

# THE MIDDLE WAY

ADVOCATING THE TRUE TEACHINGS OF NICHIREN THE TRUE BUDDHA

AUTUMN

2014



## In This Issue

Oeshiki	1
Kū Ke Chū	3
The Enlightenment of Insentient Beings	4
On Illness	7
“Beneficial Medicine for All Ills”	10
How to Make Paper Cherry Blossoms	13

### *The Middle Way*

Is published by  
Udumbara Foundation

Website: [www.udumbaraoundation.org](http://www.udumbaraoundation.org)

E-mail: [ufound@yahoo.com](mailto:ufound@yahoo.com)



Advisor: Reverend Raido Hirota

Founder and Editor-in-Chief: Peach Pair

In this issue: Translators: Junko Hokari

Editor: David Watson

## OESHIKI

Reverend Raido Hirota

Sanbo-in

Fukuyama City, Japan

Nichiren Daishonin<sup>1</sup> passed away at 8:00am on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>2</sup>.

*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<sup>3</sup>. Even though the Daishonin died, the Buddha nature – the life of Namumyōhōrengekyō<sup>4</sup> itself – never dies; it is eternal. That is why we celebrate *Oeshiki*, to affirm the eternal life of the Buddha.

<sup>1</sup> Nichiren Daishonin – (1222-1282) the true Buddha who realized the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō imbedded in the Lotus Sutra and established the Law as the means by which all living beings can become enlightened.

<sup>2</sup> Middle Way – Namumyōhōrengekyō – the ultimate reality of all phenomena.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Namumyōhōrengekyō – the Mystic Law which enlightens all Buddhas; the Supreme Law of life and the universe; the Buddha-nature in all things.

*Oeshiki* is also an affirmation of the treatise “Rissho Ankoku Ron”<sup>5</sup>. 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<sup>6</sup>. Just after the *Ni-setsu-gē-gon* passage of the *Juryo* chapter<sup>7</sup>, and just before the *Jiga-gē*<sup>8</sup>, 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 goshō<sup>9</sup>. (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<sup>10</sup>, expressly because even though it was autumn at the time of Nichiren Daishōnin’s death—the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month—the cherry blossoms bloomed throughout the entire country. The lotus flower symbolizes the teachings of Shakyamuni<sup>11</sup> of India. 2000 years after Shakyamuni’s passing, during the Latter Day of the Law,<sup>12</sup> 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 daimoku 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 please destroy the cherry blossoms burning them.



*Oeshiki vase with paper cherry blossoms adorning the altar at Sanbo-in temple in Fukuyama, Japan*

---

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> Gongyo – the practice of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism which entails the morning and evening recitation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> chapters of the Lotus Sutra and chanting Namumyōhōrengekyō.

<sup>7</sup> Juryo chapter – 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

<sup>8</sup> Jiga-ge – the verse section of the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Lotus Sutra that begins *Jiga toku burrai* , , ,

<sup>9</sup> Goshō - the individual and collective writings of Nichiren Daishonin.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> Shakyamuni - Shakyamuni Buddha – Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (1029 BCE-949 BCE), the historical founder of Buddhism on this earth.

<sup>12</sup> The Latter Day of the Law - Mappo –this present time period which began in 1052, about 2000 years after the death of Shakyamuni. It is called the evil age.

**KŪ KE CHŪ**  
**Reverend Raidō Hirota**  
**International Meeting**  
**January 2013**

**QUESTION:** What does Nichiren mean when he talks about the colors and fragrances representing the Middle Way<sup>13</sup>.

**Reverend Raidō Hirota (RH):** In this discussion I will talk about three basic truths of Buddhism: *kū*, *ke*, and *chū*<sup>14</sup>. As Buddhists we use incense on our altars. Before we light the incense it is at the stage of *ke*. It's evident that it exists because the incense stick is in a physical, visible form. You can touch it and see it. When you light the incense, it burns slowly and emits a fragrance. At this stage part of it is ash and part of it is the original stick that hasn't yet burned. This represents the stage of *chū*. The third stage is *kū*. *Kū* is the stage after it turns to ash. You can no longer grasp it or see it, but its scent remains in the air. These three stages of *kū*, *ke*, and *chū* represent eternal life as it really is: 1) first it is a stick of incense in its original form; 2) then it is half ash and half stick; 3) finally the physical form no longer exists, but the scent remains, which indicates that it is still there. Therefore, after a physical object, which you could see and touch, is gone, the scent of it still exists, and that is why fragrance represents *kū*.

**Believer 1 (B1):** What about color?

**RH:** Color is the stage of *ke* because it is visible. It has form – you can see it. *Kū* is your heart, or the believer's spirit, because you can't see it. Thus the stick of incense and color are both *ke*, and the fragrance and the believer's heart or spirit are *kū* because neither can be seen or grasped.

The stage of *chū* possesses elements of both existence—that which is visible—and non-existence—that which is invisible. To further explain, take your parents for example. While they are alive they are at the stage of *ke*. They are visible—they have form; you interact with them and have a relationship with them. When your parents are deceased their form is gone.

---

<sup>13</sup> Middle Way – Namumyōhōrengekyō – the ultimate reality of all phenomena.

<sup>14</sup> Kū, ke, chū – three truths (Jp. *Santai*) - the truth of non-substantiality, meaning that all things have no fixed existence of their own (*kūtai*); truth of temporary existence, meaning that even though all things have no fixed existence of their own, they still possess a temporary state of existence which is in constant flux (*ketai*); and the truth of the Middle Way, which means that all things have both non-existence and temporary existence, but are essentially neither (*chūtai*). “The true nature of all phenomena is beyond the limitations of words of conception.” *Dictionary of Buddhist Terms*

This is the stage of *kū*. You being sandwiched between your parents' life and death, is the stage of *chū*. This is because you have a relationship with your parents while they are alive, and even after they are deceased that relationship continues.

**B1:** I don't understand how heart and ash, which you say are both *kū*, relate.

**RH:** For the purpose of clarity let's substitute a candle for the incense. Heart can be grouped with a candle (or incense) because day by day we all age just as a candle slowly burns down. We think that when our heart (the organ inside our bodies) stops we die. But that's only our physical form that ceases to exist. Our spirit or "heart" continues on, uninterrupted.

The concept of *kū ke chū* represents eternal life. The idea that your life is over when you die does not exist in Buddhism. If you can grasp the concept of eternal life from this simple explanation that would be great!

---

---

## THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF INSENTIENT BEINGS

Reverend Raidō Hirota

International Meeting

January 2013

**QUESTION:** If *Myōhō*<sup>15</sup> represents enlightenment of sentient beings and *Renge*<sup>16</sup> represents the enlightenment of insentient beings, what does that mean?

**RH:** Western civilization places human beings at the center of everything. Whereas Eastern civilization, specifically Buddhism, regards human beings, plants, animals, stones, water—all life—as being equal. Accordingly, in Buddhism it is not only human beings who can attain Buddhahood, grass and trees and all other forms of life have the same possibility as humans to become Buddha.

Gohonzon is written on wood or paper. The writing on the paper is the teachings of Buddha. That paper, because of the writing on it, represents the teachings of Buddha. The paper itself is from a plant. So even though people use paper for many other purposes, or to write or communicate other information, because the paper used for Gohonzon has the

---

<sup>15</sup> *Myōhō*— the Mystic Law – the phenomenal manifestation of the essential nature of life.

<sup>16</sup> *Renge* – the lotus flower symbolizing the simultaneity of cause and effect, and the emergence of the Buddha nature from within all things.

Buddha's teachings inscribed on it this signifies that plants—trees and grass, etc.—the source of paper – can attain Buddhahood.

In Buddhism, insentient beings can attain Buddhahood just like sentient beings. And who knows whether water, or flowers, or stones can or can't feel. Nevertheless, in Buddhism all beings can attain Buddhahood.

**QUESTION: When we are chanting for enlightenment of beings that are alive and that are dead, is that because insentient beings can only attain enlightenment in death?**

**RH:** Human beings tend to think that things that appear to have no soul, such as plants, animals, and stones, etc., are inferior to us, but we eat vegetables, fruit, fish, and animal flesh. That's how we sustain our lives and continue to thrive. Human beings cannot exist on their own just by being human. We need to eat. In order for us to live we need the other life forms. So when you look at it from that perspective, all life is connected. Someone may ask how a cabbage equates with human life. Yet in reality there is no division or separation between us and other life. It's all connected. Humans exist because all other life exists. If all other life could not attain enlightenment and be saved, then human beings could not be saved or enlightened either. As I explained earlier, we human beings cannot exist on our own. It is by making a connection to Namumyōhōrengekyō that all things can attain Buddhahood. That is the teaching.

**B1:** How can we explain this concept of insentient beings being able to attain enlightenment to people who do not believe in this religion?

**RH:** This can be explained through the concept of karmic relationship (*en*), which is an inexplicable connection that one has with someone or something. A sentient being can choose to practice a religion of his or her choosing, can take action based on his or her belief, and if one chooses the religion that leads to Buddhahood, one can attain enlightenment. Insentient beings can also attain enlightenment by coming into contact with these teachings. For example, paper that is used for creating Gohonzons represents the true teachings of Buddha. However, the same kind of paper that is used for Gohonzons can also be used for teachings that are wrong and do not lead to enlightenment. The paper that becomes Gohonzon indicates *en*—a powerful karmic connection. This type of karmic connection is passive. It is received – it just happens.

There is also a karmic relationship (*en*) whereby one takes action and seeks. For instance, say you are talking to someone who knows nothing about Buddhism. Later that person becomes curious and is compelled to take action by calling you to ask you to tell him more about Buddhism, or he goes to a Buddhist temple to learn more, or he purchases a book

to learn more. In this case, he forms a connection with Namumyōhōrengekyō by actively pursuing it in his own individual way.

All life is connected and supports each other's existence. That is why human life alone cannot be saved. Human beings as well as all other life forms have to be saved, otherwise if grass and trees cannot attain Buddhahood, then humans cannot attain Buddhahood just because of the interconnectedness of all life.

**B1:** I understand that concept because I practice this Buddhism. But if you're trying to explain this to someone who is Christian, they would not understand these connections. How would I explain it so that a Christian or anyone who does not practice this Buddhism can understand it?

**RH:** From my understanding, Christians believe that human beings are the closest living thing to God. This is the opposite of what Buddhism teaches, so it will be very difficult, initially, for someone who believes in Christianity to accept that plants, animals, water and rocks are equal to human life. The only thing you can do is keep trying to explain the connection until they can grasp it.

**B2:** I don't think you can explain it to them because it's two different world views.

**RH:** Perhaps it's the same as in Japan. No matter how much one tries to explain Namumyōhōrengekyō to Japanese people it just doesn't click. You are Americans, and you understand it. So there's a possibility that someone from a different religion may well get it. It doesn't matter who you are or where you're from. Just because a person is Japanese, doesn't mean they will understand Buddhist concepts.

**B2:** I think it also has to do with our intent. If our intent is to communicate these teachings to someone, even though they may not understand it at this time, the seed is planted.

**RH:** Exactly. That is why karmic connection matters.



# ON ILLNESS

Reverend Raidō Hirota  
International Meeting  
February 2013

**QUESTION:** Daishonin spoke of illness often in the gosho. He said, "From illness arises the mind that seeks the Way." He also said, "There are six causes of illness: 1) disharmony of the four elements; 2) immoderate eating or drinking; 3) poor posture; 4) an attack by demons from without; 5) the work of devils from within, and 6) the effects of karma." Daishonin further said that "The illness of human beings may be divided into two general categories; the first is illness of the body. . . .The second category is illness of the mind . . . [which] arise from greed, anger, and stupidity." He also said that "There are two types of illness: minor and serious. . . .And karma also may be divided into two categories: mutable and immutable. Since repentance will eradicate even immutable karma. . . ."

How should we view illness? How do we deal with it? Some believers believe that people who are ill have weak characters, weak minds, weak practice, and faith.

**RH:** I. When the four elements are out of balance people get sick. The four elements are:

- 1) Earth – the ground or soil which corresponds to the muscles of human beings (the meat part of our bodies)
- 2) Water – corresponds to our blood
- 3) Fire – corresponds to our body temperature
- 4) Wind – corresponds to our breath

In former days there weren't any issues with air quality because polluted or toxic air didn't exist. But these days it is an issue. It has been reported that air pollution in China is at a critical point. So *ku* – air – can be considered a fifth element. When we breathe in bad air, it can be toxic to the body and can lead to illness. Whatever is toxic or poisonous to your system will eventually lead to some kind of illness.

II. Another cause of illness is eating and drinking in excess. Too much of anything can be a cause of illness.

III. When you stay up late, or your posture is poor, these things can be the cause of illness.

IV. There's a Japanese saying which states, "Evil demons are sending you notification." This means that you are being put to the test to ask yourself: Why am I alive? What am I doing with my life? What is the purpose of my life? Is my life meaningful? Being ill makes you think about these existential questions. These tests are non-denominational; they are not related to any particular religious belief.

**V.** Another cause of illness is related to religious belief. It is a test of your devotion to your religion. How much do you believe in what you practice and say you have faith in?

**VI.** Karma<sup>17</sup> is also a cause of illness. Karma is the foundation of your life. In today's terms karma can be compared to DNA. If your parents or blood relatives have an illness, you are prone to contract it or have it, too.

**B3:** It's a reflection of being human. All the challenges we face being alive, living in a world of elements and wildlife. You get a touch of everything that's out there, it's a constant fight. Taking care of health and reflecting on life is so important. A lot of time has been wasted on the wrong things.

**RH:** One way of viewing sickness and health is that when you are healthy you are free; when you are ill you are captive.

**B2:** My experience with illness is quite like that. First of all, when you're ill you are a captive—you've lost your freedom. It's torment. I've taken it as a way to lessen negative karma that I had created in the past. But I've also found it is an opportunity to gain great insight. I think without the illness that I've experienced I would not have the faith that I have.

**RH:** There is a spiritual or "heart" aspect to illness. Let's say someone was healthy one day and the next day he injures his arm and is unable to use it as he normally would. When that happens most people would go to a doctor or hospital to have it treated. When you age you also lose the freedom that you are accustomed to. If that happens it is not necessarily a bad thing. By losing the ability to use your body, you gain the ability to realize something that you weren't aware of, or didn't notice when you were younger or when you had all of your faculties. You might, for instance, gain a sense of gratitude for what your parents did for you. When you were younger, it was a given that your parents took care of you. You didn't realize, recognize or think that that was something you should be grateful for. But when you approach your parents' age, and your body ages and your faculties decline, you might have such awakenings. So being ill is not necessarily a bad thing.

**B2:** From the perspective of the person who is ill and going through agony it may be a profound spiritual experience. But for the people in your environment it can be traumatic and stressful, and most often they become impatient for a cure, which adds more stress to the person who is sick. For the observer or caregiver it may be an opportunity to grow as well, but they may not see it that way.

---

<sup>17</sup> Karma - two aspects to karma: 50% is fixed or immutable (*jōgō*)—the conditions at birth; and 50% are changeable or mutable (*fūjōgō*)—what you create and determine while you are alive. And karma is both good karma and bad karma.



**B4:** Having been through and still going through illness and working as a medical professional, I see several different aspects to this issue. One being when I'm working with people it allows me a deeper compassion, to be more empathetic and to see things from their perspective. I work for a major insurance company as a case manager. I call people when they are released from the hospital, or when they are still in the hospital. Being able to identify with some of the same issues that they are going through at the moment, having experienced those problems and issues surrounding physical illness myself, I can understand better, and be more available to them. But looking at it from a spiritual and psychological standpoint I realize it has to involve something more than just this life. With all that we see in the universe I feel a deep consolation that this illness is passing. My life will be eternal and hopefully progressing to higher and higher levels . . . to Buddhahood.

**RH:** There are religions which claim that if you believe in that religion you will be cured. But that is just not true. In Buddhism, we believe that you can't escape from the flow of time. Based on this principle, any religion that says you can avoid illness if you believe in it, or you won't get sick, or you'll be cured, is lying. To have faith in a true religion, and to practice that religion, means that when you become sick and or can't move your body freely in the way you want, you accept it without becoming confused, without denying it or trying to escape from it, and without becoming jealous or hateful of people who are not ill. Having such an attitude is having the power of faith. In other words, having faith in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is to develop a heart that is free and pure, not sick and full of enmity.

When Nichiren Daishonin got sick he believed that his illness indicated that his past behavior was ignoble – that he had slandered Namumyōhōrengekyō, and had treated practitioners of Namumyōhōrengekyō badly. Therefore, accepting responsibility for your illness or hardship is what you must do. In addition, while you are going through the illness you must reflect on your past and be resolved to no longer behave or live in the way that you had. Change your attitude and way of looking at life so that you won't make the same mistakes again, now or in the future. That is what Nichiren Daishonin taught.

Before my father passed away in 2011 I took care of him for two years. It was very hard. During that time, when I bathed him, fed him and took him to the bathroom, I realized that my parents had taken care of me in the same way when I was a child. While taking care of your parents is a difficult task, I observed, at the same time, that the parent who is being cared for by his own child is also having a difficult time. On the surface it may seem very inconvenient or a real burden, but by caring for the fundamental needs of my father, both me and my father realized the profound connection between father and son. You really notice the connection between you and your parent, or you and your loved one. As a result, you realize that you don't exist just for yourself – you exist because other living things exist with you, and that everything is connected. We are all connected. I thought about this strongly during that period of my life.

When I looked at the sick person, I asked myself if this is how I will age, or how I am aging? So if you are a person caring for a sick person, ask yourself this question. Also realize that eventually you will die too. When I was going through those years of my father's illness and death, I experienced that realization. There was so much I learned during that time.

Some of you may have been Soka Gakkai<sup>18</sup> members, and were told that if someone is sick it was because he or she was doing something bad. And because a person was having a hard time with his life or his body, he was looked down upon by the Soka Gakkai. I hope you believers don't look at illness in this way because that is not the correct attitude of a true believer. I hope you can ask yourself what can I do for the person who is sick in this situation and be helpful to them during their time of illness. Finding a way to be helpful to the sick person is the kind of faith that I hope you can cultivate.

---

---

## GOSHO SELECTION

### **Beneficial Medicine for All Ills<sup>19</sup>**

I have received your gift of two baskets of leached persimmons and a basket of eggplants. About the lay priest your husband's illness: in China there were physicians called Huang Ti<sup>20</sup> and Pien Ch'ueh,<sup>21</sup> and in India there were the doctors Jisui<sup>22</sup> and Jivaka.<sup>23</sup> These men were each the treasures of their age and teachers to the physicians of later times. Yet they could not even begin to compare to the person called the Buddha, a physician without peer. This Buddha revealed the medicine of immortality: the five characters of Myōhōrengē-

---

<sup>18</sup> Soka Gakkai - SGI – Soka Gakkai International – a lay organization that wrongly incorporates some of the doctrine of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism into its own philosophy and practice.

<sup>19</sup> The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, Vol. Five, p. 279

<sup>20</sup> Huang Ti - The Yellow Emperor. One of the legendary Three Rulers of ancient China. According to the Shih Chi (Records of the Historian), among other major contributions to civilization, he initiated the art of medicine.

<sup>21</sup> Pien Ch'ueh - Pien Ch'ueh: A physician of the Spring and Autumn period (770-403 B.C.) He learned the medical arts in boyhood and is said to have been skilled in treating virtually all forms of disease.

<sup>22</sup> Jisui - According to the Konkomyo Sutra, a skilled physician who lived countless aeons ago in the Middle Day of the Law of a Buddha called Hosho. When an epidemic broke out, Jisui, then a very old man, taught the medical arts to his son Rusui, enabling him to save the people.

<sup>23</sup> Jivaka - A physician and devout Buddhist in the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. He treated King Bimbisara of Magadha and the Buddha himself, thus winning renown. He served as minister to King Ajatashatru, Bimbisara's son, and when the king fell critically ill, Jivaka successfully persuaded him to reflect on his evil conduct and seek the Buddha's teachings.

kyō. Moreover, he taught that these five characters are "beneficial medicine for the illnesses of all the people of Jambudvipa."<sup>24</sup>

Your husband is a person of Japan, which is included within Jambudvipa<sup>25</sup>, and now he suffers from bodily illness. Yet the sutra passage clearly refers to beneficial medicine for all ills. In addition, this sutra of the Lotus is the greatest of all medicines. A wicked ruler called King Virudhaka killed more than five hundred women of the Buddha's clan, whereupon the Buddha sent his disciple Ananda to Eagle Peak to obtain the blue lotus flower. When he touched it to the bodies of the women, they returned to life and after a week were reborn in the Trayastrimsha Heaven.<sup>26</sup> Because the flower called the lotus is endowed with such splendid virtue, the Buddha likened it to the Mystic Law.

A person's death does not necessarily come about through illness. In our own times, the people of Iki and Tsushima,<sup>27</sup> though not suffering from illness, were all slaughtered by the Mongols in a single stroke. Likewise, illness does not necessarily result in death. Now, this illness of your husband's may be due to the Buddha's design, for the Vimalakirti and Nirvana sutras both speak of sick people attaining Buddhahood.<sup>28</sup> From illness arises the mind that seeks the Way.

Among all diseases, the five cardinal sins, the incorrigible disbelief of the *icchāntika* and slander of the Law are the grave ailments that especially pained the Buddha. The people of Japan today, without a single exception, are afflicted with the most serious of all diseases, the grave illness of major slander. I refer to the followers of the Zen, Nembutsu and Ritsu sects, and to the Shingon teachers. Precisely because their ailment is so serious, they neither recognize it themselves nor are others aware of it. And because this illness grows worse, warriors from throughout the four seas will attack at any moment, and the ruler, his ministers and the common people will all be destroyed. To behold this with one's very eyes is indeed a painful thing.

In his present life, the lay priest your husband has not appeared to have had especially strong faith in the Lotus Sutra. But now that the forces of karma accumulated in the past have

---

<sup>24</sup> Lotus Sutra chapter 23.

<sup>25</sup> Jambudvipa – (Jap. *Embudai*) – According to ancient Indian world view Jambudvipa was one of the four continents situated in the south. It is said to be the place where Buddhism appears and spreads. Nichiren Daishonin often uses the term Jambudvipa to mean the entire world.

<sup>26</sup> Trayastrimsha Heaven - Trayastrimsha Heaven: The second of the six heavens of the world of desire, which is the first division of the threefold world. This heaven is located on a plateau at the top of Mt. Sumeru. The beings in this heaven are said to have a life span of one thousand years; and each day here is equal to a hundred years in the saha world.

<sup>27</sup> Iki and Tsushima - 9 Iki and Tsushima: Small Japanese islands lying between Kyushu and the Korean Peninsula. They were devastated by the Mongol invasion of 1274.

<sup>28</sup> In the Vimalakirti Sutra, the householder Vimalakirti, who represents the Mahayana ideal of the lay believer, assumes the appearance of illness in order to teach others bodhisattva compassion and the Mahayana truth of non-duality. The events of the sutra unfold in the context of a dialogue among Vimalakirti and Bodhisattva Monju as well as other bodhisattvas and shomon disciples who come to visit him on his sickbed.

Which part of the Nirvana Sutra the Daishonin refers to is uncertain. Said to represent Shakyamuni's final preaching just before his death, this sutra contains passages to the effect that the Buddha manifested his last illness as a compassionate means to save the people. It also declares that even the *icchāntika* or people of incorrigible disbelief - a condition which the Daishonin defines in the subsequent paragraph as an "illness" - can attain Buddhahood.

caused him to suffer this long illness, he seeks the Way day and night without cease. Whatever minor offenses he may have committed in this lifetime must surely have already been eradicated, and by virtue of his dedication to the Lotus Sutra, the great evil of [his past] slander will also be dispelled. Were he to go right now to Eagle Peak, he would feel as delighted as if the sun had come out and illuminated all the ten directions; and he would find himself rejoicing, wondering how an early death could be so happy a thing. No matter what might befall him on the road between this life and the next, he should declare himself to be a disciple of Nichiren. To give an analogy: though Japan is a small country, if one should but announce that he is a vassal of the lord of Sagami,<sup>29</sup> he will command unquestioning awe. I, Nichiren, am the most recalcitrant priest in Japan, but with respect to my faith in the Lotus Sutra, I am the foremost sage in the entire world. My name has reached the pure lands of the ten directions, and heaven and earth surely know of it. If your husband declares that he is Nichiren's disciple, no evil demon can possibly claim ignorance of the name.

I have no words to express my thanks to you for your sincerity in sending offerings on many occasions.

With my deep respect.

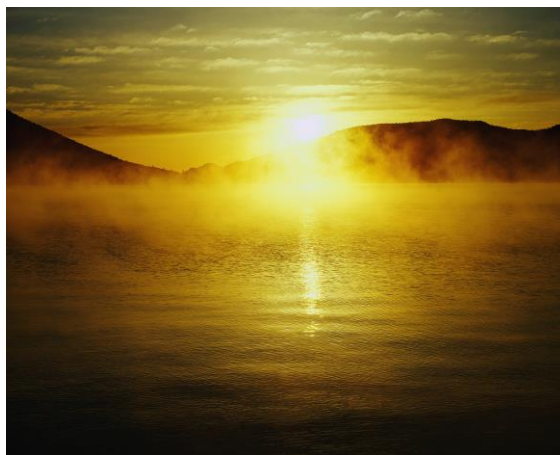
Monkeys rely on trees, and fish depend on water. You, a woman, rely upon your husband. Being loath to part from him, you have shaved off your hair and dyed the sleeves of your robe black.<sup>30</sup> How could the Buddhas of the ten directions not have pity upon you? Nor could the Lotus Sutra ever abandon you. Believing this, you must entrust yourself to it.

Nichiren

The sixteenth day of the eighth month

Aug 16, 1278

To Myoshin-ama



---

<sup>29</sup> Lord of Sagami – The governor of Sagami Province, in which Kamakura was located. The post was held by either the regent of his cosigner. When this letter was written, the governor of Sagami was Hojo Tokimune, the eighth regent of the Kamakura shogunate.

<sup>30</sup> The Daishonin indicates here that Myoshin-ama has taken vows as a Buddhist nun. "Dyed the sleeves of your robe black" means that she now wears the black robes of a nun rather than ordinary colored garments.

# How to Make Simple Cherry Blossoms

Reprinted from "DIY Cherry Blossoms" by Kara  
At [creationsbykara.com](http://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.



**Happy Oeshiki  
Congratulations!**