

ON THE BUDDHA NICHIREN

By Reverend Raido Hirota

QUESTION: Where in the *Gosho* or other writings does Nichiren Daishonin declare himself to be the original Buddha?

Rev. Hirota: There is no place in the *Gosho*, not one instance in which Nichiren Daishonin says, "I am the Buddha." However, in the 21st chapter of the Lotus Sutra Shakyamuni transfers the entirety of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings, which are all contained in the Lotus Sutra, to Bodhisattva Jogyo (Bodhisattva Superior Practice) to keep after his death.

Shakyamuni said in the Lotus Sutra that in the fifth five hundred years after his extinction there will be someone who will save all mankind with this sutra. In "How Those Initially Aspiring to the Way Can Attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra" (*Hokke Shoshin Jobutsu Sho*) Nichiren Daishonin says "I am Bodhisattva Jogyo." In "Requital For the Buddha's Favor" (*Ho'on-sho*) Daishonin expressed his realization that if people practice as he instructs they will, as a matter of course, awaken to enlightenment. In the "Opening of the Eyes" (*Kaimoku Sho*) he writes, "Shakyamuni [Buddha], Taho and the other Buddhas intend to insure the future propagation of the Lotus Sutra so that it can be made available to every single living being in times to come. Their concern and compassion are even greater than that of a father and mother who see their only child inflicted with great suffering...I Nichiren am sovereign, teacher, father and mother to all the people of Japan." In "The Selection of the Time" (*Sen-ji Sho*) Daishonin said, "There can be no room to doubt that I, Nichiren am the foremost votary of the Lotus Sutra in all of Japan. Indeed, from this we may assume that, even in China and India and throughout the entire world, there is no one who can stand side by side with me."

These words are from the *Gosho*; Nikko Shonin learned from these words, from these *Gosho*. Nikko Shonin also lived with Daishonin -- sharing the same clothes, eating the same food -- and observed how the Daishonin lived and what happened to him -- to his life. All of this led Nikko Shonin to realize that Nichiren Daishonin was the votary of the Lotus Sutra, and that he was the

one and only Buddha. That is why, if you want to awaken to Buddhahood you have to practice as the Daishonin teaches.

Believers of Nichiren Shu are the one's who ask, "Where does Nichiren say he is the Buddha? He didn't say anything like that, it's you who are saying that Nichiren is the Buddha."

Surely anybody can say, "I am the Buddha." The most important thing is how you live. Nichiren Daishonin lived like one.