**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**INTERNATIONAL SKYPE MEETINGS**

**with**

**Reverend Raidō Hirota**



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**April 2014**

**Question:** If we could only read one Gosho[[1]](#footnote-1), which Gosho would it be? And why?

**Reverend Raido Hirota (RH):** I can’t choose just one because you can’t define Nichiren Daishonin’s[[2]](#footnote-2) teachings in just one Gosho. Let me ask, 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 Goshos. You don’t want to create rankings among the Goshos, or have that kind of thinking.

**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 what they believe is right. This is not limited to the teachings of Christianity, but to other faiths, too. However, such benefits and happiness are specious because those teachings don’t expound attaining Buddhahood, which is the most important and profound thing in life.

**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 in February.

**RH:** In the Lotus Sutra[[3]](#footnote-3), Shakyamuni[[4]](#footnote-4) reveals *Kai*/*Ji* /*Go* /*Nyu* (open / show/realize/cause to enter Buddhahood[[5]](#footnote-5)). He explained that we need to be aware that these are the reasons why we were born as a human being. In other words, he is telling us that we are here in this world to chant the Ōdaimoku[[6]](#footnote-6) of Namumyōhōrengekyō[[7]](#footnote-7) (to believe, to practice, and to communicate this to people who aren’t informed), and this is what we should realize. And if you have forgotten or forget this purpose, we must try to remember it. Pass it along to people who don’t know about it.

**Question:** When I visit many close friends in Chicago this summer who are SGI[[8]](#footnote-8) and Temple members, if I am asked to chant with them, what should be my response?

**RH:** Gohonzon[[9]](#footnote-9), Gongyo[[10]](#footnote-10), Ōdaimoku – even when they are the same, the spirit of devotion is different. So, explain your reasoning clearly, and don’t chant with them. This is the approach I take.

However, if your friend comes 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, with you leading. In this case, chanting or not would be 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 with you and reading *The Middle Way* newsletter, is there any other material we can use to study? Could any of the large number of books accumulated during my past practice with NSA[[11]](#footnote-11) be used at all for study?

**RH:** I cannot answer “Yes” because I don’t know the content of the NSA books you own. But content-wise, the Gosho and the Lotus Sutra will not lead a person to NSA, so please read those two sources over and over again. When you read the Goshos in chronological order, you understand the progression of Nichiren Daishonin’s life. It’s very good.

**Question:** The Gosho “On Attaining Buddhahood” 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 in Fukushima, have the Taisekiji[[12]](#footnote-12) priests reevaluated their position?

**RH:** Since I’m not a part of the Taisekiji priesthood, I don’t know what they are thinking or what they have learned during this major disaster. In the Lotus Sutra, it is written that in the time of *Mappō*[[13]](#footnote-13) (“The Age of Dharma Decline”) the world would fall into disorder.

Due to the sins of wrong teachings, not only human activities but, also nature would be in disorder. Nichiren urgently forewarned the world about this in the “Risshō Ankoku Ron[[14]](#footnote-14).” Nichiren Daishonin is not happy about the world falling into disarray, or proud that his prediction came true. Rather, he is pleading with us to take this as a wake-up call, and to awaken to the true teachings of Namumyōhōrengekyō.

However, I must add, this is not the fault of *Mappō* or slander. If the world’s disorder weren’t taken as a wake-up call, and if there was no one who woke up to the true devotion after this disaster, then that would be evidence that we, the communicators of the Buddha’s teachings, didn’t perform our mission or carry out our responsibilities well.

The number of people who were killed or are missing due to the earthquake and tsunami on March 11th reached, as of March 25th, well over 20,000. As a believer of Namumyōhōrengekyō, I regret the lack of ability to pursue the mission and responsibilities. From now on, I’m going to disseminate 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 Shoshu Sokagakkai[[15]](#footnote-15), we were taught to do Gongyo, chant daimoku and study. We were also told (encouraged) to contribute money to their various causes and were encouraged, or rather pushed, whatever you want to label it to do shakubuku and crazy street shakubuku[[16]](#footnote-16) 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[[17]](#footnote-17)) and *Kosen rufu[[18]](#footnote-18)*. As a new person who is now practicing Nichiren Shoshu correctly with the Shoshin-kai[[19]](#footnote-19), my question is: Besides doing *Seoge[[20]](#footnote-20)*, 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, the other three are practice, study, and shakubuku.

Unlike what SGI is doing, shakubuku is not about getting people to receive Gojukai (the conversion ceremony to receive the precepts of faith) with deceit or threat, and letting them have Gohonzon. It’s about taking time to convey the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin so that the person can receive the teachings on a personal level. A person cannot be a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra as Nichiren Daishonin describes unless he has made a conscious decision to break away from the shallow teachings of another religion before joining (us). Regardless of all the years one may practice doing shakubuku, if no one joins, it is still important for you to keep spreading the seeds of Namumyōhōrengekyō. The act of spreading the seeds of Namumyōhōrengekyō creates no waste. Making a connection to Namumyōhōrengekyō is the most important thing. Converting to a religion is not something that can be forced on anyone. It should be entirely the person’s decision and the person’s choice.

**Question:** When I am 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 met a member of the Soka Gakkai who conducted his practice in this way:

1. His personal wish wasn’t coming true, so he went to the temple to chant Ōdaimoku. Because many people come to the temple and to chant to Gohonzon, he thought that the temple Gohonzon would be much more powerful than Gohonzon in the home. He asked me to do a prayer to make his wishes come true. I declined. I told him he needed to amend his thinking that the Gohonzon’s power is strong or weak.
2. Because his personal wish hadn’t come true, he scolded the Gohonzon by saying, “I’ve chanted so many Ōdaimoku, why aren’t you trying to protect me or help me?! If you are a real Gohonzon, give me a blessing!”
3. Somebody in SGI 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 Ōdaimoku.
4. He was then told that shakubuku increases blessings exponentially, and would bring him more happiness than chanting the Ōdaimoku. So, using his friends’ names, he received Gojukai and Gohonzon many times.

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

Before I properly understood the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, I was also under the impression that the Ōdaimoku of Namumyōhōrengekyō was something like a magic wand. I thought if I chant, I would get exactly what I wished for. Now when I notice my wishes and material desires surface when I am chanting, I acknowledge the heart of Namumyōhōrengekyō: *Shō Yoku Chisoku*, which means desire little and be happy with whatever you have. When you are satisfied with a little bit of desire, your life will bring you satisfaction and gratitude.

On the contrary, when you have bigger desires, you will never run out of dissatisfaction and complaints. This is called *Daiyoku Fusoku* (desire for more and not easily satisfied).

Another formidable challenge when practicing faith is “*Myōmon Myōri*”. It’s the desire of wanting to become more famous than others, to be praised, to be respected, to be wealthier than others, to possess valuable things, and to disdain others. The heart of Namumyōhōrengekyō renounces this kind of thinking. So, when I notice desires rising in myself, I return to those points, and instead of fighting, I cool my head off by asking myself if I am being materialistic and greedy (*Daiyoku Fusoku*) or a meglomaniac (*Myōmon Myōri*).

The number of victims after the massive earthquake and tsunami are well over 20,000. They are all shivering in the cold. When I go to sleep in a warm futon every night, I’ve taken it for granted. Now I am aware of that. In life, we shouldn’t forget to feel gratitude for something that we normally think is nothing special.

**Question:** When we do Gongyo correctly, that is chanting Ōdaimoku and reciting the sutra with correct faith, how does it affect our lives?  And why?

**RH:** You will 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.

**Question:** This past year I have deeply struggled to differentiate the teachings of Nichiren Shoshu Shoshinkai and that of Taisekiji. 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 Taisekiji prayer book are identical. If Shoshinkai is not affiliated with Taisekiji, 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:** Unquestionably, Nikken Abe was wrong. There were high priests in the past who were also wrong. The current state of Taisekiji, with Nichinyo, 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 it 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 (common mortal) who is a representative of an era, and who communicates the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

The way to consider the 3rd prayer is this: There are many people who set good and bad examples. What I think we should do is to take both as lessons for our faith. 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 keep your faith in the religion on the right teachings? I think of those points when I pray.

**Question:** Who is Rev. Hōshō Kubokawa? Is he the founder of Shoshinkai? Were any of the priests who originally founded Shoshinkai in line to become High Priest? Do Shoshinkai Priest’s transcribe Gohonzon?

**RH:** Rev. Kubokawa Hōshō is not the founder of Shoshinkai. Shoshinkai renounces the claim that there are teachings of Nichiren Daishonin that indicate that the High Priest is the living Buddha of Taisekiji. Therefore, there is no Shoshinkai priest who would make the false claim that he is high priest and besides, there is no need for that. And no, I do not, nor do other Shoshinkai priests inscribe Gohonzon.

**Question:** What is the meaning of *Montei Hichi-in no Taihō*? Does this concept form the basis of interpreting the doctrines of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism[[21]](#footnote-21)?

**RH:** *Montei Hichi-in no Taihō*. Generally, most believers think that because Shakyamuni taught the Lotus Sutra, the Lotus Sutra is an original teaching of Shakyamuni. In other words, they think that it’s Shakyamuni whose concepts are the basis of the teachings, and so they respect and pray to Shakyamuni as Buddha and as the object of worship.

However, Nichiren Daishonin explained that in the past Shakyamuni practiced the Lotus Sutra as a human being and attained Buddhahood. Nichiren Daishonin wished that all sentient beings would attain Buddhahood as Shakyamuni had. This wish is explained in Nichiren’s teachings. He taught that the teaching of Namumyōhōrengekyō is the core of the Lotus Sutra, and that it should be the object of worship, not Shakyamuni. Nichiren Daishonin instructed us to read the Lotus Sutra.

The former way of reading the Lotus Sutra is called *Mon-jyo*, meaning literal reading, while the latter way of reading it is called *Mon-tei* orreading the heart or spirit of the words.

At the end of the *Juyro* (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which is the central teaching of the Lotus Sutra, there is the teaching of *Issai Shujō Jobutsu* (the enlightenment of all sentient beings). The reason it is at the end of the chapter is that all sentient beings would not notice it if they are only looking at the surface or at the literal meaning. What’s at the end of the *Juyro* chapter is the core of the Lotus Sutra. And that is the true and excellent teaching of Buddhism. *Montei Hichi-in no Taihō* explains that. It is the basis of Nichiren Shoshu.

**Question:** I am confused about the 24 character Bodhisattve Fukyō quote[[22]](#footnote-22) that we recite at the end of Gongyo. When we read the quote directly from the Lotus Sutra it is worded differently than what we recite. I thought the original intent of the 24-character verse was to indicate that all people have the potential to become Buddhas. That all people possess the Buddha nature. No “ifs ands or buts”! In our quote, we say people will become Buddha only “IF” they embrace the Buddhist Law. How is this different than the Christian concept of getting into heaven only “IF” one accepts Jesus? Why is there an “IF” in our quote? Don’t all sentient beings have the potential to become Buddha whether they accept the Buddhist Law or not?   
  
**RH:** “Belief.” Faith is the only, and crucial condition for attaining Buddhahood in the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. You can’t reach enlightenment from “disbelief”. If a person can’t believe in the Buddha nature in their own life, then there is no cause or reason for them to become Buddha. That’s why, in the faith of Nichiren Daishonin, it strictly teaches *hōbō gen-kai*.

Let me explain *hōbō gen-kai*:

In the second chapter (*Hōbenpon*) of the Lotus Sutra, there is a phrase which says *Shōjiki Sha hōben*. This means to only believe in the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra explains *Issai Shujō Jōbutsu* (the enlightenment of all sentient beings) truthfully, so let go of the other expedient teachings you’ve studied in the past.

In the third chapter (*Hiyubon Daisan*) of the Lotus Sutra, there is a phrase which states, *Fujyo yokyō ichige*. This means to not let your heart wonder to, or have your heart stolen by the previous expedient teachings. These would be all expedient teachings taught before the *Fukyō* (20th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. (The *Fukyō* chapter is also referred to as the *Heart Sutra* in Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism.)

In the light of this understanding of Shakyamuni’s teachings, Nichiren Daishōnin called it *Hōbō*, or slander, when your heart or your actions indicate that you believe and accept other teachings other than the practice of Namumyōhōrengekyō. Doing so was “strictly discouraged” (*Genkai*). Together, this is called “*hōbō gen-kai*.

In the original text of the Lotus Sutra, it says, “Practice the bodhisattva Way.” From the point of view of the Lotus Sutra, the “bodhisattva Way” means “the practice of Namumyōhōrengekyō.” Nichiren Daishōnin called himself “The practitioner of Nichiren’s Lotus Sutra[[23]](#footnote-23) (*Gyōja Nichiren Hokekyō*).

In the original text of the *Fukyō* Chapter, it says “Follow the Way of the bodhisattva, then attain Buddhahood.” I have loosely translated this so that you will not be confused about what the path of bodhisattva is, and what it means to become Buddha. Also, “bodhisattva” is a practitioner. To live as a practitioner of Namumyōhōrengekyō is to become the Buddha of Namumyōhōrengekyō.

No matter how poor one might look, you accept the Buddha nature in all sentient beings and respect each other. That is the most important teaching of the *Fukyō* Chapter, and this leads us to the sense of equanimity in our heart and to a peaceful world without conflict. This teaching is contained in the Lotus Sutra, and it is the heart and soul of the teachings that the Buddha has ultimately tried to explain to us. So, in a nutshell, the teachings that are expounded in the *Fukyō* Chapter direct us “to live as a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra (Namumyōhōrengekyō)”.

The Lotus Sutra is a Buddhist sutra that tells us to believe and practice by using Namumyōhōrengekyō as the foundation of faith.

By walking the “path of Namumyōhōrengekyō”, anybody can attain the Buddhahood of Namumyōhōrengekyō. As I said above, I have paraphrased the original text which reads “attaining Buddhahood”into “Attaining the Buddhahood of Namumyōhōrengekyō.”

The meaning of the 24-character verse is completely different from “accepting Christ.” Christ is an individual—a person. Equating belief in the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō as requisite for attaining Buddhahood to belief in Christ, is similar to the current thinking of Taisekiji, which claims that the High Priest is the reincarnation of Nichiren. Namumyōhōrengekyō is the teaching that is the basis of equality in all sentient beings.

**Question:** In the gosho and in the silent prayers, I see the word “pray.”  What is the meaning of “pray” in this Buddhism?

**RH:** It means that you put your heart into it.



**May 2014**

**Question**: Is it ok to feel good when I do gongyo?

**RH**: We make time and spend money to travel because we have a curiosity to see and experience something different from our daily routines. But when we come home, we feel relaxed to be at home, and it just feels good. That’s when we notice how precious those little things are that we do and have in our daily lives. It’s like our hometown, or being held in the arms of our parents. Similarly, Namumyōhōrengekyō is like a hometown for our soul. It contains the teaching that lets you reset yourself.

Some of you may live alone, some with your family, in either case, consider Gohonzon as another existence that you cohabitate with. You might not have enough time to do Gongyo every day because you are busy with work, etc. But make time to sit in front of Gohonzon before you leave the house and chant Namumyōhōrengekyō as if to say to Gohonzon, “I'm leaving (for work, etc.).” And when you return home, do the same, telling Gohonzon, “I'm home” just as you would greet your partner or family when you return from work. I also chant Namumyōhōrengekyō before I eat and when I finish eating. My family does the same. I wish you will incorporate this in your life as well.

**Question:** When a Buddhist does something terrible or makes a huge mistake, how are we to view that?

**RH:** I hope all of you will look upon Nichiren, Nikko, and Nichimoku Shonins as your role models, and strive to live your life based on their teachings. As a person (not just as a practitioner), try to be a good person. Yes, of course we are human. In life, we mess up here and there. I’m not saying that’s good, but in Nichiren Shoshu (unlike other sects of Buddhism or other religions, which will ban you from practicing the teaching if you make a mistake once), one can continue to practice the religion. Like a *repechage*, one can go back to the start line again and try to do it right the next time. As a practitioner, don’t blame the person for their mistakes but accept the person’s willingness to do it right.

One can continue to practice this religion regardless of his past actions, but as a leader/teacher, it might be a different story. If the image created by a leader’s (teacher/priest) past actions is so strong that believers are leaving the temple, then he is not doing any good for the teachings.

In Nembutsu Shu, Shinran, the founder of the Jodo Shin sect, was a married man with kids, but in Nichiren Shoshu, Nichiren, Nikko, and Nichimoku were all unmarried men. In the Meiji era (1868 - 1912), some priests got married secretly, or rather they had women in their lives (unofficially). Priests lived in their temples, and had their women live in different houses. They were not technically married. But at one point, the Meiji government told the priests that they should legalize their marriages so that it looked “right” in the eyes of society, and to take “responsibility” for their families, as these men (monks/priests) changed their girlfriends frequently and had children by different women. So, the priests married and had their women move into their temples, where the women took care of the behind-the-scene necessities such as cooking, cleaning, etc. To the eyes of practitioners, this looked right, too. The priests looked trustworthy instead of men who hid behind the virtues of their monk’s robes but did whatever they pleased as men.

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**July 2014**

**Question:** What does it mean to be “willing to give up one’s life for Buddhism”?

**RH**: This appears in “Letter to Gijō-bō” which was written by Nichiren to the priest Gijō-bō.

The purpose of practicing this teaching, from the Buddha’s point of view, is for people to attain Buddhahood. Nichiren wants people, who were of course, like himself, born human, to be like him and attain the same state as he did, and for them to open their eyes to see that this is the #1 purpose in life (the ultimate goal). For us ordinary human beings, attaining Buddhahood sometimes doesn’t seem like the ultimate goal because so many things happen in our lives. And because there is a difference between the Buddha’s point of view and our perspective, there is a disparity between the Buddha’s purpose (for practicing this religion) and the practitioners’ purpose.

There are two ways of practicing this teaching:

1) One can either practice this teaching based on the teachings by the Buddha, or

2) One can practice this teaching based on what one believes is right.

The person who practices in the second instance is using the teaching like an adornment or some kind of jewelry to wear. This happens not only in Buddhism but in other religions throughout the world. In this situation, there is a difference between the Buddha (or God)’s point of view and the practitioner’s point of view. Here the practitioner is not really practicing Buddhism, he/she is practicing according to his or her own view.

At the end of “Letter to Gijō-bō” it says “This is why I have emphatically urged you to be willing to give up your body and your life for the sake of the Lotus Sutra.” In other words, with this sentence Nichiren is saying I don’t want you to be fixated on your life; instead I want you realize that you can attain Buddhahood. The Lotus Sutra doesn’t make us do anything. It doesn’t brainwash us. And there is no covenant or contract between the Lotus Sutra and us. In life, we will encounter challenges, but despite the challenges we will face, practice this teaching without losing a sense of self, and find resonance and happiness in the teachings.

Our Buddhist practice can compared to sports. Practicing or training is not easy, and not everyone will become a rich and famous athlete. Yet one continues to practice and train because it’s a way of life, and through the experience one gains strength.

I post messages on Yahoo! Forum (Yahoo! Japan) to spread the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin: In one message I said, “To recite Gongyo and chant Ōdaimoku in the way Nichiren did, takes about 50 minutes, but the Soka Gakkai has made Gongyo and Ōdaimoku shorter so that it fits into the way that makes sense to them. To practice this Buddhism correctly, you’ll have to do it the way Nichiren did.”

Somebody commented on my post. He (or she) said that Soka Gakkai decided to make Gongyo and Ōdaimoku shorter because non-Japanese people will have a hard time chanting it, and that the language barrier will get in the way of spreading Nichiren’s teachings throughout the world.

I replied that modifying Gongyo will not deliver Nichiren Daishonin’s correct teaching.

The person commented, saying that the way I’m doing it is wrong.

But I think they are wrong. Practicing is like training: even when you encounter difficulties, you can’t forget about the core of its purpose, which is enlightenment. By practicing it in the way Nichiren did, you might be able to understand his reasons.

**Question:** Some of my friends are shy about joining Shoshinkai because they had bad experiences with Soka Gakkai and Nichiren Shoshu in the past. The language barrier, slow internet connection, time differences are all factors for them not joining the group.

**RH:** I can’t tell anyone what to do. One must ask oneself how valuable this practice is to them. In the beginning, I thought people in different countries (other than Japan) might not be able to understand Buddhism (This was before I came to America and met you and before we started Skype meetings). But then, I remembered this phrase in the Gosho. “If one understands the difference between hot and cold, he will be able to understand the Lotus Sutra.” Nichiren Daishonin said this because back in his day, there were a lot of people in Japan who couldn’t read or write. So, I realized from the Gosho that I didn’t have to be 100% right - after all, I’m still a student - but if we could leave some of my words documented, we could spread Nichiren’s teachings after I die, and people could use them as a springboard for developing true faith. They could use these documents I leave behind to further their studies and use them as tools to think critically for themselves and not just swallow or follow my words.

No matter where you live (Italy, France, Germany, Africa, America, etc.), we all have issues. But the bottom line is this (and this relates to the pevious question): Do you consider the Buddha’s teaching as your main guide in life, or do you consider your own mind, your own opinions as your main source of guidance?

It is not for me to decide what you should do. To practice the teaching means you have to think critically for yourself.

What Nichiren was saying in the last part of “Letter to Gijō-bō” was this: We all treasure life. We don’t want to give up on our life. He isn’t telling you to die for Buddhism, rather he is telling you to live, so that you can demonstrate what you’ve learned from Buddha’s teachings. Can you accept this and live this way of life? Nichiren is saying, please live for Buddhism.



**September 2014**

**Question:** As a part of my Master's program, I'm doing social work at a high school. I'm of Caribbean descent. At work, I've noticed that some faculty members are discriminating against people based on their race. How do I handle such a situation as a Buddhist?

**RH:** People dislike, and discriminate against certain things based on their emotional response. Sadly, we cannot eliminate this side of human nature. People who discriminate against others based on their emotions don’t try to see another’s soul or heart as it actually is.  The heart and the soul have no color. But people who choose not to see that are narrow-minded. They have to understand this on their own.

Nichiren was the son of a fisherman. During his day, people who made their living by catching fish, or anything that had a life-form, belonged to the lowest caste. On the other hand, many priests belonged to the higher caste. These priests and monks used religion as a stepping stone to climb the social ladder. They eventually became political advisers, which led to their higher social status. But Daishonin didn’t hide his background. He believed that the True Teaching has to apply to everyone regardless of their standing in society (their caste, how they were raised, etc). He believed that if only the chosen people can practice the teaching, then that is not a true religion.

All sentient beings have Buddha nature. This is not a human right. This applies to all life. All life is equal. That is the teaching of Namumyōhōrengekyō.

I hope you can be mindful of this, and apply critical thinking and assess the situation, then respond to it without reacting emotionally. Those people might not understand where you are coming from, but I hope you can demonstrate the essence of Namumyōhōrengekyō. By demonstrating it, you could gently challenge their narrow-mindedness, and introduce the idea that all sentient beings are equal.

**Question:** When I’m doing Gongyo, a flood of thoughts come up. How do I remove them from my mind?

**RH:** That is called *Zatsu Nen* (*Zatsu*: scattered, not refined / *Nen*: thoughts, ideas that we are thinking). In Buddhism, we call that *Bonnō[[24]](#footnote-24)*.

We can’t stop our scattered thoughts. I have that, too. We could say that Gongyo is swimming through the ocean of *Zatsu Nen*.

The *juzu*[[25]](#footnote-25) consists of 112 beads. Counting from the left side of the *juzu*, the 8th bead and 23rd bead on both strands are 4 smaller beads. If we subtract these 4 beads from the 112 we have 108 beads. Though there are many more earthly desires and illusions (*Bonnō*) in the human mind, these 108 beads represent the major desires and illusions we have as human beings. The 4 smaller beads represent the Four Bodhisattvas[[26]](#footnote-26) who were tasked with the responsibility of spreading the teaching that our practice should not be centered around Shakyamuni, but should instead be centered around Namumyōhōrengekyō, the True Law. In Japan, just before mid-night on New Year’s Eve a large bell is rung 108 times to clear away the 108 old *Zastu Nen* before the start of the New Year. Of course, ringing a bell 108 times is not going to get rid of them. But it’s a nice symbolic gesture.

We wrap the j*uzu* beads around our hands when we pray. Some of you might think it’s odd that we encircle our hands with 108 earthly desireswhen we are facing Buddha. But by doing so, we show that our faith is enveloping those desires and illusions.

Nobody is free from *Zatsu Nen* (*Bonnō*). If anyone says that they are, I personally think they are not telling the truth. If you become confused or baffled, remember that all sentient beings host the Buddha nature. Remind yourself that you are not practicing this teaching to give attention to and be consumed by your scattered thoughts and desires.

I've been practicing 50+ years now, and I’m still repeating this process.

**Question:** Reciting the *seoge* section of Hoben (2nd) chapter of the Lotus Sutra takes time, is it reasonable?

**RH:** If you can’t find time, make time. Wake up earlier to practice it. You are training yourself to be a Buddha. Athletes, for example, practice to become better athletes. They don’t only practice and train themselves when they have time. I’ve been practicing 50+ years, and sometimes I wish I could sleep in, or that I could watch TV instead of practicing. There is no such thing as easy training. To forge ahead in this path is a lifestyle – a way of life.

**Question:** I went to Taisekiji about a year ago, their Gohonzon looked fake.

**RH:** True faith + Gohonzon = True Gohonzon. To determine what’s fake or not is based on what kind of message is in it, what it represents. Even if Daishonin wrote it, if it is housed in a temple where their faith doesn’t align with the true teaching, then that’s not a real thing.

Soka Gakkai thinks non-believers are their enemy. The members of the Gakkai are taught to win, and not to lose. Their practice is to make that happen. Their purpose is to incite a revolution within human beings; to color individuals, society and education to match their color. That’s very different from Daishonin’s purpose.

People who have been touched by Soka Gakkai may still have that color imbued in them. I say this because the first education you receive stays with you a long time. Because of that, it will be a difficult path to hoe for them, but I hope they will correct themselves and forge ahead with their faith in the true teaching.

I hope former SGI members realize the difference between their prior belief and the true teaching of Daishonin. It’ll be confusing at first because they are quite different, but I hope they continue to practice and train themselves.

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**INDIA**

**August 2016**

**Question:** All Nichiren Buddhist sects claim that they are on the right path of Buddhism. Many claim that they are True Buddhists or the True Buddhist School, the Orthodox School of Nichiren Buddhism, the conventional mainstream of Buddhism. This especially is true in Japan. Why?

**RH**: Are there any doctors, teachers, CEOs in business, or politicians who describe themselves as being wrong or incapable? All religions describe themselves as the most correct religion and the religion which can make you the happiest.

Most people will be tricked into believing in a religion that promises that you can be cured of disease, because it sounds good, and because everybody, or so many people are doing it. Most people will not even investigate the religion itself, asking:  What are the teachings? What kind of faith is it? Of what kind of practice is it?

**Question**: When every follower of Nichiren Buddhist sects believes in the existence of Gohonzon and Dai-Gohonzon[[27]](#footnote-27) and Buddha at the center of your heart, then why are Nichiren Buddhist sects divided into so many religious and ethnic groups?

**rh:** The reasons for the divisions are:

A) If you follow the teaching purely or not.

B) If you prefer to go along with society.

C) Power struggle within an organization.

D) If you prefer to pursue only financial gain in this world.

E) If you set growth in membership as the main objective.

The reason the Shoshin-kai left Taisekiji (the organization of Nichiren Shoshu) was **A**.  We also rejected reasons B, C, D and E.

The correct way to judge these things is to “follow the Law, not persons.” This concept is called *e-hō-fue-nin*.

The original sutras that were taught by the Buddha were later interpreted by people based on their time, their country and the political situation. The interpretation of the law was respected if the person interpreting it was great and scholarly. But faith should depend on the Law (the original scriptures) and not on the people—meaning the priests (*persons along the way*)100 or 200 years, for example, after Shakyamuni passed away—who tried to interpret the sutras to suit the era and the society in which they lived in an effort to revive a declining Buddhism. Even though the interpretation of the sutras was not good for both the time and society, people of the various times forgot the original teachings of Shakyamuni and kept the interpretations as the standard. Throughout the history of any religion, there are changing factors. But the golden rule is that you always have to set the original teaching as the center, and compare whether an interpretation contradicts the original scripture. This is quite different from the rigid dogmatic view which denies interpretation.

Nichiren Daishonin is also *a person along the way*. But he believed strictly in the enlightenment of all living beings, which is the central objective of the Lotus Sutra, and did not modify and misinterpret the teaching based on the era in which he lived and Japan’s political situation.

You should not use the theory of *a person along the way* unless you can confirm that the main objective was not altered.

**Question**: Every Nichiren sect and every group claims that they are on the right path. How could this be possible?

**RH:** The same answer as above.  It is important to have a faith that is based on “follow the Law, not persons” (*e-hō-fue-nin*).

**Question:** How are the historical Buddha (Shakyamuni), his Buddhism and bodhisattvas to be viewed or understood?

**RH:** Originally, Shakyamuni was also an ordinary person like us. That ordinary person practiced as a bodhisattva and was enlightened through the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō and became a Buddha.

**Question:** What are the three primary sources of knowledge in our Buddhist religion? Especially in Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism.

**RH:** The Gohonzon, the place of worship(*kaidan*) and Daimoku are the three basic treasures of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism.

**Question**: What is the enlightenment of any Buddhist sect?

**RH:** In Nichiren Daishonin’s Law, the way you live, and living with the mind of a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra is itself Buddha.

**Question**: What is the Buddhist vision?

**RH:** The enlightenment of all the living beings.

**Question:** How do souls associate with their respective bodies in Nichiren Buddhism?

**RH:** *Shikishin funi* – Oneness of body and mind.

Color is form, physical, and material, existence.  Mind is the workings of the spirit and psyche. Body and mind are *Funi* (not two but one). The mind moves the body, and the body moves the mind. What we express with our body delivers our invisible mind to others. You will understand a person’s mind by looking at his actions. Both mind and body have to have responsibilities. But one might make a split action where the mind and body oppose each other due to incidents such as accidents and stress and being aged. The body which is the container for the mind may become uncoordinated or unable to reproduce, while the mind in that body is keen and may be able to accept aging or death. The body is the container and the mind is the treasure inside that container. The center of life is the mind (personality), but ultimately life is the heart.

**Question:** What does darkness mean in Nichiren Buddhist sects and other Buddhist sects and especially Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist sects?

**RH:** *Bonnō*, which are earthly desires and illusions which result in suffering.

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**September 2016**

**Question**: Lately I have been thinking about the practice taught by the Shoshinkai. A question I have is: If I must build my own faith with the right attitude in chanting the daimoku, what is the difference between me being a Buddhist and a Christian believer? Christians also try to build their faith inside to find God in their lives...and the love they feel inside and for their environment could be the same as ours. What happens if one can’t achieve, with his own efforts, the belief in his inner Gohonzon?

I am asking this - and trust me this is really important to me - because I have always thought that faith is dedication and practice in front of the Gohonzon, which is the external cause that helps our inner cause to achieve Buddhahood; and that Daimoku works anyway, even if one does not intend it for the purpose of enlightenment as you (Shoshin-kai) say.

**RH**: In terms of life, human beings are equal to animals and plants. But the difference between human beings and animals and plants is that only human beings, besides having a hunger and desire for sex, have the wisdom to create and develop a culture and civilization and pass on that wisdom to the next generation. Because of that, and above and beyond their hunger and desire for sex, human beings, as a part of their intelligence, can think about why they live, what were they before they were born, and what are they going to be after they die. This is the major difference between humans and other life forms.

The question of why human beings exist is a matter of philosophy. The question of what happened before we were born and what will happen after we die is a matter of religion.

Because these are extremely vague propositions, human beings’ thinking and speculation are divided as follows: One way is a religion that is about feeling happy being the servant of God in whatever situation and, as it is vain to think, leave all the decision-making to God, since God created everything; and in addition, eliminate speculation because you can’t be God no matter how much you believe in God. The other way is Buddhism, which is the teaching whose purpose is ultimate equality—that all living things are equal to the Buddha. This equality is not the same as thinking that everybody is equal under God. Equality in Buddhism means that all living things can be Buddha, and anybody can be Buddha.

So the religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Shinto, which believe that God is in the center of this world, preach that God created this world.

Buddhism does not preach that God or any special existence created this world. And of course, Buddhism does not claim that Buddha created this world either.

If God created the world, then there is a beginning and an end. But in Buddhism, the universe is eternally abiding, beginningless, immeasurable, nothing new, nothing old. All life is connected and is supported by each other. Life was born like a drop taken out from the oceans—like a father and a mother—and it will always have the four inevitables—the four sufferings—in human life: birth, aging, sickness, and death. And it will return and melt back into the oceans of eternally abiding, beginninglessness and immeasurableness where all lives are all connected, and where new connections are made, and new life is celebrated.

“Ocean” is a metaphor. I could also use the “cherry tree” as the same metaphor.

The cherry blossoms which bloom every year will fleetingly scatter after a period of time. However, the trees that produced the flowers do not die, and will produce new flowers next year as if nothing happened.

Flowers scatter. Some of the flowers will be nutrients in the form of compost for the roots of the tree, and some will be bait for fish in the river that flows to the ocean. Even though it looks simply like they disappeared without any evidence, they will all return to nature without anything wasted or leftover.

Every year, the annual cherry blossoms look exactly the same. But there is nothing the same about them—not even one blossom is the same. In other words, the idea of reincarnation with me being born again as myself is a fantasy. The combination of elements will change in the connections made between all living things, and new blossoms will bloom and will become a cherry tree in the following year. In this context, the cherry blossoms represent our lives, and the tree represents the ocean. The ocean will create all lives, accept or receive all lives, and it will not die.

The ocean is a metaphor for the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō. I used the word “ocean” to express this.

This Life that produces life, does not experience death. It is something that is eternal, beginningless, and an immeasurable existence in time and space. If you say you created it, it will have a beginning and an end, which is a finite period. But things begin because there was something. This means something existed before the beginning. Things do not come out of nothing. There was an age or period of time before the beginning of the earth, which is why the earth came into being. Because there was an age or period of time before human beings, that is why human beings came into being. It is not that they just appeared like smoke.

Animals, plants, insects, soil, light, water and air, they are all equal as life. Human beings cannot live only with human beings. If all other life did not exist, then both humans and other life forms could not exist. That is why we do not believe that human beings are the closest to God, that we animals with wisdom are precious and the animals without wisdom can be eaten by human beings. And we also don’t rank, discriminate and differentiate between lives. The Buddhist teaching states that all lives have the life of Buddha.

I believe that in Buddhist thinking there is real comfort, peace and happiness. The teaching that ranks, discriminates and differentiates between species only has contradictions when they advocate or make an appeal for freedom, equality, love and peace, because there is clear discrimination in such a teaching.

In Buddhism, gods will assist Buddha, and the role of gods is to protect the Law (the cause of life and Buddhahood). Gods are not the focus of faith like the Gohonzon.

  You asked: What will happen if you can’t have faith in Buddhism? I say what will happen to you will be determined by what is going to happen in your heart after you read my answer. What will happen to you will depend on which one you will feel is true.

  You also said that the Shoshin-kai say that chanting Ōdaimoku is for achieving Buddhahood, but you say that enlightenment doesn’t need to be the purpose.

I say the Law of Nichiren Daishonin teaches that, more than anything else, to have faith is the most important, basic and fundamental thing. The implicit belief that if I have this stuff, I will be happy is a wicked thought which one believes. And if one blindly believes in the wrong law without thinking or realizing it, that is different from having faith. Even though one practices a lot and studies a lot, if you don’t have a heart of faith, then it is the same as a rootless plant. Many people in the world misunderstand enlightenment, believing it is a deep understanding. If that is the case, the unintelligent person, a person with a mental disability from birth, or an incapacitated person can’t be enlightened. Also, to understand things, and to be able to believe or have correct faith are different. The important thing is for healthy people to keep practicing, studying and making an effort to teach others; the physically disabled people to live by maintaining a faithful mind; and people with dementia to keep their faith until they have gone into dementia. To have faith is equal to having the wisdom of the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō. Even if you don’t get enlightened, Ōdaimoku will have that role.

**Question:** What are the mysterious workings of the Gohonzon?

**RH**: The Gohonzon of Namumyōhōrengekyō is the mirror to reflect our life. That means the Gohonzon reflects our life. This indicates that you need to feel the Buddha’s life, which is rooted in your life, by putting your hands together in prayer position.

**Question:** Do you believe that our Gohonzon works to subconsciously create harmony between us and our environment?

**RH:** It is not only the Gohonzon creating the harmony, but when the Gohonzon (the Law) and your own mind of faith harmonize, then you can feel that the unintelligent person, like yourself who has doubts, has the same Buddha life of Namumyōhōrengekyō as the Buddha. By having a life based on the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō, you can feel the joy of faith which springs out of true freedom, equality, peace, courage and joy from the root of life that is in all living things, and value all lives and objects for the equality of their nature—the same Buddha nature that resides in all living things.

**OESHIKI**

**Reverend Raidō Hirota**

**Sanbo-in**

**Fukuyama, Japan**

Nichiren Daishonin passed away at 8:00am on the 13th day of the 10th month in the year 1282 at the age of 61. While it is the day the Daishonin died, it is not a day of mourning. October 13 is *Oeshiki*. It is a holiday; a day of great celebration, and the most important ceremony in Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism.

*Oeshiki*, or “Founder’s Day” is a celebration of Daishonin’s true, eternal Law, which was revealed through his endurance of the austere practices and persecutions described in the Lotus Sutra. Even though the Daishonin died, the Buddha nature – the life of Namumyōhōrengekyō itself – never dies; it is eternal. That is why we celebrate Oeshiki, to affirm the eternal life of the Buddha.

*Oeshiki* is also an affirmation of the treatise “Rissho Ankoku Ron.” In this treatise Nichiren Daishonin makes clear that we must practice the Mystic Law and perceive enlightenment for ourselves, and also warns that we must believe in Namumyōhōrengekyō, or we will never achieve peace.

The *Oeshiki* ceremony is performed during Gongyo. Just after the *Nī-setsu-gē-gon* passage of the *Juryo* chapter, and just before the *Jiga-gē[[28]](#footnote-28)*, stop the recitation of the sutra and read in a loud voice the passage of the “Risshō Ankoku Ron” from, “*The host exclaimed with delight: As the proverb says, the dove has changed into a hawk, the sparrow into a clam*!” to the end of the gosho. (*All Oeshiki letters can be found at* [*www.udumbarafoundation.org*](http://www.udumbarafoundation.org))

Before the ceremony you should make paper cherry blossoms and decorate the left and right sides of the Gohonzon, expressly because even though it was autumn at the time of Nichiren Daishōnin’s death—the 13th day of the 10th month—the cherry blossoms bloomed throughout the entire country. The lotus flower symbolizes the teachings of Shakyamuni of India. 2000 years after Shakyamuni’s passing, during the Latter Day of the Law, Buddhism came to Japan where the essence of Buddhism was elucidated by Nichiren Daishōnin. The cherry blossom, a flower emblematic of Japan, signifies the passage of true Buddhism to Japan.

Getting together to do gongyo and Ōdaimoku and read the letters of Nichiren Daishonin and the various high priests on this day, is both sacred and blessed.

Please Note*:* In Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism we do not offer colorful flowers to Gohonzon, except at *Oeshiki.* You may leave the flowers adorning the altar until the end of the year. Then, in order to avoid the misunderstanding that Nichiren Shōshū decorates the Gohonzon with colorful flowers, please destroy the cherry blossoms by throwing them away or burning them.

**LOTUS SUTRA**

*Excerpt*

***Hoben-pon****(chapter 2)****[[29]](#footnote-29)***

***­***Then I conceived this thought:  
‘The reason why the Tathagata[[30]](#footnote-30) appears  
Is for preaching the Buddha-wisdom;  
Now is the very time.’  
Know, Shariputra[[31]](#footnote-31)!  
The stupid and those of little wit,  
The tied to externals and the proud  
Cannot believe this Law.  
But now I am glad and fearless;  
In the midst of the bodhisattvas  
Frankly put aside tactfulness  
And only proclaim the supreme Way.  
[You] bodhisattvas hearing this Law,  
Having all got rid of the nets of doubts,  
[You] twelve hundred arhats[[32]](#footnote-32)  
Will all become buddhas.  
In the same fashion that the buddhas,   
Past, present, and future, preach the Law,  
So also will I now  
Proclaim the undivided Law.  
The appearing of buddhas in the world  
Is far apart and of rare occurrence,  
And when they do appear in the world,  
With [equal] rareness do they proclaim this Law.  
Even in infinite countless kalpas,  
Rarely may this Law be heard;  
And those who are able to listen to this Law,  
Men such as these are also rare.  
It is like the udumbara flower[[33]](#footnote-33),  
Which all love and enjoy,  
Seldom seen by gods and men,  
Appearing but once in [long] periods.  
So he who, hearing the Law, extols it joyfully  
And utters but one single word of it  
Has already paid homage to  
All the buddhas in the three worlds.  
Such a one is exceedingly rare,  
[Rarer] than the udumbara flower.  
Be you free from doubts;  
I am the king of the Law  
And declare to all the assembly:  
‘I, only by the One-vehicle Way,  
Teach the bodhisattvas,  
And have no shravaka[[34]](#footnote-34) disciples’  
Know, all of you, Shariputra,  
Shravakas, and bodhisattvas,  
That this Wonderful Law  
Is the mystery of all the buddhas.  
Because the evil world of the five decadences  
Only delights in sensual attachments,  
[Its] creatures such as these  
Never seek the Buddha-way.  
The wicked in generations to come,  
Who hear the One-vehicle preached by the Buddha,  
In their delusion and unbelief  
Will break the Law and fall into evil ways.  
[But] there are beings, modest and pure,  
Devoted to seeking the Buddha-way;  
For such as these [I] must  
Widely extol the One-vehicle Way.  
Know, Shariputra!  
The Law of the buddhas is thus:  
By myriads of kotis[[35]](#footnote-35) of tactful ways  
They proclaim the Law as opportunity serves.  
[But] those who will not learn   
Are not able to discern it.  
[But] you already know  
The expedient tactful ways of  
The buddhas, the leaders of the world.  
Have no further doubts;  
Rejoice greatly in your hearts,

Knowing that you will become buddhas.

**GOSHO SELECTION**

***The Teaching for the Latter Day[[36]](#footnote-36)***

I have received a quarter-sack[[37]](#footnote-37) of polished rice, a horse-load of taro and five strips of konnyaku[[38]](#footnote-38) which you took the trouble to send me.

First of all, regarding the daughter of Ishikawa no Hyoe Nyudo. She often sent me letters, and in one that reached me on the night of the fourteenth or fifteenth day of the third month, she wrote, “When I observe the world around me, it seems that even healthy people will be unable to survive this year. I have been ill for a long time, but my illness has suddenly worsened, and I imagine that this will be my last letter to you.” So she has already passed away!

Most people believe that those who chant Namu Amida Butsu[[39]](#footnote-39) at the moment of their death are sure to be reborn in the Pure Land, for this is what the Buddha taught. For some reason, however, the Buddha surprisingly reversed his statement and said, “[For the past more than forty years,] I have not yet revealed the truth,”[[40]](#footnote-40) and "Honestly discarding the provisional

teachings, [I will expound only the supreme Way.]"[[41]](#footnote-41) I, Nichiren, have been teaching as the Buddha advocated, but all Japan has become enraged and denounced my words as groundless fabrications.

There were other occasions when the Buddha unexpectedly reversed an earlier teaching. In the Hinayana sutras he taught that there is no Buddha other than himself in any of the ten directions and that living beings do not possess the Buddha nature. But in the Mahayana sutras he taught that there are Buddhas throughout the ten directions and that the Buddha nature dwells in every living being. How then can there be anyone who still employs the Hinayana sutras? All people have since come to place their faith in the Mahayana sutras.

Moreover, we find that there are even more unfathomable distinctions which Shakyamuni Buddha drew between the sutras. In the Lotus Sutra, he suddenly refuted all the other sutras that he had preached, now preached and would preach in the future, and declared that only the Lotus Sutra was true. But his disciples would not believe him. At that time Taho Buddha came to bear witness to what the Buddha had said, and all the Buddhas of the ten directions added their testimony to his, extending their tongues until they reached the Brahma Heaven.

After Taho Buddha had closed the door of the Treasure Tower and the other Buddhas had returned to their original lands, not even Shakyamuni Buddha himself could have denied the Lotus Sutra, whatever other sutras he might have expounded in an effort to do so, because the other Buddhas had all joined in affirming its truth. That is why the Fugen[[42]](#footnote-42) and Nirvana sutras, which follow the Lotus Sutra, praise it and in no way disparage it.

Nevertheless, priests like Shan-wu-wei of the Shingon sect and the founders of the Zen sect repudiate the Lotus Sutra, and the entire Japanese nation has now taken faith in their teachings, just like those who were deceived by the rebels Masakado[[43]](#footnote-43) and Sadato[[44]](#footnote-44). Japan is now on the brink of ruin because it has for many years been the archenemy of Shakyamuni, Taho and all the other Buddhas of the ten directions, and in addition, the person who denounces these heresies is persecuted. Because such offenses are thus accumulated one on top of another, our nation will soon incur the wrath of heaven.

Perhaps because of karma from past lives or some other reason, the daughter of Ishikawa no Hyoe Nyudo chanted Namumyōhōrengekyō at the moment of her death. This is as rare as the one-eyed turtle[[45]](#footnote-45) finding a suitable hollow in a floating sandalwood log, or the thread lowered from the heavens passing through the eye of a needle on the earth. How wondrous!

The sutras clearly show that those who believe in the Nembutsu are destined to fall into the hell of incessant suffering, but since people are not aware of this, they all think that it is my own fabrication. People can see neither their own eyebrows, which are so close, nor the heavens in the distance,[[46]](#footnote-46) as the saying goes. Had my teaching been false, the nun, Ishikawa's daughter, could not have died with a correct and steadfast mind.

Among my disciples, those who think themselves well-versed in Buddhism are the ones who make errors. Namumyōhōrengekyō is the heart of the Lotus Sutra. It is like the soul of a person. To revere another teaching as its equal is to be like an empress who is married to two emperors or who secretly commits adultery with a minister or a humble subject. It can only be the cause for disaster.

This teaching was not propagated in the Former or Middle Day of the Law because the other sutras had not yet lost the power of benefit. Now in the Latter Day of the Law, neither the Lotus Sutra nor the other sutras lead to enlightenment. Only Namumyōhōrengekyō can do so. And this is not merely my own opinion. Shakyamuni, Taho and all the other Buddhas of the ten directions as well as the innumerable Bodhisattvas of the Earth have so determined. To mix other practices with this Namumyōhōrengekyōis a grave error. A lamp will be useless after the sun rises. How can dewdrops be beneficial once the rain falls? Should one feed a newborn baby with anything other than its mother's milk? Good medicine works by itself; there is no reason to add other medicine. Somehow Ishikawa's daughter remained true to this principle and continued to uphold her faith until the last moment of her life. How admirable!

With my deep respect,

Nichiren

The first day of the fourth month in the first year of Koan (1278)

Apr 1, 1278

Nanjo Tokimitsu

**Happy Oeshiki!**



**How to Make Simple Cherry Blossoms**

**Reprinted from “DIY Cherry Blossoms” by Kara**

**At creationsbykara.com**

**Supplies**:  
-Tissue paper  
-Scissors  
-Glue  
-Branches or dowels

**Instructions**:

**1**-Stack several pieces of tissue on top of each other and cut out a flower shape. It does not need to be perfect! Mine were about 2 1/2" across and had five petals, but it doesn't really matter that much. I wanted to do two colors, but you can just do one. And because I know a few of you are bound to notice. . . yes, my light pink paper has words on it. But it's all I had and I knew once it was all scrunched up they wouldn't show. Which they don't. Thank goodness.



**2**-For two-toned cherry blossoms, stack two flowers on top of each other with the petals not matched up.



**3**-Now just scrunch the flower petals up and twist the whole thing together at the bottom.



I thought it would be more realistic if there were variations in the blossoms, so I made some light pink, some dark pink, and some with the two colors together. To make smaller blossoms like the two on the left, just scrunch up one flower at a time.



**4**-Now it's time to glue them to your branches. I used branches that I pruned from our apple tree. If you don't have your own tree, check with your neighbors. You should be able to find some unwanted branches this time of year.  
I think it looks best to apply the blossoms to the natural buds of the branch. Just add a tiny dab of hot glue, and press your blossom on.



Continue adding blossoms to all sides of your branches.



**5**-When you are all finished, just stick them in the container of your choice.  I added some wheat at the bottom to hold them in place.



1. Gosho – the individual and collective writings and treatises of Nichiren Daishonin. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 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 livings beings can become enlightened. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Shakyamuni - Shakyamuni Buddha – Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (1029 BCE-949 BCE), the historical founder of Buddhism on this earth. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Buddhahood – the state or condition which a Buddha has attained. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ōdaimoku – Ō=venerable. Daimoku is the title of a sutra; Ōdaimoku is the invocation of the venerable title of the Lotus Sutra or Namumyōhōrengekyō. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Namumyōhōrengekyō - Namumyohorengekyo - the Mystic Law which enlightens all Buddhas; the Supreme Law of life and the universe; the Buddha-nature in all things. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. SGI - Soka Gakkai International – a lay organization that wrongly incorporates some of the doctrine of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism into its own philosophy and practice. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 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 Namumyōhōrengekyō. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. NSA – Nichiren Shoshu of America, now SGI (see above). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Taisekiji - the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Mappō – The Latter Day 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Rissho Ankoku Ron - “On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism.” Rissho 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Nichiren Shoshu Sokagakkai – see SGI at footnote #8. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Shakubuku - a method of propagating Buddhism by directly leading a person to the True Law and refuting erroneous views. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Buddha nature – the inherent cause or potential at the ore of one’s life that allows anyone to realize Budddhahood. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Kosen rufu - to widely declare and spread True Buddhism. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Shoshin-kai - Shoshin-kai - Nichien Shoshu Shoshinkai – the organization of Nichiren Shoshu priests dedicated to the protection and dissemination of Nichiren Daishonin’s true teachings. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Seoge - the verse and prose section of the 2nd chapter (Hoben-pon) of the Lotus Sutra that follows the junyoze (*nyoze so, nyoze sho*, etc.) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism - 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Bodhisattva Fukyo quote: “I respect everyone deeply, I do not despise anyone, not even a little, or look down upon anyone with contempt, because everyone has the ability to become a Buddha of Namumyōhōrengekyō, if they believer in Namumyōhōrengekyō and practice.” [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Nichiren’s Lotus Sutra – Namumyōhōrengekyō. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Bonnō – earthly desires and illusions. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Juzu – prayer beads. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Four Bodhisattvas – Jōgyō, Muhengyō, Jyōgyō and Anryugyō signify the four virtues of the Buddha’s life: true self, eternity, purity, and happiness, which in Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, are viewed as collectively indicating the life of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Dai-Gohonzon -the large plank Gohonzon enshrined at Taisekiji. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Jiga-ge – the verse section of the 16th chapter of the Lotus Sutra that begins *Jiga toku burrai , , ,* [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *The Threefold Lotus Sutra –* Bruno Kato, et al., Weatherhill/Kosei, New York/Tokyo, 1975, pp74-76 [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Tathagata – one who has thus come. The highest epithet of a Buddha. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Shariputra – (Ip. Sharihotsu) – one of Shakyamuni’s disciple who was foremost in wisdom. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Arhats – man of worth or honorable one. The highest level attained in Hinayana Buddhism. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Udumbara flower – an imaginary plant that is said to bloom only once in 3,000 years. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Shravaka – (Jp. *Shomon*) Men of Learning. The Buddha’s disciples who hearing the teachings and strive to attain enlightenment. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Kotis – *koti* is an astronomical number that has been interpreted to mean ten million or 100 million. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol Three, p. 263 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. A quarter-sack: That is, one *to*. A *to* is a unit measure of volume, equaling about 18 liters. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Konnyaku: A kind of gelatin made from the root of the konnyaku plant. It is believed to eliminate poisonous substances from the body. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Namu Amida Butsu: The Nembutsu or invocation used by the Pure Land sect. It means devotion to Amida Buddha. The Pure Land sect asserts that by chanting this phrase, one can attain rebirth in Amida Buddha's Pure Land of Perfect Bliss in the west. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Muryogi Sutra. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Fugen Sutra: A sutra regarded as the conclusion to the Lotus Sutra. Following the Fugen (28th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, this sutra describes how to meditate on Bodhisattva Fugen and explains the benefit of this practice. It also exhorts people to embrace and propagate the Lotus Sutra. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Masakado (d. 940): A warrior of the Taira clan who wielded power in eastern Japan. In 939, he rebelled against the imperial court by proclaiming himself the new emperor. However, his cousin, Taira no Sadamori, crushed his forces and killed him. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Sadato (1019-1062): Abe no Sadato, head of a powerful family in eastern Japan. He sought independence from imperial rule but was defeated and killed in a battle with the imperial army. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. One-eyed turtle: A reference to a story mentioned briefly in the Myoshogonno (27th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. The story behind this reference appears in the Zo-agon Sutra. A blind turtle, whose life span is immeasurable kalpas, lives at the bottom of the sea. Once every one hundred years it rises to the surface. There is only one log floating in the sea with a hollow in it suited to the turtle's size. Since the turtle is blind and the log is tossed about by the wind and waves, the likelihood of the turtle finding the log is extremely remote. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. This statement appears in the Maka Shikan and elsewhere, indicating the ignorance of common mortals. The Daishonin first quotes the expression and then paraphrases it; the quotation is omitted here to avoid repetition. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)