

# THE MIDDLE WAY

ADVOCATING THE TRUE TEACHINGS OF NICHIREN THE TRUE BUDDHA

AUTUMN

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## IN THIS ISSUE

Having the Heart in the Right Place	1
Nichiren Daishonin's Attributes	6
Stay Close to Home	8
How to Change Society	9
Treasures of the Heart	12
Oeshiki	14

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## HAVING YOUR HEART IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Reverend Raido Hirota  
Mt. Holly, New Jersey  
June 2007

**Rev. Raido Hirota (RH):** Ever since I started my training as a Buddhist priest, I have never wished for personal or material gain. I have only wished for enlightenment. Many people may think that such an aspiration is unique to Nichiren Daishonin<sup>1</sup> or Shakyamuni<sup>2</sup>, but that is not true. When you think about your life and ask, who am I? What is this life? Why am I alive? Then you will realize that you also want to become enlightened.

I never teach anyone to be concerned about material gain. My focus and the thrust of what I have been teaching have only been on becoming enlightened. To become enlightened is very important to your life. In "The Supreme Leader of the World," Daishonin wrote to Shijo Kingo<sup>3</sup>, "Buddhism is reason. Reason will win over your lord. No matter how dearly you may love your wife and wish never to part from her, when you die, it will be to no avail. No matter how dearly you may cherish your estate, when you die, it will only fall into the hands of others. You have been prosperous enough for all these years. You must not give your estate a second thought....I, Nichiren have never prayed for the secular things of life but have single-mindedly sought to become a Buddha. Of late, however, I have been ceaselessly praying for your sake to the Lotus Sutra<sup>4</sup>, Shakyamuni Buddha and the god of the sun, for I am

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

<sup>2</sup> Shakyamuni – Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (1029 B.C.-949 B.C.), the historical founder of Buddhism.

<sup>3</sup> Shijo Kingo – a samurai and a strong follower of Nichiren Daishonin.

convinced that you are a man who can inherit the soul of the Lotus Sutra.”

**Believer 1(B1):** If someone prays for material things and they get it, but later it doesn't work out, how should we understand that?

**RH:** The person will think, I was wishing for this thing, but it didn't happen the way I wanted it to. So the person is disappointed and hurt. This person will have to think and study hard about what life is for? He will then have to decide whether he is doing the right thing or the wrong thing.

**B1:** A lot of people offer prayers for material things and that is not how you are supposed to pray.

**B2:** Many times people don't get what they want and they get very discouraged. Or it turns to poison and then they give up on their practice.

**RH:** I received *gojukai*<sup>5</sup> when I was five years old. I remember being taken to the temple to receive *gojukai*, but when the actual ceremony took place I was sleeping.

Up to the age of twelve years old my parents told me to do *gongyo*<sup>6</sup> everyday, but I hated it. Everyday my parents took part in *Gakkai*<sup>7</sup> activities, and were absent from my life. So I hated the practice. At the age of twelve I finally understood the purpose of practice and a little bit about why my parents practiced. With that little bit of understanding I had acquired came the desire to become a priest.

My children received *gojukai* when they were three months old. They don't remember it at all. When my children entered the first grade I told them they must do *gongyo* everyday because it is the correct thing to do, and it is important for their life. My son complained saying, “Nobody in my class does this.” I told him that nobody knows about it, that's why they don't do it. You must explain it to your children when they are young so that when they get older they will understand. My children are now grown up and they do *gongyo* everyday.

**B3:** How do you introduce the practice of doing *gongyo* to an adult – someone who is completely new to the practice? Do you tell them to do the whole *gongyo*, or do you tell them to do just a little bit and gradually add to it?

**RH:** When my son was three years old and my daughter was two, I started to teach them *gongyo*. Of course they could not read at that age, so I would say a phrase – “*Myoho-rence-kyo*” and they would repeat, “*Myoho-rence-kyo*,” I would say, “*Hoben-pon dai-ni*,” and they would repeat, “*Hoben-pon dai-ni*,” etc. I did this for ten to fifteen minutes everyday for a year. It took my son one year to learn all of *gongyo*. After they had memorized *gongyo*, my children followed along with me until they were able to read it on their own. If I had had them learn one section at a time, like the first part of the *Hoben-pon* or the *jigage*<sup>8</sup>, then they would not have wanted to do the whole *gongyo*. So it is better to teach them and have them do all of *gongyo*. And as I mentioned earlier, once my children entered the first grade, they started doing *gongyo* everyday.

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<sup>4</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.

<sup>5</sup> *Gojukai* – the consecration and conversion ceremony for accepting faith in Nichiren Daishonin's true Buddhism.

<sup>6</sup> *Gongyo* – the morning and evening recitation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> chapters of the Lotus Sutra.

<sup>7</sup> *Gakkai* – Soka Gakkai (SGI) – a lay or secular organization that misuses some of the doctrine of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism in its own philosophy and practice.

<sup>8</sup> *Jigage* – the verse section of the 16<sup>th</sup> (*Juryo*) chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

**B1:** Why do we say at the end of 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 of Buddha of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo, if they believe in Namu-myoho-renge-kyo and practice?”

**RH:** [These words are the translation of the 24 characters of Bodhisattva Jofukyo <sup>9</sup> .] Nichiren Daishonin is carrying on the heritage of Bodhisattva Jofukyo. The way of life for the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra—the practitioner of Nichiren Daishonin’s true Buddhism—is indicated in these 24 characters. The first half of this phrase reflects the meaning of the Hoben chapter. The second half comes from the *Juryo* (16<sup>th</sup>) chapter. The *Hoben* (2<sup>nd</sup>) chapter says the Buddha’s life and our life are equal. This teaching is reflected in the words, “I respect everyone, I do not despise anyone, not even a little, or look down on anyone...because everyone has the capacity to become a Buddha.” The *Juryo* chapter explains why the Buddha’s life and our life are equal. It also explains that anyone who practices and lives Namu-myoho-renge-kyo <sup>10</sup> can become enlightened. This teaching is reflected in the words “everyone can become a Buddha of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo if they believe in Namu-myoho-renge-kyo and practice.” That is why I practice the way of Bodhisattva Jofukyo. This phrase from Bodhisattva Jofukyo comes from chapter 20 of the Lotus Sutra. But the teaching contained in this phrase reflects the teachings contained in the essential teachings (*hommon*), the latter fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra.

Why is it so important to read a teaching that is a lesser teaching than the teachings of the *Juryo* chapter? Because the essence of this one phrase from chapter 20 is as important as the teaching in the *Juryo* chapter, which is the most important chapter in the Lotus Sutra. This phrase spoken by Bodhisattva Jofukyo encapsulates the two chapters that make up our practice, and it defines our true practice.

**QUESTION:** Where does the daimoku<sup>11</sup> reside? When I chant, is Namu-myoho-renge-kyo in my brain, in my soul or in my body?

**RH:** You must awaken to the realization that you have Buddha’s life within you. Daimoku resides in the brain, in the soul, and in the body too. The Law of *ichinen sanzen*<sup>12</sup>, as explained in the Lotus Sutra, states that the life of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo exists even in a speck of dust. Every cell in every

24 characters of Bodhisattva  
Jofukyo  
In modern Japanese

Ware fukaku nanjirao  
uyamau aete koman  
sezu yuen wa i kan nanji  
ra mina bosatsu no  
michio gyojite masa ni  
sabutsu suru koto-o

<sup>9</sup> Bodhisattva Jofukyo – (Fukyo) – a bodhisattva described in chapter 20 of the Lotus Sutra, who revered everyone for their innate Buddha nature.

<sup>10</sup> Namu-myoho-renge-kyo – the Mystic Law, the ultimate Law of life and the universe, the Buddha nature within all things.

<sup>11</sup> Daimoku – the chanting of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo.

<sup>12</sup> Ichinen sanzen – a single life moment contains three thousand realms of existence, or within a single life moment a single entity contains all other life.

human body, and all cells throughout the universe have the Buddha's life of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo. Each and every cell has the Buddha's life.

Namu-myoho-renge-kyo is in every cell of our bodies, and every cell of everyone else's body, as well as in every cell of all living things. Namu-myoho-renge-kyo is in everything, everywhere. Don't think of life as individual entities. All life is dependent on all other life. We are a part of everybody and everything around us. Everything is interconnected. So, the answer to the question, Where does Namu-myoho-renge-kyo reside? Is that it resides everywhere. Here. There. Everywhere. It's in everything. Namu-myoho-renge-kyo even resides in the air you breathe. Don't look for it to be located in just one place. Namu-myoho-renge-kyo is in everything.

### **QUESTIONS: What does the Daimoku change—my opinion, my attitude or my karma?**

**RH:** There isn't any change. Daimoku works to awaken the Buddha's life in you. You must try to live as a believer of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, believing in and matching, rivaling or equaling the daimoku. If you don't, you will not change. If you chant daimoku sincerely in front of Gohonzon,<sup>13</sup> but then you act or think differently when you leave Gohonzon, then you cannot say you believe in Daishonin's teaching.

**B4:** You say there isn't any change. But then it says daimoku awakens the Buddha's life. So it would seem that you change from a life of being asleep to awake. Some people chant years and years and nothing appears to happen.

**RH:** Do you mean in one's heart? Or physical changes? In one's life style? Or do you think you're going to become prosperous?

**B4:** Basic attitudes. Many people chant daimoku; many people who started chanting within the Soka Gakkai or Taiseikiji. It's not like an automatic thing that you just chant and it happens (the awakening), there has to be something behind that. The mechanical chanting itself.

**RH:** If you are concentrating on specific or conscious change in attitude or something you want to be awakened to within yourself, you won't see it. It's something that comes about subconsciously; you can't will it to happen. If you have a specific idea in mind when you chant, you won't see it. It will just happen.

Here is my experience. When I was five years old my father taught me gongyo. I asked him what gongyo was and why I should do it and why I should chant daimoku. What was it all for? I asked him. My father said to me, just do it. Just do it. And he never gave me an answer. I hated doing gongyo and chanting daimoku. Then at the age of 12 I became an acolyte in the priesthood. Studying and training for the priesthood is very difficult and harsh. While I was studying I would fall asleep. I would also make mistakes during recitation of gongyo. Because of this I was punished—kicked and slapped. This happened day after day, and I hated it. During all this time I wondered why I had to suffer through this. This is torture. But then one day in my teenage years I became aware of the joy of chanting. This was not something anyone taught me or told me about it. It was just something that opened up in me, that I became aware of. That's when I first began to understand the joy and the rewards that chanting can bring about within oneself. That was the first time that happened. The change that occurred was

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<sup>13</sup> Gohonzon – the scroll that is the mandala or object of worship of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, and represents the Law of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo.

not that I could eat better food, wear nicer clothes, drive a better car, or any other material reward, it was the joy and pleasure of having my heart in the right place. Once you feel this yourself, you can understand why you are chanting.

**B4:** I'm sure Daisaku Ikeda<sup>14</sup> has chanted a lot of daimoku. Why hasn't it awakened the Buddha nature in him?

**RH:** If you chant and concentrate on the wrong things as the Soka Gakkai and Ikeda do—wanting more things for themselves: more power, money, the Nobel Peace Prize, etc., the material things; moreover, they also chant for bad things to happen to other people—then you won't become enlightened. The Gakkai and Ikeda are misusing the practice.

**B4:** So it's nothing magic? You say the magic words and it happens. You have to have the right attitude.

**QUESTION:** When you chant, can your daimoku affect me, or does daimoku only affect the individual who is chanting?

**RH:** Yes, it will influence you and others. A student learned A B C from a teacher. He wrote A B C, himself, and then he told others. It's the same principle. In "Reply to Nakaoki Nyudo" Daishonin wrote: "Moreover, on the thirteenth anniversary of the death of your infant daughter, you erected a sixteen foot *sotoba*<sup>15</sup> with the seven characters Namu-myoho-enge-kyo inscribed on it. When the north wind blows, it is said, fish in the southern sea who are touched by it will be released from their sufferings; and when the wind comes from the east, birds and deer in the western mountains who come in contact with it will escape from the path of Animality and be born in the inner court of the Tushita Heaven<sup>16</sup>. How much greater still will be the blessings of those human beings who rejoice at this *sotoba*, touch it with their hands, or gaze upon it with their eyes! I believe that because of the benefit derived from your erecting this *sotoba*, your deceased parents must be illuminating the pure land as brilliantly as would the sun and moon in the heavens. Furthermore, you yourselves, their filial son and his wife, as well as your children, will live to be one hundred and twenty, and after death, you will be with your parents in the pure land of Eagle Peak<sup>17</sup>. You should consider this to be as certain as the fact that the moon is reflected in clear water, or that a hand drum produces a sound when struck. Should you erect any *sotobas* in the future, be sure to have the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra inscribed on them as well."

This gosho passage demonstrates how powerful daimoku is. But we human beings should not wait for someone to influence us. We can chant ourselves. Don't wait like animals or plants or insects to make a connection. Do it yourself.

**B5:** You said daimoku works to awaken the Buddha's life in us, so when we chant daimoku, does it also awaken the Buddha's life in everything, such as friends, family and all life?

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<sup>14</sup> Daisaku Ikeda – president of Soka Gakkai International.

<sup>15</sup> Sotoba – stupa for the deceased.

<sup>16</sup> The Inner Court of Tushita Heaven – Heaven of Satisfaction where it is said Bodhisattva Maitreya resides, awaiting rebirth to become the next Buddha.

<sup>17</sup> Eagle Peak – or Vulture Peak. A mountain in ancient India where Shakyamuni is said to have taught the Lotus Sutra.

**RH:** Hei no Saemon, an official of the Kamakura Shogunate, was preparing to behead Nichiren Daishonin at Tatsunokuchi<sup>18</sup> on September 12, 1271. Daishonin began to chant, not for himself, but for Hei no Saemon to become aware of the Buddha nature within him. In other words, Daishonin chanted for Hei no Saemon's enlightenment. So even though this man was about to kill the Daishonin, Daishonin chose to pray for something good for his executioner. Just as Hei no Saemon raised his sword to chop off Daishonin's head, a comet flashed across the sky and illuminated the entire horrid scene. Hei no Saemon was stunned and froze in place. He was unable to decapitate the Daishonin.

Even if you are at the point of being killed, don't chant to save yourself; chant with conviction and a strong desire for the salvation of the other person – for your persecutor to take faith in Namu-myoho-rence-kyo.

The way the Soka Gakkai teaches its believers to have faith by chanting daimoku over and over again to avoid accidents and eliminate hardships and misfortune is incorrect.

In the case of Nichiren Daishonin, he became the zenshishiki (good friend) of Hei no saemon by giving him the good seed of Namu-myoho-rence-kyo.

**B5:** With regard to the words of Bodhisattva Jofukyo – ultimately I respect everybody. But is it difficult for you to have this deep respect for the Soka Gakkai when you see all the damage they've done?

**RH:** I respect the person as a human being who possesses the Buddha nature, but not their beliefs and their behavior. I hope and pray they will change. I never say that I hate someone. I don't wish any harm or misfortune to come to people I may disagree with. What I wish for is that the spirit of Buddha awakens within them. The individual has Buddha nature and therefore has the capacity to awaken his Buddha nature. That is why I respect him. But I don't respect their practice. The Gakkai's method of shakubuku<sup>19</sup>, which is to constantly try to convince, change, brainwash, force to follow and believe in their way, will never wake up the Buddha nature. The Gakkai has the idea that if you're healthy, you're a winner, but if you're ill, you're a loser and practicing wrong. If you are sick and you die, you're a loser. If you live, you're a winner. Daishonin has never taught such a teaching.

Initially, some people practiced with the Soka Gakkai for a number of years, then left and came over to the Shoshinkai. But then when something happens – sickness or some misfortune – they begin to have doubts, and begin to waver and think maybe this isn't right. Maybe I should not have left the Gakkai. There are a lot of people who might be wavering and backsliding. Just as a child is taught by their parents to do something even though the child doesn't know why, that lesson from the parent is imprinted in the child, and stays with the child, even if what they were taught was incorrect. It's the same with the teachings of the Gakkai. The first impressions will stay with you. If people were taught Buddhism incorrectly, it stays in the back of their mind, and then if they encounter some difficulty, they have the tendency to think maybe the Soka Gakkai was right. Maybe I should not have changed. You have to fight what you know is wrong. You cannot chant daimoku to triumph over someone else, or to get rid of your enemy, or to stop someone or prevent someone from hurting you at any point. This is something you have to always fight against within yourself.

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<sup>18</sup> Tatsunokuchi – during 13<sup>th</sup> century Japan it was the execution grounds on the outskirts of Kamakura.

<sup>19</sup> Shakubuku – propagation of true Buddhism by the refutation of erroneous teachings.

# NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S ATTRIBUTES

Reverend Raido Hirota

Mt. Holly, New Jersey

June 2007

**QUESTION:** In the Third Silent Prayer, please translate the following terms, which describe the Daishonin:

*isshin soku sanjin*

*Sanjin soku isshin*

*Sanze jogo no goriyaku*

*Shu shi shin santoku, daiji daihi shuso Nichiren Daishoninshi etc.*

(until the end of this part)

**RH:** *Isshin soku sanjin sanjin soku isshin*

Buddhahood is certainly inherent in the three properties (bodies) of the Tathagata (Nyorai). The three properties (*sanjin*) of the Tathagata are: *hosshin nyorai*, *houshin nyorai* and *ojin nyorai*. *Hosshin* – the Buddha can see the absolute truth which others cannot see. *Hosshin* is the Buddha. *Ojin* – a person who appears in this world as an ordinary human being, preaches to the people, and saves them as an ordinary human being. *Houshin* – the Buddha's wisdom. *Houshin*, *hosshin* and *ojin* are related. *Houshin* is at the center. Daishonin's ranks as *Houshin*.

In all the sutras taught prior to the Lotus Sutra, the three properties or bodies were separate and competed with each other. That is, *Houshin* was great, but *Ojin* was greater. By comparison, when it comes to the Lotus Sutra it states that *Houshin* is at the center, and all three properties become one property. So one body possesses three properties (*isshin soku sanjin*), and three properties settle into one body (*sanjin soku isshin*). This was taught for the first time in the Lotus Sutra. This silent prayer is T'ien-t'ai's expression of *Nyorai himitsu jinzu shi riki* ("the secret, mysterious, and super-naturally pervading powers of the Tathagata")

*Sanze jo go no goriyaku*

Throughout the three existences of past, present and future you will certainly be enlightened.

*Shu shi shin santoku, daiji daihi shuso Nichiren Daishoninshi...*

As explained in Buddhism the three important virtues that protect us in this society and in this world are the heart of the sovereign, the heart of the teacher and the heart of the parent (*santoku*). Daishonin possesses all three of these. He possesses the greatest benevolence (*daiji daihi*) and bestows this benevolence on us as a ray of light that illuminates the objective of enlightenment. We have to repay our debt of gratitude for Daishonin's benevolence.

# STAY CLOSE TO HOME

Reverend Raido Hirota

Mt. Holly, New Jersey

June 2007

**QUESTION: What does it mean to be Buddha? Does it mean change of life, or a realization in the mind?**

**RH:** You have to awaken to the understanding that you have the Buddha's life within you (Namu-myoho-renge-kyo). You must steer your life to suit the teachings. Also tell others who still don't know that they have the Buddha nature. Say to them that the way of life of a practitioner is enlightenment.

**B2:** Does this mean you can't be a Buddha without teaching others? You can't just awaken, and then declare you are a Buddha?

**RH:** You have to believe, you have to practice, you have to study and you have to do shakubuku. All four of these actions have to be implemented in order to become enlightened. Not one of these stands alone. You cannot eliminate anyone of them. You must teach, and show, and plant the seed. Everyone possesses the seed within them. But some are aware of it, and some are not. You have to help people become aware of it and awaken to it within themselves. This is shakubuku. Don't aspire to reach Buddhahood. In other words, don't think about trying to achieve some lofty level or state of being. All that is necessary for you to do is to believe, practice, study and shakubuku correctly. And without seeking it, you will feel the Buddha nature within. As time goes by you might get sidetracked by this and that in daily life. That is why we do morning and evening gongyo to Gohonzon, to constantly remind us of our Buddha nature and constantly open it up. For example, if you set out on a journey and you've gone too far, when it gets dark you may not be able to find your way back home. This analogy can be applied to the reason we need to do gongyo everyday. Chanting everyday keeps you close to home; close to your Buddha nature. The Soka Gakkai has strayed so far from home that they are lost. They've made their home in the pursuit of power and money.

**B6:** What about Taiseikiji<sup>20</sup>?

**RH:** Taiseikiji is where the Nichiren Shoshu<sup>21</sup> school of Buddhism was established over 700 years ago. Second High Priest Nikko Shoshin established the center of Nichiren Daishonin's school of true Buddhism at Taiseikiji in 1290, eight years after Daishonin passed away. About 30 years ago 200 priests (Shoshin-kai), including myself, warned Taiseikiji that if they continued to support the Soka Gakkai, which was slandering Daishonin's Buddhism, we could no longer support Taiseikiji. Taiseikiji summarily excommunicated us. But about 15 or 16 years ago Taiseikiji finally realized the true nature of the Soka Gakkai – that their beliefs and actions were wrong. But Taiseikiji never apologized to us Shoshin-kai priests and didn't invite us to return. Now there are three divisions in Nichiren Shoshu. Taiseikiji made the grave mistake of not being true to the teachings and beliefs of the true Buddha,

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<sup>20</sup> Taiseikiji – the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism and those associated with it.

<sup>21</sup> Nichiren Shoshu – a Buddhist religion dedicated to teaching the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin, the true Buddha.

Nichiren Daishonin. The Soka Gakkai and Taisekiji battle between each other so intensely that their eyes look like triangles.

*"To date, a total of 67 universities in China have awarded honorary doctorates or Professorships to Ikeda."*

Source:  
[sgi.org/media/press-release/press061010.html](http://sgi.org/media/press-release/press061010.html)

Did you know that the Soka Gakkai and China have a close relationship?

**B6:** Are they practicing Buddhism in China?

**RH:** They have political and social ties with China. And no matter what human rights offenses or other offenses China commits, the Soka Gakkai never criticizes them or questions their policies.

**B6:** You said SGI lost its way home. Is the same true of Taisekiji?

**RH:** Taisekiji claims that the reason their direction and interpretations of the teachings are slightly different is because they are the new evolution of the teachings of Daishonin. That is absolutely incorrect. Taisekiji has also lost their way home. The high priest believes that he is the Daishonin of our time. For that reason he feels he can alter the true teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. For this reason alone, that the high priest can think that he is the most significant person in our religion, is an indication that Taisekiji has lost its way, since the Daishonin teaches that everyone is equal.

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## HOW TO CHANGE SOCIETY

Reverend Raido Hirota

Mt. Holly, New Jersey

June 2007

**QUESTION:** Is the future determined, or can it be changed? Can daimoku change the whole future: my future, my loved ones' future; society and the world?

**RH:** What do you mean by "the future"? I have spoken about this before. Half of our karma is set, half is created during our lifetime. So some things can change, and some cannot. The one thing you must change is to awaken from oblivion to the awareness that you have Buddha nature within you. This is more important than trying to make a sick person well, or taking a poor person out of poverty. Whether its the present or the future, trying to realize the Buddha's spirit within is the one change we must achieve.

**QUESTION:** Radical Christians are proselytizing in various departments of our government, especially the Pentagon, creating super-militias to confront the radical Moslems around the world. They believe Christ will return after Armageddon. They believe it is their mission to bring that about. How should we as Buddhists view this and prepare for this, how do we deal with this?

**RH:** In the history of the United States there has been fighting between Catholics and Protestants, and religious discrimination within society. This has happened repeatedly. But the United States thinks that it is right; it rules the world; and believes that it is both the judge and police of the world. If this were a true democracy, you would not want to control the world with power and aggression.

The sutra does not teach us to use force, violence, or war to gain supremacy over others. It teaches us to *shakubuku* and *shakubuku*, then to wait for people to awaken to *Myoho*<sup>22</sup>. Unlike Christianity, which teaches that if you go to hell, that's the end of it, the Buddha teaches that all living things have the life of Buddha. Realize that everyone makes mistakes as ordinary human beings.

The Gakkai claims they practice Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, but just like America, they use force which is in opposition to Daishonin's teaching.

We are not powerless, but we have minimal power. We live to match, or equal *Myoho*. Because a country is made up of individuals, you must tell, one by one, those with whom you come into contact about *Myoho*. Then society will change,.

**B3:** How are we supposed to react as a Buddhist? Suppose someone punches us. Should we defend ourselves? Or should we let it happen?

**RH:** Once you strike back or take revenge, there's no end to it. Even if the clash ends, the aggression still remains within you.

**B7:** Are we then supposed to be like Christians and turn the other cheek?

**RH:** You need more courage to not strike back and start a conflict. It takes greater courage not to fight. I'm not sure, when faced with such a situation, I would be strong enough not to strike back in trying to defend myself. Nevertheless, Daishonin teaches that even if you are about to have your head cut off, as he was, you should always employ passive resistance. For instance, the Kamakura government exiled Daishonin to Sado Island, where they confined him to a hut that barely had a roof. During the harsh winters the snow would pour through the roof and pile up around Daishonin knee or waist deep. His only food was that which was secreted to him by people who took pity on him. When Daishonin heard that his believers were appealing to the Kamakura government for his release and plotting his escape, he admonished them to stop. He told them their actions were not the actions his disciples should be engaged in. To explain his position Daishonin said that everything has a reason, and he gave three reasons why his disciples should not take the course of action to rescue him:

1. He himself was receiving retribution for the bad karma he had created in the past.
2. As predicted in the Kanji (13<sup>th</sup>) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the votary of the Lotus Sutra would confront severe hardship and difficulty that could perhaps result in the loss of life.
3. He believed the Buddhist gods sent him to Sado for a reason. Had he stayed in Kamakura he would not have attained the realization which he perceived on

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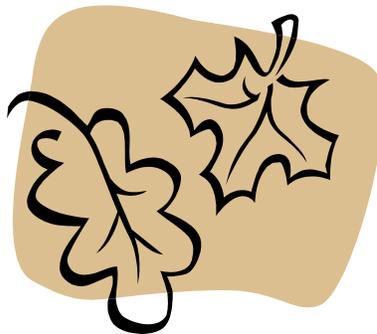
<sup>22</sup> Myoho – Mystic Law.

Sado. It was only on Sado that he could realize the full scope of his enlightenment and his mission.

As suggested here in Daishonin's explanation, we should not think that the person treating us badly is the problem, or that we are the problem because of negative karma we created in a past existence. As Daishonin exemplified, even if we are about to lose our lives, it is a greater sin to injure someone or to do harm to the true teachings.

Daishonin's followers and disciples, Shijo Kingo, Nanjo Tokimitsu, and Toki Jonin were warriors and true believers who tried to conduct their lives in the correct way. But no matter what was happening, Daishonin could not allow them to intervene with force or wiles even though Daishonin's life was at stake, and even though their intentions were to protect and perpetuate the faith of Nichiren. No force or maneuverings whatsoever can be employed to maintain this religion. It will have to come about only through prayer and faith. More than their lords and lieges and government officials whom they served and answered to, the samurai disciples and followers of Nichiren Daishonin had to first and foremost follow and uphold the Daishonin's teachings. You must at all times follow the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. However, warriors are warriors. Samurai fight. They fight to prosper; to accumulate land, wealth and power. So, for the samurai warriors who were followers of the Daishonin, their whole way of life was at odds with the passive resistance Daishonin advocated and the purpose of practice which is not to seek material gain, but rather to seek to awaken the Buddha nature within. Nonetheless, Daishonin never ordered them not to do this, or not to do that. He left it to them to realize or to choose not to kill and not to pursue material gain.

If you are a believer of Nichiren Daishonin's true Buddhism and are in the military, then you are at odds with Daishonin's teachings. I can't sit here and tell you, you have to do this or that. All I can do is explain to you what the true teachings of Nichiren Daishonin are and how the Buddha nature can manifest in your life through practicing the teachings correctly. I am not going to tell you in each and every instance what to do. You yourself have to have faith, have to practice, and have to study the teachings and determine, situation by situation, what you have to do. You yourself have to become aware of the correct action on your own. But don't chant Namu-myoho-enge-kyo praying for yourself. Chant to deepen your faith in Namu-myoho-enge-kyo. Chant to know how you can use your life to further Namu-myoho-enge-kyo. If each of you can use the four pillars of faith, practice, study and shakubuku and strive to realize how you can use your life to further the Buddha's spirit contained in the Lotus Sutra, then the world will definitely change.



# GOSHO SELECTION

## *Excerpt*

### **The Three Kinds of Treasure<sup>23</sup>**

Over and over I recall the moment, 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.<sup>24</sup> 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 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 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>25</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."

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<sup>23</sup> *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. Two, pp. 278-281.

<sup>24</sup> Ten Goddesses – also known as the Ten Demon Daughters – the daughters of the demon Kishbojin, who vowed to protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

<sup>25</sup> Prince 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.

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.<sup>26</sup>"

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, told the high minister Soga no Umako<sup>27</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>28</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 Jofukyo'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  
Sept 11, 1277 Shijo Kingo

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<sup>26</sup> Paramita – a Sanskrit word meaning perfection—the practices a Bodhisattva had to undertake to achieve perfection.

<sup>27</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>28</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.

# Oeshiki

October 13, 1282



Oeshiki is the most important ceremony in Nichiren Shoshu. On the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of *Koan* (1282), Daishonin's body, which was the same as our bodies, passed away at the age of 61. But the Buddha nature - the life of Namu-myoho-renge-kyo itself - never dies; it is eternal. That is why we celebrate Oeshiki, to affirm the eternal life of the Buddha.

At the time the Daishonin passed away, the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month would have actually fallen at the end of November rather than October. It was winter, yet the cherry blossoms bloomed throughout Japan. Thus, for Oeshiki we make paper cherry blossoms and place them on either side of Gohonzon.

Oeshiki should be celebrated as a joyous occasion, with much festivity.

Congratulations  
*and*  
Happy Oeshiki!

