

**THE PATH
TO
TRUE HAPPINESS**



By Rev. Teinyo Kunugi

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Honolulu Myohoji

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Preface

Rev. Teinyo Kunugi served as the vice officiating-priest for the ceremony to celebrate the 85th anniversary of the founding of the Honolulu Myohoji Temple, which was solemnly held in 2015. It was through that opportunity that he is sending to our temple the Buddhist educational magazine, *Hoju*, which is being published monthly by his temple, Jorinji. His magazine is inlaid with words that resemble *hoju* (treasure-gems) and its contents are wonderful. I have also learned much from this magazine.

At Hinatayama, in Yamanashi Prefecture, Rev. Kunugi has built a tower for the Buddha's relics. Hinatayama is a mountain that is connected to Nichiji Shonin, who is the founder of overseas missionary activities of the Nichiren-Shu. He is carefully watching over this fine tower for the Buddha's relics as its superintendent. While the Honolulu Myohoji does also appear to be a temple, it is really a tower for the Buddha's relics. From ancient times the object of devotion for followers of Buddhism was the Buddha's relics. Worshiping the Buddha's relics is the original practice of faith for Buddhists.

Rev. Kunugi worked for many years as an instructor at Kuon-ji at Minobusan, which is the central main-temple of the Nichiren-Shu, and he also served as the head of the missionary department of the temple. He is what we would call an expert on Nichiren-Shu propagation.

At this time, we have the good fortune of having a translation of the 2016 New Year's Supplement of Rev. Kunugi's magazine *Hoju*, and other excellent writings, and publishing these for the first time in America.

We are able to read a vibrant and real Dharma lecture of the Nichiren-Shu. Why must we practice Buddhism? The answer is found in this booklet.

Finally, I offer my deep gratitude to Rev. Teinyo Kunugi for his excellent magazine, to Dean Makinodan for his translation, and to the President, Dan Liu, and each member of the Board of Directors of the Honolulu Myohoji Mission for making this publication possible.

Rev. Takamasa Yamamura
Head Minister, Honolulu Myohoji Mission

A Prayer for the Honolulu Myohoji Temple

I was blessed by the Buddha's affinity to worship at the Stupa of the Buddha's Relics at the Honolulu Myohoji in the sacred grove of Nuuanu in Hawaii.

At the ceremony to celebrate eighty-fifth anniversary of the temple's founding, I revered the sight of the efforts to widely disseminate the Wondrous Law through the nebulas, which had spread their roots and blossomed.

Voices of praise to the founder, and joyous rain of truth of the various inhabitants of the heavenly realms, moistened the Hawaiian universe.

While residing in the crucible of deep emotion, we offered prayers for the prosperity of Myohoji, the tranquility of Hawaii and the peace of the world and humankind.

The True Path of Human Life—The Way of Life to Open Destiny

The True State of All Things

We are well past the days when human life was said to be fifty years of age and we are now in the times when the lifespan is the eighties.

While there are probably those in this age of the eighty-year-old lifespan, who are living peacefully and with no incidents, because we human beings are a living body, that body falls ill and meets with unforeseen accidents. Moreover, our economic circumstances do not proceed as hoped for and conflicts may even arise. And there are also people who are beset by the misfortune of losing everything, which was gained over many years, due to a natural disaster.

Although all people seek to live a happy life, there are a variety of circumstances—some are living with pain, while there are others who are blessed by much from birth. While we are the

same human beings, at a glance, we cannot help but think that things are really unfair, can't we?

Nevertheless, these are the appearance of the causality of all things that exists, their true state. In the Lotus Sutra, these circumstances are called the *Shoho* (phenomena of the universe and matter) *Jisso* (real state).

Shoho refers to all things that exist. Since the true state of all things is dependent on cause and a condition and cause and effect, which extend from the past, present and the future, circumstances are not the same for people.

All people seek to be in good health into old age and die suddenly and without pain, but that is not something that a wholesaler stocks on his shelves. That is because we are being sustained by the truth of cause and condition and cause and effect.

Rev. K had applied himself to his duties in good spirits until his passing, and passed away in the spring of this year (2015) at the age of ninety-eight. All that met him would ask: "What is the secret to live a long life in good spirits?" "People ask me about the secret of long life.

My answer is chanting the Odaimoku, reciting sutras, and the practice of charity.” This was his reply.

*Chanting the Odaimoku is to chant sacred mantra: Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.

These words of Rev. K contain profound meaning. These are the words that befit the experiences of Rev. K, who lived and practiced the faith of the Lotus Sutra.

When chanting the Odaimoku and reciting the sutras, we chant with our voice and also read the Lotus Sutra aloud. By chanting the Odaimoku and reciting the sutras, we become one with the mind of the Original Buddha and one in body with Him.

St. Nichiren, who was drawn to the words of Eminent Chinese Buddhist Priest Tendai, “To chant is itself the way of the Buddha,” said it is important that we chant the Odaimoku and recite the sutras aloud. That is because chanting the Odaimoku and reciting the sutras causes our soul to shine and improves our destiny.

The voice of the Odaimoku chanting and sutra recitation becomes the Buddha's voice and purifies not only ourselves alone but our surroundings. Moreover, the Buddha's voice transforms into light and cleanses the universe. It goes without saying that its merits are great.

Charity is acts of *fuse* (selfless giving), which is the primary path for our salvation. This is an enormous merit. Since charity is an expression in form and deed of a true heart, it brings joy to Buddha and deities, the departed spirits, and the minds of human beings. It is a good action that brings good results. Anyone knows that to completely live a happy life, it is useless to sit idly and leave things to fate.

Therefore, isn't it only natural that we take responsibility for our lives and make effort to improve our destiny? To do so we must deeply engrave upon our mind the truth of cause and condition, and cause and effect, and the teaching of true state of the phenomena of the universe and matter, and take action and practice this truth.

Let's practice.

The Pain of Poverty (Economic Suffering)

While there are various essential conditions for us to live in this world, since today is an economic society, we could not live for even a single day without money. That is why it is terrible if we should be without income by losing our job or falling ill and being unable to work.

Moreover, if the management of an enterprise or business does not go well, the employees and their families would be thrown into the streets. There might be a way to somehow make ends meet if we were alone, but there is no way of knowing when economic uncertainties and difficulties, which adversely affect our surroundings, may befall us. Isn't the suffering from failure due to large debts a hell-like state that is devoid of the sensation of being alive?

We must always be mindful in order to not fall into the pain of poverty. Yet what must we do if we find ourselves in that state? There is no other way than to live by awakening to the real path of cause and effect. The way will surely open for us if we thoroughly holdfast to Buddha

and deities, allow our soul to shine, and apply ourselves while devoting our lives for the sake of others and for world peace.

Among the disciples of St. Nichiren there was a disciple by the name of Horen Shonin. From the time of the passing of his father, until the 13th anniversary of his death, Horen Shonin continued to daily memorialize his father by reading the verse section of chapter 16 of the sutra. On the thirteenth anniversary, he offered up the true heart of memorial services by performing five condensed readings of the Lotus Sutra.

Horen Shonin reported his efforts to St. Nichiren, who resided on Mt. Minobu. In addition to his letter, Horen Shonin sent a celebratory gift of the memorial service. In his letter, St. Nichiren praised Horen Shonin's practice of sutra recitation and lauded his merits. In that letter St. Nichiren wrote about the merit of the selfless giving of offering a true heart.

Long ago in India, there was a hunter. At one time a famine occurred and there was not enough to eat. The hunter saw that Rita, the

sage he respected, was hungry, and he offered the sage a bowl full of his meager millet-rice. The sage Rita was overjoyed and accepted that offering. Through the merit of that offering was that hunter reborn for the incalculable period of 91 aeons as a man of unsurpassable wealth.

In the present life, the hunter was born as Anaritsu, one of the 10 great disciples of Historical Shakyamuni Buddha, who was foremost for his “miraculous eye.” St. Nichiren interpreted the tale of the hunter’s good cause and good effect: “While the millet-rice weighed very little, since it was offered to a noble Byakushibutsu (sage) the hunter was born many times with the great reward of that act.” To memorialize one’s father by reciting the Lotus Sutra is in truth also an act of making an offering to the Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra and causing Him to rejoice.

No matter what one’s circumstances may be, let alone to offer good deeds during difficult times, and to particularly make efforts to perform memorial services for our ancestors and deceased parents—such acts are truly also offerings to the Eternal Buddha, who is the source of our soul, and brings happiness to Him.

The religious faith of chanting the Odaimoku, reciting the sutras, and offering our true heart, shines a great light upon our path of life.

The Pain of Illness (Bodily Suffering)

The suffering of birth, old age, sickness and death, namely, the four sufferings are something that we cannot escape as human beings.

In particular, there are various problems with the body when growing old. As I earlier stated, as much as possible we seek to be in good health into old age and die suddenly and with very little illness.

While it is only natural that bodily problems appear with age, it is indeed a hardship to be suffering from illness at a young age.

The pain of illness is not only a hardship for the person himself, but those around him are prone to mental pain and darkness. That is why we should make the effort to be cheerful and not lose the light of hope that things will certainly improve.

Medicine has advanced. Illnesses that were said to be serious are being healed one after another. Therefore, what is of utmost importance is a peace of mind that comes from transforming our thought that *things will improve* into firm conviction.

Among the followers of St. Nichiren there was a person by the name of Myoshin Ama. Her husband was bedridden by a serious illness. St. Nichiren sent a letter to encourage her. There he wrote: "It is not determined that one dies because he is ill." In other words, he taught that illness and lifespan are not the same.

It is probably the case that people envision death after coming down with an illness. They are uneasy when they think about death. Their feelings grow dark and further worsen their condition through their own thoughts.

St. Nichiren continued: "This illness is perhaps the good graces of the Buddha.... It may be that a mind of faith will arise through his illness."

The truth that the real state of the evil cause and evil effect from past lives is now appearing

on a person as illness, can be thought of as an act to erase his past bad karma. Since karma will certainly vanish after it has appeared, we should believe things will improve from now through its disappearance. Isn't that why we should we should make effort to sow the seeds for happiness? That is to say, we should practice and carry out the chanting of the Odaimoku, the reciting of the sutras, and acts of charity.

By removing our mental clouds through chanting the Odaimoku and reciting of sutras, our mind brightens, we offer our smile to those around us and our words of gratitude. When this happens, heaven's protection begins to work. And we are provided with good medicine and blessed by a fine doctor.

When a person has an encounter with death, that is to say, when he begins to think about death, the person changes. How does he change? He decides that if he should recover his health, he will strive to fulfill his heaven-sent mission and be of service to society, people and world peace.

And when he thinks that this was due to the good graces of the Eternal Buddha, his soul is

energized and he is full of vitality. When this happens, hasn't his illness become a blessing?

The Pain of Conflict (Human Relations, Terrorism, Sufferings of War)

The pain of conflict begins with parents and children, siblings and friends, and extends widely to organizations, social dissention and to wars between nations. This is something that we cannot avoid in human society.

If this is something that we cannot avoid, that is all the more reason to develop the wisdom to transcend that suffering and to do away with it.

Among the pain of conflict, the greatest suffering is war. No matter how happy the life that we are leading or how fortunate our society or how great the economic growth that it achieves, once war breaks out, all these come to nothing. In particular, the use of the new weapons from the advancement of science, and nuclear weapons, and the like, could lead to the end of humankind.

To leave for future generations the civilization that we have worked so hard to build and to realize the eternal peace of the world and humankind, we must by all means make every possible effort.

In 1950, the venerable Rev. Nittatsu Fujii announced his admonition, "Policy to Build a Peaceful Nation." Allow me to share a section with you.

"Civilization is not turning on electric lights. It is also not having airplanes. It is also not making atomic bombs. Civilization is to not kill people. It is not destroying things. It is mutual acquaintances. It is mutual respect."

His admonition is not only a policy to build a peaceful nation, but it is the fundamental idea for the manifestation of world peace. In other words, the mutual worship, which is taught in the chapter Never-Despising Bodhisattva of the Lotus Sutra, is indeed the path to the eternal peace of the world.

Why is it the way to eternal peace? Each and every member of humankind has received the precious *life* from the Eternal Buddha and has

been dispatched to this world. At that time they came with great mission: “Go there and work for the sake of society, people and for world peace.”

Therefore all humankind—the recipients of *life* from the Original Buddha—are brothers and sisters. Moreover, they all have the same mission to work for world peace. To mutually worship one another because of that precious life and to affirm the mission of each other is the mutual worship that is spoken of.

“I respect you deeply. I do not despise you. Why is that? It is because you will be able to practice the Way of Bodhisattvas and become Buddhas.” (*Lotus Sutra*, translated by Rev. Senchu Murano, p. 286)

Since these words of Never-Despising Bodhisattva are the mind of the Eternal Buddha, they are, just as they are, the mind of the Odaimoku. To worship another by chanting the Odaimoku is not only a practice for the problem of war, but it’s the noble path that overcomes all pain of conflict.

Among the poems of Kenji Miyazawa
Bodhisattva there is the “Letter of Chunse and
Poose.”

“Any child,
Even a person who works the fields,
Even a person eating an apple while sitting in
the locomotive,
The birds that sing or those that don’t,
The red, black and every kind of fish,
All animals,
All insects,
All, everyone of them from the past,
Are brothers and sisters.
Therefore have great courage.
We must find
The true happiness of all living beings.
That is
The Namu Saddharma-Pundarika-Sutra.
It is Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.”

All living things, all sentient beings are
children of the Eternal Buddha. That is why
all sentient beings are brothers and sisters.
Let us wholeheartedly give rise to a mind of
mutual worship, go beyond advantages and
disadvantages, transcend rivalry, and completely
live a happy life.

To realize this, let us devote ourselves to chanting the Odaimoku, reciting the sutras, and do great merciful acts of charity.

The Pain of Disaster (The Suffering of Natural Disaster)

Are not natural disasters frightening just to the extent that we do not know when they will strike?

The cause for this is our tendency to think that since natural disasters are natural phenomena, they are not related to human society. That is not true.

Within the mind of the Great Spirit of the Universe and the Eternal Buddha, all we sentient beings, the county in which we live—all are being ruled. That is why the way of life of we members of humankind becomes the natural phenomena that occurs on the land, and influences all humankind.

St. Nichiren taught this when he wrote: “To begin with, heaven and earth are the mirror

of the country. Our country is now plagued by disasters and calamities. Know that the fault lies with the ruler of the land.”

In other words, the Eternal Buddha admonishes the mistakes of the country and society with the natural phenomena of the universe. Today’s people may say that there is no such thing and do not believe this. Yet that is not the case. From ancient times the Eastern people have viewed the natural universe as being a guidepost for daily life. We must not forget the wisdom that carefully reflects on nature.

Isn’t it the time for the people of today to awaken to the prayer of chanting the Odaimoku and reciting the sutras, which pray for world peace and the peace of the land, while always looking to the mind of the Universal Great Spirit and the Eternal Buddha?

As the messenger of the Eternal Buddha, St. Nichiren, appeared in the world for the happiness of all sentient beings and to spread the Odaimoku. He wrote the *Rissho Ankoku Ron* (Treatise on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing Righteousness)

and encouraged all sentient beings to practice the Odaimoku. There it is stated: “If we lose our country and our home is destroyed, there is no place for us to escape. If we wish to feel reassured, shouldn’t we first pray for the peace of the world?”

It is certainly true that the merit of praying for world peace and the tranquility of the land will become a great protector for our happiness. Let us chant the Odaimoku and recite the sutras, and perform great merciful acts of charity, live a long life in good health and fully live a happy life.

Religious faith is practice. The time for practice is now.

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