

## On Saint Nichiren at Minobusan

Honsho Ueda

St. Nichiren (1222—1282), who is ranked as one of members of representatives of Buddhism at middle ages in Japan, settled his closing years with nine years at Minobusan, Yamanashi Prefecture.

His life at Minobusan is the most significant period for Nichiren's life. Finishing his thought, faith and teachings, he made up the foundation there to convey them for future generations. Therefore, it is important to study his life of nine years at Minobusan to understand his doctrines throughout his life.

St. Nichiren left Kamakura, Kanagawa Prefecture for Minobusan on the twelfth of May, 1274, at the age of 53. Then he arrived at Minobusan on the seventh of May and entered to the residence of Lord Rokuro Sanenaga Nanbu with his several disciples. Lord Sanenaga contributed Minobusan to Nichiren and still built a hermitage on the seventh of June.

Since then, he had lived there just before his death at the age of 61. Minobusan has commemorated that day as the age of its commencement.

When Nichiren went into Minobusan at first, he didn't intend to live for a long time, but he gradually began to love the place and think as a splendid, sacred one.

He wanted to walk around the country at first, but he decided to

On Saint Nichiren at Minobusan (Ueda)

settle down there, because Minobusan had a splendid natural beauty and was suitable for his liking.

The geography of Minobusan is surrounded with the four rivers—River Fuji, River Haya, River Ōjiro and River Minobu. And its scenery was very beautiful, but the climate was very severe with the grasses growing thick in summer and with much snow in winter. So the life was very hard.

The life in the mountain that was far away from the village lacked the traffic facilities clothes and food. So, he passed the hard lives materially. Especially, it having heavy snow in winter, few people visited there.

Therefore, the isolated days continued. But Nichiren had mentally the very blessed rich days. It was a supreme state as a religionist.

Because he attained to the supreme position that was far away from worldly sphere. Even though people were rich materially, they wouldn't be happy only with it.

Nichiren proved that people being materially poor but mentally rich could get the true happiness.

Nichiren's religious standpoint depends upon Hokekyo, Lotus Sutra. It is the teachings of Buddha that preached the truth.

Hokekyo is the most important, supreme sutra among lots of Buddhist sutras.

Buddha preached the most supreme Hokekyo at Ryojusen in India for last eight years controlling his teachings preached through life. And then he showed everyone the teachings to be Buddhahood.

Nichiren inherited the teachings of Hokekyo and propagated the

## On Saint Nichiren at Minobusan (Ueda)

teaching as a messenger of Buddha at the days of 2200 after Buddha's death.

Hokekyo has many fine teachings, and Hokekyo's main subjects are that Buddha's life is eternal and that our life is eternal, too.

Nichiren accepted the Buddha's vows as the truth and tried to realize it. The vows mean what the 16th chapter of Hokekyo says, "Let everyone become Buddha." Nichiren aimed that people would become Buddha in this world before they would become Buddha in the dead world. So he tried this world to be Utopia. It was his aim that the country would be peaceful and that people would be restful. He thought his aim was very near Buddha's ideal. What Hokekyo means was that people would be Buddha in this world working livelily and helping each other and that this world would be Buddha's country as it was.

Nichiren devoted his life to realize the ideal country. Therefore, Nichiren's life was a practice of Hokekyo and its personal experience.

Nine years on Nichiren at Minobusan are largely divided into next three terms.

The first term is from 1274 to 1277.

The second term is from 1277 to 1280.

The last term is from 1280 to 1282. (the year of his death)

For the first three years, he wrote his representative books that was named "Senjisho, Hoonsho," and 93 books. Senjisho was written on a time and Hoonsho was written on a faver. The term entered to a completed period of thought and faith. For the middle three years, he wrote 122 books, and he began to think that Minobusan was as

### On Saint Nichiren at Minobusan (Ueda)

splendid as Ryojusan in India and Tendaisan in China. So, he thought Minobusan was supreme.

On Sept. 1279, Nichiren's followers at Atuhara were persecuted, so that three men were killed and seventeen men were imprisoned.

Nichiren sent his disciple to settle the event, Nichiren advised a feudal lord to correct his faith for the right faith three times, but the rulers blamed the advice and often persecuted Nichiren and his sect.

For the last three years, he rebuilt his hermitage and wrote 76 books, but he became sick. Though he once recovered his health later, his illness became chronic. So, Sept. 1282, he got down Mt. Minobu and went to Ikegami in Tokyo by his followers' recommendation. The books he wrote at Minobusan for nine years were over a half in number among the books he wrote throughout all his life. And those books have been conveyed as the valuable books since then. As much as his health could permit, Nichiren devoted himself to write the books and to educate his followers and his disciples. He lectured Hokekyo many times and often explained the meanings of Hokekyo.

Many followers and disciples, about from 50 to 100 in number, gathered there to listen to his lectures for some days. And he personally gave his instructions and advices to his followers' troubles and disciples. And he approached them with the feeling of unity. Therefore, Nichiren's entering to Minobusan was, as it was said, not merely retirement from the active life, but it seemed to be the hard and busy days. And it was not the free and calm life, but it was the life of writing the books and reading the sutras throughout the day and

## On Saint Nichiren at Minobusan (Ueda)

night.

Some theories have been said on Nichiren's entering to Minobusan. I think Nichiren had some complex reasons of his entering to Minobusan. His first reason of entering Minobusan was due to the next sayings: "When one advises the country and is refused by her, one enters into the forest." Therefore, after he advised the government three times, he left Kamakura resolutely. But this reason was external, and the internal reason had some complexity and thickness.

The second reason was making the foundation of the teachings of Hokekyo to convey them suitably. For the purpose it was important to educate his successors, and moreover, to decide the base of Hokekyo.

Minobusan is the basic training place of Hokekyo and is called "Ryozenjodo," that is, the Paradise where Buddha lives.

As Nichiren said, "My soul will be at Minobusan forever," Minobusan has very intimate relations with Nichiren.

In Sept, 1282, Nichiren's illness became worse, so on the recommendation of his disciples and followers, he went down Minobusan where is inconvenient geographically and started for Ikegami, Tokyo where Munenaka Ikegami and Munenaga Ikegami of his followers lived. On the contrary for a direction entering to Minobusan, he took a course going up River Fuji and arrived at Ikegami taking the twelve days. It was not the easy trip for the weak body. he took a rest to recover his health, but he couldn't play an active part in speaking his teachings and making people's life happy. Realizing that his death would be near, Nichiren left his future things to his main six disciples, and

### On Saint Nichiren at Minobusan (Ueda)

he died calmly at the age of 61 on 13th in Oct. He lived throughout his life as a man of practice of Hokekyo, and lived a model life for people.

At last he sent Rokuro Sanenaga Nanbu his note left behind, saying, "Thank you for your kindness for nine years, even if I would die anywhere, please erect my tomb at Minobusan."

We can understand how Nichiren loved Minobusan. Now, Minobusan, with his last words, enshrined his relics and became a supreme base of Hoke Buddhism in Japan. And now, Minobusan keeps the tradition of 710 years and has been lighting up the glory of Hoke Buddhism. The superscription of Hokekyo, "Namumyohorengekyo" saves many people, and gives them a living force. So, it becomes the mighty resources to give a peace for the country and people. The representative books that Nichiren wrote among a lot of his books are "Senjisho" and "Hoonsho". The books are the important ones among the best 5, and show clearly Nichiren's doctrine and thought.

First, Senjisho was written in June, 1275 and its original book has been kept at Myohokeji temple, Tamazawa district.

As it says first, "The man who wants to study Buddhism must understand the time well," it shows that people should know the time and the days to spread Buddhism. That is to say, the men who want to spread Buddhism have to recognize the days well and save people with the teachings suitable for the days. It is said that the first terms to spread the right Buddhism are to know the days. According to tradition, after Buddha's death, the world will get confused and after two thousand years, it will get lots of troubles, so the world will

## On Saint Nichiren at Minobusan (Ueda)

be worse. Therefore, Buddha preached Hokekyo for people living after 2000 years and he said only this teachings could save people.

The aim of Hokekyo was to save people living in Buddha's days, and its aim was said to be a greater aim in saving people at later days. Nichiren felt the great meanings in his birth at the days of 2000 years after Buddha died and he believed Hokekyo like Buddha's teachings. Moreover he had consciousness as a Buddha's messenger and propagated Hokekyo in place of Buddha.

Nichiren's opinion of the ages took Buddha's opinion itself and he recognized the great meanings at saving many people of later days, and had consciousness as a man of practice of Hokekyo among the life of Buddha's messenger. Besides, he wanted to get a direct connection with Buddha through the Buddhist Books.

"Hoonsho" was written in July after "Senjisho" was written.

It was written by Nichiren at the age of 55, and its original books have been kept at Honmonji-temple, Ikegami, Tokyo, and at other places. Minobusan had it once.

He wrote this book in returning for his master's kindness in March, 1276, when he got a report of the death of Dozenbo at Seichozan.

Dozenbo was his master of his childhood. This book is especially famous for all Nichiren's thought of his kindness for his master.

He discussed that a fundamental morals as a man was in returning for other man's kindness, and he preached the importance in returning for a kindness of the parents, the master and the lord. Next, he showed clearly how the true returning for other kindness should be, compared with a favor in the general world and a favor in Bud-

dhism.

For example, a favor in the general world has been said to follow the orders of parents and master, but Buddhism shows that Buddhist favor stands on the higher point of view giving up the worldly favor. That is to say, it is said that living in a greater favor is to give up the worldly favor. For example, I want to explain Shakyamuni, a founder of Buddhism. Shakyamuni was born as a prince of Jobonno, but he became Buddha getting the enlightenment as a result of ascetic practices, revolting against his king's order and giving up the following throne. But, as he became Buddhist priest revolting the order of a king, his father, his act is said to be unhappy, thinking from the general worldly ethics and morals. But, as he could save his father of the king and many other people getting the enlightenment by becoming a Buddhist priest, this is the greater absolute ethics being over the general morals, merely being not personal morals.

The Buddhist favor stands on such higher point of view, Nichiren stood on such point of view, too.

The most important favor among lots of favors is to return the favor for Buddha, doctrine, and Buddhist priest. Above all, a Buddha's favor is said to be especially a great, deep and supreme one. Kuon-honbutu, that is eternal Buddha, written in Juryo-bon of the sixteen chapter in Hokekyo has constantly continued to save and enlighten lots of people since by far the old days. Changing a form and a pose differently, Honbutu has saved by far many people with the various methods and a great benevolent mind.

It is said to be important that people should return for Honbutu's



## On Saint Nichiren at Minobusan (Ueda)

great favor. Nichiren always longed for his parents and master, and he prayed their blessing for nine years at Minobusan.

He climbed up on the top of Minobusan and bowed toward his native place devoting a deep prayer. Now the top of Minobusan has been said to be "The peak longing for the parents."

Though Nichiren was in Minobusan, his mind was on his disciples acting the movement for saving people and he gave them the suitable instructions and advices. So he devoted himself to save even one more people. Nichiren always devoted himself to save people as Buddha did. Nichiren didn't desire only his happiness throughout his life, and he continued to fight against the wickedness devoting himself for others. Therefore, he suffered from persecution many times and his life was often in danger. Nichiren said, "Saving people in this world full of troubles with spreading Hokekyo even a day is much better than practicing asceticism in a paradise of Gokuraku for hundred years. As he said so, he devoted himself to save people with lots of troubles and to make the disordered country comfortable to live in. Nichiren never propagated the faith merely to pursue Heaven or future ages. His faith was to make the life meaningful and useful. We hoped to be Buddha working in this present world with chanting a sutra of Hokekyo.

Our aim was to be Buddha living in this world and helping, encouraging each other. If Buddhas face each other in this world, the world can be said "Buddha's country" as it is. The thought throughout Nichiren's life was to make the peaceful country of Buddha without war. He desired everybody to become Buddha. It can be said that

On Saint Nichiren at Minobusan (Ueda)

Nichiren was suitable for a leader to realize the common ideal of mankind.