



# NICHIREN DAISHONIN AND HIS ADVENT

(Excerpted from a Treatise)

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*After the Tathagata is extinct [such a one], / Knowing [this] sutra that the Buddha  
has taught, / [Together with] its reasoning and process, / Shall expound it  
according to its true meaning.*

*The Threefold Lotus Sutra, Chapter 21*

NICHIREN SHOSHU is a religion dedicated to teaching the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin, the Eternal Buddha, who was born on the 16th day of the second month in the year 1222 in a fishing village on the pacific coast in Chiba, a prefecture in eastern

Japan. As he said in his own words: "In this life I was born into poverty of humble parentage, I grew up in the house of a *candala*." (*Candala* is the lowest class of the Indian caste system. Its members are fisherman, jailers, slaughterers and other followers of "unclean" trades.) In this it can be seen that, unlike many of the saints and scholars in history, Nichiren Daishonin was open about his humble birth and poor lineage. Moreover, it is this background of poverty which must be remembered when studying the teachings of the Daishonin. For the truth of all things - the universe and the realm of Buddhism as perceived by Buddha - is something which is to be granted equally to all living things without question of form, wealth, status or ability. It is taught that all people, all living creatures and phenomena are equal before the Eternal Buddha and the laws of Buddhism. In addition to this concept of absolute equality, from the very start the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin is based on the doctrine of salvation for all.

At the age of 12 Nichiren Daishonin entered the monastery of Seicho-ji on Mount Kiyosumi near his home. His studies began with the fundamentals of Buddhism and a general course of study. At the age of 16 he was ordained and began his training as a priest. At this time he personally vowed that he would endeavor to become the leading scholar of his day. To attain this the Daishonin devoted himself wholeheartedly to studying the Mahayana Buddhism that was followed in India, China, Japan and northeast Asia.

From the age of 16 to the age of 32, in order to study all aspects of Buddhism, Nichiren Daishonin traveled to Kyoto and Nara and other religious centers in Japan, dedicating himself to the study and practice of Mahayana Buddhism. Through this effort he gradually became convinced that the true religion of the Indian sage, Shakyamuni Buddha, was contained in the Lotus Sutra (*Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*) and so realized that all aspects of Buddhism can be found united within this text. Nichiren attained this understanding on the 28th day of the fourth month in the year 1253. From then on, despite the wave of religious persecution to which he was subsequently subjected, the Daishonin strove to put into practice the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Daishonin, having read all of the Buddhist texts, decided that the Lotus Sutra, with its laws for complete salvation and its doctrine of absolute mercy (a doctrine which teaches that all living things may be granted a way of life the same as that of Buddha) was the principle scripture of the Buddhism of Shakyamuni. However, there is a great difference between the Lotus Sutra of Shakyamuni and the Lotus Sutra as taught by

Nichiren. This is because the Lotus Sutra itself has two purposes: One is to enable those with a relationship to Shakyamuni, living in the Middle Day of the Law (see article: *The True Religion For Our Time*) to seek enlightenment through the study and practice of this text. The second is to prophesy that in the age of the extinction of the law, or the Latter Day of the Law (see article: *The True Religion Four Our Time*) when salvation cannot be reached through the basic teachings of Shakyamuni, the Eternal Buddha will come forth to re-establish the basic truths of Buddhism for the salvation of all living things.

By the time Nichiren Daishonin came a long, the power of Shakyamuni's Buddhism to save mankind had expired. Daishonin came to realize that the true essence of the Lotus Sutra resided in its title *Myoho-renge-kyo*. And by intoning the chant *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo* eternal peace and happiness could be attained for all living things. As prophesied in the Lotus Sutra of Shakyamuni, Nichiren Daishonin appeared in the Latter Day of the Law to reveal and explain for us the fundamentals of Buddhism, and thereby open the path for all us to realize Buddhahood.