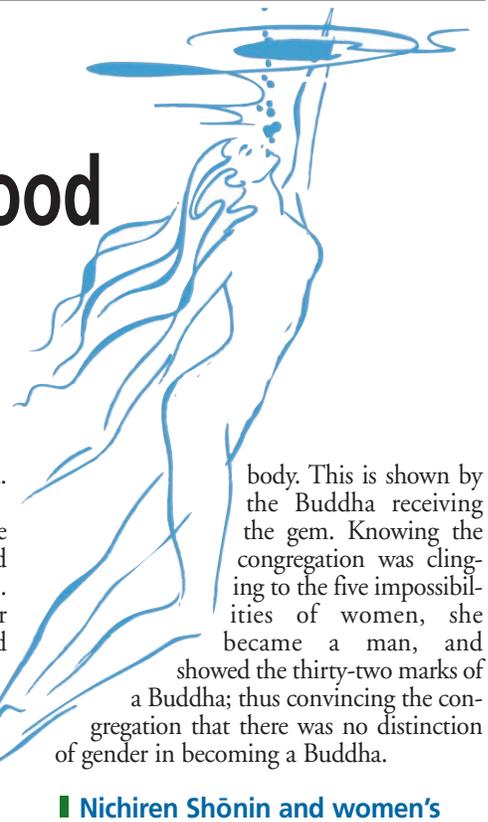
■ Changing into a man

In the Devadatta Chapter, the five impossibilities appear to be an incorrect view that must be refuted. Dragon-king's daughter also made the congregation believe her attainment of Buddhahood by changing her physical form into a man. How should we understand this?

During Śākyamuni's time men had the power and control in society, while women occupied a lower and subservient status and position. The ability to enter the religious life and practice was limited to men. Because of these social norms the idea of women having to be reborn as a man became a condition for the attainment of Buddhahood.

When a woman wished to enter a religious order, she had to renounce the life of a woman and live and think as a male monastic. This is one origin of the idea of a woman changing into a man. Later, entry into religious life would require a woman to shave her head and wear the same robes as a man, thus eliminating her female identity. In Mahayana Buddhism this was the origin of the idea of physical transformation from a woman into a man.

However, the Devadatta chapter provides us another perspective on the physical transformation as a requirement for Buddhahood. The Dragon-king's daughter attained Buddhahood first with her present



body. This is shown by the Buddha receiving the gem. Knowing the congregation was clinging to the five impossibilities of women, she became a man, and showed the thirty-two marks of a Buddha; thus convincing the congregation that there was no distinction of gender in becoming a Buddha.

■ Nichiren Shōnin and women's Buddhahood

Nichiren Shōnin wrote a great deal about women's attainment of Buddhahood using the story of the Dragon-king's daughter. In the *Hokke Daimoku Sho*, written when he was 45, Nichiren Shōnin discussed women's lower status in the sutras—from the *Flower Garland Sutra* to the *Great Nirvana Sutra*. Women were thought to have karmic difficulties that prevented them from attaining Buddhahood. He also discussed that Dragon-king's daughter attainment of Buddhahood as follows:

"Thus women were denied the ability to attain Buddhahood by other sutras. However, because Manjusri expounded a letter of *Myo*, wonderful, they were able to become Buddhas. It was so mysterious that Accumulated-Wisdom Bodhisattva, a primary disciple of Many Treasure Buddha and Śāriputra, the wisest disciple of Śākyamuni Buddha explained the reason why the daughter was not allowed to become a Buddha according to sutras of Hinayana and Mahayana; however, their intention didn't get achieved and she became a Buddha. A passage in the *Flower Garland Sutra* stating, 'One that has vanished a seed of Buddhahood,' and a passage in the *Nirvana Sutra* stating, 'As all rivers necessarily curve, women's mind also curve,' are meaningless now. A passage in the *Silver Female Sutra* and

the *Great Wisdom Discourse* stating, ‘Women cannot attain Buddhahood for a long period,’ is also useless. Accumulated-Wisdom Bodhisattva and Śāriputra were surprised and shut their mouths, and the congregation was so joyful that they put their palms together to pay respect to the Buddha. This is all the merit of the letter, *Myo*.”

Nichiren Shōnin also stated in *Kaimoku Shō*,

“ . . . The example of the dragon girl becoming a Buddha does not mean only her. It means the attainment of Buddhahood by all women. In the Hinayana sutra preached before the Lotus Sutra a woman is not thought of in terms of attaining Buddhahood. Various Mahayana sutras appear to recognize women attaining Buddhahood or going to the Buddha land, but only after they changed themselves to the good by giving up the evil. This is not an immediate attainment of Buddhahood in this world, which can only be possible through the ‘3,000 in one thought’ doctrine. Therefore what the Buddha promised in those Mahayana sutras is in name only. On the other hand, the attainment of Buddhahood by the dragon girl in the Lotus Sutra is meant as an example among many, opening the way for women of the Latter Age to attain Buddhahood or reach the Buddha land.” (Writings of Nichiren Shōnin, Doctrine 2, p. 90)

In his letter, *Sennichi Ama Gozen Gohenji (A Reply to My Lady Nun Sennichi)* sent from Mt. Minobu at his age of 57, Nichiren Shōnin stated,

“We believed after a fashion the doctrine of attainment of Buddhahood by all living beings because it was preached by the Buddha but could not believe it completely because of the lack of proof. Then it became all clear when the most important doctrine of becoming a Buddha with one’s present body was expounded in the “Devadatta” chapter in the fifth fascicle of the Lotus Sutra. It is like turning black lacquer into white or purifying dirty water by putting a wish-fulfilling gem in it. The Buddha made a small snake, who is actually a daughter of the dragon-king, attain Buddhahood with her present body. At this moment, no one could doubt about all men attaining Buddhahood. Therefore, the Lotus Sutra expounds attainment of Buddhahood by all people after the model of enlightenment of women. . . . Hinayana sutras do not allow women to attain Buddhahood at all. Some Mahayana sutras seem to allow women’s

attainment of Buddhahood or reaching the Buddha land, but they are the Buddha’s expedient words without substance. Realizing that only the Lotus Sutra expounds women’s attainment of Buddhahood and therefore is the true sutra through which we can repay our mother’s favors, I am trying to make all women chant the title (*daimoku*) of this sutra in order for them to repay their mothers’ favors.”

Thus Nichiren Shōnin was teaching women’s attainment of Buddhahood throughout his life. He did not refer at all to “changing into a man” of the Dragon-king’s daughter. Nichiren Shōnin clearly understood the attainment of Buddhahood by women since he dealt with men and women equally as having good potential to attain Buddhahood.

Learn from Nichiren Shōnin’s concept of equality of men and women

Nichiren Shōnin also understood the relationship of men and women, or husband and wife supporting each other with compassion and trust. His letters addressed to individual followers were written according to their personalities; therefore some of his expressions might be misinterpreted as slighting women or treating women as subordinate to men if only a partial passage is read. For example, “the character for a woman means to rely on. Just as a wisteria plant coils around a pine tree, and women rely on men, you should rely on your husband . . .” (*Shijo Kingo Dono Nyobo Gohenji*, Nyōnin Goshō, p. 94) or “To be a woman is to be obedient, and consequently she will have her way.” (*Kyodai Sho*, A Phrase A Day, p. 136)

But when we read the passages before and after those above, we clearly see that Nichiren Shōnin taught the relationship of a husband and wife based on the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Moreover, he stated that a man and a woman should support each other equally saying,

“An arrow is directed by the power of its bow. The clouds move with the power of wind. The works of man (husband) are seeded by woman (wife),” (*Toki Ama Gozen Goshō*, A Phrase A Day, p. 136)

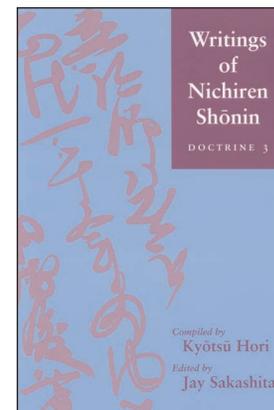
“A wife treasures her husband while he sacrifices his life for her,” (*Ueno Dono Gohenji*, A Phrase A Day, p. 130)

“A husband is like a pillar of a house and his wife its beam. When the pillar falls, the beam collapses. Man is like legs and woman is like body. A bird’s body being the wife and its wings her husband, when the wings fail, the bird cannot fly. Likewise, you must feel that you have lost your own soul after the death of your husband.” (*Sennichi Ama Gozen Gohenji*, A Phrase A Day, p. 130)

These words are based Nichiren Shōnin’s understanding of the equality of men and women that is cultivated by having faith in the Lotus Sutra.

Even today while women’s liberation has improved the status of women, there remain some tendencies among men to dominate women. We should reassert our understanding about the meaning of women’s attainment of Buddhahood expounded in the Lotus Sutra and study Nichiren Shōnin’s thoughts and ideas about equality of men and women and human respect.

NEW BOOK



Writings of Nichiren Shōnin Doctrine 3

Compiled by Kyōtsū Hori
Edited by Jay Sakashita
Published by Nichiren Shū Overseas Propagation Promotion Association (NOPPA)

This volume, the eleventh project of the English Translation Committee of NOPPA, constitutes all the 17 writings of Nichiren Shōnin included in the *Nichiren Shōnin Zenshū* (Complete Writings of Nichiren Shōnin) Vol. III; Theology 3. Among the 17 writings, *Hōon-jō* (Essay on Gratitude), *Kyōki Jikoku-shō* (Treatise on the Teaching, Capacity, Time and Country), *Ken Hō-shō* (Clarification of Slandering the True Dharma) are included.

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