

Key Passages from *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*

[8] “The Emergence of the Treasure Tower” and “Devadatta” Chapters

Shining Our Brightest amid the Realities of This World

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Happy New Year everyone! My name is Mai Ogushi and welcome to the very first study podcast of the Year of Soaring Higher toward a Youthful Soka Gakkai Worldwide!

This month in January, we will learn about the Treasure Tower and its significance, as well as the meaning of the events described during the Ceremony in the Air through studying “The Emergence of the Treasure Tower” chapter and “Devadatta” chapter from *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*.

In “The Emergence of the Treasure Tower” chapter, an enormous treasure tower rises from the earth into the sky. The entire gathering is then lifted into the air. During this Ceremony in the Air, Shakyamuni, seated in the tower along with Many Treasures Buddha, entrusts the Bodhisattvas of the Earth with the propagation of the essence of the Lotus Sutra in the evil age after his passing.

Growing up in the practice, I often heard about the treasure tower and the Ceremony in the Air depicted in the Lotus Sutra, but I could never wrap my head around it. As Sensei says in the lecture, they seemed to be “wild fantasies or fairy tales” to me. But studying this lecture by Sensei gave me a better understanding of the significance of the treasure tower and the Ceremony in the Air, so let’s delve into it!

Throughout *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, the Daishonin explains that they teach that we ourselves are supremely noble beings who embody the Mystic Law, and states: “Now Nichiren and his followers, who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, are practitioners who are ‘adorned with the seven treasures’” (OTT, 89).

Here is the first Goshō selection from *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teaching*.

**[Chapter Eleven: The Emergence of the Treasure Tower
Twenty important points]**

Point Two, on the seven treasures in the passage “At that time in the Buddha’s presence there was a tower adorned with the seven treasures.”

The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings says: The seven treasures are hearing, as in hearing the Law; belief; keeping of the precepts; meditation; diligence; abandoning of attachment to earthly desires; and a sense of shame (or reflecting on oneself). Or again, we may say that they are the seven openings in the head, the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, and the mouth.

Now Nichiren and his followers, who chant Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō, are practitioners who are “adorned with the seven treasures.” (OTT, 89)

In the section, “**The Ceremony in the Air Depicts the Drama of Life Itself**”, Sensei explains:

The Ceremony in the Air, and indeed the entire Lotus Sutra, is a drama that plays out in Shakyamuni’s own mind, and at the same time, it is a drama that describes our own beings. Drawing forth the life state of Buddhahood by chanting Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō, we can break through our individual karma and achieve the fundamental transformation of our lives known as attaining Buddhahood. Not only that, we can enact the ultimate drama of transformation based on the principle of the ‘three thousand realms in a single moment of life,’ by which we can realize happiness for both ourselves and others and contribute to creating a prosperous society and a peaceful world. The treasure tower adorned with seven kinds of treasures depicted in the Lotus Sutra symbolizes the infinite nobility and potential of our lives that we can demonstrate through our Buddhist practice.

Sensei continues:

The Mystic Law enables all people to see and reveal their innate Buddha nature and make it shine. Everyone, without distinction or discrimination, is originally and inherently a noble treasure tower. This is a truly magnificent affirmation of humanity and a celebration of life. It brims with compassion arising from the great wisdom of equality that embraces the global family of humankind, and with the broad-minded wisdom that respects and supports individuality, enabling it to flourish in all its diversity.”

In a time of division, confusion and distress, this humanistic philosophy is exactly what we all need in this world today. How fortunate we are that we can study Ikeda Sensei’s lectures on the writings of Nichiren Daishonin, reflect on ourselves to keep ourselves in check and continuously strive to be the best version of ourselves by doing our own human revolution first, and foremost!

In the section, “**Chanting to the Gohonzon, We Join the Ceremony in the Air**”, Sensei explains that:

The Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the heart of the Lotus Sutra, based on the Ceremony in the Air. The profound significance of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon is that, when we do so, we each join the Ceremony in the Air. When we engage in our daily gongyo and chanting, we take part in the noble, splendid Ceremony in the Air, activating the magnificent treasure tower within us.”

Doesn’t this wanna make you do gongyo and chant? Chanting to the Gohonzon is the ultimate way of respecting, celebrating and taking care of our own life. By polishing our life and as Sensei says, “activating the treasure tower within,” we can bring forth our unlimited potential and joyfully tackle obstacles in our lives one by one!

The next section “**Devadatta and the Dragon King’s Daughter’s Revolutionary Attainment of Enlightenment**” gives hope to the people as it highlights the equality inherent in Buddhism. The sutras expounded prior to the Lotus Sutra taught that evil people and women were incapable of attaining enlightenment. However, Shakyamuni revealed Devadatta’s future enlightenment, a person who had committed a grave offense of attempting to kill Shakyamuni. Similarly, the Dragon King’s Daughter’s attainment of enlightenment shows that things like one’s gender, age, or outward appearance do not prevent us from attaining enlightenment. These examples illustrate the universality that

all living beings are capable of attaining Buddhahood.

Here is the second Gosho selection from *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teaching*.

**[Chapter Twelve: Devadatta
Eight important points]**

Point Eight, on the passage “At that time the dragon girl had a precious jewel worth as much as the thousand-millionfold world [or the major world system] which she presented to the Buddha. The Buddha immediately accepted it. The dragon girl said to Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulated and to the venerable one, Shariputra, ‘I presented the precious jewel and the World-Honoured One accepted it—was that not quickly done?’

“They replied, ‘Very quickly!’

“The girl said, ‘Employ your supernatural powers and watch me attain Buddhahood. It will be even quicker than that!’” [LSOC12, 227]

The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings says: In the phrase “a precious jewel,” the word “a” or “one” indicates Myoho-rence-kyo [abbreviated as *myoho*, or the Wonderful Law]. “Precious” indicates the workings of the Wonderful Law, and the jewel indicates the entity of the Wonderful Law. . . .

Expressing the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, the dragon girl presents the precious jewel to the Buddha. When [T’ien-t’ai’s] *Words and Phrases* says that this “symbolizes the attainment of perfect understanding,” it is referring to the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. At the time when the precious jewel was still in the hands of the dragon girl, it represented the attainments that were inherent in her nature. But when the Buddha accepted the precious jewel, it became representative of the attainments acquired through religious practice. Herein is embodied the principle that “acquired through practice” and “inherent in nature” are not two different things. (OTT, 107–108)

The dragon king's daughter's enlightenment is described in the Devadatta chapter. When faced with those in the assembly who doubt about her ability to attain Buddhahood due to her outward appearance, she presents a precious jewel to Shakyamuni Buddha and then manifests the state of Buddhahood. Regarding this jewel, Nichiren Daishonin explains in the passage that it represents the Buddha nature inherent within her. He further teaches that her offering of the jewel to Shakyamuni signifies her attainment of Buddhahood through religious practice. In the section **“Revealing the Precious Jewel That Exists Within”** Sensei explains:

These two aspects of ‘the attainments that were inherent in one’s nature’ and ‘the attainments acquired through religious practice’ are deeply interrelated. Because we inherently possess the life state of Buddhahood, we can manifest it through our Buddhist practice, and because we can manifest it through our Buddhist practice, it becomes clear that we inherently possess it. These two aspects are nondual, and both are indispensable.

We all possess the life state of Buddhahood within, but it is through our daily practice that we can bring it forth and shine in our own unique way!

I would like to end this podcast by sharing Sensei’s encouragement from the section, **“Happiness Is Within”**:

Each of you is the most precious treasure of all. Happiness does not exist outside of you. There is nothing more wonderful than you. This is what Buddhism teaches. It enables you to bring your most precious treasure—you yourself—to shine. That is what makes it a genuine philosophy.

Thank you so much for listening, and have a wonderful study meeting this month! If you have any questions, please send them to us at: study@sgicanada.org