BONNO SOKU BODAI  
(DESIRE ARE ENLIGHTENMENT)  
Reverend Raidō Hirota  
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The essential nature of this age is good and evil. Good and evil are as intermingled as milk in coffee. When you add milk to coffee, the milk mixes and becomes inseparable. Desires (bonno) and enlightenment (bodai) are the same.

A single statement made by an individual can be taken as a great declaration by one person, and an outrageous proclamation by another person. Just one single statement can be viewed in very different ways.

In his early teachings, Shakyamuni¹ taught that negative thoughts had to be eliminated; that one needed to purify one’s mind to attain enlightenment. But in the Lotus Sutra,² taught at the very end of Shakyamuni’s teachings, he said there needs to be a law by which anyone can become enlightened, because no one can separate good and evil from one’s life. The Law, therefore, has to be powerful enough to enlighten life where good and evil co-exist indistinguishably.

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¹ Shakyamuni – Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (1029 B.C.-949 B.C.) historical founder of Buddhism  
² Lotus Sutra – the highest teaching of Shakyamuni, it was taught during the last eight years of his life. It is the true Mahayana or Great Vehicle teaching.
Shakyamuni illustrated this well in the 12th chapter of the Lotus Sutra. As the story goes, though he never succeeded, Shakyamuni’s cousin, Devadatta,3 tried on numerous occasions to kill the Buddha and usurp his position as leader of the entire Buddhist community. In the end, Devadatta plunged into a crevice created during an earthquake. At that very moment, Shakyamuni urged him to take faith and invoke the name of the Law (or its equivalent) before he died. Devadatta tried, but unfortunately only managed to utter, “Namu”4 before he plunged to his death. It is said he went straight to hell. Shakyumuni, with his supernatural powers, visited Devadatta in hell and encouraged him to follow the Law. He promised Devadatta that he would become Heavenly King Buddha in a future life. As Heavenly King Buddha he would live in a world called Heavenly Way and abide there for 20 kalpas.5

Shakyamuni’s followers were surprised and even angered at Shakyamuni’s treatment of Devadatta. After all, Devadatta had attempted to kill the Buddha, and yet, the Buddha tried to save him. Shakyamuni explained his actions, saying, “Devadatta was my teacher in a past life. Thanks to his guidance I was able to become enlightened. Now I can show my appreciation to him.”

We learn from this that within the three existences of past, present and future good and evil have an inseparable nature. Thus, it is not just in the present time, it is consistent through the three existences.

There are many, many parables throughout the sutras of Shakyamuni that emphasize this point. Another example is Kishibojin,6 who had countless children. Although she herself was a mother of many children, she kidnapped the children of other mothers and ate them, or fed them to her own children. Shakyamuni Buddha taught her a lesson by kidnapping and hiding one of her children. Through the agony she suffered from the loss of her own child she came to realize the pain she had inflicted on other parents. From that moment on she vowed to be a protector of children. Subsequently she became a Buddhist god, protecting the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra.

There are many stories of transformations from bad to good. Even within the same individual’s lifetime can there be actions taken that lead in a completely different direction. So again there is this indivisible nature of good and evil within our lives.

By the same measure can we view the indivisibility and interrelatedness of our desires and enlightenment. That is the meaning of bonno soku bodai (desires are enlightenment). This concept that one individual has an inseparable good and evil nature was only taught in the Lotus Sutra. It sounds like a contradiction, but it’s true.

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3 Devadatta – In their youth Shiddhartha (Shakyamuni) and Devadatta fell in love with the same woman, the beautiful princess Yashodhara. Siddhartha won her hand in marriage. Devadatta never for gave him, hence discord ensued between them.
4 Namu- devotion
5 Kalpa – In “Letter to Horen” (Major Writings Vol. 7) Nichiren Daishonin defines kalpa as follows. “Suppose that the span of human life is eighty thousand years, and that it decreases one year every hundred years, or ten years every thousand years. Let us suppose that it decreases at this rate until the life span has reached ten years….Then the process would reverse, and after a hundred years, the life span would increase to eleven years, and, after another hundred years to twelve years. After a thousand years it would have increased to twenty years, and this would continue until it once more reached eighty thousand years. The time required to complete this combined process of decrease and increase is called a kalpa.”
6 Kishibojin – also Kishimojin – the mother-of-devils or the goddess of children. She appears in the 26th chapter of the Lotus Sutra.
QUESTION: Please explain the three virtues possessed by Nichiren—sovereign, teacher and parent in the third silent prayer. How are we to understand the Daishonin as sovereign in today’s world?

Reverend Raidō Hirota (RH): “The Opening of the Eyes” is a gosho in which Daishonin discusses these three virtues. Apart from Buddhism, it is also critical in the secular world that people think about these three virtues. “The Opening of the Eyes” begins with, “There are three categories of people that all men and women should respect. They are the sovereign, the teacher, and the parent.” After making this statement Daishonin goes on to survey the three virtues from three perspectives: secular (Confucianism), Brahmanism and Buddhism. At the end of this treatise he concludes by saying, “I, Nichiren am sovereign, teacher and father and mother to all the people of Japan.”

Once you are born in this world and live in this society you cannot ignore these three virtues. All human beings need these three virtues. They need someone who can foster them, teach them and protect them. By the same token, in the world of Buddhism one needs to have someone who has these three virtues so that one can learn from such a person. You can imagine, can you not, that an individual possessing the three virtues is extremely important even in the secular world? Then when thinking about Buddhism, where we pursue the realization of our fundamental character and enlightenment, it is even more important in this realm to have an individual who possesses the three virtues.

“The Opening of the Eyes,” as mentioned above, is a letter Daishonin wrote while he was in exile on Sado Island. In it he declares that he is the true teacher—the true Buddha in the Latter Day of the Law. And living under the circumstances which he did—suffering extreme cold, having improper clothing, lacking sufficient food, living in a small shack without heat in winter, and surrounded by enemies who were always trying to kill him—he still declared himself the Buddha who would teach and save all mankind. I think it’s important to consider the significance of Daishonin making such a declaration while in exile on Sado Island, living in such harsh and desperate conditions.

We must also consider Daishonin’s influence on his followers. Most of them lived far from Sado in the Kamakura area. They also lived in trying circumstances under the Kamakura government, which suppressed Daishonin’s followers and impeded their practice through persecution. These are the conditions under which Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter describing the three virtues. We need to consider the significance of this.

The question is, can we in fact view Nichiren Daishonin as our sovereign, teacher and parent in the realm of Daishonin’s Buddhism? That may be an important question for each of us to ask ourselves.

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7 Nichiren – Nichiren Daishonin (1222-1282) – founder of true Buddhism, true Buddha who realized and established the Law of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo as the means by which all living beings can realize Buddhahood.
8 Gosho – sacred writings.
9 Sado Island – remote island in the Japan sea with very harsh conditions where people were exiled to by the feudal government of Japan.
Believer 1 (B1): I think that there’s a question about Nichiren Daishonin’s place as a sovereign in the secular world, not just in the realm of Buddhism, but as a world leader.

RH: I may not clearly understand the definition of sovereign in Western terms, but from my understanding a sovereign in the secular world is someone like your employer who assigns you a job, asks you to do things, you follow the rules this sovereign creates, and he pays you a salary so you can live. Nichiren Daishonin is not someone who creates a job for you, or orders you to do this or that. But Daishonin teaches you how to live your life, how to execute your job, and how to conduct yourself in your personal life. That is my explanation.

If you, for example, compare your own parents to the Daishonin as a function of “parent” in the three virtues, Daishonin does not tell you “consider me better than your parents.” He says, as you respect your parents and have a sense of appreciation for your parents, you can thereby understand my role towards you in leading, fostering and building character in you so that you can live in this world.

Can anyone explain to me what is meant by sovereign in Western society or the Christian world?

B1: In a democratic society the notion of a sovereign doesn’t exist. A sovereign in a Western society may be the Queen of England who holds the position of a sovereign; it’s more of a ceremonial position, and many years ago a protector of some sort.

B2: Actually in our society it is probably more of a nation state and not a person at all.

B3: In general, sovereign means protector of the land. Traditionally, it was the king, because the king was the one who protected the land and made it safe for you to live. You owed your peace and security to the good offices of the king.

B4: What about sovereign in the Western religious world?

B1: That would be the pope or cardinal. The ruler. The head. I think that the function of the sovereign is to establish the state versus a king, or to establish a religion. So Christ is the sovereign of the Catholic religion and then that function is passed on to his disciples—Peter and each successive pope. They hold the position of the founder of the religion.

RH: Is the pope the current incarnation of Jesus Christ?

B1: The concept of reincarnation isn’t in Christianity, but the pope does sit in his place. He takes his place.

B2: For Catholics, but not for other Christians.

B5: I asked this question, because when you hear this expression today the only person who would say this would be our most ruthless leaders who completely control their people. So when I read this every morning and evening I need to get the spirit of it. Because it is never a positive thing for anybody.

RH: May I ask you a question before going into my explanation? Are you talking about the secular realm or the religious realm?
B5: Actually both. The kind of person who controls everything. If there is a religious world in that person’s control, that person would control that as well. It’s such a universal position. There’s no room for anything else. Such a person would possess the religion, and would be your parent as well. You are completely at the will of that individual. This phrase would never be said today except in certain places which we know as tyrannies.

There is this image of the Daishonin among people who disagree with the position that we assign to him, that he was dictatorial, a braggart, dogmatic, that he considered himself the only one who knew the truth; and you hear this statement of his, “I am parent, teacher and sovereign of Japan.” People criticized the Daishonin saying that he was just another priest, but he thought he was best. It sounds like a person who is pure ego, as opposed to a person who is without ego. This is exactly the opposite of what we hear about, and that’s such a contradiction in conventional terms.

RH: Do you consider God as a creator who possesses everything?

B5: No.

RH: Do you consider God as a sovereign?

B5: What I consider the description of a sovereign to be is a secular tyrant who controls everything. I think of God—if one believes in God—as a benevolent being. This kind of terminology just does not call that to mind. So I have to retranslate it.

B3: Perhaps we should ask what Nichiren Daishonin meant when he said he was the sovereign?

RH: Again, I have to ask you about your religious concept? To what extent does God reign over the universe? For instance, we know there are more than 60 billion sun-like stars just like our own sun that exists in this universe. Could these be under God’s control?

B1: The theocratic definition of God is that everything comes from him and everything depends on his will. God can create or destroy anything that exists at his will. All existence depends on God’s will. The whole reason for you to exist is to please God.

RH: Going back to the meaning of sovereign, from the Japanese point of view, I don’t think most Japanese would have difficulty accepting the world “sovereign.” Most Japanese don’t think of a sovereign as a tyrant.

B5: I’m not saying that. But if there is a sovereign and a parent and a teacher—someone who has all those qualities—that’s then comprehensive. It doesn’t seem to be anyone who can exist outside of that, therefore it sounds like a dictator.

B1: It doesn’t have to be a dictator. There’s a sense of authority and dependence. A child depends on its parent. A student depends on its teacher. A citizen depends on a sovereign. A worker depends on the boss. There’s authority and dependency. In this country there’s a lot less tolerance for dependency. Everybody is much more equal in American society.

RH: As you mentioned, people have a dependency. If you are a child you need your parents, if you are a student you need a teacher, if you are an employee you need an employer. So we cannot deny such relationships in the secular world. So using just such a concept, Daishonin tried to introduce the
concept of someone who can work with us. The relationship is not hierarchical, with a superior and a subordinate. Using social or secular concepts, Daishonin introduced the role he plays in the Buddhist realm.

B1: From the point of view of Nichiren Daishonin, he’s taking on the responsibility and the obligation as parent, teacher and sovereign. But as boss, you have to have a board of directors; as a teacher they don’t call you professor, they call you by your first name; as a kid, there’s a culture in this society that says kids are people too. You have to respect your children. It’s a different culture.

B6: In Nichiren Daishonin’s day Japan was a feudal society. There was a feudal relationship with your lord.

RH: I understand your conflict with this concept, particularly with regard to the relationship between parent and child. But I’m sure you feel a sense of responsibility to take care of your children; to teach them what is right and good; and to feed them. And when your child grows up and is unable to work, and requires nursing and care, you wouldn’t let him be independent and try to make it on his own.

B1: I think it interesting, because people who take on responsibility often get rewarded with resentment, just as the Daishonin took on the ultimate responsibility to save all mankind. He was rewarded with persecution.

B2: In the context of what you are saying, if you look at Nichiren Daishonin’s lifetime accomplishments, which no one else succeeded at, it is then very easy to accept Daishonin as sovereign, teacher and parent. No one else could provide a direct means for the enlightenment of all mankind. No one else could provide the Gohonzon\(^{10}\)—the true object of worship. No one else could provide the simple formula *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo*.\(^{11}\) I don’t have a problem with these three virtues of the Daishonin when viewed in the context of his accomplishments.

RH: I suspect, though I could be wrong, that you may be viewing the role sovereign as the role of God. That’s what I’m hearing.

B5: Not for me. To me I’ve never thought of sovereign in the religious sense. To me it was in the secular sense.

B1: What is interesting is that in Western culture the sovereigns’ ultimate claim to authority is that God has appointed them.

RH: In this sense the gods will lead you and protect you because they created you and rule over you. The gods have given you everything, so they have the authority to do this. In Buddhism, however, a sovereign is not someone who created you or anything else. Rather, a sovereign realized that something exists and conveyed that message to you. So there is no sense of dependency. Rather the

\(^{10}\) Gohonzon – the object of worship in Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism. It is a physical manifestation of the Law of *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo*

\(^{11}\) Namu-myoho-renge-kyo – the ultimate universal Law in life; the absolute reality permeating all things material and immaterial in the universe.
sovereign is a teacher who is your equal. In Buddhism there is a sense of equality between the follower and the teacher.

In “The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra” it reads, “No matter how earnestly Nichiren prays for you, if you lack faith, it will be like trying to set fire to wet tinder.” And in “Three Obstacles and Four Devils” Daishonin wrote, “This time I am sure that you will give up your faith. If you do, I have not the slightest intention of reproaching you for it. Likewise, neither should you blame me, Nichiren, when you have fallen into hell. It is in no way my responsibility.” Daishonin does not say that he is the Law, and that no matter what you do he will rescue you. He says that both he and us are equal in the presence of the Law. He says that he can only do so much, and we can do so much. If the Law didn’t exist, there would not be anything for Nichiren Daishonin to teach. Thus, there is a distinction between Nichiren Daishonin and the Law. The Law is superior. Daishonin is not superior to us he is equal. He is simply showing us the Law. Daishonin has the three virtues because the Law exists. He is definitely not a tyrant, nor a dogmatic despot.

THE THREE ENLIGHTENED PROPERTIES
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QUESTION: The third silent prayer states that Nichiren “possesses the Three Enlightened Properties, and whose Three Enlightened Properties comprise His single being.” Was the Daishonin the first, last, and only human being to possess Three Enlightened Properties? Has there ever been a High Priest or a priest who possessed Three Enlightened Properties? Can we possess Three Enlightened Properties, or will there always and forever be that distinction between Daishonin and everyone else?

RH: As we discussed above, there is essentially equality between Daishonin and ourselves.

One body can possess the three properties, and the three properties are contained within a single body. This is true whether you are Daishonin or a common mortal. As you may know, the three properties are hosshin, hōshin and ōjin. Hosshin is the fundamental Law. Hōshin is the wisdom of the Buddha who leads all human beings to enlightenment. Ōjin is the function of showing or being the model of what Namu-myoho-RENGE-KYO is. Each of the initial characters in these terms has a meaning.

Ō = response
Hō = wisdom
Hou = Law

The three properties are a way to explain what Buddha is. A good analogy would be someone, most likely a woman, who looks in the mirror to put on her makeup. But instead of one mirror she may have three mirrors in front of her that permit her to see herself from three different angles. In a similar fashion, with the three properties we are viewing the Buddha from three different angles. The three mirrors show three different reflections, three angles of one body, or that one body has three different angles.

Hosshin, as we said, is the Law to which the Buddha is enlightened. Hōshin means to return to the people. Together they indicate the wisdom the Buddha uses to teach the Law correctly without
introducing confusion. Ōjin is the behavior of the Buddha or the model of Buddha’s life, showing how the Buddha should act.

Within the various schools of Buddhism there are different concepts of the Buddha’s three properties. Most schools assert that the three properties exist separately. Some schools view the various incarnations of Shakyamuni as the Law. That is, they consider Shakyamuni’s eternal life that was born and died and reborn and died again and again for many lifetimes, itself as the Law. This view of Shakyamuni would be considered the Law aspect or hōshin. Another group considers the incarnation of Shakyamuni who was born almost three thousand years ago as the embodiment of the Law. This is considered the manifest or behavioral aspect or ōjin. Daishonin, on the other hand, took the position of the Middle Way. He taught that even ordinary human beings, who practice as he did and act for the sake of other people, show the appearance of Buddha. He believed that the Law exists within human beings who act as Buddha. In the Middle Way view the function of the Buddha and the other two of the three properties exist as one (a single entity) within all beings.

If you only consider the embodiment of Shakyamuni as the Law, there is no way that we ordinary human beings can be a part of the Law. Clearly there is inequity in this view. Thus Daishonin tried to demolish that idea and show that everyone can find the Law within himself or herself. Not only the two different views of Shakyamuni (the one with multiple rebirths and the one born three thousand years ago), and Nichiren Daishonin, but every human being can manifest the three properties. Using the Middle Way, Daishonin explains that the eternal Law and the behavioral life of the Buddha exists together in the presence of the Buddha’s wisdom, which leads ordinary human beings on the correct path to Buddhahood. The purpose of the Buddha’s actions is not just to enlighten oneself or to become a Buddha for oneself. Buddha’s wish is for everyone to be equal to him, attaining the same understanding and wisdom as he has. If he cannot accomplish this goal then he cannot be considered a Buddha. If you present the wonderful idea of Buddha, but no one can attain it, then you are a failure as a Buddha. For instance, about three thousand years ago Shakyamuni presented such an extraordinary and wonderful image of Buddha, but it was presented as a historically unique ideal that no one else could achieve. The purpose of Daishonin’s teachings of Buddhism was that by chanting Namu-myohorenge-kyo everyone could become a Buddha. Prior to Daishonin, the Buddha was a lofty figure beyond reach. But Daishonin brought Buddha down from that lofty height and placed Buddha among ourselves; not separate from us.

Again, the three properties do not exist separately or independently. They must be together, existing in unison. Without wisdom (hōshin) in the center you lose the proper perspective. To have the proper view is the important thing. The Daishonin put wisdom in the center of the three properties so that the actual function of Buddha could be perceived. This is the proper way to view the three properties.

**B1:** What is the difference between three properties and three enlightened properties?

**RH:** The three properties exist even without having the proper perspective. The enlightened three properties is the understanding that the three properties exist within one body and one body possesses three properties, and that wisdom is at the center of the three properties. Possessing wisdom within yourself you can sense that you are the embodiment of the three properties which are related to Shakyamuni’s teachings and Daishonin’s teachings, and related to the Law. That itself is the enlightened three properties.

**B1:** The third prayer gives the impression that we just have the ordinary three properties, and only the Daishonin has the enlightened three properties.
QUESTION: Can we be without ego as Daishonin was?

RH: Daishonin is a good example for all of us as ordinary human beings. I don’t think he was able to eradicate his ego. He must have had it. He must have had the same feelings as we do, “I’m hungry; I’m sleepy; I’m cold; I’m hot; I’m suffering; I’m joyful.” All these feelings he must have felt and expressed as we do.

As we just discussed with the three properties, if you think the Law exists somewhere else and not here within you, then you might relate to this question and think that Daishonin is somewhere else and not here in your heart. If you think that Daishonin’s life is completely different from yours, then that is the wrong conception. If you think this way, then consistent with this belief is the notion that a Hollywood star, for example, is beyond human and has never gone to the bathroom; that such a being doesn’t do such things. You are imagining something that is not really true.

So Daishonin teaches us over and over again that he and us are equal. Daishonin’s body was flesh and blood just as each of ours is. His character and nature were as normal as any human being’s. But he had a profound sense of mission. Notwithstanding, he did not suppress his desires and feelings. Rather, he tried to live an exemplary life for the sake of other human beings. Exerting himself was the key factor.

One of his major persecutions was the Matsubagayatsu persecution when he was arrested the day before he was taken to be executed at Tatsunokuchi. At the time of his arrest, Daishonin was carrying a scroll of the Lotus Sutra. Since he had not yet inscribed Gohonzon, he used a scroll of the Lotus Sutra when he prayed. On this particular occasion a samurai grabbed the scroll away from Daishonin and beat Daishonin with it several times. Daishonin was extremely upset and humiliated. He attempted to grab the scroll back as he wanted to use it to hit the samurai. As he reached for it he noticed the title of the scroll. It was the fifth volume containing the Kanji (13th) chapter. This particular chapter describes the difficulties and persecutions the votary of the Lotus Sutra would encounter in the Latter Day of the Law. He realized that by experiencing the physical abuse at that moment, he was living what was predicted in the Lotus Sutra. Instead of grabbing the scroll back and hitting the samurai, he was suddenly struck by an overwhelming feeling that, “I am experiencing the prediction in the Lotus Sutra.”

We will never eradicate the nine worlds from our lives. We need, instead, to endeavor to live as Buddha. In other words, we should not try to eliminate our egos. Rather we should learn how to use our lives. This is how we will be able to manifest the life of Buddha while we still possess the life of Hell, Hunger, Animality and Anger.
Oeshiki, despite being the day of Daishonin’s death, is the day we celebrate Daishonin’s life without feelings of sadness. His life ended at age 61, but Oeshiki is a celebration of eternal immortality. Daishonin’s life was the same as ours, he like us, experienced birth, old age, sickness and death. What Daishonin taught us in the end was that he was a common mortal, and demonstrated that he became enlightened. He showed us that we too have the life of Namu-myoho-ренge-kyo, which neither life nor death can influence, change or destroy. With this Buddhist service we rejoice in Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings and celebrate the basic, fundamental Law of life. This Law is Namu-myoho-ренge-kyo, the essence of life. It is the highest salvation, leading all to the way of enlightenment. Scientific reason cannot explain Namu-myoho-ренge-kyo—the essence of life. God, Shakyamuni, Maitreya (Miroku), Kannon, and Christ, preached eternity, but they could never answer why life is eternal, or name the fundamental Law.

We must increase our gratitude more and more for the value of having faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s teaching, and endeavor to exert ourselves all the more in our daily practice and our daily life.

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GOSHO SELECTION

The One Essential Phrase

The One Essential Phrase

First, for you to ask a question about the Lotus Sutra is a rare source of good fortune. In this age of the Latter Day of the Law, those who ask about the meaning of even one phrase or verse of the Lotus Sutra are much fewer than those who can hurl great Mount Sumeru to another land like a stone, or those who can kick the entire galaxy away like a ball. They are even fewer than those who can embrace and teach countless other sutras, thereby enabling the priests and laymen who listen to them.

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12 The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin Vol. 1 (Gosho Zenshu p. 1402)
13 Mount Sumeru – according to ancient Indian lore it is a mountain that stands at the center of the earth with four sides covered in gold to north, silver to the south, emerald to the east and crystal to the west. The protective force (Buddhist god) Taishaku lives at the summit.
to obtain the six mystic powers.\textsuperscript{14} Equally rare is a priest who can explain the meaning of the Lotus Sutra and clearly answer questions concerning it. The Hoto chapter\textsuperscript{15} in the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra sets forth the important principle of six difficult and nine easy acts. Your asking a question about the Lotus Sutra is among the six difficult acts. This is a sure indication that if you embrace the Lotus Sutra, you will certainly attain Buddhahood. Since the Lotus Sutra defines our life as the Buddha's life, our mind as the Buddha's wisdom and our actions as the Buddha's behavior, all who embrace and believe in even a single phrase or verse of this sutra will be endowed with these three properties. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is only one phrase, but it contains the essence of the entire sutra. You asked whether one can attain Buddhahood only by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and this is the most important question of all. It is the heart of the entire sutra and the substance of its eight volumes.

The spirit within one's body may appear in just his face, and the spirit within his face may appear in just his eyes. Included within the word Japan is all that is within the country's sixty-six provinces: all of the people and animals, the rice paddies and other fields, those of high and low status, the nobles and the commoners, the seven kinds of gems and all other treasures. Similarly, included within the title, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, is the entire sutra consisting of all eight volumes, twenty-eight chapters and 69,384 characters without exception. Concerning this, Po Chu-i\textsuperscript{16} stated that the title is to the sutra as eyes are to the Buddha. In the eighth volume of his Hokke Mongu Ki, Miao-lo\textsuperscript{17} stated that T'ien-t'ai\textsuperscript{18} Hokke Gengi explains only the title, but that the entire sutra is thereby included. By this he meant that, although the text was omitted, the entire sutra was contained in the title alone. Everything has its essential point, and the heart of the Lotus Sutra is its title, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Truly, if you chant this in the morning and evening, you are correctly reading the entire Lotus Sutra. Chanting daimoku\textsuperscript{19} twice is the same as reading the entire sutra twice, one hundred daimoku equal one hundred readings of the sutra, and a thousand daimoku, a thousand readings of the sutra. Thus if you ceaselessly chant daimoku, you will be continually reading the Lotus Sutra. The sixty volumes of the T'ien-t'ai doctrine present exactly the same interpretation. A law this easy to embrace and this easy to practice was taught for the sake of all mankind in this evil age of the Latter Day of the Law. A passage from the Lotus Sutra reads, "During the Latter Day of the Law,\textsuperscript{20} if one wishes to teach this sutra, he should employ the mild way of propagation." Another reads, "In the Latter Day when the Law is about to perish, a person who embraces, reads and recites this sutra must abandon feelings of envy and deceit." A third states, "In the Latter Day of the Law, one who embraces this sutra will be carrying out all forms of service to the Buddha." A fourth reads, "In the fifth five hundred years after my death, accomplish worldwide kosen-rufu\textsuperscript{21} and never allow its flow to cease." The intent of all these teachings is the admonition to embrace and believe in the Lotus Sutra in this Latter Day of the Law. The heretical priests in Japan, China and India have all failed to comprehend this obvious meaning.

\textsuperscript{14} Six mystic powers – 1) the power to appear anywhere at will; 2) the power to observe all phenomena in the world; 3) the power to understand all sounds and languages. 4) the power to read minds; 5) the power to know people's past lifetimes. 6) the power to be free from all innate desires.
\textsuperscript{15} Hoto Chapter – Chapter 11 of the Lotus Sutra.
\textsuperscript{16} Po Chu-i – (772-846) noted Chinese poet.
\textsuperscript{17} Miao-lo – (711-782) Ninth successor and restorer of the sect of T’ien-t’ai Buddhism in China. He wrote commentaries on the works of T’ien-t’ai.
\textsuperscript{18} T’ien-t’ai – (538-597) also known as Chih-i, founder of T’ien-t’ai Buddhism in China. First to expound ichinen sanzen (the concept of a single life moment contains three thousand realms). His three major works are Hokke Gengi, Hokke Mongu and Maka Shikan.
\textsuperscript{19} Daimoku – the title of a sutra, specifically the title of the Lotus Sutra.
\textsuperscript{20} Latter Day of the Law – The third time period after Shakyamuni's death. Beginning in 1052 A.D., it is the age of confusion and conflict when Shakyamuni's teachings will no longer enlighten people and the true Law will be propagated.
\textsuperscript{21} Kosen-rufu – to teach and spread true Buddhism widely and achieve lasting peace.
The Nembutsu, Shingon, Zen and Ritsu sects follow either the Hinayana\textsuperscript{22} or the provisional Mahayana\textsuperscript{23} teachings but have discarded the Lotus Sutra. They misunderstand Buddhism, but they do not realize their mistakes. Because they appear to be true priests, the people trust them without the slightest doubt. Therefore, without realizing it, both these priests and the people who follow them have become enemies of the Lotus Sutra and foes of Shakyamuni Buddha. From the viewpoint of the sutra, it is certain that not only will all their wishes remain unfulfilled, but their lives will be short and, after this life, they will be doomed to the hell of incessant suffering.

Even though one neither reads nor studies the sutra, chanting the title alone is the source of tremendous good fortune. The sutra teaches that women, evil men, and those in the realms of Animality and Hell - in fact, all the people of the Ten Worlds - can attain Buddhahood. We can comprehend this when we remember that fire can be produced by a stone taken from the bottom of a river, and a candle can light up a place that has been dark for billions of years. If even the most ordinary things of this world are such wonders, then how much more wondrous is the power of the Mystic Law. The lives of human beings are fettered by evil karma, earthly desires and the inborn sufferings of life and death. But due to the three inherent potentials of Buddha nature—innate Buddhahood, the wisdom to become aware of it, and the action to manifest it—our lives can without doubt come to reveal the Buddha's three properties. The Great Teacher Dengyo\textsuperscript{24} declared that the power of the Lotus Sutra enables anyone to manifest Buddhahood. He stated this because even the Dragon King's daughter\textsuperscript{25} was able to attain Buddhahood through the power of the Lotus Sutra. Do not doubt this in the least. Let your husband know that I will explain this in detail when I see him.

Nichiren

The third day of the seventh month in the first year of Koan (1278), July 3, 1278
To Myoho-ama

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\textsuperscript{22} Hinayana – Theravada Buddhism (Lesser Vehicle) primarily concerned with self-salvation and elimination of desire.
\textsuperscript{23} Provisional Mahayana – Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) one of the major streams of Buddhism which advocates practicing for enlightenment of oneself and others. Provisional Mahayana are those teachings of Shakyamuni which reveal only partial truth.
\textsuperscript{24} Great Teacher Dengyo – (767-822) also known as Saicho, he is the founder of Tendai Buddhism in Japan
\textsuperscript{25} Dragon King's Daughter – it is explained in the 12\textsuperscript{th} chapter of the Lotus Sutra that the daughter of the Dragon King, despite being a child and a female, realized Buddha hood without changing her form.