

THE MIDDLE WAY

ADVOCATING THE TRUE TEACHINGS OF NICHIREN THE TRUE BUDDHA

WINTER

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The Middle Way

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Website: www.udumbarafoundation.org

E-mail: ufound@yahoo.com



Advisor: Reverend Raidō Hirota
Founder and Editor-in-Chief: Peach Pair
Translator: Junko Hokari
Editor: David Watson

SANGE

Reverend Raidō Hirota
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QUESTION: What is *sange*?

Reverend Raidō Hirota (RH): The understanding of *sange* from a Buddhist and Eastern point of view and a Christian and Western point of view is quite different. So I would like each of you to tell me what your understanding of *sange* is.

Believer 1 (B1): I don't know what *sange* is. I've never heard of it.

Believer 2 (B2): As I understand it, *sange* is apology or repentance to Gohonzon¹ for past and present negative actions that created negative karma. It's never really been explained to us here in the United States.

B3: I think *sange* means confession.

¹ Gohonzon - the scroll that is the object of worship of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, representing the universal Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō and the Buddha-nature in all things.

B2: So perhaps that's comparable to confession to a priest in Catholicism?

RH: *Sange* is a confession. So what feelings do you Westerners have about confession? Or, how do Christians view the idea of confession? I'd like to hear you discuss this and your experiences with this.

B2: I think it's only in Catholicism that they have confession. I don't think confession is a part of other Christian religions. I grew up in the Protestant tradition. I never heard about anyone going to confession.

B4: Isn't *sange* forgiveness for slander?

B2: From my personal point of view, *sange* is recognizing and admitting to your slander, or recognizing that whatever your condition is in life it is a result of what you did in past lives, and having sincere remorse. That's what I do. Is that correct?

RH: The concept of *sange* came from the time of Shakyamuni Buddha.² Back then, when someone made a mistake or committed a transgression he or she would confess the error to the *sangha*³ or group of believers, saying, "I did this, or I did that." Thereby, he or she would be accepting and admitting that he or she had done wrong. That action was considered one of the religious practices as a Buddhist. That is how *sange* came about.

In Buddhism, a believer does not judge or question another person's mistakes; he will first question and accept responsibility for what he or she has done wrong. Self-examination is a basic practice in Buddhism.

The difference between Catholicism and Buddhism is, for example, in Catholicism a person may have confessed to a priest about something he had done and the priest pardons him or her and absolves the person of his transgressions. While in Buddhism, the concept of being absolved of your sins does not exist. In Buddhism, as soon as you do *sange*, or when a person acknowledges or confesses his transgression, that is the starting point when the process begins. From there on, the person accepts the consequences that arose as a result of the transgression he had committed. That is one of the major differences between Buddhism and Catholicism.

B2: When you confess in Catholicism, and the priest absolves you, that's it. There's no accepting responsibility and no necessity to change your behavior. But in Buddhism, as you say, *sange* is the starting point, and therefore you *have to* take action. Is that correct?

² Shakyamuni Buddha - Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (1029 BCE-949 BCE), the historical founder of Buddhism on this earth.

³ Sangha – Buddhist community of believers.

RH: When Bodhisattva Jofukyo⁴ uttered to everyone he encountered his 24 character phrase, which we recite after Gongyo,⁵ “I respect you deeply, I do not despise you or look down you with contempt, because everyone can become a Buddha, if they believe in Namumyōhōrengkyō⁶ and practice,” people thought he was weird and crazy, and felt uncomfortable in his presence. So they threw stones at him, beat him with sticks and staves, spit at him, demeaned and hurled insults at him, and ostracized him. And yet, for years upon years Bodhisattva Jofukyo continued to put his palms together and praise every person he encountered, despite their persecution of him. After a while, the people gradually began to realize that the way they were treating Jofukyo was not right. While on the other hand, Bodhisattva Jofukyo realized that in past lives he had behaved the same way as the people who were now persecuting him. He thought that what was happening to him was the result of actions and decisions he had made in the past. That is why he continued to praise every person he met.

It is not a matter of a person who has no sense, or who is crazy, or who does bad things. In some way, everyone acts that way. For instance, when you say something or do something that you think is good for another person, it may not be a good thing. It may be your perception that your actions or your words are good, but they may not be. In that sense, what you think is good may be bad for the other person. In this life, just because you think you’ve done five good things and three bad things, and that the effects of the bad things will be erased because you did more good things, it doesn’t work that way. For the good things, accept them as the result of good deeds. And when bad things happen, also accept them, for there are reasons they came your way.

In some circumstances, people might think, “Oh, I’ve done something wrong, so I can just apologize and be done with it.” But it doesn’t work that way either. After you make the apology, you have to live with the awareness that you did something in the past to bring this about. You take responsibility for and accept the results of your past actions, and in this life you change your behavior.

B1: Is that what karma⁷ is?

RH: Yes

⁴ Bodhisattva Jofukyo - Bodhisattva Fukyo – a bodhisattva described in the 20th chapter of the Lotus Sutra who revered everyone for their innate Buddha-nature, and was persecuted because of his compassionate behavior.

⁵ Gongyo -- the practice of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism which entails the morning and evening recitation of the 2nd and 16th chapters of the Lotus Sutra and chanting Namumyōhōrengkyō.

⁶ Namumyōhōrengkyō - the Mystic Law which enlightens all Buddhas; the Supreme Law of life and the universe; the Buddha-nature in all things.

⁷ Karma – thoughts, words and deeds which determine a person’s reality. Past thoughts, words and deeds influence the outcome in the present, just as present thoughts, words and deeds influence the outcome in the future.

B5: If it's something that keeps recurring, that you keep doing, even though you are recognizing it, admitting to it, and apologizing for it, what does that mean? The behavior doesn't change, even though you sincerely apologize.

B1: We keep doing the same thing, but think we're going to get a different result.

RH: We as human beings all say, "I know this is bad for me, but I just can't stop it." Whatever that might be for you, most people, if not all, have this foible. In Buddhism, there is a concept called *gampon no mumyō* – fundamental darkness.⁸ We all have darkness within our heart. Most people were not born as criminals. They don't want to not get along with other people and fit into society. They don't want to commit crimes. There's a difference between things that you can not immediately change based on your actions, and things that you can easily change. It's the difference between something that is deeply rooted, and something that is superficial or near to the surface, such as remembering to brush your teeth. If you pay heed to it, you will do it. But then there are other things that might take a little more time and energy and effort to overcome. To be able to see the difference between the two, and then take action accordingly is the key point.

I could be a little more specific if you give me an example.

B1: My ex-husband wouldn't talk when I was in the room. Later he would apologize for his behavior, but he would still continue to repeat his actions. Subconsciously he knew what he was doing. By saying he's sorry he thought it was okay, all was forgiven and that was that, it would go away. But he kept repeating it. Sorry doesn't mean anything in his vocabulary because kept doing the same thing. And because he said he was sorry, he was aware that what he was doing was wrong.

RH: Between couples living together, or within family-type situations – husband and wife, lovers, parents and children, siblings – there are things that you just can not bear. Other people can't see it. For example, a person keeps talking in a room when you aren't there, or not talking when you are there, or not brushing their teeth for days. Nonetheless, there are things you just can not change in other people. A person is the way he is because of the environment he was raised in, the people and manner in which he was raised, and his past life. These are the influences reflected in his or her actions in this life. But it doesn't mean that the person can not change these things. If the person realizes that his behavior is bad then he can change and act differently. But if the person doesn't realize it, or doesn't consider his actions or behavior is bad, then he will continue to act, consciously or unconsciously, the same way.

⁸ Gampon no mumyo - Fundamental darkness – primal ignorance; ignorance to the truth or the true nature of one's own life; ignorance of the ultimate Law of Namumyōhōrengkyō.

Let's say, for example, there is a person who, no matter how you look at him, has no good or desirable qualities. But then someone comes along and falls in love with this bad person and thinks, "Maybe I can help this person if I am with him or her." In the beginning, this second person is not as difficult, intolerable or crazy as the person he or she has fallen in love with. But eventually the second person will become unhappy and unstable as a result of being with the difficult person. The first person could be an alcoholic and not trying or committing him or herself to sobriety. Then a woman or a man comes along who thinks she or he can help this person stop drinking if they are together. But too often this does not work.

In Buddhism, as I've explained before, there are Ten Worlds.⁹ Each individual has these Ten Worlds. But this system also exists within interrelationships between a husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, lovers, etc. That is, the Ten Worlds also exist within the relationships with other human beings. Society also has the Ten Worlds. Therefore, if each individual that you deal with has the Ten Worlds, then the point is to accept not just the aspects of the person's character which you like, but to accept all of the Ten Worlds within each individual.

B2: If a person who is a Buddhist chants, realizes and accepts that mistakes were made, and has apologized for this over a lifetime, but the situation keeps repeating, and the behavior continues, the person may think that chanting doesn't work because the understanding is that if you just chant it will go away or the situation that triggers that behavior or trait will no longer occur. What do you think about that?

RH: If a person says again and again, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, by making that kind of apology the person is committing another bad action.

Sange is the starting point – to apologize and confess. The next step is introspection and self-reflection. If you don't reflect on yourself and your own behavior then the bad behavior continues, and it will seem as though chanting does not work because your apologies are just empty words. But as Buddhists, you should have a clear mind about what you are doing. Be more critical and reflective of yourself, questioning your own behavior before you criticize the behavior of others. You should, in fact, be a little easier on others, realizing that they too have the Ten Worlds. This is what Nichiren Daishonin¹⁰ taught. The Soka Gakkai,¹¹ on the other hand, condones the behavior of its members while showing ill-will towards people who are not Soka Gakkai members, or people who oppose SGI. Yet, they claim they follow the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, which is entirely false. The demeanor of the Soka Gakkai is the opposite of the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

⁹ Ten Worlds - ten conditions of life that are physically and spiritually manifested in a single life. They are: Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Heaven (Rapture), Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva, Buddha.

¹⁰ Nichiren Daishonin - (1222-1282) the true Buddha who realized the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō imbedded in the Lotus Sutra and established the Law as the means by which all living beings can become enlightened.

¹¹ Soka Gakkai - SGI – Soka Gakkai International – a lay organization that wrongly incorporates some of the doctrine of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism into its own philosophy and practice.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Reverend Raidō Hirota

April, 2011

QUESTION: If we could only read one Goshō,¹² which Goshō would it be? And why?

RH: I can't choose just one because you can't define Nichiren Daishonin's teachings in just one Goshō. Which is the most important body part in a human body? If you cut off one part of a body, its function will die and the body itself would be compromised. A single life comprises all parts. The teachings of Nichiren Daishonin are in all the Goshōs. You don't want to create rankings among the Goshōs, or have that kind of thinking. But if I must, I would recommend that you start with: "Risshō Ankoku Ron,"¹³ "The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra," "The Opening of the Eyes," "The True Object of Worship," and "On the Selection of the Time."

QUESTION: I see many people who apparently benefit from their faith in Christianity. How does Buddhism explain this phenomenon?

RH: There are many people who are satisfied and think that Christianity is right. This is not only limited to the teachings of Christianity, but to other faiths, as well. However, such benefits and happiness are specious because those teachings don't expound on attaining Buddhahood, which is the most important and most profound issue.

QUESTION: When one has lost sight of the purpose of one's life and the meaning of life, and finds no purpose in practicing, how does one find new inspiration? How does one find the will to live and the will to resume practicing? A friend of mine committed suicide recently.

RH: In the Lotus Sutra,¹⁴ Shakyamuni taught *Kai / Ji / Go / Nyu*.¹⁵ He explained that we need to be aware that these are the reasons why we were born as a human being. In other words,

¹² Goshō - - the individual and collective writings of Nichiren Daishonin.

¹³ Risshō Ankoku Ron "On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism." Risshō Ankoku Ron - "Securing the Peace of Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism". One of the major writings of Nichiren Daishonin in which he explains to the ruling clan that in order for the country to be peaceful and secure, the people need to abandon their faith in erroneous teachings and embrace the True Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō.

¹⁴ Lotus Sutra - the highest teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, taught in the last eight years of his life. It reveals that all life has Buddha-nature, and that the life of Buddha, and all life is eternal.

¹⁵ Kai/Ji/Go/Nyu - in the second chapter (Hoben-pon) of the Lotus Sutra Shakyamuni taught that the one great purpose Buddhas come into this world is to open (*kai*) the eyes of all living beings to Buddha-wisdom; to show (*ji*) all living beings the Buddha-wisdom; to cause living beings to apprehend (*go*) the Buddha-wisdom; and to cause all living beings to enter the way (*nyu*) of the Buddha-wisdom.

he is telling us that we are here in this world to chant the Odaimoku¹⁶ of Namumyōhōrengekyō – to believe, to practice, and to communicate this to people who aren't informed. We should realize that. If you have forgotten about this, you have to try to remember it. And you have to pass it along to people who don't know about it.

QUESTION: When I visit many close friends who are SGI and Temple members and I am asked to chant with them, what should be my response?

RH: Gohonzon, Gongyo, Odaimoku – even when they are the same, the spirit of devotion is different. So, explain your reasoning clearly, and don't chant with them. I also take this approach.

However, if your friend came to you because he (or she) is looking for the right path for his devotion, because he has questions about the teaching he is following and he is feeling troubled about it, it would be OK for him to chant with you and have you lead. Chanting or not is up to your friend. Instead of worrying about what they might think of you, it's important for you to explain to them clearly why you are not going to chant with them, and what your thoughts are.

QUESTION: Besides the online conferences every month and The Middle Way Newsletter is there any other material we can use to study. Could any of the large amount of books accumulated during my past practice with NSA be used at all for study?

RH: I can't answer "Yes" because I don't know the content of the NSA books you own, but content-wise, the Goshō and the Lotus Sutra won't lead a person to NSA, so please read the Goshō and the Lotus Sutra over and over. When you read the Goshō in chronological order, you understand the passages of Nichiren Daishonin's life. It's very good.

QUESTION: In the Goshō "On Attaining Buddhahood" it says, if the minds of the people are impure, their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land. There are not two lands, pure or impure in themselves. The difference lies solely in the good or evil of our minds." In the wake of the devastating earthquake and tsunami, have the Taiseikiji¹⁷ priesthood reevaluated their position?

RH: Since I'm not a part of Taiseikiji, I don't know what they are thinking or what they have learned in the midst of this major disaster. In the Lotus Sutra, it is written that in the time of *Mappō*¹⁸ the world would fall into disorder. Due to the sins of wrong teachings, not only the world but also nature would be in disorder. This is what Nichiren Daishonin

¹⁶ Odaimoku - the title of a sutra; the honorific invocation of the title of a sutra.

¹⁷ Taiseikiji - the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu – here it refers to the organization of Nichiren Shoshu (NST), the priests and the believers associated with that organization.

¹⁸ Mappō – The Latter Day of the Law – the age of decline of the Law; this present time period which began in 1052, about 2000 years after the death of Shakyamuni. It is called the evil age.

implored the world to take heed of in the “Risshou Ankoku Ron”. But Nichiren Daishonin would not be happy that the world is falling into disarray, nor would be proud that his prediction has come true. Rather, he is pleading with us to take this as a wake-up call, and to awaken to the true teachings of Namumyōhōrengekyō.

This disaster can not be blamed on *Mappo* or on slander. If the world’s disorder weren’t taken as a wake-up call, and if there were nobody who woke up to the true faith after that, then it would be evidence that we, the communicators of the Buddha’s teachings, didn’t carry out our mission or our responsibilities well.

The number of people who were killed or are missing due to the earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011, reached well over 20,000 as of March 25th. As a believer of Namumyōhōrengekyō, I regret our lack of ability to pursue the mission and responsibilities. From now on, I’m going to send out the message even more than before. A believer must first think of what they can do as a believer.

QUESTION: In my past Buddhist practice with Nichiren Shoshu¹⁹ Soka Gakkai, we were taught to do gongyo, chant daimoku and study. We were also encouraged to contribute money to their various causes and were encouraged, pushed, to do shakabuku²⁰ and crazy street shakabuku campaigns to bring in new members to receive the Gohonzon. We were told that this was necessary in order to move forward with our faith (bring out our Buddha nature) and Kosen rufu.²¹ As a new person who is now practicing Nichiren Shoshu correctly with the Shoshin-kai²² my question is – besides doing *Seoge*,²³ chanting lots of daimoku and studying each day, what else can I do to practice the Buddhism of the Heart and bring out my enlightened Buddha nature?

RH: Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism teaches us that there are four pillars that lead to attaining Buddhahood. The center pillar is faith or devotion; the other three are practice, study, and shakubuku.

Unlike what SGI is doing, Shakubuku is not about forcing people to introduce other people to this Buddhism with deceit or threat. And it is not about getting people to receive Gojukai²⁴ and receive Gohonzon. Shakubuku is about taking time to convey the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin so that the person can receive it and grasp it on a personal level. A person can’t be a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra as Nichiren Daishonin describes unless he has made a decision to break away from the shallow teachings of a religion before joining this religion. Regardless of all the years of practicing Shakubuku, if people still don’t take faith, it

¹⁹ Nichiren Shoshu - the sect of Buddhism that embraces and recites the true Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō as the original cause of enlightenment and believes in Nichiren Daishonin of the true Buddha.

²⁰ Shakabuku - a method of propagating Buddhism by directly leading a person to the True Law and refuting erroneous views.

²¹ Kosen-rufu - to widely declare and spread True Buddhism.

²² Shoshin-kai - Nichiren Shoshu Shoshinkai – the organization of Nichiren Shoshu priests dedicated to the protection and dissemination of Nichiren Daishonin’s true teachings.

²³ Seoge – the verse and prose section of the 2nd chapter (Hoben-pon) of the Lotus Sutra that follows the junyozō (*nyozō so, nyozō sho*, etc.)

²⁴ Gojukai – a conversion ceremony whereby people accept the precept of taking faith and practicing true Buddhism.

would be important for you to continue spreading the seed of Namumyōhōrengekyō. The act of spreading the seed of Namumyōhōrengekyō creates no waste. Gaining a connection to Namumyōhōrengekyō is the most important thing. Being converted to something is not something that can be forced on anyone; it should be decided by the individual.

QUESTION: When I'm chanting with the Buddhism of the heart I find myself at times reverting to chanting for desires, things in my life. Will this always be something I will be fighting against for the rest of my life?

RH: There is no need to fight. If you've lost your way, quietly go back to the heart of Namumyōhōrengekyō. I knew a member of Soka Gakkai who was as follows:



His personal wish wasn't coming true, so he went to the temple to chant Odaimoku. Because many people come to the temple and chant to the Gohonzon, he thought that the Gohonzon would be much more powerful. He asked me to do a prayer to make his wishes come true. I declined. I said he needed to amend his thinking that the Gohonzon's power is strong or weak.



Because his personal wish hadn't come true, he scolded the Gohonzon by saying "I've chanted so many Odaimoku, but why aren't you trying to protect me or help me?! If you are a real Gohonzon, give me a blessing!"



Somebody instructed him that if he wrote his personal wish on the back of a Gohonzon, his wish would come true, so he wrote it as he was told and chanted Odaimoku.



He was told that Shakubuku increases blessings many-fold and it would bring him more happiness than chanting the Odaimoku. So, using the names of several of his friends, he received Gojukai and Gohonzon many times.

Soka Gakkai fabricates teachings that don't exist in the writings of Nichiren Daishonin. They deceptively say that it's the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, and they stir up people's material desires and passions while encouraging them to devote themselves to fulfilling those desires.

Before I correctly understood the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, I was also under the impression that the Odaimoku of Namumyōhōrengekyō was something like a magic wand. I thought if I chant I would get exactly what I wished for.

Now when I find myself thinking about my yearnings and material desires, I refocus and acknowledge the heart of Namumyōhōrengekyō: *Shōyoku Chisoku*, which means "desire little and be happy with what you have." When you are satisfied with less desire, your life will be full of contentment and gratitude.

But on the contrary, when you have bigger desires, you will never run out of dissatisfaction and complaints. This is called *Daiyoku Fusoku*, which means “desire for more and not easily satisfied.”

Another formidable challenge when practicing devotion is *Myōmon Myōri*. This is the desire to strive after fame and wealth, to want to be praised, held in high esteem and seek high honor, and to disdain others. The heart of Namumyōhōrengekyō rejects that kind of thinking. So, when I notice desire in myself, I return to these points, and instead of fighting, I cool my head by asking myself if I am being like *Daiyoku Fusoku* or *Myōmon Myōri*.

The number of victims of the massive earthquake and tsunami rose to well over 20,000. They are all shivering in the cold weather. When I go to sleep in a warm futon every night, I take it for granted. But now that I know that, I’ve come to realize that in life we shouldn’t forget to feel gratitude for something that we normally think is nothing special.

QUESTION: I have deeply struggled to differentiate the teachings of Nichiren Shoshu Shoshinkai and that of Taiseikiji. One point of confusion for me is the silent prayers in our sutra book. The wording of the prayers in our prayer book and in the Taiseikiji prayer book are identical. If Shoshinkai is not affiliated with Taiseikiji then why are the silent prayers identical? In particular how should we understand the third silent prayer where-in we offer gratitude to all the successive High Priests?

RH: Certainly the previous High Priest Nikken Abe was wrong. And the present High Priest is also wrong. The current state of Taiseikiji is wrong because they still claim that the High Priest is the living Buddha and the reincarnation of Nichiren Daishonin.

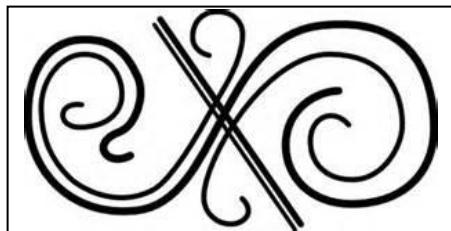
No matter how and when Nichiren Shoshu might have changed its nature (in any era, under any circumstances, or any period of counteraction along the way), the High Priest is not the living Buddha. He is a normal person – a common mortal who is a representative of the era, and who communicates the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

In other words, the Shoshinkai has not altered the teachings and practice of Nichiren Shoshu. Taiseikiji has strayed from the teachings of Nichiren Shoshu by its claim that the High Priest is a living Buddha. Because this is their singular premise, they have changed the nature of Nichiren Shoshu. The Shoshinkai continues to practice the original teachings of Nichiren Shoshu. Therefore the prayers have not changed.

There are many people who set good and bad examples. What I think we can do is to take those good and bad examples as admonishments for our devotion. Having 100% trust, respect, and/or infatuation is not the basis of our prayers. Why is a bad High Priest bad? Why is a good High Priest good? It’s easy to criticize, but when that happens, can you hold on to your faith in the devotion to the right teachings? I think of those points when I pray.

QUESTION: When we do Gongyo correctly, that is chanting daimoku and reciting the sutra with correct faith, how does it affect our lives?

RH: Aspire to touch and feel the Buddhahood in all sentient beings, and use that as the core of your life. By doing so, your concept of values, and your views on life's purpose and on happiness will change.



GOSHO SELECTION

THE KALPA OF DECREASE²⁵

The kalpa of decrease²⁶ has its origin in the human mind. As the poisons of greed, anger and stupidity gradually intensify, the life span of human beings accordingly decreases and their stature diminishes.

In the lands of China and Japan, before the introduction of Buddhism, the outer classics²⁷ of the Three Rulers,²⁸ the Five Emperors²⁹ and the Three Sages³⁰ were used to order the minds of the people and govern the world. However, as the people's minds gradually diminished in good and grew accomplished in evil, the wisdom of the outer classics, being shallow, could no longer restrain the people's offenses, for their evil was deep. Because it became impossible to govern the world by means of the outer classics, the Buddhist sutras were gradually introduced, and when they were used in governing, the world was restored to tranquility. This was solely because the wisdom of Buddhism fully elucidates the nature of the people's minds.

²⁵ *Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. 6, p. 139.

²⁶ Kalpa of decrease: A period in which the human life span diminishes. While the world is in the stage of continuance, the life span of human beings is said to undergo a repeated cycle of change, increasing one year every hundred years until it reaches eighty thousand and then decreasing at the same rate.

²⁷ Outer classics: A general term for non-Buddhist scriptures, particularly those of Confucianism and Taoism. The term is used in contrast to "inner scriptures," which denotes the Buddhist writings.

²⁸ Three Rulers: Fu Hsi, Shen Nung and Huang Ti, legendary rulers of ancient China said to have realized model governments. The books recording their deeds, known as the Three Records, are said to date from their time.

²⁹ Five Emperors: Shao Hao, Chuan Hsu, Ti Kao, T'ang Yao and Yu Shun, said to have reigned after the Three Rulers. The books of the five emperors, known as the Five Canons, are said to date from their time.

³⁰ Three sages: Three wise men of ancient China. The Maka Shikan, vol. 6, lists them as Lao Tzu, Confucius, and Yen Hui, Confucius' foremost disciple.

What are called "outer writings" in the present day differ essentially from the original outer classics. When Buddhism was introduced, the outer classics and the Buddhist scriptures vied with one another. But because in time the outer classics were defeated and the ruler and the people ceased to employ them, adherents of the outer classics became followers of the inner scriptures, and their former confrontation came to an end. In the meantime, however, the adherents of the outer classics extracted the heart of the inner scriptures, thus increasing their wisdom and incorporated it into the outer classics. Foolish rulers suppose [that such wisdom derives from] the excellence of these outer writings.

Furthermore, as good wisdom gradually diminished and evil wisdom came to dominate people's minds, though men tried to govern society by means of the Buddhist scriptures, when they employed the wisdom of the Hinayana sutras, the world was not at peace. At such times, the Mahayana sutras were spread and used in governing, the world was somewhat restored to order. After this, because the wisdom of the Mahayana teachings in turn became inadequate, the wisdom of the sutra of the one vehicle³¹ was brought forth and used to govern the world, and for a brief period, the world was at peace.

The present age is such that neither the outer classics, the Hinayana sutras, the Mahayana sutras, nor the one vehicle of the Lotus Sutra has any effect. The reason for this is that the intensity of the greed, anger and stupidity in people's minds rivals the Greatly Enlightened World-Honored One's superiority in great good. To illustrate, a dog, in the keenness of its sense of smell, is superior to a man; in picking up the scent of birds and beasts, its nose is not inferior to a great saint's supernatural power of smell.³² The owl's keenness of hearing, the kite's sharpness of eye, the sparrow's lightness of tongue, and the dragon's magnificence of body--all of these surpass even the faculties of a wise man. In this way, the extremity of greed, anger and stupidity in people's minds in the impure world of the latter age is beyond the power of any sage or worthy man to control.

This is because, although the Buddha cured greed with the medicine of the meditation on the vileness of the body, healed anger with the meditation on compassion for all, and treated stupidity with the meditation on the twelve-linked chain of dependent origination,³³ to teach these doctrines now merely makes people worse and compounds their greed, anger and stupidity. To illustrate, fire is extinguished by water, and evil is defeated by good. However, if water is cast on fire that has emerged from water, it will on the contrary have an effect like that of oil, producing an even greater conflagration.

Now in this latter, evil age, great evil arises less from secular wrongdoing than with respect to the doctrines of the religious world. Because people today are unaware of this and endeavor to cultivate roots of merit, the world declines all the more. To give support to the priests of the Tendai, Shingon and other sects of today may outwardly appear to be an act of

³¹ Sutra of the one vehicle: The Lotus Sutra.

³² This refers to the supernatural abilities acquired by the bodhisattvas of Hinayana Buddhism.

³³ These are three of five meditations for quieting the mind and ridding it of error. The other two are a breath-counting meditation and a meditation on analysis of the elements.

merit, but in reality it is a great evil surpassing even the five cardinal sins and the ten evil acts.³⁴

For this reason, if there should be a wise man in the world with wisdom like that of the Greatly Enlightened World-Honored One, who, so as to restore the world to order, meets with a wise ruler like King Sen'yo;³⁵ and if together they put an end altogether to these acts of "goodness" and commit the great "evil" of censuring, banishing, cutting off alms to or even beheading those people of the eight sects³⁶ who are thought to be men of wisdom, then the world will surely be pacified to some extent.

This is explained in the first volume of the Lotus Sutra where it says: "The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas."³⁷ In the phrase "consistency from beginning to end," "beginning" indicates the root of evil and the root of good, while "end" indicates the out-come of evil and the outcome of good. One who is thoroughly awakened to the nature of good and evil from their roots to their branches and leaves is called a Buddha. T'ien-t'ai states, "Life at each moment is endowed with the Ten Worlds."³⁸ Chang-an states: "The Buddha regarded his doctrine as the ultimate reason [for his advent]. How could it ever be easy to understand?"³⁹ Miao-lo adds that "this is the ultimate revelation of the final and supreme truth."⁴⁰ The Lotus Sutra states: "[And whatever he preaches according to his understanding] will never contradict the truth."⁴¹ And T'ien-t'ai interprets this to mean that "no affairs of life or work are in any way different from the ultimate reality."⁴² A person of wisdom is not one who practices Buddhism apart from worldly affairs but, rather, one who thoroughly understands the principles by which the world may be governed.

When the Yin dynasty became corrupt and the people were suffering, T'ai-kung Wang⁴³ appeared in the world and beheaded King Chou of the Yin, bringing an end to the people's

³⁴ Ten evil acts: Evils condemned in the Kushi Ron. They are killing, stealing, unlawful sexual intercourse, lying, flattery (or random and irresponsible speech), defaming, duplicity, greed, anger and stupidity, or the holding of mistaken views.

³⁵ Sen'yo: The name of Shakyamuni in a previous existence. According to the Nirvana Sutra, King Sen'yo was a ruler of a great kingdom who had faith in the Mahayana sutras. When five hundred Brahmans slandered the Mahayana teachings, he had them put to death. Because of this act, the sutra says, he was never thereafter in danger of falling into hell. In his "Rissho Ankoku Ron," Nichiren Daishonin suggests that this story should not be taken literally as an endorsement of the execution of slanderers; instead, he interprets it as a comment on the gravity of slander and the importance of protecting the True Law.

³⁶ The eight sects are the Kushi, Jojitsu, Ritsu, Hosso, Sanron and Kegon sects, which flourished in the Nara period (710-794), and the Tendai and Shingon sects, which rose to prominence in the Heian period (794-1185). The nine sects comprise these eight plus the Zen sect, which appeared in the early part of the Kamakura period (1185-1333). The ten sects are those nine plus the Jodo sect, which also spread during the Kamakura period.

³⁷ Lotus Sutra, chap.2. The phrase "consistency from beginning to end," mentioned subsequently, concludes the passage describing the "true aspect of all phenomena."

³⁸ *Maka Shikan*, Vol. 5.

³⁹ *Kanjin Ron Jo*, vol. 4.

⁴⁰ *Maka Shikan Bugyoden Guketsu*, vol. 5.

⁴¹ Lotus Sutra, chap. 19.

⁴² *Hokke Gengi*, vol. 1.

⁴³ T'ai-kung Wang: Teacher and advisor to Hsi Po, the Earl of the West (later known as King Wen of the Chou dynasty). His strategies are said to have enabled Hsi Po's son, King Wu, to overthrow the Yin dynasty and establish the Chou dynasty.

anguish. When the second ruler [of the Ch'in dynasty]⁴⁴ caused the people to taste bitterness, Chang Liang appeared and restored order to the world, enabling them to know sweetness. Though these men lived before the introduction of Buddhism, they helped the people as emissaries of Lord Shakyamuni. And though the adherents of the outer classics were unaware of it, the wisdom of such men incorporated in its essence the wisdom of Buddhism.

In the world today, at the time of the great earthquake of the Shoka era⁴⁵ or at the time of the great comet of the Bun'ei era,⁴⁶ had there been a ruler of outstanding wisdom, he would surely have heeded me, Nichiren. Or, even if he did not do so then, when strife broke out within the ruling clan in the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272) or when the Mongols attacked in the eleventh year of the same era (1274), he ought to have welcomed me as King Wen of the Chou dynasty welcomed T'ai-kung Wang, or sought me out as King Kao-ting⁴⁷ of the Yin dynasty sought out Fu Yueh from seven *ri*⁴⁸ afar. Thus it is said that the sun and moon are not treasures to one who is blind, and that a worthy man will be hated by a foolish ruler. Rather than go on at length, I will stop here. The heart of the Lotus Sutra is just as I have explained. You should not think of it as otherwise. Great evil portends the arrival of great good. If all of Jambudvipa should be thrown into chaos, there can be no doubt that [this sutra] will "spread widely throughout the continent of Jambudvipa."⁴⁹

I am sending Daishin Ajari⁵⁰ to pay a visit to the grave of the late Rokuro Nyuko.⁵¹ In the past, I had thought that if there were people in the Kanto region⁵² who had heard this teaching, I would go to their graves myself and recite the Jigage.⁵³ However, if I were to go there under the present circumstances, the entire province would hear of it within the day,

⁴⁴ Second ruler: Hu-hai (229-207 BC), the second emperor of the Ch'in dynasty. A puppet ruler, he was controlled by the eunuch official Chao Kao, who eventually forced him to commit suicide to further his own ambitions. Chang Liang (d.168 BC), mentioned subsequently, was a statesman and strategist who assisted Liu Pang in the overthrow of the Ch'in and the establishment of the Han dynasty.

⁴⁵ This refers to a major earthquake that leveled much of Kamakura in the eighth month, 1257.

⁴⁶ This refers to a large comet that appeared in the sky from the sixth through the eighth month of 1264 and was widely interpreted as an evil omen.

⁴⁷ Kao-ting: The twenty-second ruler of the Yin dynasty. According to the *Shih Chi* (Records of the Historian), Kao-ting sought to revive the declining Yin dynasty but could find no able advisers. At length he learned of Fu Yueh, who had been living in retirement, and appointed him his minister. With Fu Yueh's counsel, he was able to revive the dynasty.

⁴⁸ Ri: Unit of linear measurement. A *ri* was originally defined as 6 *cho* (0.65 km), but from the Heian period (794-1185) on, it was commonly understood as 36 *cho* (3.93 km).

⁴⁹ The Daishonin alludes here to a passage from chap. 28 of the Lotus Sutra, which states, "After the Buddha's death, I [Bodhisattva Fugen] will spread this sutra widely throughout the entire continent of Jambudvipa."

⁵⁰ Daishin Ajari (dates unknown): A priest-disciple of Nichiren Daishonin who was born in Shimosa Province and is thought to have been a relative of the Soya family.

⁵¹ Rokuro Nyudo: Thought to be Takahashi Rokuro Hyoe Nyudo, a disciple of the Daishonin who was a leading figure among the lay believers in the Fuji area. He was converted to the Daishonin's Buddhism by Nikko Shonin, who was his wife's nephew.

⁵² Kanto region: The eastern part of Japan.

⁵³ Jigage: The verse section that concludes the *Juryo* (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It restates the teaching of the eternity of the Buddha's life revealed in the preceding prose section of the same chapter. The verse (Jap. *ge*) section begins with the words *ji ga toku burrai* ("Since I attained Buddhahood").

and it would probably cause an uproar as far away as Kamakura. And, even though they may have steadfast faith, where-ever I go, the people will have to fear the eyes of others.

Because I have not yet been to visit, I had thought how greatly the late Rokuro Nyudo must be longing to see me, and that there must be something that I could do. Therefore, I have first of all sent a disciple to recite the *Jigage* before the grave. I ask for your understanding on this point.

With my deep respect.

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Farewell to a Friend



Art Shapiro

May 7, 1926 – November 24, 2014

Our dear friend, long-time editor of *The Middle Way*, and gentle soul has passed away. He is missed now, and will be missed forever.

“After his death, a thousand Buddhas will extend their hands to free him from all fear and keep him from falling into the evil paths.” How can we possibly hold back our tears at the inexpressible joy of knowing that not just one or two, nor only one or two hundred, but as many as a thousand Buddhas will come to greet us with open arms!

Nichiren
Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life