

Key Passages from *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings* [5]

“Simile and Parable” and “Belief and Understanding” Chapters The Mystic Law is the Unsurpassed Treasure Possessed by All

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Hello everyone, welcome to SGI Canada’s monthly study podcast. I’m Sadaji. This month, we’ll be studying Part 5 of Ikeda Sensei’s lectures on key passages from *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*. This instalment is entitled “The Mystic Law is the Unsurpassed Treasure Possessed by All.”

In an opening section, Sensei discusses a transformation of Shakyamuni’s disciples—a transformation from individuals who simply seek to be led to enlightenment into individuals who help others to attain enlightenment. In other words, they began striving to live with their mentor, facing the same direction in which their mentor’s gaze was focused, rather than standing looking towards their mentor. This represents the spirit of mentor and disciple, don’t you think?

In this article, Sensei has selected three passages from *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*.

The first passage is Nichiren Daishonin’s commentary on T’ien-t’ai’s quote regarding the chapter title “Simile and Parable.”

Chapter Three: Simile and Parable

Nine important points

Point One, regarding the “Simile and Parable” chapter

Words and Phrases, volume five, says [regarding “simile and parable” (Jpn *hiyu*)], “*Hi*, or simile, means to compare one thing to another; *yu*, or parable, means to enlighten and instruct. . . . The Buddha’s great

compassion is unceasing. And . . . his clever wisdom is boundless. . . .”

The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings says: “Great compassion” is like the mercy and compassion that a mother feels for her child. At present it is the mercy and compassion of Nichiren and his followers. (OTT, 43)

Shakyamuni used parables in his compassion to elevate the state of life of all people to be equal to his own. Following T’ien-t’ai’s words, the Daishonin describes the “great compassion” of the Buddha as being “like the mercy and compassion that a mother feels for her child”.

At your meeting, you may want to discuss how we can manifest such mercy and compassion. Of course we can pray for bringing forth such compassion from within. Here, Sensei talks about Soka mentors and disciples who have steadfastly spread the Mystic Law, by translating compassion into courageous action. Then he comments:

Our members, even if experiencing difficulties of their own, are always praying and taking action wholeheartedly while thinking of others’ problems, ready to extend a helping hand. They genuinely listen to and acknowledge others’ worries. Their warm support and care activate the inherent strength of those who are struggling. This is an expression of compassion; it is the bodhisattva way of life. Our members, on their own initiative, dive in among the people and put such compassion into practice.

Furthermore, Sensei teaches that the parables of the Lotus Sutra are stories of revitalization, expounded to lead all people to Buddhahood. Likewise, experiences in faith we share with others are also stories of revitalization and transformation that have the power to lead people from all walks of life to Buddhahood.

The next passage Sensei selected is the Daishonin’s commentary on the chapter title “Understanding and Belief”

Chapter Four: Belief and Understanding
Six important points

Point One, concerning the “Belief and Understanding” chapter

. . . Belief represents the value or price we attach to a jewel or treasure, and understanding represents the jewel itself. It is through the one word “belief” that we are able to purchase the wisdom of the Buddhas of the three existences. That wisdom is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Belief is the source of wisdom and belongs to the stage of hearing the name and words of the truth. . . .

Now when Nichiren and his followers believe in and accept Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, they are gaining possession of a great precious jewel; in the words of the “Belief and Understanding” chapter, “This cluster of unsurpassed jewels / has come to us unsought” [LSOC4, 124]. (OTT, 54–55)

Here, “understanding” refers to fully grasping the Buddha’s teachings, which is another term for wisdom. By believing in the Mystic Law, we can understand the Buddha’s teachings and acquire the wisdom of the Buddha. In the passage, Nichiren Daishonin uses the term “stage of hearing the name and words of the faith”. The stage of hearing the name and words refers to the second of the six stages of practice, which was formulated by T’ien-t’ai—the stage at which an ordinary person has just heard the name of the Buddha. The Daishonin teaches in his commentary that we can obtain the unsurpassed treasure just as we are, which has come to us unsought. This phrase appears in the “Belief and Understanding” chapter, and it’s explained further in the third Goshō selection.

Additionally, just as the term “belief and understanding” implies, understanding is important along with faith. Following the study material from July, in this article, Ikeda Sensei also explains that the belief described in the Lotus Sutra is not blind faith. What are the differences between blind faith and the faith described in the Lotus Sutra? I’d like you to think about it.

Now let’s move onto the third Goshō passage.

Point Five, on the words “This cluster of unsurpassed jewels / has

come to us unsought” [LSOC4, 124]. . . .

. . . And now in the minds of Nichiren and his followers, what is unsurpassed is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Among all the things that are unsurpassed, it holds the highest position of all.

It is the Wonderful Law [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] that is described . . . as a “cluster of unsurpassed jewels,” a cluster of jewels that represents all the paramitas, the ten thousand religious practices and ten thousand good deeds of all the Buddhas of the three existences of past, present, and future.

And without labour or trouble, without religious practices or good deeds, this cluster of unsurpassed jewels can come into our possession through the single word “faith” [i.e., faith in Nam-myoho-renge-kyo]. That is why the passage says that it has “come to us (*jitoku*) unsought.” (OTT, 58–59)

The words “This cluster of unsurpassed jewels has come to us unsought” were spoken by the four great voice-hearers upon hearing Shakyamuni’s teachings, realizing that they could attain Buddhahood, and expressing their joy. For more details, please refer to the article in the *New Century*, or the “Belief and Understanding” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which can be read on nichirenlibrary.org.

Now, the Daishonin’s explanation here elaborates on what the phrase represents from our standpoint of Nichiren Buddhism. From our perspective, the Daishonin declares that the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, or the Gohonzon of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that enables all living beings to attain Buddhahood is “cluster of unsurpassed jewels” which comes to us unsought. And we are Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The ten thousand religious practices and ten thousand good deeds, or in other words, all the practices and benefits consequently attained by the Buddhas of the three existences are contained within Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. At district meetings, in our *New Century* magazines, or in broadcasts of the Headquarters Leaders meetings, we hear or read inspiring experiences like, “Wow, that’s absolutely fantastic! I want to have an experience like that too.” But, remember, all the causes and benefits of those members are contained within ourselves. The Gohonzon of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo enables us to bring them forth from within. Sensei teaches us:

The Gohonzon, which is a “cluster of unsurpassed jewels,” makes it possible for all

people to attain the supreme treasure of Buddhahood.

When we strive in our Buddhist faith and practise with an unflagging seeking spirit, we can attain an extraordinary state of life beyond all imagining.

Mr. Toda said: “People who joyously chant to the Gohonzon and joyously share Nichiren Buddhism with others are people of true faith. It is on such people that the Gohonzon bestows, though they do not seek them, unsurpassed treasures—namely, a strong life force and wonderful good fortune and benefit.”

As I mentioned earlier, at the beginning of this study material, Sensei mentions how Shakyamuni’s disciples transformed to those who help others attain Buddhahood. We share Nichiren Buddhism and our dramas of revitalization with others, just as the Buddha did, so that they, too, can attain the unsurpassed jewels.

Sensei concludes this article with a description of the Osaka Campaign of 1956, which exemplifies members putting this into practice. Let me quote part of it.

I chanted, fought my hardest, and called out to our leaders in Kansai, determined that we would report a resounding victory of the people to our mentor: “Let’s encourage and offer guidance to each individual, so everyone can experience personal revitalization in their lives. Let’s brim with joy and determination arising from faith in the Mystic Law. Let’s tell others about the pride of joining in a movement devoted to the noble mission of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth!”

Last but not least, the special podcast for the Level 2 study exam has been posted on the SGI Canada’s website on the “Activities” page. If you are eligible to write the Level 2 Study Exam but haven’t yet registered, please do so now. For those of you who have registered, please encourage those who haven’t to do so. For those of you who are not taking the exam this time, you can support this activity in various ways. Thank you for listening. If you have any questions, feel free to send them to us at study@sgicanada.org. Bye for now.