

BACK TO THE BASICS
BODHISATTVA NEVER DISPARAGING
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In the 20th chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni shares the story of Never Disparaging, a bodhisattva from a remote time when arrogant priests tried to destroy Buddhism and control people's lives. Unlike those priests, Never Disparaging went around trying to empower everyone he met. "I have profound reverence for you," he would say, "I would never dare treat you with disparagement or arrogance. Why? Because you are all practicing the bodhisattva way and are certain to attain Buddhahood" (*The Lotus Sutra*, pp. 266–67).

How did people react to Never Disparaging's encouragement? They beat him up and called him names. Not once, not twice, but all the time, over many years. And he just kept telling them the same thing: "You will become Buddhas!" (p. 269).

Through this sincere kind of practice, Never Disparaging eventually realized such a vast state of life that all who had tried to hurt him came to deeply respect him. In the end, they came to practice Buddhism correctly.

While relating this story, Shakyamuni reveals that "in fact he [Never Disparaging] was none other than I myself!" (p. 268). Nichiren Daishonin similarly applies this story to himself, seeing in it a parallel to the way he was persecuted for sharing this Buddhism.

The point is that we can all relate Never Disparaging's story to our own lives, to the unique struggles for kosen-rufu each of us goes through. "Those struggling in the forefront of our movement are themselves Bodhisattva Never Disparaging," SGI President Ikeda teaches (August 1999 *Living Buddhism*, p. 23).

For us, as it was for Never Disparaging, the purpose of our being born, the purpose of our coming to practice this great philosophy, comes down to how we can treat others. In "The Three Kinds of Treasure," the Daishonin says that "the heart of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings is the Lotus Sutra, and the heart of the practice of the Lotus Sutra is found in the 'Never Disparaging' chapter. What does Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's profound respect for people signify? The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 852).

Do we have Never Disparaging's reverence for others? Do we act on it? When we do, our friends, loved ones and even our enemies are naturally led to true happiness.