

## “Happiness in This World”

THERE is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. The sutra says, “The people there [in my land] are happy and at ease.”<sup>1</sup> “Happy and at ease” here means the joy derived from the Law. You are obviously included among the “people,” and “there” indicates the entire world, which includes Japan. “Happy and at ease” means to know that our lives—both our bodies and minds, ourselves and our surroundings—are the entities of *ichinen sanzen* and the Buddha of absolute freedom. There is no greater happiness than having faith in the Lotus Sutra. It promises us “peace and security in this life and good circumstances in the next.”<sup>2</sup> Never let life’s hardships disturb you. After all, no one can avoid problems, not even saints or sages.

Just chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, and when you drink sake, stay at home with your wife. Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, no matter what happens. Then you will experience boundless joy from the Law. Strengthen your faith more than ever.

With my deep respect,  
Nichiren

The twenty-seventh day of the sixth month in the second year of Kenji (1276). (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* vol. 1, pp. 161–62)

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The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 223–246.*

WE practice faith to fully enjoy life, to lead the happiest possible existence. The Goshō we will study this time, “Happiness in This World,”<sup>3</sup> explains the “secret teaching” that makes this possible. It is a short letter, but it offers a complete exposition of the ultimate principles of faith. When we deeply understand this Goshō, we have internalized the secret of faith and of life.

### Chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo Equals the Greatest Happiness

**There is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.**

HUMAN beings” at the outset carries great significance. This means all humankind; the Daishonin’s teaching can benefit all people without exception.

Buddhism is a teaching that exists for all human beings. It is not only for the Japanese or the people of one particular country or ethnic group. Nichiren Daishonin declares that, ultimately, for all people—whether poor or wealthy, famous or unknown, powerful individuals or ordinary citizens, artists or scientists— apart from

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chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, there is no true happiness, no true joy or fulfillment in life. That's because when we chant daimoku, our lives become one with the life of the Buddha, enabling us to draw forth the inexhaustible strength to carry out our human revolution and to help others do the same.

Fame, wealth and social status alone do not guarantee happiness. Many wealthy individuals suffer terribly within their mansions. Some people may be so bound up in vanity that they can find no peace of mind. Many famous people feel miserable the moment they slip from the limelight.

Let's say there are two people who work in the same company, perform identical jobs and have equivalent material resources and social standing; yet one feels happy while the other feels nothing but despair. It is not at all uncommon to find such disparities among people whose lives are otherwise quite similar. The disparities arise due to differences in people's inner states, differences in their hearts.

Nor can it be said that the advance of science or economics necessarily brings happiness. In every case, whether we feel happy or unhappy ultimately depends on us. Without changing our state of life, we can find no true happiness. But when we do change our inner state, our entire world is transformed. The ultimate means for effecting such change is chanting daimoku.

**The sutra says, "The people there [in my land] are happy and at ease."**

THIS sutra passage is from the *jigage* section of the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It means that in this world people ought to live in happiness and ease. We recite this passage every morning and evening in gongyo.

We are born in this world to enjoy life. We are not born to suffer. This is the basic premise of the Lotus Sutra on the nature of human existence. To live happy and at ease in this world means to enjoy our work and family life, to enjoy helping others through Buddhist activities. If we have a truly high state of life, then even when unpleasant things happen we view them as making life all the more interesting, just as a pinch of salt can actually improve the flavor of a sweet dish. We feel true delight in life, whatever happens.

This sutra passage assures us that we can definitely develop such a great life force. And it urges us to exert ourselves in Buddhist practice toward that end.

**"Happy and at ease" here means the joy derived from the Law.**

TO experience the "joy derived from the Law" means to fully savor the eternally unchanging Mystic Law and the power and wisdom that derive from it. In contrast to this joy, there is the "joy derived from desires"—the enjoyment that comes from fulfilling desires of various kinds. While it might seem like genuine happiness, such joy is only temporary and superficial. It does not arise from the depths of our lives and it soon gives way to unhappiness and dissatisfaction.

Faith enables us to receive the eternal joy derived from the Law. So let us engrave in our hearts this point: We ourselves receive this joy. Because we receive it ourselves, our happiness does not depend on others. No one else can

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make us happy. Only by our own efforts can we become happy.

Therefore, there is no need to feel envious of others. There is no need to bear a grudge against someone or depend on another person for our happiness. Everything comes down to our state of life. It is within our power to take our lives in any direction we wish.

To be dragged around by other people or the environment is not the way of life the Lotus Sutra teaches. True happiness is not feeling happiness one moment and misery the next. Rather, overcoming the tendency to blame our sufferings on others or on the environment enables us to greatly expand our state of life.

Also, at the most fundamental level, faith is for our sake, not for anyone else's. While we of course practice for ourselves and others and to realize kosen-rufu, ultimately we are the prime beneficiaries of all our efforts in faith. Everything is for our growth; everything contributes to the development of our state of life and the establishment of Buddhahood in our lives. When we practice with this determination, all complaints vanish. The world of Buddhahood that had been covered by the dust of complaints begins to shine, and we can freely and fully savor the joy deriving from the Law.

### **True 'Peace and Security' Is Having Courage to Overcome Hardships**

**You are obviously included among the "people," and "there" indicates the entire world, which includes Japan. "Happy and at ease" means to know that our lives—both our bodies and minds, ourselves and our surroundings—are the entities of *ichinen sanzen* and the Buddha of absolute freedom.**

THE Daishonin says that this passage, "The people there [in my land] are happy and at ease," is about each of us. The sad thing is that no matter how much we read the sutra or study the Goshō, we still have the tendency to think, "That might be true for others, but my situation is different." Particularly, when we are assailed by storms of adversity, when it seems as though our hearts will burst with woe, we may think, "Only my sufferings are beyond help." But in this passage the Daishonin tells us that this definitely is not the case.

When this letter was written, Shijo Kingo, its recipient, had been libelously accused of various wrongs by his colleagues and had fallen from favor with his lord as a result. This was all due to envy. Kingo had enjoyed the deep trust of his lord, but he also had the straightforwardness to speak out when he felt it necessary. As a result, he had made many enemies.

People have the tendency to become envious over the slightest thing, which is perhaps human nature. They may try to undercut someone of whom they feel envious and then delight at the person's misfortune. We must not be defeated by this pitiful tendency. To allow ourselves to become caught up in or swayed by such whirlpools of emotion, going from elation one moment to dejection the next, is pointless.

As indicated by the phrase "[receiving oneself] the joy derived from the Law," the

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key is to develop such inner strength that we can look upon everything from the world of Buddhahood, the condition of supreme happiness. And, as the Daishonin says, steadfastly chanting daimoku enables us to do this.

Also, as the Daishonin indicates where he speaks of “both our bodies and minds, ourselves and our surroundings,” Buddhism is not abstract theory involving only the mind. Nor is it about changing our subjective outlook irrespective of other people and our surroundings.

The good fortune and benefit we accumulate in the depths of our lives become manifest on the material plane, as well as in our environment. In our bodies and minds, ourselves and our surroundings, it is the mind of faith, which is invisible, that moves everything with enormous power and strength in the best possible direction—toward happiness, toward the fulfillment of all our wishes.

Someone who puts this principle into practice is a “Buddha of absolute freedom.” Leaving aside a doctrinal discussion of this term, the Buddha of absolute freedom is a Buddha who, while remaining an ordinary person, freely receives and uses limitless joy derived from the Law.

Specifically, the Buddha of absolute freedom is Nichiren Daishonin. In a general sense, the term also refers to those striving to achieve kosen-rufu who have a direct connection in faith to the Daishonin.

“Absolute freedom” is interpreted by the Daishonin as meaning “the property to freely receive and use.”

**In one place he says, “The ‘property to freely receive and use’ is the principle of a single life-moment possessing three thousand realms.”**  
*(Gosho Zenshu, p. 759)*

JOSEI Toda explained that the Gohonzon is an inexhaustible store of benefit. And Nichikan declared, “[If only you take faith in this Gohonzon and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo even for a while,] no prayer will go unanswered, no offense will remain unforgiven, all good fortune will be bestowed and all righteousness proven.”<sup>4</sup>

The extent to which we can receive and use the vast, profound joy derived from the Law depends entirely on our faith. Will we take only a small cup of water from the ocean, or will we fill up a large swimming pool? Can we freely receive and use still more? This is determined entirely by faith.

If somewhere in your heart you have decided, “I alone am incapable of becoming happy,” “Only I cannot become a capable person” or, “Only my sufferings will forever remain unresolved,” then that one factor of your mind or determination will obstruct your benefit.

In this passage, therefore, the Daishonin’s intention is to tell Shijo Kingo, who was experiencing great hardship, “You, too, definitely can become happy just as the sutra states.” The Daishonin expresses his immense compassion here.

**There is no greater happiness than having faith in the Lotus Sutra. It promises us “peace and security in this life and good circumstances in the next.”**

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THERE is a saying, "A small heart gets used to misery and becomes docile, while a great heart towers above misfortune." True happiness is not the absence of suffering; you cannot have day after day of clear skies. True happiness lies in building a self that stands dignified and indomitable like a great palace—on all days, even when it is raining, snowing or stormy.

Attaining "peace and security in this life" doesn't mean having a life free from all difficulties, but that whatever difficulties arise, without being shaken in the least, you can summon up the unflinching courage and conviction to fight against and overcome them. This is the state of life of "peace and security in this life."

And, as indicated by the dictum, "If you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present,"<sup>5</sup> establishing a great state of happiness and security in this life is proof that in the future you will experience good circumstances; being born into a place conducive to your further growth.

Some religions teach that people will become happy after death even if their present lives are filled with misery. But this is not the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, which explains that we can thoroughly enjoy both the present and the future. That is the essence of Buddhism.

Toward establishing such an existence, we need to develop a strong life force by chanting daimoku and thoroughly challenging the realities of our lives. It is through such efforts that we realize true "peace and security in this life" and "good circumstances in the next."

### **'Regard Both Suffering and Joy As Facts of Life'**

**Never let life's hardships disturb you. After all, no one can avoid problems, not even saints or sages.**

NOT even saints and sages, the Daishonin says, can avoid difficulties. In society, people tend to suppose that if someone is vilified and persecuted, the person must be somehow bad or evil. But from the standpoint of Buddhism, it is possible that people may be verbally attacked and undergo difficulties even though they are without guilt or blame. People may label or write about a good person as though evil, assert that lies are true and depict the truth as a lie. This is a fact of human society.

Shijo Kingo, too, suffered on account of calumny. But the Daishonin told him, "Never let life's hardships disturb you." Those who resort to libelous accusations are defeated as human beings; nothing is more lowly and base. We should not be swayed in the least by such despicable actions. Just as we do not put garbage into our mouths, we must not permit such rubbish into our hearts. The Daishonin in effect encouraged Shijo Kingo to shut the cowardly behavior of his accusers out of his mind. The Roman philosopher Seneca (4 B.C.E.–C.E. 65) says that the arrows of slander cannot pierce the heart of a person of wisdom.<sup>6</sup>

Much human misery arises from people despairing over things that despairing cannot help. We should not worry about things that no amount of worrying will

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resolve. The important thing is to build a golden palace of joy in our hearts that nothing can disturb — a state of life like a clear blue sky above the storm, an oasis in the desert, a fortress looking down on high waves.

What matters most is that we fight thoroughly against injustice with a lofty, dauntless spirit. While waging a determined struggle against evil that nearly cost him his life, Nichiren Daishonin cried out [to Shijo Kingo, as they were being led to the execution grounds at Tatsunokuchi], “You should be delighted at this great fortune” (MW-1, 181). And he wholeheartedly anticipated that his disciples would “form their ranks and follow him” (MW-1, 176).

Even a tiny speck of evil that causes people to be unhappy should not be tolerated. Attaining “peace and security in this life and good circumstances in the next” lies precisely in carrying out such a struggle with the faith of indomitable courage.

**Just chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and when you drink sake, stay at home with your wife.**

THE moment he set foot outside his home, Shijo Kingo was in danger of being attacked by enemies. The Daishonin cautions him not to act with imprudence but to stay at home and chant daimoku. And he advises that Shijo Kingo and his wife encourage one another. He taught his follower, in other words, the importance of faith for building a happy, harmonious family.

The Daishonin urged Shijo Kingo to live happily in the present, without brooding on events of the past or needlessly troubling himself over what might happen in the future. Happiness does not lie far off in the distance. It is to be found in the here and now.

**Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens. Then you will experience boundless joy from the Law.**

IN times of suffering, chant daimoku. In times of joy, chant daimoku. Chanting daimoku is itself happiness. In life, there are both times of suffering and of joy. These are all irreplaceable scenes in life’s drama. Without suffering, we could not appreciate joy. Without tasting the flavors of both suffering and joy, we could not savor life’s profundity.

“Suffer what there is to suffer,” the Daishonin says. Suffering is inevitable in life. Therefore, we need to be prepared for hardship and to have the inner fortitude to rise above our worries and anxieties. We have to cause the “serene light of the moon of enlightenment” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1262)—the world of Buddhahood—to shine in our lives. Then earthly desires are transformed into enlightenment and we can use everything that happens in life to fuel our happiness.

To “enjoy what there is to enjoy” means to cause the “mystic lotus of the heart” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 978) to brightly blossom with a sense of appreciation and joy. Someone who can find joy, who can feel appreciation, experiences a snowballing

exhilaration and joy in life. Such is the heart's function.

The ocean, even when waves are crashing on its surface, is calm and unchanging in its depths. There is both suffering and joy in life—the point is to develop a profound, indomitable self not influenced by these waves. A person who does so receives the joy derived from the Law.

In the journey of kosen-rufu things will not always proceed smoothly. But we are eternal comrades. People who come together in good times but desert one another when the going gets rough are not comrades. Turning a blind eye to the sufferings of others, using the rationale that “it has nothing to do with me,” is not the spirit of comrades. True comrades share both suffering and joy.

We suffer together, rejoice together and bring our lives to fruition together. We regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens. To maintain this comradeship, this single-minded commitment to faith, is our eternal guideline in advancing toward kosen-rufu. Let us ever advance with the strong unity of faith!

### **Strengthen your faith more than ever.**

WHEN Nichiren Daishonin was taken to be executed at Tatsunokuchi, Shijo Kingo ran straight to his side. Clutching the reins of the horse on which the Daishonin rode, he resolutely stood by him, vowing to kill himself and join him in death. He was a person of immensely strong faith who boldly ran forward along the path of mentor and disciple.

Even to Shijo Kingo, who possessed such strong faith, the Daishonin says, “Strengthen your faith more than ever.” It's not a matter of what we've done in the past—it's what we do from now on that counts. Strength of faith is what everything comes down to. Faith is strength. It is the greatest power people have.

We receive the power of the Buddha and power of the Law embodied in the Gohonzon in accordance with the power of our faith and practice. Faith is the secret art for thoroughly infusing our daily lives with the inherent power of the universe.

Shijo Kingo exerted himself in faith just as the Daishonin instructed. After his difficulties passed, he showed actual proof by regaining the firm trust of his lord and having the size of his lands doubled. Those colleagues who harassed him suffered pitiful consequences.

To practice just as the Daishonin instructs is the fundamental spirit of the SGI. We are advancing in strict accord with the Goshō's teachings. As long as we remember this point, we can definitely achieve great victory in life and our efforts for kosen-rufu.

The Goshō is truly an eternal teaching, which we should be most grateful to have. Thanks to our having encountered this teaching, we can lead wonderful lives of eternal victory. □

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1. LS16, 230.
2. LS5, 99.
3. "Shijo Kingo Dono Gohenji" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1143), written in June 1276 when the Daishonin was 55.
4. From his "Commentary on 'The True Object of Worship.'"
5. From Nichikan's *Shinjikan* Sutra. See MW-2 [2nd ed.], 172.
6. Seneca: *Moral Essays*, trans. John W. Basore (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), vol. 1, pp. 57–59.

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