

## Nichiren Shu Buddhist Temple of UK Newsletter

### **Bodhisattva... “I met a Train Conductor in the form of a Bodhisattva”**

Buddhism teaches us how important it is to associate people with compassion. A compassionate deed or idea is called, “The way of Bodhisattva”. This is an essential concept for attaining enlightenment and for bettering your life. Hence people who live life this way are called “Bodhisattvas”. I would like to talk about a Bodhisattva whom I met when I was travelling in Europe a long time ago.

Over twenty-five years ago East-West relations were still tense. At that time I was travelling in Europe alone. I was riding a night train to Belgrade in Yugoslavia from Venetia, Italy. I purchased a first-class seat and had a whole six-seat compartment to myself. It was like a moveable palace to me – very enjoyable and relaxing, and I felt like a King.

When darkness had fallen the train stopped at a station, and one young man entered my palace with many clattering kitchen utensils and luggage. I helped him to carry them. My palace had unexpectedly become a storage room. I asked what his destination was. He was on his way to Moscow from Algeria in Africa. He said that he was a top medical student in Algeria. The Soviet government had given him a scholarship and invited him to attend Medical School in Moscow; and included the train ticket to Moscow. He had brought pots, pans and other kitchen articles along for his new life in Moscow. “Russia is the greatest country in the world!” he told me proudly.

Before long a conductor came to check our tickets. As soon as he looked at the young man’s ticket he said, “This is a second-class ticket. Please move to a second-class car”. The young man quickly responded, “It cannot be so! This ticket was prepared for me by the Soviet government. I understood that I may sit anywhere”. “You may sit anywhere in second class”, the conductor said to him. “You must move from here” he said and went to the next car.

The young man kept saying, “It cannot be true”. The conductor came back soon and he threateningly said, “Move to the next car!” The young man however was not going to move and repeated what he’d said to the conductor before. The conductor’s patience had run out. He started to throw the young man’s belongings into the corridor and shouted, “Get out of here!” The young man shouted back at the conductor. Watching the situation unfold, I was upset at their fighting and wondered how I could stop them; then another conductor came along, separated the two and took the excited conductor to the next car. I asked the young man to show me his ticket. It was written in a foreign language, but I did recognise the number “2” in the area where the class identification would be located. I realised the conductor was right. The young man stuck to his opinion, and asked for mine but I kept my mouth shut.

Soon the conductor who stopped the fight came back again. The young man reacted to the conductor’s presence, ready for the next fight. The conductor sensed his mind and with a gentle voice asked him to see the ticket once again. The young man showed it to him nervously and waited for his reply. After looking at the ticket the conductor

gently said, "What will you do in Moscow?" The young man told his story. The conductor listened sympathetically and talked with the young man for a while. "Would you like to return to your country after becoming a doctor in Moscow?" The young man nodded emphatically and was now calm. The conductor said, "Okay! You may stay here. It's a long way to Moscow. Please take care and enjoy the trip!" The conductor faced me, and apologised with a slight bow. As he was leaving the compartment he turned to the young man, and said, "Become a good doctor!" I was moved by his compassion. He was so nice. The young man however turned to me and said proudly, "See, I was right!" I felt respect and admiration for the conductor, but only pity for the young man.

What do you think and how do you feel about this story? In this world wrong, unreasonable or varieties of absurd things frequently occur. If people were wiser, it would be a much more comfortable place to live. However in fact, the reasonable way often has to compromise with the unreasonable way like in the story of the conductor and the young man. This is absurd isn't it? It is commonly thought "We should compel an unreasonable person to be a reasonable person" so that the reasonable way should always take priority. But the conductor was different. He chose a more thoughtful, compassionate way instead of removing the young man by force as he understood the situation and accepted the young man's will even though reason was on the conductor's side. The conductor acted like a mother watching her child who tried to get the mother to get what the child wanted. I imagine the conductor thought "Although I am going could explain more to him, he would not understand; but in the future he will be able to understand tonight's event. However just for tonight, I'll let him stay here". He tolerated the young man's strong will like a mother with her son.

The conductor's deed is called "the way of Bodhisattva". A Bodhisattva is anyone who is motivated by compassion and seeks enlightenment not only for him/herself, but also for everyone. The compassion of Buddhism often refers to a mother's love for her child. For example, a mother will love her child unconditionally; even though the child may be mischievous she will tolerate the child's behaviour. However, once difference is that although a mother love her child primarily, the Buddha's compassion and love covers not only human beings but also all living beings equally.

There is no person who can understand reasoning, which is inborn, without life experiences. One day we will reach the age of maturity and we will understand the reason for something and will reflect back on our life saying, "How foolish I was!" On the path to maturity, we human beings make mistakes and do foolish things, and reflect on our past conduct and eventually become mature. We will awaken to and be ashamed of our foolish behaviour –what we said or how we acted.

There is no time to waste in life. We shouldn't punish or leave out the immature or foolish person. If we do so, they will not be able to learn properly. As the conductor showed, he did not judge or punish an immature person, but rather, sympathised with him. The reasonable person should lead or advise the immature person with great patience in order to lead him/her to understanding. Even as people read this, there might be someone who thinks, "If reasonable people have to do so for unreasonable people all the time, then reasonable are constantly at a disadvantage." This is incorrect! People who think "I am one of the reasonable people" must have grown after causing trouble to others and receiving support from them. A wise person knows

that he also was once and immature. We must not forget this fact. Reasonable people should recompense their indebtedness to others. Even if the person's behaviour does not improve straight away, we must not punish or leave him out due to anger. Instead of giving punishment, we should try to put ourselves in the other person's shoes: to try and understand his mind and situation; then we will be able to lead him to a better way according to his character, as the Buddha did. Remember, "A wise person can understand an immature person's mind, but an immature person cannot understand the mind of a wise person." A wise person should guide an immature person with great compassion. This is the way of a Bodhisattva and is what the Lotus Sutra teaches us. The Bodhisattva way is to lead others and oneself to Buddhahood together.

In Chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha said, "All of you are my children. I am your father."

In Chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra, it is written,

"The Buddha, the World-Honoured One, appeared in the worlds in order to cause all living beings to open the gate to the insight of the Buddha, and to cause them to purify themselves, - in order to show the insight of the Buddha to all living beings, - in order to cause all living beings to obtain the insight of the Buddha, - in order to cause all living beings to enter the Way to the insight of the Buddha."

The Buddha is our father and mother. We are the Buddha's children because we succeed the seed of "Buddha nature". We believe in Buddhism, and should awaken to it and keep it in our mind always and show great compassion to others as Buddha's children.

Please develop your Faith with no anger, great patience and compassion, and continue to practice the way of the Bodhisattva. If your patience is running out, please chant Odaimoku, "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" in your mind until you become calm. You may chant Odaimoku anytime and anywhere, whether you're happy or sad, even angry or in pain. Odaimoku is the medicine to resuscitate your life. In Chapter 7 it is written, "May all sentient beings be blessed with these merits, and may we all together attain Buddhahood."

Gassho.

### **"Three Drunken Men"**

One day the Buddha was passing through a town with his disciples. The Buddha met three drunken men. As soon as one of them saw the Buddha, he hid in the bush beside the road. Another one sat on the ground and pretended not to be drunk, having qualms about the Buddha's presence. The last one looked innocent and said "I don't care about anything" and ignored the Buddha.

The Buddha preached for his disciples. "A man who has hidden in the bush because of remorse has potential to become a good man with some practice. The second man who pretended not to be drunk because of a bit of remorse also has some potential to become a good man; with more practice than the first man. Unfortunately I don't know when the last man will become a good man. It is difficult for the person with no

remorse to turn over a new leaf; because without having qualms about his actions such a person is neither able to reflect on his own behaviour nor improve his life by himself.