

GEMS: A Person of Wisdom
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Buddhism can be correctly propagated only by a person of unsurpassed wisdom. This is why Shakyamuni, after expounding all the sutras, entrusted the Hinayana teachings to Ananda and the Mahayana teachings to Monju, but refused to transfer the ultimate principle of the Lotus Sutra to any of his immediate disciples. Shakyamuni instead summoned Bodhisattva Jogyo, his disciple from ages past, and entrusted it to him. (“Propagation by the Wise,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 169)

The ultimate philosophy of Buddhism, the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, great and powerful as it is, can accomplish nothing on its own. Without people who can put it into practice, share and spread it, this wonderful philosophy will remain a mystery, unable to benefit humanity.

And according to this passage, the person who spreads this teaching must be a person of wisdom. Opinions may vary as to what qualifies someone as wise, but *person of wisdom* here means someone who deeply understands which teaching, when accepted and applied in the present age, will release people from misery and lead them to lasting fulfillment. It also indicates those who have practiced, applied and fully expressed that teaching in their lives and actions.

For this reason, the Daishonin points out that in the case of the ultimate teaching of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni “summoned Bodhisattva Jogyo (Superior Practices), his disciple from ages past, and entrusted it to him” alone. The Buddha left the spread of his most profound teaching, the teaching applicable to our times, only to a person of correspondingly profound capacity and wisdom.

**Nichiren Daishonin and
Bodhisattva Jogyo**

In “Emerging from the Earth” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, bodhisattvas who had gathered from other worlds ask Shakyamuni Buddha for permission to propagate the Lotus Sutra in this world after the Buddha’s death. But Shakyamuni refuses: There are already bodhisattvas here to carry out the task, he declares. At this moment, the earth trembles and a great multitude of bodhisattvas suddenly arise from the space beneath it. They are resplendent in appearance and dignified in bearing. Each possesses a golden body and the thirty distinguishing features of a Buddha. They are led by four great bodhisattvas — Superior Practices (Jogyo), Boundless Practices (Muhengyo), Pure Practices (Jyogyo) and Peaceful Practices (Anryugyo).

In many of his writings, Nichiren Daishonin equates his own propagation of the Lotus Sutra to the practice of Bodhisattva Jogyo. He had good reason: With no thought for his own welfare, the Daishonin alone had been spreading the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, as the Buddha had entrusted Bodhisattva Jogyo and the Bodhisattvas of the Earth to do. And he alone was being vilified, attacked, exiled and scorned because of it, exactly as the Sutra predicted its votary would be. In this sense, this passage expresses the Daishonin’s conviction that he himself possesses the wisdom necessary to propagate Buddhism correctly in the Latter Age. The person of unsurpassed wisdom, therefore, is Nichiren Daishonin himself, and that wisdom, more expressly, is the wisdom of the Buddha of the latter day, the Daishonin’s true identity.

But what gives rise to such wisdom, and what does it mean to us?

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Bodhisattva Jogyo means true self, passion and joy.

In his “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings” and elsewhere, the Daishonin attributes to Jogyo several important qualities.

First, of the “four virtues” — eternity, happiness, true self, and purity — which the four Bodhisattvas represent, Bodhisattva Jogyo embodies “true self” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 751). The Daishonin also states that “[true] self is Buddhahood” (GZ 756), and elsewhere that enlightenment and happiness lies in a deep awareness of the true nature of our own lives.

Second, he equates the four bodhisattvas to the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air, and specifically, Bodhisattva Jogyo to the function of “fire” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 751). In this regard, President Ikeda has said: “Bodhisattva Jogyo kindles his earthly desires to radiate wisdom, which illuminates the world. He leads others, alighting the flame of courage and passion in all, as a guide to point out the direction in which people must advance.” Jogyo, therefore, exemplifies passion and compassion.

Third, the Chinese character for emerging in the phrase emerging from the earth also means to leap or dance. While in the midst of severe persecution, the Daishonin wrote to a follower, “When Bodhisattva Jogyo emerged from the earth, he leapt forth joyfully” (MW-5, 161). Bodhisattva Jogyo, then, also embodies a state of sublime and unrestricted joy, joy that is unperturbed by trials or obstacles.

Buddhist practice is the way to spark our wisdom.

Someone may ask, “What if I lack these qualities of true self-awareness, passion and joy? Aren’t I, then, unqualified to spread Buddhism?” But there is no need to worry. Nichiren Daishonin perfectly brought these qualities forth, and left for us the Gohonzon and his writings so that we may chant, study and spark them in ourselves. And the successive leaders of our movement — presidents Makiguchi, Toda, and Ikeda — have displayed these qualities, spreading the Daishonin’s Buddhism broadly in our age and setting an example for us all.

Furthermore, the “Emerging from the Earth” (fifteenth) chapter likens the Bodhisattvas of the Earth to “the lotus flower in the water” (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 222). They are like lotus flowers that arise from the pond’s muddy bottom to blossom beautifully. The bodhisattvas’ and the lotus’ emergence from the soil signifies the welling forth of our Buddha nature and its wisdom from our ordinary lives.

Our current capacity aside, when we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with a solid pledge to lead our friends to happiness and work to support one another in our SGI activities to this end, true self-confidence, passion and joy will emerge and flow from our lives. These qualities — this wisdom — will not only serve us well in sharing Buddhism, but in everything we do.

One in a series