

# THE MIDDLE WAY

ADVOCATING THE TRUE TEACHINGS OF NICHIREN THE TRUE BUDDHA

AUTUMN

2009



New altar at Sanbo-in Tempe, Fukuyama, Japan

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## FURTHER DISCUSSION ON OBSERVING THE MIND

Reverend Raido Hirota  
Mt. Holly, NJ  
June 2008

**Believer 1 (B1):** What does Daishonin<sup>1</sup> mean when he says the Gohonzon<sup>2</sup> is the object of worship for observing the mind? I am not referring to meditation.

**Reverend Raido Hirota (RH):** *Kai ji go nyu*<sup>3</sup> is observing the mind. Rather than looking at what you have on the outside, observing the mind is equal to seeing the life of Buddha within you.

**Believer 2 (B2):** *Kai ji go nyu* means to open, to show, to reveal, and to enter. How does that equal observing the mind?

**RH:** The way to the Buddha's path is *kai ji go nyu*. The sutra shows you the Buddha inside you as well as the path you should take to further understand the Buddha's path. *Kai ji go nyu* are four different keys that open the same door to understanding Buddhahood.

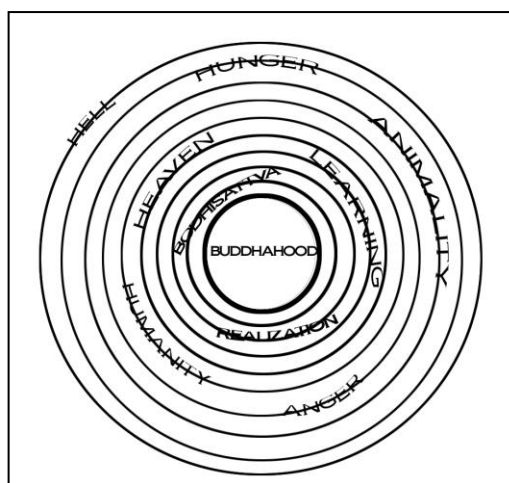
**B3:** Please correct me, but my understanding of observing the mind comes from a passage from

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

<sup>2</sup> Gohonzon – the scroll that is the mandala of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism and represents the universal Law of Namu-myoho-rence-kyo and the Buddha nature in all things.

<sup>3</sup> Kai ji go nyu – found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter (*Hoben*) of the Lotus Sutra, it indicates the great reason why all Buddhas are born.

the goshō “On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime,” where it says if you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of this moment you should perceive the Mystic Law<sup>4</sup> that has always been in your life. That is *Myōhō-rensō-kyō*. So my understanding of observing the mind is to focus on the mind, that means that one single moment has three thousand worlds. So each moment we have three thousand realms in our lifetime. So we need to focus on what our life is. It could be Buddha nature, it could be Hell, or it could be an animal nature. We have three thousand worlds. So when chanting *Namu-myōhō-rensō-kyō* we can observe any one of the three thousand realms. So that’s another way of observing the mind. But only by chanting *Namu-myōhō-rensō-kyō* can we enter the way of observing the mind.



**RH:** To help you understand, let’s view the life conditions of the Ten Worlds<sup>5</sup> as concentric circles. The outer circle is the world of Hell. Working inward the next circle would be the world of Hunger, then Animality, etc. until you get to the innermost circle which would be the world of Buddha. The life of Buddha is at the core of all of the circles or worlds. With the outer nine circles we are talking about different individual life conditions, but when we come to the life of Buddha at the center of the circles, we are no longer talking about a personal life condition. The life of Buddha does not exist as a personal life condition, it’s bigger than that and is identical in all things. The world of Buddha is connected to, or common to all life. Through chanting *Namu-myōhō-rensō-kyō* and connecting to Gohonzon, we can all connect to the

life condition of Buddha. This is the basis of the equality of all living things. And this is what Daishonin has enabled us to do: that by observing the mind while chanting *Namu-myōhō-rensō-kyō* to Gohonzon our personal life becomes connected to the huge world of Buddha which exists commonly in all life.

**B3:** The Ten Worlds are within me, so I am observing my Buddha nature.

**RH:** Down the center of Gohonzon is written *Namu-myōhō-rensō-kyō*, which is the Buddha nature. Surrounding *Namu-myōhō-rensō-kyō* are the nine different worlds. Everyone has a different perception of the nine worlds. That is, the nine worlds can manifest in any number of ways. For instance, the World of Hunger can manifest as lacking in food, or as greedy, etc. By contrast, with Buddha nature there is only one way to view it. The Buddha nature is like air, it is no one’s possession. Everyone has access to it.

In the nine worlds, depending on your background, how you were raised, or what kind of character you have, you could have a stronger anger nature, or a hellish nature, depending on who you are. Through the nine worlds you express your own individual way of life. But when you come to the Buddha nature it’s one nature. It’s the nature of the Buddha. You cannot say that his Buddha nature is horrible, or her Buddha nature is so weak. There’s no such thing. The Buddha nature is the Buddha nature. Buddha nature is like air—it is common to everything.

<sup>4</sup> Mystic Law *Myōhō-rensō-kyō*, the ultimate universal Law of life and death.

<sup>5</sup> Ten Worlds – potential conditions of life inherent in each individual. They are Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Tranquility or Humanity, Heaven or Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood.

**B4:** When we are sitting in front of Gohonzon, the point is not to seek or observe our own nine worlds, it is to seek the common world—the world of Buddha—that is what we are trying to observe?

**RH:** Buddha nature is common to all and is the same in everything, and belongs to everyone. The *Ho* in *Namu-myoho-re-enge-kyo* is the Law. Nichiren Daishonin wants us to concentrate on that aspect—on the Law. Other sects, by contrast, worship one person who attained Buddhahood. Believers of these sects seek help from that one person who achieved that level. Nichiren Daishonin changed all that by introducing *Namu-myoho-re-enge-kyo*, and revealing that all life has the Buddha nature of *Namu-myoho-re-enge-kyo* within.

**B5:** What does the Buddha nature look like? What are some characteristics?

**RH:** There are so many other things we could talk about. ☺

The character of the Buddha is exemplified in the Buddhist terms *jigyō keta*, which means being concerned with yourself and others; and in the term *jitai hishi*, which means no discrimination between yourself and others. These are two aspects of the character of the Buddha nature. They signify absolute equality; but not in the sense of racial equality or ethnic equality. The reference is to the equality of all beings because all living things possess the life of Buddha. Therefore, because every living being possesses the Buddha nature, every living being is absolutely equal. In the gōsho Nichiren Daishonin often refers to the behavior of Bodhisattva Jofukyo<sup>6</sup> as the quintessential Buddha nature. Bodhisattva Jofukyo put the Buddha nature into practice. That is why we repeat his words after every gongyo: *I respect everyone deeply, I do not despise anyone not even a little, or look down on anyone with contempt. Because everyone has the capacity to become a Buddha of Namu-myoho-re-enge-kyo if they believe in Namu-myoho-re-enge-kyo and practice.* This passage from the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Lotus Sutra<sup>7</sup> indicates the way one whose life expresses the life of the Buddha behaves.

**B2:** When you chant and you are observing the mind, what is your mindset? What are you thinking? What are you feeling? What is going on?

**RH:** The Gohonzon is a mirror. It's up to you whether you are willing to accept your reflection in the mirror or not.

**B6:** What is the meaning of opening the eyes?

**RH:** You've heard the saying, "the eyes are the window to the heart (or to the soul)." Nichiren Daishonin is saying, the Gohonzon is the mirror to the soul.

If a person does not want to receive Gohonzon, does not seek to receive or does not have a strong desire to receive it, then Gohonzon is only an object hanging on the wall. It doesn't mean anything to that person. Once an individual decides to take faith in this religion, someone will enshrine Gohonzon in the person's home and pray with the new believer, then the Gohonzon becomes meaningful to this individual.

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<sup>6</sup> Bodhisattva Jofukyo – Bodhisattva Fukyo – a bodhisattva described in the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Lotus Sutra who revered everyone for their inherent Buddha nature.

<sup>7</sup> Lotus Sutra – the highest teaching taught by Shakyamuni, taught in the last eight years of his life. It reveals that all life has Buddha nature, and that the life of Buddha is eternal.

We perform the eye opening ceremony for Gohonzon, juzu beads,<sup>8</sup> and in Japan we also do it for tombstones. But unless someone has the will to take faith, the Gohonzon and any other item that has had the eye opening ceremony performed for it are just objects without meaning.

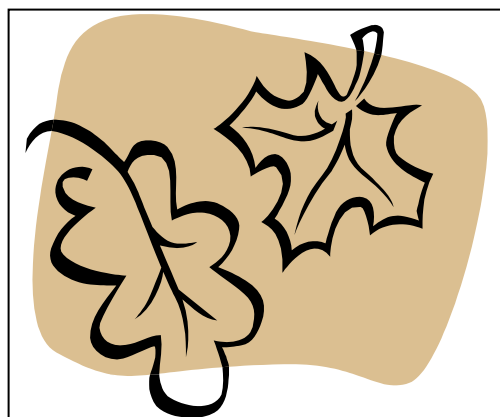
Before juzu beads are given to believers, I pray using each set of juzu and perform the eye opening ceremony, then the juzu become useful in the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's true Buddhism. These juzu are fabricated by a commercial bead manufacturer. Many different sects of Buddhism use the same juzu. There aren't different beads for different sects. So priests from different sects consecrate each set of juzu so that they can be used in their particular religion.

**B7:** What qualifies you to do an eye opening ceremony? Can't anyone else do it? What is the significance of you doing it? If the eye opening ceremony indicates only someone's determination to work for *kosen-rufu*,<sup>9</sup> to make a great cause for the sake of human beings, then can't anyone else do this?

**RH:** It is the tradition for priests to conduct this ceremony. If someone other than a priest did this, how and what would the person pray about? This remains the question. I believe this should be done by someone who has been trained and knows what he's doing.

**B2:** When I purchased my new butsudan and altar<sup>10</sup>, the company sent me juzu beads the likes of which I have never seen. The ends were not the pompoms; they were a knot. They were like the beads they use in the Gakkai<sup>11</sup>. What do you think about that? They looked strange to me. I had never seen this kind of juzu before. It looked like the Gakkai symbol. I used them twice and then I fell down a flight of stairs and broke a finger.

**RH:** (Looking at a pair of juzu with knotted ends) It looks like a soccer ball. I don't know, could this be popular nowadays? Priests use beads with tassels. We were taught that the swinging movement of the tassels signifies the mission of the priest, which is to spread the teaching. I use the tasseled juzu, but also use juzu with pompoms. The round pompoms signify perfect teachings. I don't know what the knot signifies.



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<sup>8</sup> Juzu beads – prayer beads

<sup>9</sup> Kosen-rufu – literally means the worldwide propagation of Namu-myoho-rence-kyo.

<sup>10</sup> Butsudan and altar – ( the Buddha's house) the cabinet that houses the Gohonzon, and the place where Buddhism is practiced.

<sup>11</sup> Gakkai – SGI – a lay organization that wrongly uses some of the doctrine of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism in its own philosophy and practice.

**ON KOSEN RUFU**  
**Reverend Raido Hirota**  
**Mt. Holly, New Jersey**  
**June 2008**

**QUESTION: Why is the world evil? Is it because no one criticizes the mistaken religions?**

**RH:** You were born in a country that has a certain religious tradition. Your parents believed in this religion, and most likely it was the religion of your ancestors. For this reason, you have been raised in this religion since birth. Religious belief is as fixed within a people as DNA is within one's physical makeup. Is it good to accept this religion because it's your parent's religion?

One must ask of a religion whether the religion professes happiness for all people, or only for the people who believe in it. Does it deny happiness to those who do not believe in it, and even murder non-believers? Are the believers who carry out these murders considered people of strong faith and heroes? If so, this is a religion that will never save people and will not achieve world peace.

Shakubuku<sup>12</sup> is to tell others that our religion professes happiness for all people. Is there any value in our religion? Daishonin teaches that the life of all people is equal to the Buddha's life, and that this religion does not repudiate anyone for not believing. Daishonin teaches that we must never abuse or speak ill of others. We hate slander, but we do not hate the person who slanders.

Japan is a country where people are born into a religion and they do not question it because, if their ancestors followed it, it can't be wrong. In America there are many different religions—Catholics, other Christian religions, Muslims, Jews, and so forth—but do the followers of these religions actually know what the teachings of their respective religions are?

In Tibetan Buddhism, for example, they state that they are the original Buddhism that started in India. But that is not true because they believe that the Dalai Lama is the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Kannon.<sup>13</sup> As a bodhisattva he exists in the 9<sup>th</sup> world, while Buddha is at the highest level, the 10<sup>th</sup> world. All Dalai Lamas are supposedly reincarnations of Bodhisattva Kannon and not Shakyamuni Buddha.<sup>14</sup> I would like all practitioners of every faith to really think about what they are following and not just follow blindly.

**B4:** But is it because of mistaken belief, as Nichiren Daishonin says in the *Rissho Ankoku Ron*,<sup>15</sup> that the world is evil?

**RH:** I think that Nichiren's teaching encompasses all beings and all nature on earth and not just humans. So Nichiren Daishonin is saying that natural disasters and catastrophes such as earthquakes,

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<sup>12</sup> Shakabuku – a method of propagating Buddhism by directly leading a person to the True Law and refuting his erroneous views.

<sup>13</sup> Bodhisattva Kannon – “He who perceives the sounds of the world” – according to the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Lotus sutra, he is a bodhisattva who assumes 33 different forms and appears anywhere in the world to save people from suffering and danger.

<sup>14</sup> Shakyamuni Buddha – Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (1029B.C.-949 B.C.), the historical founder of Buddhism.

<sup>15</sup> *Rissho Ankoku Ron* – (“On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism) One of Daishonin's major writings, written to the Kamakura government on July 16, 1260, it encourages government officials to abandon their belief in erroneous teachings and take up faith in Namu-myoho-renge-kyo in order to avert disaster and establish peace in the country.

typhoons and whatnot go hand in hand with human nature. Human nature also experiences catastrophes and the like. Nichiren Daishonin wants practitioners to realize that Buddha nature encompasses all phenomena, and to realize that individual life conditions are not inseparable from all phenomena in the world.

**B7:** There are so many different religions in the world, can we coexist?

**RH:** I think there is no other way. Even if the perfect teachings exist in front of you, some people may never take faith. Daishonin exerted himself, particularly in the early part of his life, in trying to convert people to his Buddhism. Sometimes people thought his methods were violent. In the early years, he thought that even though he taught the teaching in a way that seemed very harsh, or very strict to the people who couldn't take faith, these people would benefit from having made a connection to Namu-myoho-rence-kyo. The Buddhist term for this approach is *gakuin*, which means making a connection to the Law when one does not want to make a connection. In later years Daishonin modified his thinking and his approach by introducing the method illustrated by Bodhisattva Jofukyo.

Do you know the story of Utoku-o and Kakutoku? [Daishonin relays their story in the *Rissho Ankoku Ron*.] Shakyamuni Buddha preached: *“Men of devout faith, in past ages in this very city of Kushinagara a Buddha appeared whose name was Kangi Zoyaku Nyorai or the Buddha Joy Increasing. After this Buddha passed away, the True Law that he had taught remained in the world for countless millions of years. Finally, only forty more years were left before the Law was due to come to an end.*

*“At that time there was a monk named Kakutoku who observed the precepts. There were many monks at this time who violated the precepts, and when they heard this monk preaching, they all conceived evil designs in their hearts and, arming themselves with swords and staves, attacked the teacher of the Law.*

*“At this time the ruler of the kingdom was named Utoku. He received reports of what was happening and, in order to defend the Law, he went at once to the place where the monk was preaching and fought with all his might against the evil monks who did not observe the precepts. As a result, the monk who had been preaching the Law was able to escape grievous injury. But the king received so many wounds from the knives and swords, prongs and lances, that there was not a spot on his body the size of a mustard seed that remained unharmed.*

*“At this time the monk Kakutoku praised the king, saying, 'Splendid, splendid! You, O king, are now a true defender of the True Law. In ages to come, this body of yours will surely become a boundless vessel of the Law!'*

*“At that time, the king had already heard the teachings of the Law, and he felt great joy in his heart. Thereupon his life came to an end, and he was reborn in the land of the Buddha Ashuku, where he became the principal disciple of the Buddha. Moreover, all the military leaders, citizens and associates of the king who had fought beside him or had rejoiced in his effort were filled with an unflagging determination to achieve enlightenment, and when they died, all of them were reborn in the land of the Buddha Ashuku.*

*“Later the monk Kakutoku also died, and he too was reborn in the land of the Buddha Ashuku, where he became second among the disciples who received the direct teachings of the Buddha. Thus, if the True Law is about to come to an end, this is one way one ought to support and defend it.*

*“Kasho, the king who lived at the time was I myself, and the monk who preached the Law was the Buddha Kasho. Kasho, those who defended the True Law enjoy this kind of boundless reward. As a consequence, I have been able to obtain the distinguishing characteristics that I possess today, to adorn myself with them, and to put on the Dharma Body that can never be destroyed.”<sup>16</sup>*

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<sup>16</sup> *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. II, pp. 35-37.

At that particular time, killing enemies to defend the Law was acceptable, but it was not acceptable during Daishonin's day and it is not acceptable now. Nichiren Daishonin's teaching is derived in part from this story. However, it does not agree that it is okay to use violence to spread the teaching. But it does stipulate that a believer should maintain his faith and uphold the Law even if someone hits him with sticks or staves, or spits on him.

When you teach this teaching to someone and the person accepts it, the Buddhist term for this is *juin*. And as we mentioned earlier, when a person rejects the teaching it is referred to as *gakuin* or reverse relationship. We don't know if *kosen rufu* will happen in this lifetime, but even though people may not accept the teachings as a result of your shakubuku, it is still what we need to do.

**B7:** What is your view of *kosen rufu*, and do you think it can be accomplished at this time or some time in the future?

**RH:** It depends on the perspective. Take Nichiren Daishonin's for example. Initially he exerted a great effort to shakubuku the leaders of the country. During Daishonin's time 95% of the population was illiterate. Daishonin understood this and thought that if he converted the leaders of the country, then the teaching would spread throughout the entire country. That was Daishonin's initial idea. Later on Daishonin realized that a connection needed to be made with each individual. Even if the connection was a reverse relationship (*gakuin*) and the person rejected it, Daishonin was determined to make a connection one by one. That was Daishonin's approach to achieving *kosen rufu*, by planting the seed of Buddhahood in each individual life one by one. Taking our lesson from this, we must proceed in like manner, planting the seed one by one, whether it is accepted or not, making a connection to every individual with the correct teaching.

**B7:** Is there criteria by which you can determine that *kosen rufu* has been accomplished?

**RH:** Life continues life after life. We won't live forever so we need to prepare for the many generations to come. As long as we do our best, and we encourage and prepare the next generation to do the same, making sure that the flow of the true teachings continues to exist, that is the important thing.

**B7:** What actually is the meaning of *kosen rufu*?

**RH:** Making a connection one by one is the actual progression of *kosen rufu*. The way of life as a Bodhisattva of the Earth is to carry on the same mission as Nichiren Daishonin in the manner of Bodhisattva Jofukyo. During the Latter Day of the Law<sup>17</sup> people may be so deluded that they may not accept the true teachings. Nonetheless, we have to plant the seed<sup>18</sup> one by one, one after another.

**B7:** Is there an end? Will there be a time when we can say we have accomplished *kosen rufu*?

**RH:** No, there is no such thing. Because our life is a continuation, it never ends. We may be happy in this lifetime with Gohonzon and Odaimoku. Who knows what our next lifetime will be. Even if you

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<sup>17</sup> Latter Day of the Law – (Mappo) the present age which began in 1052, 2000 years after Shakymuni's death. It is the predicted evil when the true Law of Buddhism will flourish.

<sup>18</sup> Plant the seed – the seed of Buddhahood is Namu-myoho-rence-kyo. To plant the seed is to tell someone that they have Namu-myoho-rence-kyo within them.

shakubuku 100 people, what about the 101<sup>st</sup> person, and the 102<sup>nd</sup> person? There are many more people who exist. So there is no end or no point that we can say *fete accompli*. Rather it is important for us to carry on Daishonin's mission and make sure the correct teachings exist in the future.

**B2:** What is the connection between the *kosen rufu* movement and the separation of SGI, Taisekiji<sup>19</sup> temple and the Shoshin-kai?<sup>20</sup>

**RH:** SGI and Taisekiji hold the view that they need to increase the number of members in their respective organizations and increase the number of people who practice Buddhism, and that the expansion of their organizations is the bedrock of their *kosen rufu* movements. I don't believe that will happen. They won't expand the number of people [because they add members on one end and lose members on the other end]. I believe even though people may not accept the correct teaching, planting the seed and creating a reverse connection to this teaching is the key to *kosen rufu*.

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## THE SPIRIT

**Reverend Raido Hirota**  
Mt. Holly, New Jersey  
June 2008

**QUESTION: How do we pray for someone?**

**RH:** Have the heart of Bodhisattva Jofukyo. Pray that that person will live strongly, and do not lose faith that that person has the life of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo no matter what the circumstances of the person's life. Don't only pray for the person, have the courage to put your wish into action and do shakubuku. No matter how sincerely you pray for someone to practice, it is more valuable to utter one word of shakubuku than to sit in front of Gohonzon, wishing for it to happen.

**B8:** When somebody's alive it's better to shakubuku, explaining the teachings to them. But what about someone who's passed away?

**RH:** The life of a person who is alive is spirit. The spirit of a person who is alive and the spirit of a person who is dead are essentially the same. That is why it's important to chant for your deceased relatives so that they too can come to be connected to Namu-myoho-renge-kyo.

There are some people who, from their own point of view, chant for the deceased out of sadness. That is the wrong attitude. In Japan, people tend to chant for the evil spirits of the deceased not to haunt them, but to leave them alone. That is also wrong. Instead, during morning and evening

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<sup>19</sup> Taisekiji – the Head Temple of Nichiren Shoshu. The organization of priests and believers associated with the Head Temple.

<sup>20</sup> Shoshinkai – the organization of Nichiren Shoshu priests dedicated to the protection and dissemination of Nichiren Daishonin's true teachings.



gongyo<sup>21</sup> I want you to chant Odaimoku<sup>22</sup> and recite the sutra for your own enlightenment and for the enlightenment of the deceased. That is the proper way to chant.

Do people in the West believe in ghosts?

**B1:** Western tradition has a lot of angels and spirits and devils. A lot of it has to do with god creating heaven and earth.

**B9:** The Greeks and Romans have their gods. Every culture has.

**B7:** Are the Japanese ghosts spirits that haven't gone to the other side?

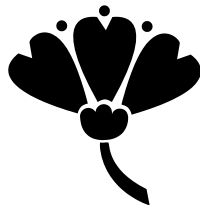
**B5:** There's an organization that one of my friends belongs to. They're ghost hunters. They're called to a house to discover whether there is any ghost activity there. They take videos, because some videos can capture a ghost that the naked eye cannot see. These ghost hunters try to find out why the ghosts are there. If they are unhappy. They don't try to capture them, but they do try to influence them and try to placate them. The people who employ this service are everyday, normal people. They're not weirdoes.

Also the Catholic church performs exorcisms. There are Catholic priests who are specially trained to remove evil spirits from inside people—and many times children.

**RH:** I'm not surprised that there are wandering spirits.

**B10:** Are they alive or dead?

**RH:** They're both.



OESHIKI  
Reverend Raido Hirota

The Ōeshiki ceremony is the most important Buddhist service, for it celebrates Nichiren Daishonin's eternal life as well as the eternal Law of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo. Having an Ōeshiki Buddhist service deepens our faith.

During gongyo, just after the *Nī-setsu-gē-gon* passage of the *Juryo* chapter, and just before the *Jiga-gē* section, stop the recitation of the sutra and read in a loud voice a passage of the Risshō Ankoku Ron from, "*The host exclaimed with delight: As the proverb says, the dove has changed into a hawk, the sparrow into a clam!*" to the end of the gosho.

In a formal Ōeshiki ceremony the shakubuku letter written to the Kamakura government by ninth High Priest Nichiū Shōnin, Nichiren Daishonin's Risshō Ankoku Ron, Daishōnin's shakubuku

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<sup>21</sup> Gongyo – the practice of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism which includes the morning and evening recitation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> chapters of the Lotus Sutra and the chanting of the daimoku, Namu-myoho-renge-kyo.

<sup>22</sup> Odaimoku – the sacred chant of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo, the title of the Lotus Sutra.

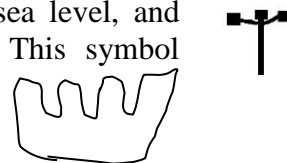
letter to the Kamakura government, the shakubuku letter of second High Priest Nikkō Shōnin to the Kamakura government, the shakubuku letter of third High Priest Nichimoku Shōnin to the Kamakura government, the shakubuku letter of fourth High Priest Nichidō Shōnin to the Kamakura government, and the shakubuku letter to the Kamakura government by fifth High Priest Nichigyō Shōnin are read in front of the Gohonzon by the priests one after another in this order. This is done so that we do not change this faith after Nichiren Daishōnin's death. No matter what time period, we must make it paramount to work for the sake of *kōsen-rūfū* and the enlightenment of all living beings.

You should make paper cherry blossoms and decorate the left and right sides of the Gohonzon, specifically because even though Nichiren Daishōnin died in autumn—the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month—the cherry blossoms bloomed throughout the country. The lotus flower symbolizes the teachings of Shakyamuni of India; after 2000 years during the Latter Day of the Law Buddhism came to Japan where the essence of Buddhism was elucidated by Nichiren Daishōnin. The cherry blossom symbolizes the passage of true Buddhism to Japan.



The photograph shows a vase of cherry blossoms on the altar at Sanbo-in. The body of the vase in which the flowers are placed from the Buddhist perspective symbolizes the Law of Buddhism and is representative of Mt. Sumeru.<sup>23</sup> The height of Mt. Sumeru is 84,000 *yojana*<sup>24</sup> above sea level, and 84,000 *yojana* below sea level. This symbol

illustrates the stars, this symbol



illustrates the stars, this symbol

stands for the waves which surround the mountain, this represents the mountains. [These surround the flowers in the cone



of the vase.] The three belts encircling the vase which support Mt. Sumeru represent the gold wheel, the water wheel, and the wind wheel. The white mountain-shaped papers surrounding the base of the vase symbolize Mt. Sumeru's seven surrounding mountains and seven oceans. In the sea surrounding the seventh gold mountain there are 4 continents. The southern most continent is Jambudvipa<sup>25</sup> where humans live. If you are not born into this world of Jambudvipa, you cannot connect with Buddhist teachings. The cherry blossoms decorating the summit of Mt. Sumeru symbolize *kōsen rūfū* and the enlightenment of all living beings.

In conclusion, in Nichiren Shōshū Buddhism we do not offer colorful flowers to Gohonzon, except at Oeshiki. You may leave the flowers decorating the altar until the end of the year. Then, in order to avoid the misunderstanding that Nichiren Shōshū decorates the Gohonzon with colorful flowers, at the end of the year please destroy and throw the cherry blossoms away.



<sup>23</sup> Mt. Sumeru – in ancient Indian cosmology Sumeru was the highest mountain in the center of the world.

<sup>24</sup> Yojana - 1 *yojana* (an Indian measurement) is 7-9 miles

<sup>25</sup> Jambudhvipa – in ancient Indian cosmology it is one of the four continents surrounding Mt. Sumeru.

# GOSHO SELECTION

## EXCERPTS

### “THE TEACHING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BUDDHA’S OWN MIND”<sup>26</sup>

You have kindly sent me three *koku* of rice. I immediately placed it as an offering before the Lotus Sutra, the single vehicle, and chanted *Namu-myoho-rence-kyo* just once. I have done this so that your beloved son may "assuredly and without doubt" be escorted to the pure land of Eagle Peak.<sup>27</sup>

The nature of cause and effect is like the relationship of flower to fruit. Or it is like the case of a single flame, no bigger than the light of a firefly, which, when applied to a thousand-*ri* plain of dried grass, in the space of an instant burns first one blade of grass, then two, then ten, a hundred, a thousand and ten thousand, so that the grass and trees over an area of ten or twenty *cho*<sup>28</sup> are consumed all at once. A dragon who places one small drop of water in its hands and ascends to the heavens can cause rain to fall upon the major world system. When performed as an offering to the Lotus Sutra, even a small act of goodness produces benefits that are equal in magnitude to these.

One hundred years after the passing of the Buddha, there was a ruler in India known as King Ashoka, who reigned over one quarter of the eighty-four thousand states that make up the continent of Jambudvipa. He was attended by the dragon kings and summoned the spirits to serve him, and, with sixty thousand arhats<sup>29</sup> as his teachers, he vowed to erect eighty-four thousand stone stupas and make offerings of tens of billions of gold pieces to the Buddha. Such was the stature of this great ruler. But if we inquire as to what meritorious deeds from past existences allowed him to achieve such greatness, we find that he had done no more than offer a single mudpie to Shakyamuni Buddha.

Shakyamuni Buddha had an uncle named King Dronodana, and this king's son was known as Aniruddha. This prince was born with a bowl in his hand, and the bowl had rice in it. When the rice was eaten, more rice appeared in the bowl, and kept on appearing, so that there was never a time when the bowl was empty of rice. As a result, when he was a child the prince was given the name At Will, and through the power of the Lotus Sutra he became a Buddha known as Universal Brightness. If we inquire as to what cause from a previous existence brought all this about, we find that it was because, in a time of famine, he offered a meal of millet to a monk who was a pratyekabuddha<sup>30</sup>.

If one can gain benefits such as these even from making an offering to a pratyekabuddha, then the benefits gained by giving an offering to the votary of the Lotus Sutra are infinitely greater, exceeding even those gained by making offerings to countless Buddhas.

Nichiren is an inhabitant of the country of Japan. Within the 7,000-yojana area that constitutes the southern continent of Jambudvipa, there are 84,000 countries. Among these, there are 16 major countries, 500 middle-sized countries, 10,000 small countries and a countless number of tiny countries scattered about like grains of millet. India is a major country, comprised of five regions. In the midst

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<sup>26</sup> *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. 7, pp. 149-153

<sup>27</sup> Eagle Peak – (Jap. *Ryojusen*) – a mountain in ancient India where Shakyamuni preached the Lotus Sutra. It symbolizes the Buddha Land or the enlightened land.

<sup>28</sup> Cho – a unit of area measuring about 9,900 sq. meters.

<sup>29</sup> Arhats – the highest stage of Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle) Buddhism.

<sup>30</sup> Pratyekabuddha – those who awaken to the law of impermanence by observing natural phenomena.

of the ocean to the east of it there is a little island, which is the country of Japan. Japan is situated over 100,000 *ri* to the east of the central region of India.

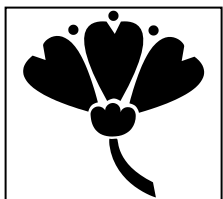
During the 1,000 years following the passing of the Buddha, known as the Former Day of the Law, Buddhism remained within the confines of India and was not transmitted to other countries. But after the 1,000 years of the Former Day of the Law had ended and the world was 15 years into the Middle Day of the Law, Buddhism was transmitted to the land of China. Three hundred years after it was introduced to China, it was transmitted to the country of Paekche [on the Korean Peninsula]. And after it had been in Paekche for 100 years and 1,415 years had elapsed since the passing of the Buddha, a bronze gilt statue of Shakyamuni Buddha and copies of various scriptures were for the first time introduced to Japan, in the reign of the thirtieth human sovereign, Emperor Kimmei....

One should understand that, of the sacred teachings of the Buddha, there are those known as *zuitai*, which are preached "in accordance with the minds of others," and those known as *zuijii*, which are preached "in accordance with the Buddha's own mind." Thus, if a parent yields to the will of his or her child, that is a case of *zuitai*. But if the child complies with the will of the parent, that is *zuijii*. All the other sutras are examples of *zuitai*, because when preaching them the Buddha adjusted himself to the minds of all other living beings. But the Lotus Sutra is an example of *zuijii*, because in it the Buddha had all living beings comply with his own mind.

The various other sutras represent the teachings of the Buddha, but if one puts faith in them, then one is simply following the minds of ordinary people and will never be able to attain Buddhahood. The Lotus Sutra is both the teaching of the Buddha and the embodiment of the Buddha wisdom. If one puts sincere faith in each character and brushstroke in it, then one will become a Buddha in one's present form. For example, a piece of white paper becomes black when dipped in black ink, and black lacquer turns white when white liquid is poured into it. Just as poison turns into medicine, so do ordinary individuals change into Buddhas. Accordingly we call it the wonderful teaching....

Nichiren

The second day of the fifth month in second year of Koan (1279), cyclical sign *tsuchinoto-u*  
Reply to Lord Niike



October 13<sup>th</sup>

Happy Oeshiki!

*Oeshiki documents for the Oeshiki ceremony can be obtained at [www.udumbaraoundation.org](http://www.udumbaraoundation.org)*