

**YOUTH STUDY AUGUST**  
**“GENERAL STONE TIGER”**  
**THE MAJOR WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN, VOL.1, PP. 225–27**

**THE STORY OF GENERAL STONE TIGER**  
**BY KEN SARAGOSA, PHILADELPHIA**

The Goshō we are studying this month refers to the story of “General Stone Tiger.” Here is a contemporary retelling of this Chinese fable.

There was a warrior in ancient China named Li Kuang. One day, his beloved mother was killed by a mighty tiger. The warrior vowed to avenge his mother, and was filled with an awesome determination to hunt down and kill the tiger. Finally one night, he came upon the beast lying very still in the moonlight. He knew that this animal was so fierce and so strong that he would only have one chance to kill it. If he didn’t kill the tiger on the first blow, he himself would be killed. Knowing this, he took out a single arrow — his only shot. Summoning every bit of his anger and determination, he fired the arrow, thinking, “With this one arrow, I will avenge my mother!” He scored a direct hit!

To his surprise, however, the tiger didn’t cry out or even move. He approached slowly and as he got closer, he realized that what he had thought was the sleeping tiger was really a huge stone. Amazingly, the arrow was lodged deep within that rock. He couldn’t believe this, and he tried to understand how he had managed to pierce the rock with his arrow. He even tried to shoot other arrows into the stone. Naturally, this was impossible. The arrows simply bounced off. But then he remembered the awesome determination he put into that one single arrow, and he realized that this kind of powerful and focused effort was what had enabled the impossible to become possible. Because of his extraordinary feat, the warrior Li Kuang became known throughout China as “General Stone Tiger.”

**WHO ARE THE BODHISATTVAS OF THE EARTH?**  
**BY NAOKO MIYAUCHI, ATLANTA**

Among those who propagate this sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, who could compare with Shariputra, Mahakashyapa, Kannon, Myō’ōn, Monju and Yakuo? Shariputra and Mahakashyapa, who were of the two vehicles, had destroyed all illusions of thought and desire, thus freeing themselves from the six paths. The others, all bodhisattvas, had eradicated the forty-one illusions and were approaching perfection, like the harvest moon the night before it reaches fullness. Nevertheless Shakyamuni Buddha refused to entrust the mission of propagation to any of these people and gave it instead to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Thus these Bodhisattvas of the Earth are the ones who had thoroughly forged their faith. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 226-27).

In the Lotus Sutra, after Shakyamuni preached his highest teachings, he asked who would be willing to undertake the difficult task of spreading Buddhism throughout the society in the Latter Day of the Law. His best and brightest disciples all expressed their determination to do this, but as this Goshō passage tells us, Shakyamuni refused to entrust the mission of propagation to them, even though they were thought to be his most capa-

ble disciples. Suddenly, the earth opened up and a number of truly brilliant Bodhisattvas came out of the ground. These Bodhisattvas of the Earth, the passage tells us, are the ones to whom Shakyamuni entrusted kosen-rufu. These Bodhisattvas of the Earth were the ones who had thoroughly forged their faith.

Who are these Bodhisattvas of the Earth? In Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, he says that those of us who choose to practice and propagate Buddhism in our contemporary society — the Latter Day of the Law predicted by Shakyamuni — are, by definition, those Bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are us! We are the ones whom the Buddha entrusted with the great mission to propagate Buddhism in the Latter Day of the Law, though it may appear to us that we were simply born into the SGI, or that we merely made a simple decision to start practicing Buddhism. From the perspective of Nichiren Daishonin, we are fulfilling a promise we made in the distant past.

We are Bodhisattvas of the Earth and disciples of Nichiren Daishonin, so we have nothing to be afraid of when we face hardships.

Believe in this Goshō! As soon as we recognize our great mission, we try to make strenuous efforts with a proud and strong conviction every day. But, do we always behave like a Bodhisattva of the Earth who overcomes all hardships with strong determination? Do we recognize our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth?

It sometimes takes us a while to make a strong determination when we face problems. Hesitation, anxiety, pessimism and doubt are often our first reactions! But every difficulty is actually a crucial opportunity for us to be courageous and make a strong determination. SGI President Ikeda says, "Someone who has deep doubts and lives as though behind a smoke screen will be utterly incapable of connecting in faith with the great life of the Buddha" (*Lectures on the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 2, p. 119).

Courage is easy to talk about when things are going fine. However, when life gets complicated, and difficulties arise — problems at work, in our relationships, with our families, or with our health — it isn't so easy to keep our conviction strong. So, how can we maintain our courage in faith?

President Ikeda said the ultimate meaning of faith is difficult to understand — and yet at the same time quite simple. He says that faith is "to maintain a seeking mind toward — and not to forget — the Gohonzon, no matter what our circumstances. When we seek the Buddha with an honest and pure spirit — like that of a child in search of his or her mother calling 'Mommy!' or a mother embracing her child — a palace of indestructible happiness arises in our hearts. By contrast, faith means yearning for and thirsting to see the Buddha. It is to be 'honest and upright, gentle in intent'; to be thoroughly honest and gentle in one's spirit toward the Buddha, toward the Gohonzon" (p. 119).

So when we lose sight of our conviction in faith, it means that our life is thirsting to see the Buddha. In that case, we can receive wisdom and energy by doing gongyo and daimoku every day, and we can maintain a high life-condition and strong conviction.

But not only do we help ourselves; through our conviction, we can illuminate the lives of our friends with the light of hope. That is our mission as the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Just as General Stone Tiger lodged an arrow into a rock through his strong belief that it was the tiger that killed his mother, let's each of us make just as strong a determination and live courageously!

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. What lessons can we learn from the story of General Stone Tiger? Why does Nichiren Daishonin use this as an example to encourage Shijo Kingo?**
- 2. Have you ever thought of yourself as a Bodhisattva of the Earth? Is this a difficult thing to believe? What difference does it make if we believe it or not?**
- 3. Why is courage in faith important? Does faith imply helplessness, or is praying a passive activity? What does it mean to act with conviction?**

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