

**WORDS TO WIN BY
THREE POWERFUL ENEMIES: A SOURCE OF GREAT HOPE
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From "The Selection of Time," The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 538–94.

These passages from the sutras speak of powerful enemies of the correct teaching. Such enemies are to be found not so much among evil rulers and evil ministers, among non-Buddhists and devil kings, or among monks who disobey the precepts. Rather they are those great slanderers of the Law who are to be found among the eminent monks who appear to be upholders of the precepts and men of wisdom.

The Great Teacher Miao-lo, speaking of such men, says, "The third [group] is the most formidable of all. This is because the second and third ones are increasingly harder to recognize for what they really are." (WND, 584)

This passage appears at the conclusion of "The Selection of the Time." Nichiren Daishonin adopts a cautionary tone here, fully aware that the grand undertaking of kosen-rufu will be met with fierce opposition.

As individuals, there are various hindrances that have the potential to negatively affect our practice, such as negligence, lack of time, fear, illness and doubt. There are also difficulties we must face collectively as believers in the Daishonin's Buddhism. The Daishonin teaches that forces opposing the movement for kosen-rufu assume external form as the three powerful enemies.

These are the three types of people who persecute those who propagate the Lotus Sutra after the Buddha's passing: 1) lay people ignorant about Buddhism who denounce and attack the votaries of the Lotus Sutra; 2) arrogant, cunning priests who slander the votaries of the Lotus Sutra; and 3) priests respected by the general public who, in fear of losing fame or profit, induce the secular authorities to persecute the sutra's votaries.

Since the third, most powerful enemy adopts the form of an apparently virtuous religious authority, it is hard for people to perceive his or her true intent. During the Daishonin's time, Ryokan, chief priest of Gokuraku-ji temple, personified this third powerful enemy. Despite his strong reputation as a saintly priest, he incited the government's attempt to exile the Daishonin.

The Daishonin recognized the appearance of the third powerful enemy as something positive—the validation of his identity: "I know that, if I do not call forth these three enemies of the Lotus Sutra, then I will not be the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Only by making them appear can I be the votary" (WND, 53). When I read these words, I feel great pride to be living at this time. The current Nichiren Shoshu priesthood's attempt to destroy the SGI is an unavoidable obstacle that we, with SGI President Ikeda's leadership, have called forth. It happened because we have been spreading the true teaching as the sutra's votaries.

The message of the above passage is clear—we should never fail to recognize the appearance of the third powerful enemy. Nor should we let others fall prey to such evil. The negative function of Nichiren Shoshu, which has disrupted the harmonious body of believers in the Daishonin's teaching and is obstructing the kosen-rufu movement, must be pointed out. We must pray for and awaken those who have fallen prey to the deception. In order to fully reveal the great teachings of the Daishonin's Buddhism and cause them to flourish infinitely, we must triumph over the evil that currently threatens kosen-rufu.