

# THE MIDDLE WAY

ADVOCATING THE TRUE TEACHINGS OF NICHIREN THE TRUE BUDDHA

SPRING /SUMMER

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## A PERSON OF NON-VIOLENCE

Reverend Raidō Hirota  
Quakertown, Pennsylvania  
July 26, 2019



**QUESTION: "Fact and Details.com," a highly researched, and authoritative website covering the histories and cultures of different countries, states, based on Donald Keene, a renown Columbia University scholar of Japanese culture and history, "Nichiren<sup>1</sup> (1222-82), is a Japanese monk who promoted the Lotus sutra as the 'right' teaching, and believed that violence was sometimes justifiable. His main claim to fame was predicting the Mongol invasions.... The Nichiren central doctrine is Rissho Ankoku Ron. . . ."**

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#### ***The Middle Way***

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<sup>1</sup> Nichiren - 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.

**Please explain what Nichiren’s correct view is on violence and killing, and the correct way to protect the Law?**

**Reverend Raido Hirota (RH):** As you mention, Donald Keene is very famous. I don’t understand why, as stated here, he would say Nichiren Daishonin believed that violence was justifiable. What did he draw from to come up with this conclusion? Nichiren Daishonin didn’t mention anything like that in the Goshō<sup>2</sup>.

To predict the Mongolian invasion of Japan<sup>3</sup> was not like fortune telling for Nichiren Daishonin. In fact, he didn’t predict it at all. It is stated in the Lotus Sutra<sup>4</sup> that if the faith is wrong or the teachings are interpreted in the wrong way, a country could be invaded by external forces, and more difficulties will befall the country. This is written in the Lotus Sutra. Thus, it was not a prediction of Nichiren Daishonin. However, because it was written in the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin believed such a thing would happen to Japan since the country believed in wrong teachings and had the wrong faith. Out of concern for the country, Nichiren took it upon himself to report to the Kamakura government the warnings revealed in the Lotus Sutra that the country would be attacked by the Mongols who were the most formidable foreign power during the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Interestingly, they may say that Nichiren became famous for “predicting” that Japan would be invaded by the Mongols, and yet the government treated him like a criminal for just that reason. The Kamakura government regarded Nichiren’s efforts as treasonous. He was first banished in 1261 to Izu Peninsula after been accused of opposing the government. But it was the government itself that went against the law. Then in 1271 they attempted to execute him at midnight at Tatsunokuchi, Kamakura’s execution site. The execution was thwarted by a passing meteor that lit up the night sky and frightened everyone. The executioners scattered and ran from the scene. Rather than attempt another execution, the authorities exiled Nichiren to Sado Island, a very remote and extremely cold island in the Japan Sea where survival was very difficult. The government’s expectation for sending him there was that due to the harsh living conditions on the island Nichiren would succumb to

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<sup>2</sup> Goshō - The writings of Nichiren Daishonin.

<sup>3</sup> Mongol Invasion of Japan – Kublai Khan attempted to conquer Japan, launching major military efforts in 1274 and 1281.

<sup>4</sup> Lotus Sutra - the highest teaching that 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.

the elements and die. So, even though Nichiren was innocent, he was exiled to Sado Island, a sentence of certain death.

Throughout all the persecutions and tribulations, he endured, Nichiren Daishonin was never angry, and never protested against his treatment by the government. He accepted whatever he received as hardship to endure for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren was a person who practiced non-violence, even when he was innocent of the crimes he was accused of. He accepted his fate, and lived a life of non-violence. So, for him to “justify violence,” as it is reported at “Facts and Details.com,” is absolutely antithetical to the non-violent way he lived his life.



## **GODS, HEAVEN & BELIEF IN THE LOTUS SUTRA**

**Reverend Raidō Hirota**  
**Quakertown, Pennsylvania**  
**July 26, 2019**

**QUESTION:** I know that doing Gongyo<sup>5</sup> and chanting Daimoku<sup>6</sup> works in my life. When I finish Gongyo and Daimoku I feel energized, motivated, and confident, and ready to attack my day. I know that it works. My question is, how does it work, and why does it work?

**RH:** If things aren't working well in your life, what do you attribute it to?

**Believer:** Sometimes life is difficult. Sometimes it rains and storms, and the wind blows. Sometimes there are violent storms, and sometimes it's a beautiful, sunny day. Sometimes life is not always smooth and clean. Sometimes I know part of life is difficult and has

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<sup>5</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>6</sup> Daimoku - Ōdaimoku – Ō=venerable. Daimoku is the title of a sutra; Ōdaimoku is the invocation of the venerable title of the Lotus Sutra or Namumyōhōrengekyō.

obstacles. I continue to practice my faith and try to weather the storms. Sometimes I try to focus more on my faith. That is, I try to do a cleaner, crisper, more concentrated Gongyo and Daimoku. Sometimes that helps.

**RH:** Have you ever wondered or thought “why am I facing these difficulties if I am chanting Odaimoku and Gongyo?”

**Believer:** Sometimes I wonder why I’m facing difficulties. What Buddhism has taught me is that it is because of my past slanders that I’m suffering my difficulties today. So, sometimes I wonder what kind of slanders or sins I committed in the past to put myself in this situation now. I still plod on and try to work it out, and try to live the best life I can.

**RH:** When you chant Gongyo and Odaimoku, you don’t chant to make things work or to make things work well. As you mentioned, life is not always smooth. Life is filled with good and bad. Sometimes it rains, sometimes it’s sunny, sometimes it’s cloudy. So, you understand that life is filled with all kinds of elements. Sometimes it’s good, sometimes not so good, and sometimes it’s very difficult in deed. Understanding this is a very good thing.

To chant Gongyo and the Odaimoku of Namumyōhōrengekyō<sup>7</sup> is to be aware of the life of Buddha in all life, including your own. What Nichiren Daishonin said was “chant Namumyōhōrengekyō whenever you are suffering, whenever you are in a dark place, or whenever you are happy.” No matter what your mindset, whether you are up or down, if you are going through hardship just chant the same everyday – every time. This teaching is a very different way of thinking from thinking that I chant and practice so much, so why am I having difficulties, or why did I end up like this. Or thinking that because I am doing this practice, I am going through a great time. These thoughts are the wrong way of thinking. The reason you are chanting is to become aware of the life of Namumyōhōrengekyō by chanting Namumyōhōrengekyō, which includes your life. Your life is a part of all life.

*Shoten zenjin*<sup>8</sup> are the gods of this world who are fed and nourished by the Odaimoku of the True Law<sup>9</sup>, which in turn permits them to fulfill their purpose of protecting believers who believe in and practice the True Law and whose actions are for the right reason. Also,

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<sup>7</sup> Namumyōhōrengekyō - the Mystic Law which enlightens all Buddhas; the Supreme Law of life and the universe; the Buddha-nature in all things.

<sup>8</sup> Shoten zenjin - Buddhist gods – forces of nature that are not explicable, can’t be seen and are not scientifically proven.

<sup>9</sup> True Law – Namumyōhōrengekyō.

as a part of their duty of protecting believers, *shoten zenjin* will test the faith of believers to determine if the believer's faith is true or not. For a believer of strong faith, *shoten zenjin* will try to obstruct the believer's faith with some kind of difficulty, or an encounter with an evil person, or an enticement of some kind, to determine the depth of one's faith. So, the job of the gods is not only to protect the believers, but to also impose hardship on the believer to challenge the believer to deepen his or her faith. There are many gosho passages where Nichiren Daishonin wrote about *shoten zenjin* challenging believers, sometimes even to the point of near death.

When Shakyamuni Buddha <sup>10</sup> began teaching the Lotus Sutra, all the gods throughout the universe gathered to hear the teaching that all living things possess Buddha nature – or that the Buddha dwells in all living things. As you know, the teachings prior to this teaching taught that one had to eliminate his desires and all evil from his mind in order to become Buddha. These earlier teachings did not reveal or even discuss anything about life. They only taught the steps you had to take to become a Buddha. So, when the Buddha started preaching that all life has Buddha, the *shoten zenjin* gathered to make a vow before the Buddha to be the protectors of the True Law. Because this teaching is the True Law, the *shoten zenjin* were certain that someone or something would be an obstacle to the spreading of the Law. At the time the *shoten zenjin* made the vow to protect the True Law, they also vowed to protect the believers who practice the Law. So, when we are having a difficult time, in that hardship is a lesson. The god's are trying to challenge us. By giving us a hardship, it is an opportunity to review and reflect on our own faith. It is a reminder to understand one's faith. No matter whether you are suffering through hardship or are enjoying good times, you should chant Namumyōhōrengekyō in the same manner. This is what Nichiren Daishonin taught.

**Question:** I would like to understand the word "heaven" in the following quote from the last paragraph of the Gosho "The Causal Law of Life" (Gosho Zenshu p. 1114). "The Buddha taught that people from the very moment of their birth are attended by two messengers called Dosho and Domyo who follow them as closely as their own shadows, never leaving them for an instant. These two take turns reporting to heaven the person's good and evil acts, both major and minor, without overlooking the slightest detail. Therefore, heaven must already know about your great faith." In Italian, the word

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<sup>10</sup> Shakyamuni Buddha - - Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (1029BCE – 949BCE), the historical founder of Buddhism on this earth.

“heaven” can be translated as *ceilo* (sky) or *paradisio* (paradise). The word “heaven” used in this quote makes me think of Zen or Taoist teachings, which I know nothing about. Does it refer to the *shoten zenjin* of the sky, or to the universe (the great ocean)?

**RH:** Everything has a god because god is soul. Everything has soul. Each of the Buddhist *shoten zenjin* have their own role.

*Shoten zenjin* are not specific Buddhist gods. Originally the *shoten zenjin* were attributed to the mountains. Not generally, but rather specific individual mountains: Mountain A, Mountain B, Mountain C, etc. Each mountain had its own god. The same thing applies to rivers: River A, River B, River C, with each one having its own god. And the same is true for ponds, lakes and oceans. Every possible thing has a god – which means a soul.

The meaning of the word “heaven” is similar to the concept of *shoten zenjin*. There is a god expressed in all space and in every discrete aspect of existence. To put it another way, for every space and every existence there is a god for that. Thus, spaces have a soul.

It is Buddhist lore, which Nichiren Daishonin mentioned in the gosho, that at the moment a person is born there are two gods who attend them. One god resides on the right shoulder and the other on the left shoulder. They are named Doshō and Domyō. These two gods attend a person for his or her entire life to protect them. At the moment a person is born, these two gods are given names. Domyō, will be given the same name as the person. (Domyō means “same name”). Doshō, which means “live together”, will be given a different name. This is Buddhist lore as mentioned. It was not devised by Nichiren Daishonin.

If we consider the Buddha as a doctor, then the gods would be considered nurses. How to interpret this? The true reason or purpose of Buddha is to teach people the True Law. The purpose or reason for gods is to protect what was taught by the Buddha [and those who practice what was taught by Buddha]. The job of gods is to protect the space where the Law is in the center. All space where all life exists is the territory the gods are to protect. In the middle of this space is the Buddha’s Law. God is not in the middle. The gods’ duty is to protect the Law that is in the middle.

**Question:** Are the gods just for natural things, like rivers, mountains and trees? Or are there gods for a chair, a house, a table, a book?

**RH:** Everything, sentient and insentient, has a god. Even one grain of rice has a god. As I've mentioned, there is a god in everything. There's a god in a kitchen. A god in a bathroom, in a bathtub, a toilet. These gods oversee, monitor or protect each function or each action. From the perspective of these teachings, this means there is soul in everything. The most important thing is that we should be aware and grateful for whatever the "thing" is.

**Question:** Isn't it true that the term "god" in English or Western languages does not mean what it means in Asian life?

**RH:** This is an issue of terms and concepts. From the perspective of monotheistic traditions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam as written in the Bible and Koran and handed down and accepted for many generations, God is an absolute, omnipotent, omniscient, authoritative being. This is the image of God that people of these faiths have. There is a big difference between the term god, the concept of god and the status of god. In Japanese, the word "god" translates as *kami*. *Jin* of *shoten zenjin* is the same Kanji character as *Kami*. The original meaning of the Kanji character for *kami* is "invisible existence." If you look up the word *kami* in a Japanese-English dictionary it would just say "god." But the concept of "God" is so different from the meaning which is invisible existence, spirit, presence. The words nerve, neurology, psychology in Japanese all have the same Kanji character as *kami* because these disciplines deal with something that is not visible, yet exists. So, the concept of *kami* in Japanese is not the almighty being who created the world – the sky, the ground, the plants, animals, and human beings. The God who created the world is the God of the Bible or Koran. A completely different concept of god. In Buddhism, *kami* translated as god in English, is an existence whose duty is to protect, to observe, to guard. Not to create anything. So, believers, if you are thinking of god in Western terms, you have to change your way of thinking.

*Ten* (天) is the word for heaven in Japanese. In Buddhism, the concept of heaven is not an idyllic place in space. *Ten* also means sky, which is up. *Jigoku* means hell, which is down We use both of these terms in Buddhism. Why do we use the word "hell" (*jigoku*) in Buddhism? Long ago, in ancient Japan, when criminals were punished there were no jails or prisons to retain them, so they were buried in the ground. What is implied by burying someone in the ground is darkness, restriction, limitations and frightening conditions. One loses their freedom. When you don't have freedom, living becomes very difficult. By using these terms in Buddhism, the objective was for people to visualize an image: hell represents darkness, underground, limitations and loss of freedom. Freedom is represented by sky,

heaven. *Shoten zenjin* are in the sky. In Buddhism, heaven does not mean an idyllic place in the sky that you go to. It is an open space or state where the Buddhist gods live. That is the Buddhist concept of heaven. And this is what is meant by “heaven” in “The Causal Law of Life” gosho.

**Question:** What does *gosui* mean?

**RH:** *Gosui* is the five types of decay. *Sui* means decay. *Go* means five. As I mentioned earlier, the concept of god (*kami*) in Buddhism is different from the concept of the absolute, omnipotent, omniscient, everlasting god in the Bible. In Buddhism, gods are not omniscient, or omnipotent, and they do not live forever. Buddhist gods have a finite life. Nonetheless, gods live longer than human beings, but not forever. The five signs that a god is decaying or dying are:

1. Their clothes are getting dirty and beginning to fray because they have been wearing their clothes for a very long time.
2. The crown of fresh flowers which adorn their heads begin to wither, die and eventually rot.
3. Their body gets really dirty and smelly.
4. After living so long, they start to sweat, and their sweat makes their bodies dirtier.
5. After performing their duties of guarding, protecting, and overseeing over a long period of time, the gods will become unstable mentally and emotionally.

Each god will approach the end of their life in this way. God, in the Buddhist sense, is not an absolute existence that lives forever. There is a new generation of gods who replace the old generation. For instance, the gods Dosho and Domyo, mentioned earlier, who arrive when a person is born, will die when the person dies. The concept of god in Buddhism is very human-like. But in one sense a god’s state of being is much worse than a human being’s because they can’t even bathe. All gods are equal. There is no hierarchy. The gods of the mountain, the tree, the toilet are all equal.

The Buddhist concept of god is similar to the Japanese concept of god. However, over the years, people in power in Japan began attributing greater power to the Sun Goddess (*Tensho Daijin*) and Bodhisattva Hachiman, making them the rulers of all other gods. The rulers of Japan did this to assert power over the people. Overtime this became an established tradition, which eventually evolved into a belief that these Japanese gods created “their” world. This was the promoted legend about the creation of Japan.



I'm not sure how the myth of Japan's creation began. But in Japanese mythology the Japanese archipelago was created by two gods, Izanagi and his wife Izanami. Legend has it that these two ascended up into the sky (the heavens), scooped up water from the ocean, and then let drops of water fall from their hands. These drops of water formed the many islands that make up the Japanese archipelago. The child of Izanagi and Izanami is *Tensho Daijin*, the Sun Goddess (also known as *Amatorasu Omikami*). The Sun Goddess, *Tensho Daijin*, is considered the ancestor of the Imperial family.

When you think about this story of how Japan was created, and how the current Imperial family is directly connected to this god, it is rather comical and incredulous. But there are some people who seriously believe this myth, and worship and believe in the existence of these gods.

I would say the God written in the Bible is the same. The Bible got its start in a specific region of the world, and begins with Genesis – the creation of the world. The creation, as it is expressed in Genesis, doesn't speak about how the United States, South America, North America, Africa, Europe, Australia, or Asia were created. The indigenous people of all these lands, continents and different cultures have their own myths of creation. As we view it now, the whole concept of space is very different from when these myths originated. In earlier times, creation was specific to one area such as Japan, the Middle East, America, etc.

**Question:** Are the same *shoten zenjin* worshipped in Buddhism and Shinto<sup>11</sup>?

**RH:** Nichiren Daishonin was born during the Kamakura era. Before he was born, a civil war erupted in the late Heian period (794 – 1185)<sup>12</sup> between the two major clans, the Tairas and the Minamotos. In the end, the Minamoto clan prevailed and ushered in the Kamakura Shogunate.

During the time of this civil war, known as the *Genpei War*<sup>13</sup>, the Imperial family worshipped *Tensho Daijin*, the Sun Goddess from whom they considered themselves directly descended. One disgruntled member of the imperial family, the son of a previous

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<sup>11</sup> Shinto – Shintoism – a Japanese religion that believes in ancestor worship, and the sacred power (*kami*) in both animate and inanimate things.

<sup>12</sup> Heian period – named after the capital city of Japan at the time – Heiankyō which is now called Kyōto. Buddhism, Taoism and Chinese influences were prominent at this time in Japanese history.

<sup>13</sup> Genpei War – an alternative reading of the kanji for Minamoto is Gen, and the alternative reading of the kanji for Taira is Hei. Thus the war between the Gen and Hei = *Genpei*.

emperor who felt he was denied his rightful place on the throne, enlisted the Minamoto clan to fight against the Tairas who at that time held the power of the throne. *Tensho Daijin* was also worshipped by the Minamoto clan. The Minamotos, in addition, also worshipped Hachiman, who was originally the god of the countryside (farm lands) of Kyushu<sup>14</sup>. They adopted Hachiman as their warrior god to gain power, and thereby won the war.

The Minamotos established Kamakura as the capital of their Shogunate government, and designed the city around a shrine they had built of Hachiman. This ushered in the Kamakura period (1185 – 1333). The Hachiman Shrine became the symbol of the *Genji* (Minamoto) family. Thus, there were two sets of gods: one worshipped by the Imperial family in Kyoto, and one worshipped by the governing warrior family of that era in Kamakura. The Imperial family and the Shogunate government each designated their preferred god as the highest god, and ranked all other gods beneath them.

The Kamakura era was the era in which Nichiren Daishonin was born and raised. Nichiren Daishonin included *Tensho Daisjin* and Hachiman on Gohonzon because they were familiar gods (*kami*) that most people knew. The names of these gods on Gohonzon represent all gods.



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<sup>14</sup> Kyushu – southwestern most major island of the Japanese Archipelago where the city of Nagasaki is located.

## QI<sup>15</sup>

Reverend Raidō Hirota  
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July 27, 2019

**QUESTION:** Nichiren Daishonin sometimes mentions Taoism and Zen Buddhism (both originating in China) in the gosho. There are meditative practices and healing (therapeutic) treatments that originate from these schools of thought, such as creating energy flow (*Qi* (Japanese: *ki*)) and rebalancing the energy meridians of the body to improve one's health. Acupuncture is an example. For health purposes, I have sometimes used these treatments, but I am not acquainted with their Chinese origins. These practices apparently seem to refer, in some way, to the concepts of Universal Energy (*Qi*) and perhaps to the principles of the "*Tao*".

**RH:** Taoism and Zen Buddhism originated in China. But their philosophical origin is India. The term *Qi* (pronounced *chi*) (*Ki* in Japanese) can be explained in this way: The human body contains blood, lymph fluids and lymph glandular system, and a nervous system. The lymph system with its fluids is similar to blood, plus the nervous system, which causes us to feel pain, hot, cold, itchy, all have been medically proven to exist. *Qi* is invisible. The mind and body are integrated as one unit, one whole body. When the mind and body are connected, that is a whole life.

*Kishinfuni* is a four-kanji character word that explains this. The first character, *ki*, is used in the word for "power"; and it is also used for the word "color," indicating form, because only something that is physical or material has color. The second character, *shin* means "mind." Mind is invisible or formless. *Ki* and *shin* together equal body -- form (*ki*) and mind (*shin*). Body and mind together (*funi*) form a whole life. There is a connection between the mind and the body that combines these two. That connective element is *Qi*. This idea had its start in Indian philosophy, and migrated to China, and eventually to Japan. And while it traveled from place to place, the medical discipline and science of acupuncture developed. The needles used in the treatment of acupuncture are used to treat the connection between mind and body. The needles puncture the *Qi* to repair the connection.

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<sup>15</sup> Qi – pronounced Chi in Western languages and Chinese.

Yoga is similar. Yoga originated in India. It began as a religious practice used to interrupt the connection (*Qi*) between mind and body and to treat it. Now it is used mostly as a physical exercise discipline to enhance one's health through stretching and manipulating the body. But it also continues to be used as a religious practice to reach the mind by trying to reach into the *Qi* through the manipulation of the body and other practices.

Zen also originated with Indian philosophy and way of thinking that life can be understood in a certain way.

Qigong is like Yoga, Zen and acupuncture. Its treatment tries to reach the *Qi* between body and mind.

As mentioned earlier, Nichiren Daishonin was censored and treated like a criminal. He experienced horrible conditions. He didn't have clothes to wear. He didn't have a place to live. He didn't have food to eat. Today, adults need to consume about 2- to 3,000 calories to survive. But during the Kamakura era there was not enough meat, and it was difficult to preserve fish, so it would have been difficult for the average person to consume the calories needed to survive. One has to wonder how Nichiren Daishonin survived overwhelmed by hardships and lacking in food. It was due to the power of his mind that Daishonin survived. The power of his *Qi*, was exceptionally strong.

We tend to think about our health in terms of the condition of our body, but it is important to keep your mind in the center when considering or thinking about your life and your health. For example, some people look very healthy even though they are very sick. But even if the doctor says someone has no health issues, the person may look very sick. So it depends on how you set your mind in the middle to control your life and health. *Qi* is the most important thing for your life. The most important thing to have as the center of your life.

**Question:** Is there any relationship, affinity or hierarchy between the concepts of *Qi* and *Tao* and the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō?

**RH:** *Tao* is a nameless path one must follow to realize a code of behavior one has to perceive from the universe, a moral and ethical *way* of living like Confucianism to achieve individual wisdom. It is vague, having multiple interpretation, and exists outside of you.

How do you regard your life? Do you look at your life from the physical aspect, that is your body parts—your organs, limbs, etc.? Or do you look at your life from the

perspective of *Qi* and mind? Your life is composed of body and mind and spirit all together. When you think that your mind is incased in your body, the body is a big container that holds the mind. Nichiren Daishonin said that even though this container which holds the mind is defiled – that is, even if your body or life is dirty – your treasure is inside the container. This treasure is the Buddha mind – the Buddha life. So, if you are not taking care of your mind, that means you are not taking care of the Buddha’s life. And if you are not treating your mind and body well, it means you are trying to get rid of the Buddha-life. Everyone has the Buddha life, and everyone needs to take good care of it. Chanting Namumyōhōrengekyō really takes good care of the Buddha life inside you.

When you see your mind through acupuncture or any of the other disciplines mentioned, it is only from the perspective of that particular discipline. That is, with yoga, acupuncture or Qigong one experiences a mindfulness that is realized through treatment of the body. But this is very shallow. What Nichiren Daishonin is saying is much deeper because Namumyōhōrengekyō is your Buddha nature itself. It takes care of your Buddha nature which is inside your mind, surrounded by your body. Nichiren Daishonin’s perspective is from the Buddha life or Buddha nature that originates from the mind of Namumyōhōrengekyō.

In one’s mind there is an external mind, and an internal mind at the center of your mind. The external mind is when you think such thoughts as, I don’t like so and so; or I really like so and so, or this or that. It’s just something you think on your own. Thinking about things. The mind at the very, very center is the Buddha life of Namumyōhōrengekyō. This is the deepest part of your mind. It is important to live the mind of Namumyōhōrengekyō. Of course, you could also say the external mind is important. But it is not something you should base your life on. That said, some people do base their lives on the external mind and live accordingly. They live based on people they don’t like or do like. And some will even commit suicide based on reasons of the external mind. That’s a reality.

The most important thing is to base taking care of the Buddha life, which is inside your life, on Namumyōhōrengekyō. Make an effort to merge with Namumyōhōrengekyō. That is what it means to take care of your life.

**THE SIX WAKUs**  
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**July 27, 2019**

**QUESTION:** Could you please explain both the literal meaning and the true meaning according to Nichiren Daishonin's teachings of the following passage from the Juryo chapter of the Lotus Sutra? Because it is repeated several times, I thought it might have a profound meaning as in other portions of the Juyro chapter.

Nyo rai sho en kyo den.	All the sutras which the Tathagata preaches
Ka i do das>shu jo.	Are for the deliverance of the living.
Waku sek>ko shin.	Whether speaking of himself or
Waku set>ta shin.	Speaking of others.
Waku ji ko shin.	Whether indicating himself or
Waku ji ta shin.	Indicating others. and
Waku ji ko ji.	Whether indicating his own affairs, or
Waku ji ta ji.	The affairs of others. . .

- RH:**
- Nyo rai sho en kyo den = the Lotus Sutra taught by the Buddha
  - Kai do das-shu jo = to enlighten all living things equally to the Law.
  - Waku sek- ko shin = I will teach the Law that by practicing it, enlightened me. This Law means the Lotus Sutra (Namumyōhōrengekyō). But the Lotus Sutra did not originate with Shakyamuni. Shakyamuni, himself, was taught this sutra. By learning it and practicing it, he became a Buddha.
  - Waku set-ta shin = I will speak about others. Buddha is enlightened, but other people are not. So I, the Buddha, will speak about the life of others.
  - Waku ji ko shin = Whether I am speaking about myself (Buddha), my thoughts, I am using myself as an example in the stories I tell, indicating this is how I think, this is how I am.
  - Waku ji ta shin = I will show and explain the thoughts of other people who are not enlightened.

- Waku ji ko ji = I am going to tell you how I lived – my life, my experience.
- Waku ji ta ji = I will speak of the life and experiences of the unenlightened.

These six *Wakus* are called *Roku Waku Kejin*. In these six phrases Buddha is trying to express Namumyōhōrengekyō from the Buddha’s perspective and the perspective of others. It’s not that the Buddha is doing one thing and imposing his thoughts on others, stating such as, this is how I feel or how I live. How the Buddha feels and how the Buddha lives, and how others feel and live it is all combined, integrated and inclusive. This explains how the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō is taught. It’s not a one-sided or one-way perspective. The Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō is taught from all perspectives.



## MORE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Reverend Raidō Hirota  
Quakertown, Pennsylvania  
July 26, 2019

**QUESTION:** Can you please explain the different impact on one’s life when one has a casual Buddhist practice and faith – such as that of Christians who go to church every Sunday for their “spiritual fix”, but don’t live that way during the week – and a true Buddhist practice and faith, where you live it every day? How does one achieve the latter? What does it mean to practice the Law? And what is a simple answer when someone asks me “what is Buddhahood”?

**RH:** Which is better for your health and your mind, eating meals three times a day – breakfast, lunch and dinner? Of having a meal once a week? As I’ve mentioned before, your body creates dead skin or old skin every day. To rid your body of old, dead skin daily is similar to your faith. To only bathe once a week you are accumulating dead skin for a week. And that is not the same as every day faith. Nichiren Daishonin said, wake up with Buddha and go to bed with Buddha. That way of life is the way of faith.

To practice the Law is the same as to live a life following the Law. To live your life learning from Buddha. To understand the value and purpose of Buddha. And make an effort to live life with that purpose and value. The goal of our practice is just that: to live a life with the value and purpose of Buddha.

When someone asks you, what is the purpose of practicing Buddhism, you can tell them:

1. To wake up faith in Namumyōhōrengekyō in all people who have a mind full of pride, and to bring them to realize that their minds are full of pride, self-assurance, doubt and fear.
2. *Ichinen Sanzen*: All life – all living things – are equal. All living beings possess Buddha nature. All living things are qualified to be Buddha, and can be Buddha.
3. Practicing the faith of the Lotus Sutra as a believer with points #1 and #2 in the center of your mind.



**QUESTION: Concerning the 5<sup>th</sup> prayer of the liturgy, why do we have to say a prayer for Nichiren Shohu members if we practice with the Shoshinkai?**

**RH:** Nichiren Shoshu<sup>16</sup> and Nichiren Shoshu Shoshinkai<sup>17</sup> are names of each group. Originally, Nichiren Shoshu was a sect that had the same faith in the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and believed in the Lotus Sutra. When you pray with faith, you should not be thinking about discriminating against different groups of people. You should not question why you should pray for other people. Instead, your thinking should be that you want others to wake up from what is wrong with their belief. When you do gongyo, you should wish for others to do the right thing. When you start thinking about separations, or that the faith you belong to is different than others, you also tend to create hateful ideas. And you might even start to resent or have contempt for other people because their faith is wrong. That thinking is wrong.

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<sup>16</sup> Nichiren Shoshu - the sect of Buddhism that embraces and recites the true Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō as the original cause of enlightenment and believes in Nichiren Daishonin of the true Buddha.

<sup>17</sup> Nichiren Shoshu Shohinkai - Shoshinkai – the organization of Nichiren Shoshu priests dedicated to the protection and dissemination of Nichiren Daishonin’s true teachings.





**QUESTION:** How are historical, humanitarian figures, such as Gandhi, Krishnamurti, Jesus, Mother Theresa, etc. viewed through the lens of Buddhism and Gohonzon?

**RH:** As humanitarians, as personalities, as individuals, these people were amazing. However, what they taught as faith cannot save people. For example, the poor, the sick, the starving children, etc. can really not be saved by what these historical figures taught. When you say “saved” in terms of faith, the teachings of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and all the other teachings are not even close to the depth of Buddhist teachings, and therefore cannot save people in the way that Buddhism can.

As I’ve mentioned before, prior to the Lotus Sutra, Buddha taught if you rid yourself of all your doubts, desires, and evil in your mind, then you will be saved. This is very similar to what Islam, Judaism and Christianity teaches. Judaism is based on the old testament of the Bible. Christianity is based on both the old and new testaments of the Bible. These are very similar to pre-Lotus Sutra teachings where, if you reach a point where you have eliminated your evil mind and have a pure mind, you can reach heaven. But with the Lotus Sutra’s teachings it is revealed that human beings can’t really eliminate their negative minds. It’s like the dead skin metaphor. You develop dead skin every day, which has to be washed off. This is the true condition of human beings. The Lotus Sutra therefore teaches that despite the reality of the human condition of being confused, having desires and a doubtful and negative mind, humans can still be saved. These other teachings – pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, and teachings that followed: Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam – cannot save the people because people have to completely remove those things from themselves that are, after all, the human condition.



**QUESTION:** In the “Gift of Rice” Goshō (Goshō Zenshu p. 1596), Nichiren Daishonin says that “the Lotus Sutra explains that secular matters ultimately are Buddhism.” Can you please explain what that means?

**RH:** This goshō compares pre-Lotus Sutra teachings with the teachings of the Lotus Sutra by means of metaphors commonly used in Japanese cultural expressions. The provisional

teachings say that “a tranquil mind is like a clear moon,” and “a pure heart is like a beautiful flower.” But Nichiren Daishonin said that these are not true because the moon and the flower have Buddha nature. All life has Buddha nature, which is the life of Namumyōhōrengekyō. And all life derives from Namumyōhōrengekyō. This is what the Lotus Sutra teaches. When you say, “the mind is as clear as the moon,” or “the heart as beautiful as a flower” you are separating and making a distinction between things that are actually the same, since the moon and the flower both have the life of Namumyōhōrengekyō just as the “mind” and “heart” do. The moon and the flower are not beautiful because we perceive them to be. Everything is equal. Everything has Buddha nature and Buddha mind. Every single living thing is complete and whole within themselves because every single living thing has the life of Namumyōhōrengekyō – the causal Law of life – within it



## GOSHO SELECTION

### **The Three Kinds of Treasure<sup>18</sup>**

I have received the various articles from your messenger, including a white winter robe and a string of coins, as well as the goods mentioned in Lord Toki's<sup>19</sup> letter. The persimmons, pears, and fresh and dried seaweed are particularly welcome.

I am most grieved over your lord's illness. Although he has not professed faith in the Lotus Sutra, you are a member of his clan, and it is thanks to his consideration that you are

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<sup>18</sup> *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Volume Two, p.273

<sup>19</sup> Lord Toki: Toki Jonin (Toki Goro Tanetsugu) was an official serving the Kamakura shogunate on the military tribunal and one of the Daishonin's staunch followers. He lived in Shimosa, to the northeast of Kamakura. He became a priest but lived at home. Such priests were called nyudo. Toki took the priest's name, Jonin, and was later given another name, Nichijo, by the Daishonin. He received dozens of writings, many of which involve significant revelations, including "The True Object of Worship." Accurate data is scarce and posthumous biographies are contradictory, though it would appear from the few accurate sources now available that he was born in 1216 and died in 1299. He is believed to have converted to the Daishonin's teachings around 1253.

able to make offerings to the sutra. Therefore all of your gifts are in effect prayers for your lord's recovery. Think of a small tree under a large one, or grass by a great river. Though they do not receive rain or water directly, they nonetheless thrive, partaking of dew from the large tree or drawing moisture from the river. The same holds true with the relationship between you and your lord. To give another example, King Ajatashatru was an enemy of the Buddha. But because Jivaka,<sup>20</sup> a minister in the king's court, believed in the Buddha and continually made offerings to him, the blessings accruing from his actions are said to have returned to Ajatashatru.

Buddhism teaches that when the Buddha nature manifests itself from within, it will obtain protection from without. This is one of its fundamental principles. The Lotus Sutra says, "I deeply respect you." The Nirvana Sutra states, "All living things possess the Buddha nature." Ashvaghosha's Daijo Kishin Ron<sup>21</sup> says, "When the Buddha nature continuously manifests itself, it will quickly extinguish illusions and reveal the property-of-Law aspect of life."<sup>22</sup> Bodhisattva Maitreya's Yuga Ron<sup>23</sup> contains a similar statement. An inconspicuous deed will produce a conspicuous benefit.

The Devil of the Sixth Heaven probably knew the aforementioned principle, and he therefore possessed your colleagues, causing them to invent that preposterous lie<sup>24</sup> in order to prevent you from making offerings to the Lotus Sutra. However, since your faith is profound, the Ten Goddesses must have come to your aid and thus caused you lord's illness. He does not regard you as his enemy, but since he once acted against you in giving credit to the false accusations of your colleagues, he has become seriously ill and the malady persists.

Ryuzo-bo,<sup>25</sup> whom these people count on as their pillar of strength, has already been toppled, and those who spoke falsely of you have contracted the same disease as your lord.

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<sup>20</sup> Jivaka: An Indian physician in Shakyamuni's time. Immediately after birth he is said to have seized hold of the acupuncture needle and medicine bag. He had devout faith in Buddhism and also served as a minister to King Ajatashatru.

<sup>21</sup> Daijo Kishin Ron: "Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana," a treatise which preaches the fundamental doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism and attempts to awaken people to true faith. It has been widely read by Mahayana sects and there are many commentaries on it.

<sup>22</sup> Property-of-Law aspect of life: One of the three properties of the Buddha's life.

<sup>23</sup> Maitreya's Yuga Ron: "Treatise on the Yogachara Practice," translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Hsüan-tsang during the T'ang dynasty. It is said to have been dictated to Asanga by Maitreya--not Shakyamuni's contemporary and close disciple but a Buddhist scholar of the third- or fourth-century India.

<sup>24</sup> That preposterous lie: The report made by Shijo Kingo's colleagues to Lord Ema that he forcibly tried to disrupt the Kuwagayatsu debate in order to embarrass Ryuzo-bo.

<sup>25</sup> Ryuzo-bo: A priest of the Tendai sect. He originally lived at Enryaku-ji temple on Mt. Hiei, the head temple of the Tendai sect, but was banished from Mt. Hiei for allegedly eating human flesh. Later, he appeared in Kamakura and continued preaching from a cottage at Kuwagayatsu. Although he came to enjoy considerable popularity, he was defeated in debate by the Daishonin's disciple, Sammi-bo, in June 1277.

Ryokan is even more slanderous than they. He will probably encounter some bad accident, or stir up major trouble and find himself in serious distress. Surely he will not escape unharmed.

As things stand now, I have a feeling you are in danger. Your enemies are sure to make an attempt on your life. In backgammon, if two stones of the same color are placed side by side, they cannot be hit by an opposing stone. A cart, as long as it has two wheels, does not lurch all over the road. Likewise, if two men go together, an enemy will hesitate to attack. Therefore, no matter what faults you may find with your younger brothers, do not let them leave you alone even for a moment.

Your face bears definite signs of a hot temper. But you should know that the gods will not protect a short-tempered person, no matter how important they may think he is. If you should be killed, even though you might attain Buddhahood after your death, your enemies would be delighted, but we would feel only grief. This would indeed be regrettable. While your foes busy themselves plotting against you, your lord places greater confidence in you than before. Therefore, although they appear to have quieted down, inwardly they are no doubt seething with hate. So you should at all times behave unobtrusively in their presence. Pay greater respect to the other retainers of the clan than you have in the past. For the time being, when members of the Hojo clan are visiting your lord, refrain from calling on him, even if he should summon you.

If the worst should happen and your lord should die, your enemies would become masterless and would have nowhere to turn, though they do not seem to consider that fact. Unreasoning as they are, when they see you report to work more and more frequently, their hearts are bound to be fired with jealousy and their breath come in pants.

If the young nobles of the Hojo clan or the wives of those in power should inquire about your lord's illness, no matter who the person may be, get down on your knees, place your hands properly, and reply thus: "His malady is entirely beyond my poor skill to cure. but no matter how often I decline, he insists that I treat him. Since I am in his service, I cannot help but do as he says." Leave your hair unattended, and refrain from wearing well-starched court dress, bright robes or other colorful clothing. Be patient and continue in this way for the time being.

Perhaps you are well aware of it, but let me cite the Buddha's prediction about what the Latter Day of the Law will be like. In essence he states, "It will be a chaotic age in which even a sage will find it difficult to live. He will be like a stone in a great fire, which for a while seems to endure the heat but finally chars and crumbles to ashes. Worthy men will

advocate the five great principles of humanity,<sup>26</sup> but they themselves will find it hard to practice them." Thus the saying goes, "Do not remain in the seat of honor too long."

Many people have plotted to undo you, but you have avoided their intrigues and emerged victorious. Should you lose your composure now and fall into their trap, you will be, as people say, like a boatman who rows his boat with all his might only to have it capsize just before he reaches the shore, or like a person who is served no tea at the end of his meal.

While you are in your lord's mansion, if you stay in the room assigned to you, nothing will happen to you. But on your way to work at dawn or returning from it at dusk, your enemies are bound to be lying in wait for you. Also, be very careful in and around your house in case someone should be hiding beside the double doors, inside the family sanctuary, under the floor or in the space above the ceiling. This time your foes will use even more cunning in their plots than before. In the end, no one will be more dependable in an emergency than the night watchmen of Egara<sup>27</sup> in Kamakura. However disagreeable it may be to you, you should associate with them amicably.

Minamoto no Yoshitsune<sup>28</sup> found it utterly impossible to defeat the Heike until he won Shigeyoshi<sup>29</sup> over to his side and in that way vanquished the rival clan. Shogun Minamoto no Yoritomo<sup>30</sup> sought to take revenge on Osada<sup>31</sup> for his father's death, but he would not behead the murderer until after he had conquered the Heike. It is even more vital for you

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<sup>26</sup> Five great principles of humanity: Also called the five constant virtues: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and good faith. They were set forth by Confucianism as the principles by which one should always abide.

<sup>27</sup> Night watchmen of Egara: Shijo Kingo's four younger brothers. Their lands were confiscated on account of their belief in the Daishonin's teachings, forcing them to take the lowly position of night watchmen.

<sup>28</sup> Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159 - 1189): A younger half-brother of Minamoto no Yoritomo, founder of the Kamakura government. In 1180, when Yoritomo raised an army against the rival Taira or Heike clan, Yoshitsune joined forces with him and later defeated the Taira army. After the battle, Yoshitsune incurred Yoritomo's displeasure and escaped to the northern part of Japan, but was finally killed by a powerful family in that district.

<sup>29</sup> Shigeyoshi: Taguchi Shigeyoshi, the head of a powerful family in Awa, a province in the southern part of Japan. Though a member of the Taira clan, he informed Yoshitsune of the internal conditions of the Taira army as well as the weak points of their position. This helped bring about the downfall of the Taira clan.

<sup>30</sup> Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147 - 1199): The founder of the Kamakura shogunate. He defeated the rival Taira clan at the final battle of Dannoura in 1185, and established a military government in Kamakura. However, he made no attempt to dismantle the government machinery already in existence in Kyoto and deliberately sought recognition for his actions from the emperor and the court. In 1192 he succeeded in obtaining the prestigious military title of shogun.

<sup>31</sup> Osada: Osada Tadamune, a Samurai in Owari Province in central Japan. In 1159 Minamoto no Yoshitomo, the father of Yoritomo, battled with the Taira army and was defeated. Fleeing, he hid at the house of Osada Tadamune. On the Tairas' order, Osada led Yoshitomo into the bath and there killed him. Later when Yoritomo raised an army, Tadamune and his son, Kagemune, sided with Yoritomo, but were killed at Yoritomo's command after the fall of the Tairas.

to master your emotions and ally yourself with your four brothers. They had risked their lives to acquire their mansions, and these were confiscated by their lord because of their faith in the Lotus Sutra and because of their belief in Nichiren. Be considerate of those who believe in Nichiren and the Lotus Sutra, no matter what they may have done in the past. Moreover, if they frequent your house, your enemies will be afraid to attack you at night. It is not as if they were trying to avenge their fathers' deaths; certainly they do not want their plot to come out into the open. To one such as you who must avoid being seen, these four are the most dependable warriors. Always maintain friendly relations with them. But since you are hot-tempered by nature, you might not take my advice. In that case, it will be beyond the power of my prayers to save you.

Ryuzo-bo and your elder brother plotted evil against you. Therefore, Heaven so contrived that the situation would develop exactly as you wished. Then how can you now dare to go against the wish of Heaven? Even if you had accumulated a thousand or ten thousand treasures, of what use would they be if your lord should forsake you? He already looks to you as if you were his own parent, following you as water follows the shape of its container, longing for you as a calf longs for its mother, relying you as an elderly person relies on his staff. Is his regard for you not due to the aid of the Lotus Sutra? How envious your fellow retainers must be! You must hurry and bring your four brothers over to your side and report to me how the matter goes. Then I will fervently pray to the gods for your protection. I have already informed them of how deeply you grieve over the death of your father and mother. Shakyamuni Buddha will surely extend them his especial consideration.

Over and over I recall the moment,<sup>32</sup> unforgettable even now, when I was about to be beheaded and you accompanied me, holding the reins of my horse and weeping tears of grief. Nor could I ever forget it in any lifetime to come. If you should fall into hell for some grave offense, no matter how Shakyamuni might urge me to become a Buddha, I would refuse; I would rather go to hell with you. For if you and I should fall into hell together, we would find Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra there. It would be like the moon illuminating the darkness, like cold water pouring into hot, like fire melting ice, or like the sun dispelling the darkness. But if you depart from my advice even slightly, then do not blame me for what may happen.

The plague which is raging at present will, as you predict, strike those in the higher ranks of society at the turn of the year. This is perhaps the design of the Ten Goddesses. For the time being stay calm and observe how things develop. And do not go around lamenting to others how hard it is for you to live in this world. To do so is an act utterly unbecoming to a worthy man. If one behaves in this way, then after he dies, his wife, overcome with sorrow at losing her husband, will tell other people about the shameful

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<sup>32</sup> The moment: A reference to the Tatsunokuchi Persecution.

things he did, though she has no real intention of doing so. And that will in no way be her fault but solely the result of his own reprehensible behavior.

It is rare to be born a human being. The number of those endowed with human life is as small as the amount of earth one can place on a fingernail. Life as a human being is hard to sustain--as hard as it is it is for the dew to remain on the grass. But it is better to live a single day with honor than to live to one hundred and twenty and die in disgrace. Live so that all the people of Kamakura will say in your praise that Shijo Kingo is diligent in the service of his lord, in the service of Buddhism, and in his concern for other people. More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all. From the time you read this letter on, strive to accumulate the treasures of the heart!

I would like to relate an incident that is customarily kept secret. In the history of Japan, there have been two emperors who were assassinated. One of them was the thirty-third emperor Sushun. He was the son of Emperor Kimmei and uncle of Prince Shotoku.<sup>33</sup> One day he summoned Prince Shotoku and said, "We hear that you are a man of unsurpassed wisdom. Examine Our physiognomy and tell Us what you see there!" The prince declined three times, but the emperor insisted that he obey the Imperial command. Finally, no longer able to refuse, the prince reverently examined Sushun's physiognomy and then reported, "Your Majesty's countenance indicates that you will be assassinated by someone."

The emperor's complexion changed color. "What evidence do you have to support such a contention?" he asked. The prince replied, "I see red veins running over your eyes. This is a sign that you will incur the enmity of others." Thereupon the emperor asked, "How can We escape this fate?" The prince said, "It is difficult to evade. But there are soldiers known as the five great principles of humanity. As long as you keep these warriors on your side, you will be safe from danger. In the Buddhist scriptures these soldiers are referred to as 'forbearance,' one of the six paramitas."

For some time after that, Emperor Sushun faithfully observed the practice of forbearance. But being irascible by nature, he violated the precept one day when one of his subjects presented him with a young wild boar. He withdrew the metal rod that was attached to his sword scabbard and stabbed the boar in the eyes with it, saying, "One of these days this is what We will do to that fellow We hate!" Prince Shotoku, who happened to be present, exclaimed, "Ah, what a fearful thing you do! Your Majesty will surely arouse the enmity of others. These very words you have spoken will be the sword that wounds you." The prince then ordered articles of value to be brought out and divided among those who had heard the emperor's remark, [hoping to buy their silence]. One of them, however,

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<sup>33</sup> Shotoku (574 - 622): The second son of the thirty-first emperor, Yomei, famous for his application of the spirit of Buddhism to government. As the regent for Empress Suiko, he carried out various reforms. He revered the Lotus Sutra, Shrimala Sutra and Vimalakirti Sutra, writing commentaries on them.

told the high minister Soga no Umako<sup>34</sup> about the episode. Umako, believing he was the one the emperor hated, won over Atai Goma, son of Azumanoaya no Atai Iwai, and had him kill the emperor.

Thus even a ruler on the throne must take care not to give unreserved expression to his thoughts. Confucius held to the proverb, "Nine thoughts to one word," which means that he reconsidered nine times before he spoke. Tan, the Duke of Chou,<sup>35</sup> was so earnest in receiving callers that he would bind up his hair three times in the course of washing it, or spit out his food three times in the course of a meal, in order not to keep them waiting. Think carefully about what I mean by this so you will have no cause to reproach me later. Such thoughtfulness is surely a part of Buddhism.

The key to all of Shakyamuni's teachings is the Lotus Sutra, and the key to the practice of the Lotus Sutra is expounded in the Fukyo chapter. What does Bodhisattva Fukyo's profound respect for people signify? The real meaning of the Lord Shakyamuni Buddha's appearance in this world lay in his behavior as a human being. How profound! The wise may be called human, but the thoughtless are no more than animals.

Nichiren

The eleventh day of the ninth month in the third year of Kenji  
(1277), cyclical sign hinoto-ushi.  
Reply to Lord Shijo Saemon-no-jo  
Sep 11, 1277 Shijo Kingo



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<sup>34</sup> Soga no Umako (d. 626): The chief minister, who succeeded to the position in 570 upon the death of his father, Soga no Iname. In 587, he defeated the Mononobe family, the strongest opponents of Buddhism. In the following year the prince chosen by Umako ascended the throne to become Emperor Sushun. Under the protection of the Soga clan, Buddhism soon began to flourish, and by the end of the sixth century it was well established in the Yamato area. Unfortunately, Soga no Umako's political record did not match his pious efforts to promote Buddhism, for he proceeded to consolidate his power by acts of outrageous treachery. He had Emperor Sushun assassinated, and placed on the throne his own niece, Empress Suiko.

<sup>35</sup> Tan, the Duke of Chou: Younger brother of Emperor Wu. After Wu's death, Ch'eng, Emperor Wu's son, was still a child, so Tan administered the affairs of state for him as regent.