

Correct Transmission

A Person of Wisdom and a Worthy Ruler Acting in Tandem for the People's Welfare

“Now in this latter, evil age, great evil arises less from secular wrongdoing than in connection with the doctrines of the religious world. When people today, who are unaware of this, endeavor to cultivate roots of good, events that lead to the ruin of the world occur all the more. Although superficially it may seem to be an act of good to provide support to the monks of the Tendai, True Word, and other schools of the present age, in reality it is a great evil surpassing even the five cardinal sins and the ten evil acts.

For this reason, in order that peace reign in the age, if a wise man existed in the world with wisdom like that of the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, and if he met with a worthy ruler like King Sen'yo and if together they devoted themselves to putting an end to these acts of good and committed the great evil of censuring, banishing, cutting off alms to, or even beheading those persons of the eight schools [of Buddhism] who are thought to be [persons] of wisdom, then the age may be pacified to some extent.”

Here, Nichiren asserts that error in the realm of Buddhism causes more harm and suffering to the people than wrongdoing in the secular realm. He denounces the Buddhist schools in Japan of his day for espousing erroneous teachings that contributed to the misfortunes of the people. These schools, he said, were guilty of slandering the Law by going against the Buddha's intent set forth in the Lotus Sutra—that is, discrediting the teaching that all people have the potential to attain enlightenment.

Shakyamuni's basic goal was to enable all human beings to attain Buddhahood, as expressed most succinctly in his great vow in the Lotus Sutra “to make all persons equal to me, without any distinction between us” (*The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*). The essence of this Buddhist ideal is for us to recognize all people can bring forth their infinitely noble Buddha nature and, based on that, to respect each other and build a peaceful society. ...

Unfortunately, during Bodhisattva Nichiren's day, the existing Buddhist schools had lost sight of the Buddha's true intent and the fundamental ideals of Buddhism. They had become attached to partial or provisional teachings from the sutras expounded prior to the Lotus Sutra. Moreover, in the process of touting the teachings of their own schools as the ultimate truth of Buddhism, they slandered the Lotus Sutra and rejected the Buddhist wisdom that teaches respect for all human beings. As you have heard me often say, that we should look upon others as potential Buddha in the making...

The lay followers of the various Buddhist schools in Medieval Japan were taken in by the monks' religious authority and appearance of respectability and failed to see the true situation. As a result, though they thought they were accumulating good causes through their Buddhist practice, they were in fact, frighteningly enough, steeping themselves in the poison of slander of the Law. It was as if the healing medicine that people thought they had been prescribed was actually toxic. ...

Bodhisattva Nichiren indicates that the only way for this situation to be remedied was for a wise person possessing the wisdom of the **correct teaching** and a worthy ruler to join together to put a stop to this great evil. ...

A true person of wisdom in the Latter Day of the Law must embody not only the great good wisdom of the correct Buddhist teaching but also be able to detect error, fight against it, and **strive earnestly to free people from the hold of false teachings**. Nichiren stood up as that person to engage in this struggle without begrudging his life. He was determined to convey the fearful nature of slander of the Law to the people of Japan. Undeterred by any obstacles or persecution, Bodhisattva Nichiren continued his efforts to educate people to the fact that the seemingly devout, self-renouncing monks of the day were actually guilty of the great evil of destroying Buddhism. ...

A "worthy ruler" here represents a social entity that acknowledges a person of wisdom. Today, in our democratic society, the "worthy ruler" corresponds to a wise and awakened citizenry. Such a citizenry is vital if a peaceful and prosperous society is to be realized. As people grow wiser and stronger, the ideals of the sanctity of life and the absolute importance of peace and non-violence will become more widely and deeply accepted and established in society. And this will lead to more people rejecting self-centered ideas that give rise to discrimination, violence, and war, which inflict human suffering. In other words, even if corrupt monks go unpunished, if the people become wise and are able to recognize evil for what it is and stop its spread, it will be cut off at its root. Ultimately, people themselves must strive to prevent the negative workings of life from manifesting and holding sway. ... To create such a society, it is crucial to widely spread the philosophical principles of the sanctity of life, respect for all people and peace-building.

We, as practitioners of Nichiren Doctrines of Shakyamuni Lotus Sutra Buddhism, have a personal mission and social responsibility to appeal to others' conscience through the power of words, dialogue and ideas, and actualize a peaceful and prosperous society.