



## Battling the Devil of Compassion

The parasites in the Lion's bowels

An Essay by chikushonin 智俱諸人

It is my intention to demonstrate in this essay that academic translations are often more reliable than translations by so-called religious authorities due to the tendencies of religious adherents to incorporate their own interpretations of doctrine into their so-called translations. Commentaries and insights belong in the footnotes and not presented as direct translations.

While this is often done with the best of intentions, the intent and meaning of the original author can be misrepresented and thereby lost—a most grievous error!

As Nichiren wrote, *“The impurity of thought has been such that, as the Former and Middle Days of the Law gradually passed, people transmitted insignificant erroneous teachings while destroying the unfathomable correct teaching. It therefore appears that more people have fallen into the evil paths because of errors with respect to Buddhism than because of secular misdeeds.*

*Now the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law have passed, and it has been more than two hundred years since the Latter Day began. Now is the time when, because the impurity of thought prevails, more people fall into the evil paths with the intention of creating good causes than they do by committing evil. As for evil acts, even ignorant people, if they recognize them for what they are, may refrain from committing them. This is like extinguishing a fire with water. But people think that good deeds are all equal in their goodness; thus they adhere to lesser good and do not realize that, in doing so, they bring about major evil.”*

*Encouragement to a Sick Person by Nichiren, [NichirenLibrary.org](http://NichirenLibrary.org)*

To illustrate, I offer two translations of the section of Nichiren's work *On the Receiving of the Three Great Secret Laws: Sandai hihō honshō ji* (三大秘法稟承事). While I submit that neither translation is perfect, in this case, the academic translation is more reliable. I will attempt to make distinctions regarding both.

The first is from the Soka Gakkai's English translations of Nichiren's works. While the Soka Gakkai's efforts to propagate the teachings of Nichiren is highly commendable in terms of their intent and the

unsurpassed scope of their activities to this end, and I, like many others, owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude for their efforts, nonetheless, I must point out the error here so that I may, in part, repay my debt.

*“The sanctuary, or ordination platform, constitutes one of the Three Great Secret Laws of the essential teaching. When the secular law and the Law of the Buddha are fused and in mutual accord; when both the ruler and his officials uphold the Three Great Secret Laws of the essential teaching; and when the practice of King Possessor of Virtue and the monk Realization of Virtue is actualized in the future of the muddied and evil age of the Latter Day, then imperial edicts and official proclamations will be issued, and the most fitting site will be sought out, one resembling the pure land of Eagle Peak, and the sanctuary will be established there. We have only to wait for the proper time for this. This is what is meant by the practice of the precept of the Law.*

*This will be a sanctuary not only where the people of the three countries of India, China, and Japan, and all the inhabitants of Jambudvīpa, will come to receive the precept of the Law that enables them to repent and wipe out offenses, but also where the great heavenly kings Brahmā and Shakra will descend to take part in the ceremony.*

*Once the precept of the Law is established, the ordination platform of Enryaku-ji, since it administers the precepts of the meditative practice of the theoretical teaching, will cease to be of any benefit.”*

*On the Receiving of the Three Great Secret Laws: Sandai hihō honshō ji (三大秘法稟承事) by Nichiren, [NichirenLibrary.org](http://NichirenLibrary.org)*

The second translation is excerpted from Monumenta Nipponica, XXVI, I-2, pages 220-221 *Sandaihihō-shō. An Essay on the Three Great Mysteries* by Nichiren, translated by Pier P. Del Campana. I am indebted to the editor of this publication for the permission to reprint it here:

*“As for the Seat of Ordination, when the Law of the Sovereign and the Law of the Buddha are united and become one, and sovereign and subjects become one in their faith in the doctrine of the Great Three Mysteries, the same bond that existed in the days of old between King Utoku and the Monk Kakutoku will also exist in the future world of the impure and evil Age of the Latter Law.*

*At that time an imperial edict and a decree of the shogun will be granted; a most exalted place—similar to the Vulture Peak—will be found, and there the Seat of Ordination will be erected. We have only to wait for the right time for this to happen.*

*This will mark the advent of the actual law established by the Buddha among men. To this Seat of Ordination will come not only all the people of the three countries—India, China and Japan—to repent their sins and be saved, but even Brahma and Indra and the other gods will come and gather around it.*

*Once this Buddha Law is established, the Seat of Ordination existing now at Enryaku-ji will lose its reason for existence, since it is based merely on the precepts of the conceptual doctrine of the Trace Buddha.”*

*Monumenta Nipponica © 1971 [Sophia University](http://Sophia University) ([link to this article](#))*

You may ask, “What has this to do with ‘battling the Devil of Compassion’ and ‘the parasite in the Lion’s bowels’?”

The Devil of Compassion, here, is born of the well-intentioned but misguided minds of common mortals. We all possess the aspects of sovereign, teacher, and parent inherent in our lives. There is, however, a difference between the compassion of parenting born of the minds of common mortals and the virtue of Parent attained by the Buddhas and the common mortals of myojisoku. Hence, Nichiren’s statement about the importance of becoming a person of wisdom if one endeavors to disseminate the teachings of the Buddhas:

*“The old fox never forgets the hillock where he was born; the white turtle repaid the kindness he had received from Mao Pao. If even lowly creatures know enough to do this, then how much more should human beings! Thus, Yü Jang, a worthy man of old, fell on his sword in order to repay the debt he owed his lord Chih Po, and the minister Hung Yen for similar reasons cut open his stomach and inserted the liver of his dead lord, Duke Yi of Wei. What can we say, then, of persons who are devoting themselves to Buddhism? Surely they should not forget the debts of gratitude they owe to their parents, their teachers, and their country.*

*But if one intends to repay these great debts of gratitude, one can hope to do so only if one learns and masters Buddhism, becoming a person of wisdom. If one does not, one will be like a man who attempts to lead a company of the blind over bridges and across rivers when he himself has*

sightless eyes. Can a ship steered by someone who cannot even tell the direction of the wind ever carry the traveling merchants to the mountains where treasure lies?"

On Repaying Debts of Gratitude by Nichiren, [NichirenLibrary.org](http://NichirenLibrary.org)

In the course of my own practice, I have encountered manifestations of the function of the Devil of Compassion in the well-intentioned actions of the SGI-USA, when they have given guidance regarding myself, the nature of, "Don't give him an audience", and "Please do not confuse the members", and "Your actions are causing confusion and disharmony among the community of Believers!"

I believe the errors in the translation quoted above from *On the Receiving of the Three Great Secret Laws*, NichirenLibrary.org, are of this nature—well-intentioned but misguided. As such, they are precisely—while well-intentioned—the very definition of the parasites in the Lion's bowels, or, as Nichiren has stated, "Neither non-Buddhists nor the enemies of Buddhism can destroy the correct teaching of the Thus Come One, but the Buddha's disciples definitely can. As a sutra says, only worms born of the lion's body feed on the lion. A person of great fortune will never be ruined by enemies, but may be ruined by those who are close."

Letter from Sado by Nichiren, [NichirenLibrary.org](http://NichirenLibrary.org)

A comparison of these two translations sheds light on the issue at hand. The translation by the Soka Gakkai (SG) is rife with the inclusion of interpretations which could be included in footnotes, but have no place in the translation itself. Thus, they are the parasites in the Lion's bowels; The attempt at literal and academic translation provide by Monumenta Nipponica (MN), while not perfect, at least attempts to convey Nichiren's words without embellishment, thereby leaving the reader with the opportunity to ponder Nichiren's intended meaning. This makes the translation by MN superior to the offering provided by SG.

There are three main areas in the selected texts of the *Sandaijihō-shō* below that are most worrisome:

SG: "When the secular law and the Law of the Buddha are fused and in mutual accord;"

MN: "(W)hen the Law of the Sovereign and the Law of the Buddha are united and become one,"

and:

SG: "We have only to wait for the proper time for this. This is what is meant by the practice of the precept of the Law."

MN: "We have only to wait for the right time for this to happen. This will mark the advent of the actual law established by the Buddha among men."

and:

SG: "Once the precept of the Law is established, the ordination platform of Enryaku-ji, since it administers the precepts of the meditative practice of the theoretical teaching, will cease to be of any benefit."

MN: "Once this Buddha Law is established, the Seat of Ordination existing now at Enryaku-ji will lose its reason for existence, since it is based merely on the precepts of the conceptual doctrine of the Trace Buddha."

The SG translation includes interpretations of "Law of the Sovereign" as "the secular law", rendering "This will mark the advent of the actual law established by the Buddha among men" as "This is what is meant by the practice of the precept of the Law.", and rendering "Once this Buddha Law is established," as "This is what is meant by the practice of the precept of the Law."

The SG interprets Nichiren's meaning: this is not a direct translation. The translator assumes that he/she knows Nichiren's mind and tells us what our understanding should be—in accord with their own minds,

while representing these doctrinal and sectarian ‘worms’ as Nichiren’s actual thoughts and words; The MN translation makes an honest attempt to convey Nichiren’s actual words, thereby leaving Nichiren’s meaning open to be explored and pondered by our seeking minds of faith.

For the reasons stated above, while both translations have their own issues regarding accuracy, the academic translation by Pier P. Del Campana and Monumenta Nipponica is far superior to the interpretive translation provided by the Goshō Translation Committee and the Soka Gakkai.

While I truly believe that these actions by the Translation Committee are honest mistakes, born of the mindset of wishing not to confuse the English-speaking members of the SGI, they nonetheless fulfill the functions of the Devil of Compassion and bear the mark of the parasites in the Lion’s bowels, and are not in keeping with the practice of Bodhisattva Fukyo, who spoke to everyone he encountered words to the effect of, “I would never look down to you because you, too, have the Buddha nature hidden within your life.”

Again: *“Neither non-Buddhists nor the enemies of Buddhism can destroy the correct teaching of the Thus Come One, but the Buddha’s disciples definitely can. As a sutra says, only worms born of the lion’s body feed on the lion. A person of great fortune will never be ruined by enemies, but may be ruined by those who are close.”*

Letter from Sado by Nichiren, [NichirenLibrary.org](http://NichirenLibrary.org)

In the Pier P. Del Campana translation, it is clear that Nichiren is making predictions regarding the advent of the Law of the Kaidan, the Buddha Law, the establishment of the Seat of Ordination and High Sanctuary, the third and remaining element of the doctrine of Three Great Secret Laws that, in his wisdom, Nichiren left to be revealed in the future days of the Latter Day of the Law—the Soka Gakkai’s interpretive rendering does not.

In a collection of letters written in the early 1990’s titled ‘Turning the Wheel of the Law’, I offered the following untitled poem, which I stated at the time, is a poem meant to be pondered:

*The Sun of Jiyu is rising,  
all eyes turn east, further east...  
In the west, for the first time,  
a white lion cub is born.  
Thus, heaven and earth agree,  
the time is almost right,  
for the necklace to be rejoined.*

Untitled Poem by John Jansen, Copyright ©1994 by John L Jansen, Jr. All Rights Reserved

In brief, my understanding of the portions of the *Sandaihihō-shō. An Essay on the Three Great Mysteries* by Nichiren, are as follows:

*“(W)hen the Law of the Sovereign and the Law of the Buddha are united and become one,”:*

Here, *the Sovereign* is none other than Shakyamuni, who is Sovereign, Teacher, and Parent to all of us, and *the Law of the Sovereign* is none other than myohorengē; the *Law of the Buddha* is none other than myojisoku,

hidden in the depths of the Juryo Chapter of the Lotus Sutra, and that they are *united and become one* is none other than myohorenge—myojisoku.

*“We have only to wait for the right time for this to happen. This will mark the advent of the actual law established by the Buddha among men.”:*

Because the three poisons of anger, greed, and foolishness in our minds, society, and environment are so prevalent, if we don’t make drastic changes within the next ten to twenty years, in as soon as seventy-five years human beings will be extinct, due to global warming, we will be gone the way of the dinosaurs, the *wait is over*, and this is *the right time for this to happen*; and, that *This will mark the advent of the actual law established by the Buddha among men* is none other than Namumyohorengemyojisokukyo, because the time is now right, for the necklace to be rejoined.

*“Once this Buddha Law is established, the Seat of Ordination existing now at Enryaku-ji will lose its reason for existence, since it is based merely on the precepts of the conceptual doctrine of the Trace Buddha.”*

This last sentence I thought to leave for later, left to be pondered, but, if I did so now, I would be judged by the Buddhas of the Ten Directions and Three Worlds to be lacking in compassion and mercy. So, while I am reluctant, I must keep the mystic precept of responding with acceptance and joy:

*Once this Buddha Law is established* means someone comes forth and declares Namumyohorengemyojisokukyo in a clear and uncompromising fashion; and, *the Seat of Ordination existing now at Enryaku-ji will lose its reason for existence, since it is based merely on the precepts of the conceptual doctrine of the Trace Buddha* means when the sun comes out, the stars go into hiding and they are no longer a reliable guide to steer the ship across the sea of suffering to the distant shore, the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light.

Namumyohorengemyojisokukyo is the actualization of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. This eleven-character teaching contains the wisdom of all the Buddhas of the Ten Directions and Three Worlds.

If it were not for Namumyohorengemyojisokukyo, Nichiren would be known as a great liar for having written, *“The Lotus Sutra is the teaching of shakubuku, the refutation of the provisional doctrines.” True to the letter of this golden saying, in the end, every last one of the believers of the provisional teachings and schools will be defeated and join the retinue of the Dharma King. The time will come when all people will abandon the various kinds of vehicles and take up the single vehicle of Buddhahood, and the Mystic Law alone will flourish throughout the land. When the people all chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the wind will no longer buffet the branches, and the rain will no longer break the clods of soil. The world will become as it was in the ages of Fu Hsi and Shen Nung. In their present existence the people will be freed from misfortune and disasters and learn the art of living long. Realize that the time will come when the truth will be revealed that both the person and the Law are unaging and eternal. There cannot be the slightest doubt about the sutra’s promise of “peace and security in their present existence.”*

On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings by Nichiren, [NichirenLibrary.org](http://NichirenLibrary.org)

If not for the struggles and accomplishments of the Soka Gakkai, it is possible that I may not have had the rare good fortune of encountering the Mandala of the One Great Reason in this present existence. Now, as difficult to believe and difficult as it is to understand, because of all your efforts, I have become a person of wisdom and I am able to repay all my debts of gratitude completely. Is this anything other than the functions of being both mentor and disciple to one and other?

With faith and understanding, responding with acceptance and joy!

chikushonin 智俱諸人, a common mortal of myojisoku

Daikudoshin, myokaku, myojisokukyo/Namumyohorengemyojisokukyo 南無妙法蓮華命時僧俱教