

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism

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Nichiren Daishonin, 1222-1282 A.D.

Introduction

This document is designed to give those interested in Nichiren Buddhism everything they need to practice, all in one place. Both theory and actual practice are described thoroughly and concisely. The document is only 81 pages long. With what is in this document, you can practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism either affiliated with one of the Nichiren denominations, or independently.

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The Author's Personal Testimonial



Gerry (right) and Sweetie eating (left), January 2013

Hello. My name is Gerry Aitken. I was born in 1954. I grew up in a suburb of New York City. Throughout grammar school, middle school and the first two years of high school, I was frequently bullied, including being physically manhandled. This did not stop until I took up karate in my junior year high school (1970). I also took up tai chi chuan in 1982. I remain a martial artist today, still practicing vigorously.

My success in defending myself in the latter years of high school gave me an animalistic world view. I felt that force was the prime motivator of life, that the strong survive, the weak perish, and that there is no room in life for compassion. I was now “strong”, and I was never going to be “weak” again.

Fortunately for me, in my first few years of college in the early seventies, the TV show “Kung Fu” with David Carradine was popular (the original version of the show). From watching this I learned that martial arts and Buddhism had a connection. Then I started reading, and I found out that Bodhidharma (Daruma) is the founder not only of Kung Fu but also of Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism. While reading up on all this, I was isolated in the suburbs of New York, at home with my parents. But I made up my mind that in September, when I returned to Baltimore to do my senior year at Johns Hopkins, I was going to find a Zen Buddhist center and learn to meditate.

However, in September, my karate instructor, Mark Spencer, told me that *he* was practicing Nichiren Buddhism, and he recommended I do that rather than Zen. Based on the trust I had for Mark personally, I took his advice and made the first moves in my Nichiren Buddhist practice.

Practicing Nichiren Buddhism changed my compassionless view of life. My fellow Buddhists consistently showed concern for my happiness and took good care of me, teaching me the basics of Buddhism. This inspired me to start having compassion and kindness myself. Eventually, I was transformed – from a worshipper of force to a

humanistic person.

I learned to cope with my past (being bullied) by chanting a lot, studying Buddhism, and sharing Buddhism with others (I introduced several people). I also taught karate in the 1980s. Teaching it – helping others learn to defend themselves – was very therapeutic for me. I also did work in the security field, and it was likewise very therapeutic for me to work protecting people, property, and information. In the 1990s I developed a large collection of plastic toy soldiers and museum quality military miniatures. I stage rubber band gun battles with the plastic toy soldiers, a harmless way to sublimate anger. Today the years when I was bullied are just a dim, distant memory. That experience no longer holds back my happiness.

Manifesting my Buddha Nature by practicing Nichiren Buddhism has given me an uncanny affinity with animals. I have two happy, healthy indoor cats – Kitty and Sweetie. They both accept being indoors in my one bedroom apartment; they are cute, affectionate and playful; they do not pester me, demand attention, or get in my way; they are non-destructive; and they both use the litter box effectively.

Kitty is a brown striped Tabby. Kitty was formerly living in extremely cramped conditions on board a long haul truck tractor, with two adult humans and two medium size dogs also crammed inside. My two elderly 17 year old cats, Tippy and Zippy, had both died within a few months of each other in early 2010. I began chanting every day for the perfect replacement cat. The truck driver gave me Kitty on December 25, 2010 as I was at work guarding the truck stop. Such a fantastic Christmas present from the Buddha! Kitty was only a year old when I got him.

In June of 2012, Kitty and I added Sweetie to our little indoor family. Sweetie is a short limbed gray female cat whom I fed and tamed for several years before she felt ready to come inside. During the latter part of the taming period, Sweetie slept in a cat igloo on my patio, and, through daily interactions at my patio screen door, became close friends with Kitty. Now Sweetie loves being inside and safe just as much as Kitty does. Sweetie gets along beautifully with Kitty. Now Kitty has a companion to keep him company when I'm at work. Of course before bringing Sweetie inside I had her tested, and she is free of AIDS and leukemia, so she cannot sicken Kitty. At this testing (early June 2012), the Vet said Sweetie was about five years old.

Kitty and Sweetie come to the window and greet me when I come home from work. They sleep with me, cuddled up right beside me. They play “chase the ball”, “chase the string”, and “chase the plastic mouse” with me. They purr loud when I hold them, pet them and kiss them. They lick my nose and my fingers every now and then. They love me and I love them. If a cat is aloof, that is usually the owner's fault not the cat's fault. I shower my cats with love and affection, and consequently they love me back, every bit as much. Kitty and Sweetie make me very happy. Although I am single I am never lonely, and this is because of Kitty and Sweetie.

There's a lesson in all of this. I chanted almost nine months to get my cat benefit. Those nine months were lonely at home without a cat. But when Kitty finally came into

my life, he was the PERFECT cat in every way. And now I also have Sweetie to add to my joy, another PERFECT apartment cat! I've now recovered my loss from when Tippy and Zippy died in early 2010. So don't ever give up half-way when you're chanting for something! Give it time, be patient, persevere, and trust the Buddha. Your benefit will come, in the right way, and at the right time. Sometimes, the greater the benefit, the longer it takes – because when it finally happens, it will unfold in the PERFECT WAY. I have also saved eleven other stray cats and one stray dog – by feeding them, getting to know them, and then taking them to a no-kill shelter, where every one was eventually adopted (these were cats who wanted to be outside; that is why I did not keep them. They were adopted by people with five bedroom houses and two acre yards; one cat even wound up living on a small farm). I almost always win the trust of animals, even semi-wild ones, because animals have the same Buddha Nature that I cultivate in myself through Buddhist practice.

I feed Kitty and Sweetie both dry cat food and canned cat food. And I feed four stray cats exactly the same way - Sassy, Shamus, Tux, and Brownie.

My love for living creatures is so strong that when I am at home in my apartment, I even go out of my way to avoid killing the insects and spiders who live with me.

In fact, during the summer of 2011 at my weekend guard job, I was sitting in the guard shack and a hornet flew in and landed on the desk right beside me. I told the hornet several times that I liked him. Obviously hornets don't understand English, but he got my basic meaning from my friendly tone of voice. Then I extended my hand to him and he climbed on my hand and stayed there a while. Finally he climbed off and went to sleep on the desk less than a foot away from me as I did something on my notebook computer. The hornet slept for a few hours. At sundown I gently blew my breath on him to wake him so he could return to the safety of his nest before dark.

I had that hornet's complete and total trust, and this is because hornets and other creatures recognize my Buddha nature which I manifest through my Buddhist practice. It really annoys me when I see someone crushing a nearby hornet for no reason. I wish people would realize that the hornet's attitude stems from their attitude, so if they are friendly to the hornet, the hornet will be peaceful. When a hornet gets angry at a human, it is because that human showed intolerance and arrogance toward the hornet first.

Practicing Nichiren Buddhism will help you become a big success at work. I work as an elite, highly trained, higher-paid security guard. I have done elite security for decades. My current post is guarding a truck stop at night (I prefer nights) that has over a hundred trailers, each loaded with about \$100,000 worth of food or furniture, waiting to be picked up by truck tractors in the morning.

At the truck stop there's just me and another guard - only two of us. That is why they pay me much more than most guards make. Some guards at my company make much less money than me because they work at non-premium sites; the fact that I work at a premium high paying site is a benefit of my Buddhist practice.

In early 2009 my boss told me that I am one of the best employees in the company, and that he wished he had more employees like me.

My guard job is engaging but not draining, so I am never fatigued. At work I can listen to my radio, read books, use my notebook computer, or talk with the other guard and with the truck drivers, much of the time. I am good friends with many of the truck drivers, some of whom I've known for years, so I am not isolated.

I bring my notebook computer to work with me and use my computer, between rounds, to do freelance writing, both for the enjoyment, and for the extra income. At the same time, I perform a conscientious thorough security check of the entire premises once an hour as the job requires.

Because my hourly guard salary is higher than what most guards make, and I a lot of overtime - and because I do some freelance writing - I have a decent middle class income, whereas most guards are low income. I thank the Gohonzon for the good financial fortune I have been able to generate through my Buddhist practice. Indeed, in the other three apartments in my apartment building are a mortgage underwriter and his girlfriend, who is a high paid bartender; an engineering draftsman and his schoolteacher girlfriend; and two young brothers who drive a Mercedes and a BMW respectively (they manage their father's construction company). I can afford to live side by side with such people, and most security guards cannot. At the same time, I am able to do what I LIKE to do for a living, which is to be a night watchman. I have my cake and eat it too! This is a direct benefit from my Buddhist practice.

I think Buddhist practice helps you at work because it unleashes your Buddha wisdom and life force. More Buddha wisdom means you have an instinct for the right actions to take at work, especially in unrehearsed situations. More life force means you can apply more energy to the job without becoming depleted over time. When you practice Buddhism you also receive protection from the Buddhist gods (natural forces in the universe); this is obviously important for me, considering my job, and I have, indeed, been consistently protected. I have been working at the truck stop since 2008.

My Buddhist practice has always given me money, job benefits, cars, insurance, housing, medical care, and other material things. I had to work for all these things, but by practicing Buddhism my efforts bore fruit consistently. Some fairly recent examples of my material, financial, and health benefits include:

- I prayed for a laptop or notebook computer at no cost to me and got one. It has proven to be reliable and dependable with no problems in its operation. And it is current enough that I was able to find software that would run on it, and I can use the internet.
- In addition to my main weeknight job at the high security truck stop, I also work at another truck stop on Saturday and Sunday nights (I'm off Friday nights). The weekend truck stop had no guard shack, so that autumn I chanted that they would install one, so I wouldn't have to use my own automobile gas to stay warm.

The guard shack was installed just as winter set in.

- My current automobile as well as the previous one both involved amazing protection and amazing fortune from my Buddhist practice.
- I have extensive and affordable medical and dental insurance. It does not come from my job. I've had it for many years, so when Obama-Care came along I already had coverage and I didn't need to make any changes. I guess you could say I'm enrolled in "Buddhist-Gods-Care", because the Buddhist Gods protected me and saw to it, long ago, that I had good medical coverage.
- Although overtime is generally frowned upon at my guard agency, I work lots of overtime.
- At my Saturday truck stop, one autumn they installed watch-clock keys and expected us to drive around the yard, getting out of our car 22 times to walk to each of the 22 keys, situated around the truck yard, and click them in the watchclock. (The key when being turned in the clock makes a mark on a paper tape.) This was to prove that we did our rounds. It was already autumn when this system was installed, and I knew it would be hell to get out of my car 22 times in winter-time, and *repeating* the entire ordeal *several times* during my shift. A sure formula for pneumonia! So I chanted that they would waive the key tours and just trust us to do our rounds. I got what I wanted just as winter set in, and we haven't been required to hit the clock keys since. The amazing thing is, the client had just spent over \$800 on the watch-clock system, and soon after installing it they waived the clock rounds. Now we just drive slow around the yard and look out our car windows to check on things.
- In early 2008 my former cat Zippy, who was then 15, came down with diabetes, which is often accompanied by urinary tract infections. This causes a cat to come to associate the litter box with pain and for that reason pee on the carpets. I was (and still am) living in an apartment complex with neighbors right nearby, and a very vigilant apartment manager. I kept Zippy alive for an additional two years with insulin and special food until he died at age 17 in 2010. I scrubbed fresh baking soda into the carpets once a month, vacuuming it up at the end of the month; this reduced, but did not eliminate, the odor. During the final two years of Zippy's life, despite the odor in my apartment, my neighbors never complained, and my apartment manager was understanding and compassionate. Without the magnanimity of these other people I would have had to put Zippy down at age 15, two years prematurely. I believe these people responded to the odor problem with compassion because of my Buddhist practice. When Zippy died my apartment manager asked me to pull up the smelly carpets and discard them in the dumpster, and I complied. I was not charged any money for the loss of the carpets.
- I'm into retro computing, and I bought a new mass produced 1970's style 4-bit

computer. It is not unlike the old MITS Altair computer of 1975. Since this computer was newly manufactured, compared to an actual antique Altair, it was very inexpensive. The only problem was, it was manufactured in Japan, and the manual was in Japanese, which I do not read. I chanted that someone would write an official or unofficial manual for the computer in English. Within several months an English language manual appeared on the internet, which logically means work was started almost right after I began chanting about it. Looking at the situation reasonably, it is unlikely that *my daimoku alone* brought about the English manual. It is much more likely that the English manual happened as the result of the prayers, lobbying and campaigning of several hundred English speaking owners of the computer. But I believe my daimoku contributed. After all, I may have been the only one who was chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.

- Ever since I started practicing Nichiren Buddhism in 1975, I have been consistently protected, often in a dramatic fashion, every single time I have ever been in a money crunch. This protection is so reliable that I have come to take it for granted, and I no longer worry even when the protection doesn't appear immediately.
- *Now for a health benefit:* In May of 2012, my right knee suddenly began to bother me, severely, and my doctor diagnosed it as arthritis. Well, thanks to chanting and Chondroitin-Glucosamine-MSM, by the end of July 2012, I was no longer limping and the pains in my knee were 95% gone. By October 2012 I was completely recovered – the arthritis was completely gone.

Then in February 2013 I started having pains in my right knee and shin-bone *only when driving my car*. My doctor said it was tendonitis this time. I began taking ginger for its anti-inflammatory benefits, massaging the area daily, and chanting to heal the damage as quickly as possible. Well, by April of 2013 my tendonitis was completely gone!

But meanwhile my doctor had ordered me to quit practicing karate and practice taichi only. At first I felt a considerable sense of loss. But then, in the summer of 2013 I created an intermediate regimen which I called *Tai-Te*. That's Tai from Taichi and Te from Kara-Te. It was a blend of both martial arts. I practiced this experimentally for a few months and the arthritis and tendonitis did not return. And pretty soon: No arthritis, no tendonitis! Then in November I spoke with my doctor, he asked me a bunch of questions, he liked my answers, and so he gave me his blessing to continue practicing Tai-Te.

Chanting helps the body heal faster and better than it would otherwise, because the Buddha Nature expresses itself not only spiritually but also physically. I'm sure the Chondroitin-Glucosamine-MSM, the ginger, and the massages also helped. This shows that when we are faced with a health problem, or any kind of problem, both prayer and action are required. In the case of a health problem, we must not only pray but also see our doctor and apply the right kind of medicine and therapy.

I have also been protected dramatically in two car accidents (the other party's fault) and two self defense situations (which I was able to resolve without serious injury to either party, and with humane dialogue being the final outcome).

My physical health is very good, and always has been. I have never had any diseases, and I very seldom catch a cold. I attribute this to my Buddhist practice, as well as to a common sense lifestyle (good diet, enough sleep, exercise, annual checkups).

When I am chanting sincerely about some problem or goal, I find I become more creative. Some years ago I coded 100 Windows software programs, and for a time I distributed them on another web site. Most of the 100 programs are small – each one was coded in my spare time in two or three evenings. All 100 of these programs are new and unique – they've never been done before as application software. I actually had 300 innovative ideas; I coded the best 100 of them. There were really only 71 core ideas – the other 229 ideas were variations on the core ideas. Still, 71 new software ideas is quite a feat of creativity. I got the 71 ideas gradually, a few at a time, at times when I was chanting seriously about something unrelated. One night I got 100 ideas in one evening, a few hours after chanting an hour for my cat Zippy's diabetes to stabilize.

Also, someone I met through this web site co-authored and published a book with me. I am not going to be specific, because I do not want to use this web site for advertising. But the book is about a niche subject of interest to both of us (not Buddhism). She lent me her credentials and experience and acted as my editor and co-promoter. Without putting up this web site I would never have met her. When you make a good cause, you eventually receive a good effect, as we all know. We published the book using CreateSpace, which means we didn't have to invest any money (there is no overhead) and the book is automatically sold on Amazon. So far, despite the lingering recession and the fact that our book is about a niche subject, we have nevertheless enjoyed modest sales. Most of all we had the fun of preparing the book, and I made a new friend, who will no doubt be a friend for life.

In the 1980s when I was in my 30s I went steady with a beautiful woman named Linda, who worked as a nurse. Things were great for a long time, but then, after years with me, she took up with a Christian man who had a tree farm, and made more money than me, and she withdrew from Buddhism, and she withdrew from me as well. Since then (1989) I have dated intermittently but have never found another committed love. But here's my benefit from practicing Buddhism: I am never lonely (not as long as there are cats living with me). I haven't missed Linda since 1991. My cats, my job, my freelance work, my hobbies, and my own high inner life condition, totally fulfill me emotionally. I am complete within myself. There are so many people whose lives are an emotional roller coaster because their happiness depends on a volatile relationship. Whereas I am single, fulfilled, and happy, absorbed and occupied with my cats and my activities. Which way would *you* rather be? This is a tremendous benefit from my Buddhist practice.

Also, quite frankly, these days I am not nearly as hot blooded as I was when I was 25.

The fact is, I'm not really looking for a relationship now; I enjoy my life just the way it is. At this point in my life I enjoy having my time to myself and having things my own way; it's kind of nice. But it's good that I had the relationship with Linda for a while, while I was young, because, life is about learning lessons, and there are lessons which only relationships can teach us, and ways of developing ourselves which can only occur in a relationship. So I'm glad I had the experience; I have no regrets.

One good thing I have now, that I didn't have when I was young, is the ability to just enjoy young women as friends, without wanting or needing anything from them. In the apartment upstairs from me is a gorgeous young woman who lives there with her young boyfriend. If this situation had happened in my twenties I would have been consumed with jealousy. But today, in contrast, I can enjoy both of them as friends, and they in turn sense my relaxed attitude and they respond to me positively in return. In part this is just a physical process of calming down and becoming more mellow with age, but it's also a spiritual development - a long term inconspicuous benefit from my decades of Buddhist practice.

My character revolution over the decades resulting from my Buddhist practice has improved my relationship with my brother Bruce. Years ago we had a difficult relationship, but now we are close friends.

My many tangible (material) benefits prove that practicing Nichiren Buddhism is something that generates tremendous good fortune for the practitioner. I have also received inconspicuous (spiritual) benefits. Here are some of those:

- I've already described how I've morphed from being a helpless bullying victim, to a vicious martial artist, to a kind generous compassionate person. The latter transformation was entirely due to my Buddhist practice. And I didn't have to give up martial arts to make the change!
- One of the biggest benefits I get from being a Nichiren Buddhist is having an internal locus of control. For example, if I have a difficult boss, I know from studying Buddhism that I must change first, rather than waiting for my boss to change. By changing myself, I can eventually win over my boss or get a better boss.
- Another benefit I get from practicing Nichiren Buddhism is accountability. I am taught that everything I do comes back to me, so it is in my own interest to make good causes and avoid doing bad things. Thus, I have a practical reason to try to be a good person.
- All my life I have gone my own way – I have marched to the beat of a different drummer. In kindergarten I played with the other kids part of the time, but I also enjoyed solitary play. After graduating from Johns Hopkins, I shunned traditional career life, and opted instead to be a martial arts instructor and elite security guard. Although I like women, I never desired to marry and have children, and

instead I lived a solitary life sprinkled with girlfriends. At my truck stop night watchman job today, I enjoy the frequent social contact, but I also enjoy the solitary time. Buddhism did not make me different; I've always been different. In my twenties I was self conscious about my pronounced individuality, and I worried about fitting in and about how I was perceived by others. But gradually through my Buddhist practice, as I gained an increasing gut level awareness of my Buddha Nature, I came to see the high value of my life, just as I am, and I came to accept myself. Today, because I accept myself completely, other people accept me too...By the way, Buddhism also works for conformists, not only for non-conformists. It works for everyone.

- My long decades of Buddhist practice have transformed me from a pessimist and complainer into a person filled with optimism and appreciation. For example, on one particularly cold night at the truck stop in the winter of 2012-2013, I walked up to one of my truck driver friends and launched into a spontaneous recitation of all the GOOD things about my job – no office politics, no annoying co-workers, no boss breathing down my neck every minute, I've made myself indispensable because a lot of younger guys just won't do it, there's good heat in the guard shack at least, and when I am outside the cold night air is healthy and bracing, I can listen to talk radio, read books, and use my computer between rounds, I get to talk to the truck drivers, and on and on. That truck driver listening to me had HIS OWN mood lifted by my positive attitude (I know, because he TOLD me so!). Our objective situation is only 20 percent of our happiness, and the other 80 percent is how we take it. Chanting definitely gives me a "cup half full attitude" rather than a "cup half empty attitude" and as a result I have evolved into a bright, happy person. I am happy not because I have perfect circumstances, but because I have an upbeat attitude. (My positive attitude doesn't stop me from wearing long johns and two coats in the winter time!)

- Through my Buddhist practice I have acquired a MISSION which gives meaning and purpose to my life – to help other people practice Nichiren Buddhism. Another mission I have is to protect property. And another mission I have is to help animals. And another mission is to give people enjoyment and information and to stimulate their thinking through my writing. My four missions, and the affection I exchange with my cats, are the two great sources of happiness in my life. And I DO consider myself to be a happy person.

- Another benefit is that the fear of death is eliminated. I firmly believe in reincarnation, so when death comes (hopefully in advanced old age), I can face it with serenity. I believe in reincarnation so firmly, that I spend a few minutes each week playing simple tunes on "Virtual Piano" on my computer, so that, in my next lifetime, I will have extensive musical opportunities. I do not live only in this lifetime; I live and plan on an eternal plane.

- Indeed, serenity is my biggest benefit right now, day to day. I know that I can tackle any obstacle and turn it around into an impetus for my growth, changing

poison into medicine.

I just mentioned that Buddhism gives me a reason to be good, and eliminates my fear of death. This just goes to show that the most important thing about a religious belief is the impact it has on the believer, not whether it is intrinsically or absolutely true. At the same time, I *do* believe that Buddhism *is* true.

Challenges I Am Currently Facing

I am definitely not a fully enlightened “guru” in the remotest sense of the word. I’m just a regular Joe, just like you, who is still working on his life condition and his fortune, and who has many miles ahead of him in life’s journey of self improvement.

I am always trying to improve my life condition still further, because the higher my life condition becomes, the happier I will be and the more I can make other people (and animals) happy. I have the added incentive that the more I raise my life condition, the more I will be able to increase my CHI (internal energy) for use in self defense and healing.

Whether at 19, 59 or 89, we must never sink into complacency and stop advancing, thinking “now I’ve arrived”. Living in a healthy manner means always advancing, always striving to grow and improve further. Because I have this spirit, although I will be 60 in March 2014, people often take me for someone in their early fifties.

Finally, let me mention that on March 18th 2014, the day I turned 60, I felt like a million bucks, both physically and emotionally. There was not the slightest hint of mid life crisis; there was no mid life crisis when I turned 50 either. On my 60th birthday I thanked the Gohonzon for extending my life, because, if Mark Spencer had not told me about Nichiren Buddhism, my first day of my senior year at Johns Hopkins, I would not have lived past age 21. The early years of my Buddhist practice in the late 1970s and early 1980s were a time of struggle, buoyed up by a burning hope. But now, in 2014, at age 60, I am a very happy person, healthy, and secure, and I owe this entirely to Nichiren Buddhism. Anyone who decides to practice this Buddhism for the rest of their life is definitely making the RIGHT decision.

Why practice Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism?

Practicing Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism will make you happy, secure and prosperous. It will make you more enlightened. It will let you become one with the Universal Law. In practical terms, what does it mean to be “one with the Universal Law”? The answer is nothing remarkable. Here is a list of hints and clues:

Enjoying life’s challenges, not only the smooth times. Turning every obstacle into an impetus for personal growth. Turning one’s sufferings into one’s mission – the mission to overcome the suffering in order to be encouraging to others faced with similar circumstances.

Achieving a balance in daily life. More appreciation. More determination. More optimism. More energy. Better relationships. Caring more about others. Respecting other people more. Respecting other life-affirming religions and their practitioners.

Being law abiding. Not needing to be a substance abuser. Being ethical - but, from enthusiasm to do the right thing, not from guilt. Standing up with integrity even in the face of workplace politics and discrepancies. At the same time, experiencing uncanny protection in one's work environment - as well as one's social and natural environment.

Respecting the natural environment. Respecting animals - being kind to them, and without condescension. Realizing that just because it's a bug, it doesn't thereby automatically deserve to die (people should nevertheless protect their homes from infestations).

Some people may express more enlightenment by becoming vegetarians. Others by eating less meat than before, and by avoiding meats where the animals are raised inhumanely.

Some people may express more enlightenment by refraining from hunting. Others may express more enlightenment by hunting more carefully - taking pains to become a good woodsman and marksman, so as to make the kill swiftly and surely. Feeling genuine gratitude for the sacrifice made by the quarry. Hunting primarily for meat to be eaten, not explicitly for trophies. Feeling sincerely good about the conservation role of hunting - thinning herds to prevent mass starvation.

(In this sect we have no explicit **Precepts** or specific rules of conduct. Behavioral improvements do happen, but they arise from one's growing inner enlightenment, and are undertaken voluntarily. That's because we believe external codes of conduct cannot lead to lasting changes; in the long run, people must become internally persuaded to do better, of their own volition.)

Cherishing life is a sign of increasing oneness with the Universal Law. And being less afraid of death is an indication of increasing enlightenment. Cherishing life more and fearing death less, are two improvements that tend to develop together.

Oneness with the Universal Law also means living a natural lifestyle - living as nature intended us to. Such as rising in the morning, working all day, and sleeping at night (of course, some people have to work the night shift).

Other signs of being one with the Universal Law: Being self restrained when necessary. Having exuberance, being joyful, being playful - in measure, and when appropriate. Being tolerant when appropriate; being relentlessly discerning when necessary. Controlling one's anger, refraining from unnecessary violence, yet courageously defending the innocent and the helpless when required. Exercising. Quitting smoking. Taking better care of one's health.

Being strict yet compassionate with oneself. Always looking for self improvement, while

always forgiving oneself (and others) for being less than perfect.

How Nichiren Buddhism is practiced in the United States

There are a large number of different schools of Nichiren Buddhism. Many of these are active in the United States. They agree on most of the fundamentals. Yet they differ on some particulars. Here is an explanation of who they are and what they each believe. Please bear in mind that *all* the statistics listed below are approximate. The first thing you should know is that Buddhists of all stripes in the United States comprise about 0.7 percent of the adult population. Buddhism competes with Islam for the position of fourth largest religion in America – after Christianity, Judaism, and no affiliation.

There are about 215,384 Nichiren Buddhists in the United States. There are about 21 million across the world. In the U.S.:

- Nichiren Shu has 7%, or 15,077.
- Nichiren Shoshu has 8%, or 17,231.
- Soka Gakkai International – USA has almost 20%, or about 43,076 active current members.
- Former Soka Gakkai members who have quit and are no longer practicing at all comprise 45% of all U.S. Nichiren Buddhists, or about 96,922. Such people may have Buddhist beliefs, but they no longer chant or carry out any sort of practice.
- Independents who actively practice comprise 15%, or 32,308.
- Other Nichiren Buddhists comprise 1%, or 2,154.
- 4% mix Nichiren Buddhist methods with practices from other Buddhist sects. These people number about 8,616.

Nichiren Shu, Soka Gakkai, and Kempon Hokke believe that Shakyamuni is the most fundamental Buddha, “the Original Buddha”. Whereas Nichiren Shoshu reveres Nichiren as the Original Buddha, and regards Shakyamuni as a provisional Buddha. The Nichiren Buddhist Association of America (NBAA) advocates harsh confrontation with the dominant religions of America, especially Christianity. Whereas the Soka Gakkai is less confrontational and prefers to have dialogue with people of other beliefs and to cooperate with them on secular good works.

Also, Nichiren Shu reveres all six senior priests who inherited Nichiren’s teachings. Whereas Soka Gakkai and Nichiren Shoshu believe that only Nikko Shonin, one of the six senior priests, accurately preserved Nichiren’s teachings.

Nichiren Shoshu and Soka Gakkai used to be one sect, but they split apart in 1991.

Nichiren Shoshu is a group of priests and temples and they obey their High Priest. Soka Gakkai, on the other hand, is a laymen's organization that teaches that lay people can manifest enlightenment on their own. At the same time, Soka Gakkai members revere Daisaku Ikeda, their President, as their mentor, and they regard themselves as Ikeda's disciples.

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(Soka Gakkai plans to maintain Ikeda as the mentor after his death by referring to the voluminous body of writings and speeches he has left behind).

For those new to Nichiren Buddhism, a special note is necessary here. The "Gohonzon" is the object of worship in Nichiren Buddhism. It is a scroll or tablet with calligraphy on it. It represents the state of enlightenment or Buddhahood.

Nichiren Shu believes that the valid object of worship is not only the Gohonzon, but also, an inscription of Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo alone, or, a statue of Shakyamuni, or a statue of Shakyamuni flanked by the Four Bodhisattvas, or, a statue of Taho Buddha (a mythological Buddha who appeared in the Lotus Sutra to attest to its veracity).

Whereas Nichiren Shoshu and SGI believe that the Gohonzon alone is the object of worship.

SGI and other Nichiren organizations teach that it is wrong to display a photograph of the Gohonzon in print or online. But many independent Nichiren Buddhists believe there is nothing wrong with doing this. Many independents believe that the traditional taboo against displaying the Gohonzon is a medieval superstition. It is not unlike superstitious Native Americans in the west in the late 1800's, who were afraid to have their photograph taken, because they thought their souls would be stolen from them. Of course, the Gohonzon must be displayed in a dignified setting. For example, including an image of the Gohonzon in a web site about Nichiren Buddhism is appropriate; putting the Gohonzon alongside pornography would obviously be a slander.

Finally, although Nichiren created an unsurpassed method for cultivating fortune and enlightenment, he abrasively asserted that all the other forms of Buddhism, and all the non Buddhist religions, were no good, and that his teaching alone was valid. However, today, many independent Nichiren Buddhists believe that many other religions are also worthwhile, not only Nichiren Buddhism. Although Nichiren is a great bodhisattva and even a Buddha, he is not infallible; this is because the life of Buddha and the life of the common mortal coexist in everyone, including Nichiren.

I believe the main thing that creates good or bad karma is intention, and, for example, when Christians worship Christ or God, through their intention they are metaphorically worshipping the Universal Law, even though they do not realize it, and so they are creating good karma indirectly.

Each of the world's major religions gives people a reason to be good and compassionate, by making them accountable through some mechanism of cause and effect; and alleviates the fear of death, by promising some form of positive afterlife for

those who have been good. Looking at it this way, all the world's major religions are equal.

The point is, as the author, I have definite beliefs, yet I believe "my way" is not "the only way".

Twelve Advantages of Practicing Independently

Here are twelve advantages of practicing Nichiren Buddhism independently, without joining any of the sectarian organizations:

1. Everything you need to practice is right here in this PDF, including links to downloadable sound files of people chanting slowly, so you can learn to chant.
2. As an independent, you do not have to get caught up in inter-sectarian feuding.
3. As an independent, you are free. You do not have to become someone's disciple, whether President Ikeda's or the High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu's. When you practice Nichiren Buddhism independently, you are your own master.
4. When you join a sectarian organization, a lot of your spare time comes to be dedicated to organizational activities, including your travel time to far-away meetings. Whereas by being independent, you can practice when you choose to, at your own convenience, at home. If you introduce a few of your neighbors or co-workers, you can attend small meetings right in your own neighborhood, instead of traveling long distances.
5. When you join a sectarian organization such as Soka Gakkai, Nichiren Shoshu, Nichiren Shu, etc. you are forced to accept a package of beliefs, some of which you may not agree with. Whereas by being independent, you can profess *exactly* what you believe, on *every* point of controversy within Nichiren Buddhism.
6. When you practice independently, your Buddhist practice is self motivated. Whereas when you belong to a sectarian organization, your practice is largely externally driven. People who belong to one of the large organizations feel lost if they have to move to an outlying neighborhood with few members. Whereas an independent Buddhist can adapt to that situation handily. Also bear in mind that at the moment of death, you cannot take all your companions with you to the other side. By being self reliant in life, death won't seem so scary or isolating.
7. When you join a sectarian organization, you have to accept the organizational culture along with the religion. For example, if you join Soka Gakkai you have to idolize President Ikeda. Whereas by being independent, you do not have to accept any extraneous, peculiar, or cultish organizational culture, just Nichiren Buddhism itself.

8. Almost all of the existing Nichiren organizations are top down and hierarchical. Whereas by practicing independently, with a small number of companions, you can establish an intimate democracy, making decisions by consensus or from the bottom up.

9. By practicing independently, you are helping to build a safeguard against religious corruption. What I mean is, if the only Nichiren Buddhists were members of large organizations, then, if the leadership of the large organizations grows self serving and corrupt, then Nichiren Buddhism will be despoiled. But by having large numbers of independent Nichiren Buddhists in society side by side with the organizations, there is a built in safeguard against corruption, because Nichiren Buddhism then belongs *to the people*, not to a few cliques of leaders. If you practice independently, you are helping to make this possible.

10. In most Nichiren organizations, dissenters are passed over for promotion to leadership positions, and their potential is ignored. Whereas if you are independent, you can hold a contrary opinion about something, and still exert leadership of your small neighborhood group that you created yourself.

11. When you practice independently, no one is going to pressure you to make financial contributions. You can hold on to your hard earned money. Whereas, for example, in one major Nichiren organization, members are pressured to donate money - and the organization offers no financial transparency.

12. In most of the Nichiren organizations, both layman's organizations and priesthood-based organizations, you are forced to go along with Nichiren's exclusivity and intolerance toward other religions. This can make it all but impossible for you to tell other people about Nichiren Buddhism without offending them. But if you practice independently, you can be ecumenical. You can inwardly recognize, and publically declare, that other religions are also worthwhile, not only Nichiren Buddhism. You will still find converts. In fact, you will probably find more.

Twelve Advantages of Practicing While Affiliated

1. The meetings provide a very good social outlet.
2. You can always get guidance and encouragement from leaders who genuinely cared about you as a person.
3. You become part of something greater than yourself.
4. You may start dating another member, who might even become your spouse.
5. It is always a pleasure to be treated as an equal by members who have a lot

more money than you have.

6. Doing organizational activities will prepared you for encountering diversity in the workplace.

7. You will meet a lot of interesting members who come from all walks of life.

8. You will make business and professional contacts, or if you are in a sales business, potential customers. However, this should not be your MAIN motivation for joining.

9. Especially in the beginning of your practice, you are more likely to learn Buddhism correctly and less likely to misunderstand it or develop incorrect habits.

10. The other members provide a mirror that lets you see your own life condition and your own good points and bad points, so that you can focus your Buddhist practice on further self improvement.

11. Most people have a natural inclination and need to affiliate. (The exception is highly independent types like the author.)

12. If you wish it, and you show sincere faith and practice for awhile, you can advance within the organization, taking on leadership responsibility. You will definitely be a busy person, but many people find this leadership role to be enjoyable and personally fulfilling.

Note: If you join one of the existing Nichiren organizations, they will give you a Gohonzon (sacred scroll), so you do not need to download, print, and frame one of your own. If you are interested in affiliating, and you live in the United States, I suggest you Google SOKA GAKKAI (SGI-USA), NICHIREN SHOSHU, and NICHIREN SHU, research all three, decide which one you like best, then contact them online. You will be referred to the meetings and members who live nearest to your location.

Life has infinite potential, so there is reason for optimism. (Ichinen Sanzen)

Life is dynamic, constantly changing, and infinitely malleable. So we have infinite potential. For this reason, we should always be hopeful and determined, no matter what our momentary feelings or circumstances.

Life has 3000 conditions in a single moment. The point of this analysis is to show that we are never stuck in a particular life state, but that life is constantly changing and infinitely malleable through self improvement. Thus the conclusion of the **theory of 3000 Conditions in a Single Life Moment** is that we should be hopeful and determined at all times, because we always possess infinite potential to improve ourselves and our surroundings.

As for the details of this theory, we will first briefly summarize the theory. It might seem a little abstract. But then we will go over it a second time in more detail with analogies to make it clear. We are trying to prove that “Life is dynamic, constantly changing, and infinitely malleable. So we have infinite potential. For this reason, we should always be hopeful and determined, no matter what our momentary feelings or circumstances.”

There are: 10 life states, times their mutual possession, making 100 states, times the 10 factors, making 1000 states, times the 3 realms, making 3000 conditions in a single moment of life.

The 10 life states are: **Hell** (helpless suffering), **Hunger** (extreme want, or greed), **Animality** (fawn on the powerful, bully the weak), **Anger** (arrogance, retribution), **Humanity** (transient calmness, dependent on good circumstances), **Rapture** (transient joy, dependent on good circumstances), **Learning** (from books, teachers, experience, independent of circumstances), **Realization** (from experience, intuition, nature, meditation, independent of circumstances), **Altruism** (caring for others), and **Enlightenment** (some degree of oneness with one’s innermost nature and the macrocosm).

These 10 states are **mutually inclusive**, making 100 states; thus someone who is enlightened may feel anger for social justice.

The **10 Factors** explain how we change from one life state to another. They are: **Appearance** (how you look), **Nature** (what you’re like inside), **Entity** (the essential identity that gives rise to both Appearance and Nature), **Force** (your life force), **Influence** (how your life force affects your surroundings), **Latent Cause** (John was compassionate), **Manifest Cause** (John fed a stray cat), **Latent Effect** (John carried the destiny for two years that someone someday would do him a kindness), **Manifest Effect** (two years later someone returned John’s lost wallet with all the money), and **Consistency from Beginning to End** (John is unlikely to kick a dog).

The factoring of these 10 Factors now makes 1000 states. Then there are the **Three Realms**: The first one is **The Realm of the Individual Consciousness** - your awareness on all levels, including subconscious and psychosomatic; it includes the elements of form, perception, conception, volition, and consciousness. The second realm is **The Realm of Living Beings** - plants, animals, all sentient beings. The third realm is **The Realm of the Environment** - your neighborhood, your region, the earth, the solar system, our galaxy, the universe.

Thus the grand total is 3000 conditions in a single life moment.

Now let’s go through the Theory of 3000 States in a Single Life Moment in more detail. We will use analogies to make it more clear. Again, we are trying to prove that “Life is dynamic, constantly changing, and infinitely malleable. So we have infinite potential. For this reason, we should always be hopeful and determined, no matter what our momentary feelings or circumstances.”

A human life is like a nine story building. The building has an elevator. Let's analyze the way the elevator works to discover the factors that figure into it. Let's do this analysis not as mechanical engineers, but as "life engineers" who observe and study the dynamics we find in life itself.

The whole elevator looks a certain way. You've used the elevator 5 days a week for 3 years. Next month you're going abroad on business for 4 weeks. When you return you notice a few minor changes to the elevator. Some bits of paint have flecked off that were still there 4 weeks ago when you last used the elevator. And of course the floor indicator light is changing according to a different pattern than the last time you used the elevator 4 weeks ago.

Although some aspects of the elevator visibly change, and at varying rates, something about the elevator is still the same, uniquely identifying it, visibly designating it as an elevator and distinguishing it from other elevators. It's hard to put your finger on exactly what is changeless, what is uniquely identifying, about this elevator. If you say it's the paint job, then when a fleck of paint falls off, is it not the same elevator?

The "suchness" that makes the elevator an elevator, and a particular elevator, is its Nature. Its changeable physical characteristics – the floor indicator, flecking paint, a fresh paint job – is its Appearance.

But which *is* the elevator – its Nature or its Appearance? If an elevator is its Nature not its Appearance, then you should be able to use the elevator without standing inside it, pushing any buttons, seeing it, or being anywhere near it.

On the other hand, if an elevator is its Appearance not its Nature, then an identical clone (with the same age paint and the same paint flecks, same dirt, etc.) would be the same elevator as the original elevator; yet the original and clone elevators in fact make two distinct elevators.

So since an elevator is not solely its Nature and not solely its Appearance, yet the elevator possesses both its Nature and its Appearance, the elevator must be a union of Nature and Appearance – something more fundamental that gives rise to both outward aspects. That union of Nature and Appearance is the elevator's suchness, its identity, which is called its Entity.

The elevator's Entity is what allows it to exist (appear on your floor, or surround you as you ride it), not exist (not surround you, and leave your floor for another floor), and change state, both while existing and while not existing (floor indicator light changes; elevator changes mode to up, down or stop; elevator changes floors; paint flecks off; the floor gets dirty; the floor gets cleaned; new paint job). And all these changes are happening whether you can see the elevator or not, whether it exists or not-exists from your perspective.

Since the elevator is an Entity that possesses an inner Nature and an outward Appearance, it must follow that the elevator's Nature and Appearance are interrelated co-aspects that both arise from, or manifest, the elevator's Entity.

The Entity, Nature and Appearance of the elevator are its fundamental characteristics. If an elevator could exist in isolation in a complete vacuum, then, hypothetically, the elevator could consist of nothing but its own intrinsic characteristics (Entity, Nature, Appearance) without any peripheral characteristics or factors that allow it to relate to other Entities as part of a larger environment.

But although this seems possible as a hypothetical abstraction, the concept proves nonsensical, so it could never happen in actual reality.

An elevator's Nature is, in part, to follow and oppose gravity in a directed way. If the elevator existed in a special plane all by itself, in a total vacuum, then gravity would have no be neither existent nor nonexistent nor simulated nor enhanced nor opposed. This would mean the elevator has no Nature. And since its Appearance is related to its Nature, then it has no Appearance either. Since every Entity manifests a Nature and an Appearance, there is no Entity either – which means there is no elevator. Not in a manifest state, latent state, or even an abstract state (since the abstraction is nonsensical and so cancels itself away).

Remember that we are using an elevator as a simplified analogy for human life. All this therefore proves that life cannot exist in a vacuum, relating only to itself. This is true of elevators (insentient life), as well as turtles, cats, and humans (sentient life forms). Returning to the elevator metaphor: The elevator cannot exist alone, but must have various means of relating or connecting its Nature and Appearance to other Entities, as part of a larger environment. That is why the elevator has 10 Factors, not only 3. The first 3 are of course Entity, Nature and Appearance. The Last 7 are Force, Influence,

Inherent Cause, Manifest Cause, Inherent Effect, Manifest Effect, and Consistency From Beginning To End.

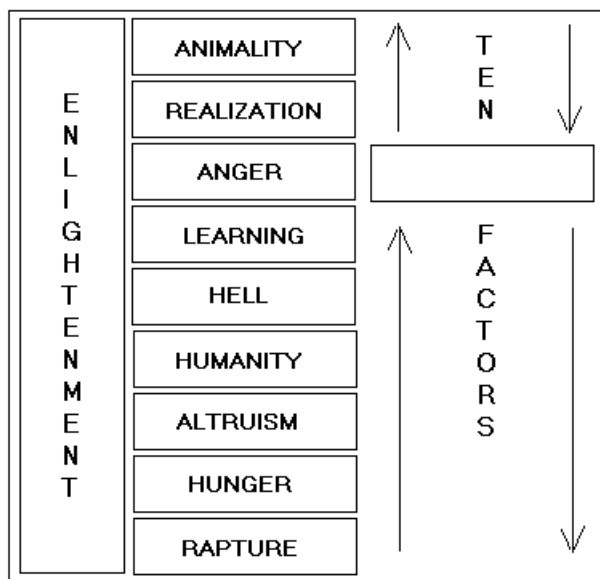
The elevator has the Force to go up, go down, stop, close doors, open doors, change the floor indicator light, and sound an emergency alarm.

Whenever the elevator expresses its Force, it has an Influence. For example, when it opens its doors, people arrive at the office or leave. So at 9:05 a.m., a ringing telephone will be answered by a live person, because an employee stepped off the elevator to report to work. But if the phone rings at 9:05 p.m., the caller will get voice mail, since the employee has already stepped onto the elevator to go home.

The elevator's Force of opening its doors has an Influence that – with other Influences, exerted by other Entities – helps determine whether a caller at a particular time is answered by a live person or by voice mail.

You work on Floor 3. In the morning you enter the elevator and press the “3” button. The elevator now has an Inherent Cause, your button push. The Inherent Effect occurs simultaneously – it is now virtually inevitable that the elevator will soon go to Floor 3. However, other people pressed 4 and 7 before you pressed 3. After stopping at 4 and

7, the elevator makes a Manifest Cause by moving from Floor 7 to Floor 3. The Manifest Effect is that you are now right in front of the entrance to your office suite. “Consistency From Beginning To End” means that the previous 9 Factors – Appearance, Nature, Entity, Force, Influence, Inherent Cause, Manifest Cause, Inherent Effect, and Manifest Effect – all functioned consistently. They all belonged to the same elevator. They all behaved like an elevator, not like a construction crane or a conveyor staircase. And all the Factors were consistently focused on bringing you from Floor 7 to Floor 3.



The elevator’s Ten Factors enable it to change state, that is to say, to change floors. Because all Entities, sentient or insentient – an elevator, a tree, a cat, a rock, a human – have the Ten Factors, that is why “Life is dynamic, constantly changing, and infinitely malleable.”

But that in itself does not prove that life possesses “infinite potential to improve oneself and one’s surroundings.” The keyword that has not yet been substantiated is “improve”. If an elevator can improve its life-state, or that of a passenger, by moving from one floor to another, then there must be important subjective differences when experiencing work on the building’s various floors, or *all* the floors must be experienced in an enlightened way.

At this moment, each of the 9 floors in the office building where you work has a different life-state. Let’s list the floors in ascending order by life-condition, not by floor number:

Hell 5th Floor

Hunger 2nd Floor

Animality 9th Floor

Anger 7th Floor

Humanity 4th Floor

Rapture 1st Floor

Learning 6th Floor

Realization 8th Floor

Altruism 3rd Floor

Each floor in your building houses a different company; your employer is on Floor 3. On the 5th Floor, Hell predominates because the employees of Run Round Inc., an accounting and consulting firm, just found out the SEC will dismantle them for accounting irregularities and insider trading.

On Floor 2, the employees at Gobble Group are in a Hunger life state, feverishly trying to finalize their unfriendly takeover of FreshMeat Corporation.

On Floor 9, Animality predominates as FreshMeat employees desperately try to fend off Gobble Group's unfriendly takeover, knowing most of the jobs eliminated in the restructuring will come from FreshMeat.

On Floor 7, the partners and staff at the law firm of Koop, Acconte, Reese, Sieves, Able, & Curran are in an Anger life condition, because FreshMeat owes them a lot of money and just informed them payment will be delayed indefinitely.

The 4th Floor houses no offices, but is filled with concessions such as a cafeteria, news stand, gift shop, gym, etc. The people who work on this floor calmly go about their daily routine, neither worried nor overjoyed about their livelihoods. So on the 4th Floor a state of Humanity is prevalent.

Rapture predominates on Floor 1, where the employees at AppleTree Inc. – makers of a leading firewall program – just went into public trading, and all became instant millionaires.

The Floors that are in a condition of Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity or Rapture all have something in common: their life state is determined entirely by their fluctuating environment. The remaining Floors are in conditions of Learning, Realization and Altruism, and they have something in common too: the inner discipline to influence their own destiny by proactively improving their own feelings and circumstances. Floor 6 houses Jones & Klein Pharmaceuticals, Research Division. The employees here are involved in medical research and have no role in the financial side of the business. On the 6th Floor, a condition of Learning is prevalent.

Realization predominates on Floor 8, where the Detroit Motors Think Tank has been

subjecting the Detroit Motors Company to self scrutiny – analyzing past mistakes and conceiving new strategies to keep foreign competition at bay.

Your fellow employees on Floor 3 are in a condition of Altruism, where they are attending a half-day seminar entitled “Corporate Responsibility, Employee Volunteerism, and the Real Book Value of Goodwill.”

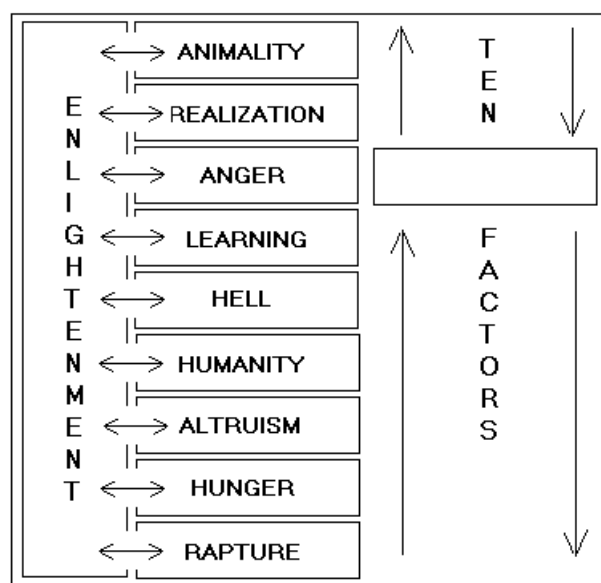
But you personally have been excused from this seminar, as you already attended it at another company location. You have the rest of today off. Your special friend is out of town; your relatives are out of town; your friends are still at work; your apartment is being fumigated; you have a slight cold, so you don’t feel like going to the gym. But you feel a little light exercise might do you good. You’ve always been curious about the other companies in your building, so you decide to wander around and have a look at the other floors.

It is the elevator, your 10 Factors – Appearance, Nature, Entity, Force, Influence, Inherent Cause, Manifest Cause, Inherent Effect, Manifest Effect, and Consistency From Beginning To End – that enables you to freely fluctuate among the life-states of Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realization, and Altruism. But are these movements just changes, or really improvements?

Logically, there can be only two ways the elevator’s movements can bring any gain. (a) The elevator must frequent the floors with high life conditions and avoid the floors with low life conditions, or, (b) the elevator must learn to experience every life condition it encounters – whether high or low – in a more enlightened way.

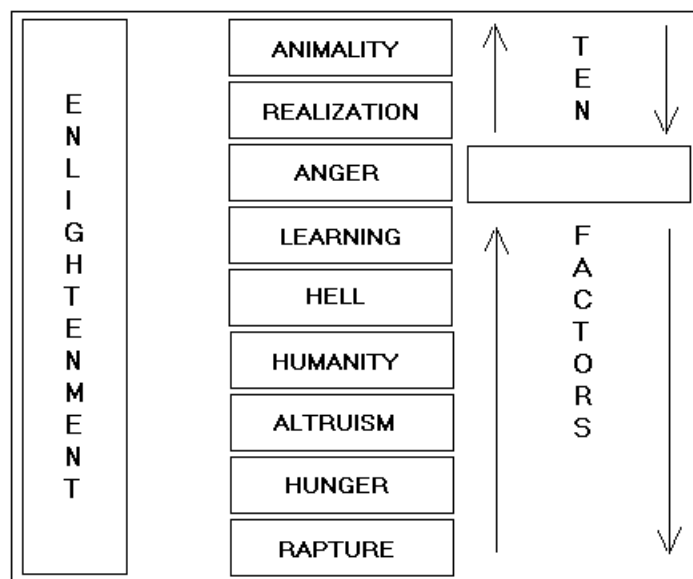
The problem with solution (a) is that it is impractical. People have to report to work on all 9 floors. And the elevator may need to cross a “low condition” floor to get from one “high condition” floor to another. Likewise, human beings cannot entirely avoid the lower life conditions, nor would it be desirable to do so; without anger, how could you seize a broom and defend a small child from a vicious dog?

So, for the elevator’s movements to be improvements, and not merely changes, the solution is not for the elevator to try to visit only the floors with high life conditions. So since life cannot avoid experiencing all of its conditions, the key is to experience them in a more enlightened way. This points to the importance of tapping the 10th, highest life state – enlightenment.



In the above illustration, a human being is tapping his or her 9th Consciousness, and invigorating his Entity. This signifies a gradually increasing degree of Enlightenment. Thus the lower 9 states can be experienced in a more enlightened way – even the lowest ones!

Pictured below is the life of a person who does not manifest his or her Buddha nature. His or her enlightenment is only a dormant potential; it is not currently being manifested.



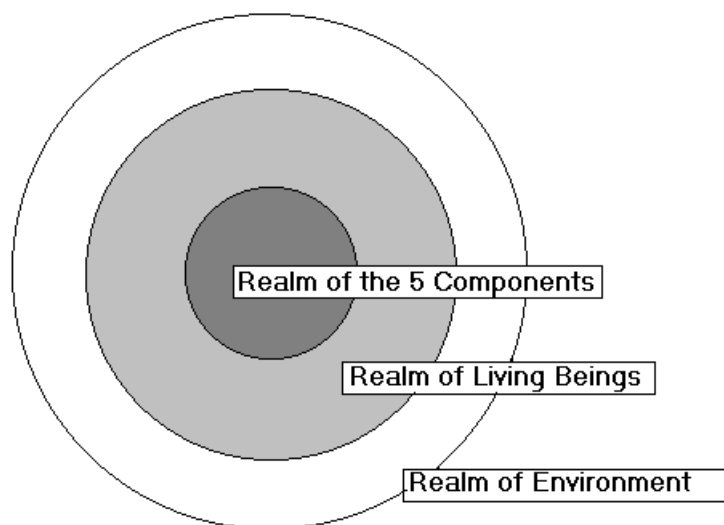
Now we have substantiated that when human beings manifest their Buddha nature through Buddhist practice, human life can be characterized as “possessing infinite potential to improve oneself.” But the full opening statement of this section was “we always possess infinite potential to improve ourselves and our surroundings.” If self-improvement arising from enlightenment is mostly subjective, mostly internal, then

it cannot consistently or reliably improve our objective circumstances. In that case, there is no basis for saying “we should always be hopeful and determined, no matter what our momentary feelings or circumstances.”

The elevator in your office building has 9 floors, Hell through Altruism, with the building as a whole being considered a ‘10th floor’ called Enlightenment. The elevator can go from any floor (1-9) to any floor (1-9), which makes the first 9 floors Mutually Possessive. And no matter which of the 9 (Hell through Altruism) floors you’re on, potentially, Enlightenment can be manifested there. So all 10 Floors, or states, have a Mutual Possession – each of the 10 states contains the other 9.

So far, our analysis of human life, using an elevator metaphor, has stated that there are 10 Factors x 10 States x their Mutual Possession. $10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1000$ Factors. To improve our surroundings, however, we need to be connected to our environment.

Fortunately, life has not just 1000 Factors but 3000. That’s because the first 1000 Factors must be multiplied by the 3 Realms.



We’ve determined that every life has 10 Factors, 10 States, and Mutual Possession of the 10 States, making 1000 Factors. This is an analysis of the Self, which we will call “The Realm of the 5 Components”. From another standpoint, this Realm consists of Form, Perception, Conception, Volition, and Consciousness.

The next 2 Realms are the larger setting in which the Self exists and plays a role. “The Realm of Living Beings” includes all other life forms, whether insentient (a rock), semisentient (a virus), or sentient (a bacterium, a fish, a tree, a dog, a human).

“The Realm of the Environment” is the earth, solar system, galaxy, and the entire universe throughout space and time.

Since every life has 3 Realms, every life is directly connected with its environment, and can directly influence its environment – both its social environment and its natural

environment; both spatially and temporally; both physically and spiritually.

Through Buddhist practice we can empower our Entity, making it capable of positively influencing the Self, the social environment and the natural environment. That is why “Life is dynamic, constantly changing, and infinitely malleable. So we have infinite potential. For this reason, we should always be hopeful and determined, no matter what our momentary feelings or circumstances.”

Every life has 10 Factors x 10 States x Mutual Possession (of the 10 States) x 3 Realms
= 3000 Factors in a Single Moment of Life.

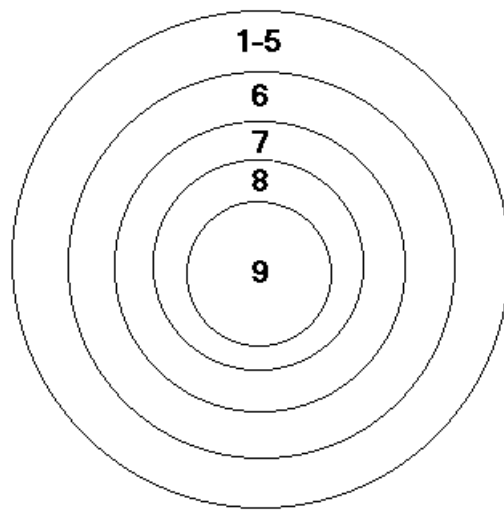
We are accountable for everything we say, do, and think. So we should, from now on, try our best to make good causes and refrain from making bad causes. And beyond that, we needn't feel overwhelmed by our prior accumulation of bad effects, no matter how great it may be, because there is a way to supercede this accumulation rapidly.

Life is **eternal**. Our lives eternally go through a cycle of **Birth, Maturity, Decline, and Death**. Death “recharges our batteries” and nets us a fresh new body for our next **incarnation**. Simply stated, that is the **Theory of Reincarnation**.

Every thought, word and deed we perform, whether positive or negative, forms a Latent Cause and simultaneously, a Latent Effect. At some point (either right away, or in the future), we will meet up with an appropriate Manifest Cause which triggers the Latent Effect into becoming a Manifest Effect. This process could happen within one lifetime or across lifetimes. So it's obviously in our own interest, as well as virtuous, that we, from now on, try our best to make good causes and refrain from making bad causes. That is the **Theory of Karma**.

If our previous accumulation of negative effects is great, we can feel overwhelmed and hopeless, like someone too deeply in financial debt to get out from under it (which itself is one form of negative karma!). Yet the truth is, we needn't ever feel “doomed” by our prior accumulation of bad effects, no matter how great it may be, because there is a way to supercede this accumulation rapidly, in an accelerated mode. This ‘mega method’ is faster and, in the long run, easier than the slow, excruciating, ‘conventional method’ of expiating our negative karma, while creating further incremental good karma, and refraining from creating any further bad karma. The next section explains what this ‘mega method’ is all about.

Our previously accumulated negative karma exists on a superficial level of our psyche. So when we make good causes on the most profound level of our psyche, we are able to supercede our negative karma, expiating a small portion of it, while quickly eliminating the major portion. (9 Levels of Consciousness)



There are **9 Levels of Consciousness**. Levels 1 through 5 are the consciousness possessed by our five physical senses - sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. The 6th level of consciousness is our ability to integrate these into a coherent impression - as when we are repulsed by a beautiful looking but bad smelling object. The 7th level of consciousness is the Intellect, the Super-Ego and Ego, the level on which the reader is primarily experiencing his or her reading of this web site. The 8th level of consciousness is karma storage (including karma from previous lifetimes), and also corresponds to the Id, the Subconscious, and the Collective Unconscious.

The 9th level of consciousness is our pure, eternal, immaculate consciousness that is untainted by karmic accretions. It is our Buddha Nature. When we are tapping our 9th consciousness we are Buddhas - human beings manifesting their inherent oneness with the Universal Law.

When we tap this pure consciousness by fusing our lives with the Universal Law - with which our 9th consciousness is inherently linked from within ourselves - we are able to 'flush out' most of our negative karma relatively quickly, like a volcano expelling lava. The karma is 'pushed out from underneath'. In contrast, an incremental approach to improving our karma takes eons - and may not succeed at all, due to the karmic inertia we already possess, which can make us confuse bad causes for good causes, or even give up along the way.

We've seen that even the 'mega method' of cleansing karma leaves a small residue of our karmic accumulation for us to expiate now. That is so we can train ourselves through overcoming it, in order to elevate our life condition. With an elevated life condition, we are less likely to repeat the same mistakes as before and eventually wind up back in the same impasse. Our training period is like an airplane's struggle to get off the runway; that's the time of maximum aerodynamic tension. Once the plane is in the

sky, things are much easier and more assured, because the plane enjoys both updraft (protective response from the universe) and momentum (people in high life states tend to accumulate more good karma than bad). The training period involves at least one whole incarnation, in the case of immutable karma, and may involve a much shorter period in the case of mutable karma. The time it takes depends upon the depth and intensity of accumulated karma, upon the individual's efforts and sincerity, and upon the validity, efficacy, and profundity of the individual's spiritual beliefs. And beyond merely expiating bad karma, a process of building up further happiness and good fortune likewise depends on the individual's efforts and sincerity, and upon the validity, efficacy, and profundity of the individual's spiritual beliefs.

To further clarify the difference between mutable and immutable karma with some examples: Having a broken arm is mutable karma; being born without legs is immutable karma. Being neurotic is mutable karma; being psychotic is immutable karma. Growing up poor in the South Bronx in the late 20th century is mutable karma; being a member of the untouchable caste in India is usually immutable karma - the discrimination is more intractable, and may take more than one existence to overcome fully.

Our desires and attachments cause us to suffer, because they are sometimes based on beliefs at variance with the true nature of life, or because, since life is constantly changing, we cannot cling to the desired object or circumstance forever. Yet desires and attachments are intrinsic to life and, indeed, the motivating power of life. To totally negate desire and attachment is to deny the value of life itself. So the solution is to elevate desire, transforming earthly desires into enlightenment. (Bonno Soku Bodai)

There are ten worlds: Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realization, Altruism, and Enlightenment. The desire for Enlightenment stems from the world of Enlightenment. All our other desires stem from the lower nine worlds. When we want something, as Nichiren Buddhists, we chant for it. Our chanting gradually elevates our desires, transforming even negative desires into higher, positive desires.

Through this process, we can reveal the enlightened aspect of the lower nine worlds. Someone whose default life condition is Hell can, through inner reformation, manifest this condition in an enlightened way - empathizing with others who are suffering, and taking action to relieve their sufferings. This can bring great satisfaction to the caregiver and great relief to the recipients. Thus because of the **Mutual Possession of the Ten Worlds**, Hell can manifest Humanity, Rapture and Altruism from within itself. The key is basing one's existence on the 10th life state, Enlightenment, which allows all nine lower life states, such as Hell, to express their enlightened aspect.

Similarly: Hunger can be transformed from greed to a hunger to benefit others through research or service. Animality can be transformed into a relentless struggle against evil in society - win or lose, them or us. Anger can be transformed from arrogance or retribution to anger for social justice. Humanity can be transformed from a 'yawning' life-state into a vigorous, imperturbable, incorruptible sense of fair play and equity.

Rapture can be transformed from foolish abandon to enlivening and refreshing others, on a deeper level and toward a more valuable objective. Learning (for example, insight attained through academic education) can be transformed from knowledge for its own sake, elitism, or diabolical applications of knowledge, to the pursuit of knowledge to benefit others. Realization (for example, insight attained through experience or meditation) can be transformed from myopic preoccupation with one's own sole salvation, to using one's realization empathetically to benefit everyone. Altruism, when based on enlightenment, functions more deeply and powerfully and is less likely to go tragically wrong.

These changes benefit not only others but also oneself. First of all, it feels good to be empathetic, to feel linked with the greater universe, and to take action for others. Second, one's life attracts protection and fortune from the environment - both discernible and inconspicuous - in direct proportion to how much we manifest empathetic qualities and behaviors. That's because everything *is* inherently connected; our happiness and well being depends on how much we realize and reflect that reality. (So then, why sometimes do bad things happen to "good" people, or good things happen to "bad" people? Again, because karma is a process that can transpire across lifetimes.)

By thus elevating our life condition, we can transform any circumstance from poison into medicine. (Hendoku Iyaku)

For example, when we are full of life force, desire for self improvement, and empathy - all aspects of enlightenment - we can transform a difficult boss from a source of anguish into an impetus for personal growth. We may thus win our boss over, by changing ourselves, or even be promoted - by our boss's boss - to a higher level in a different department. And, more importantly, in so doing, we have deepened, expanded, and purified our state of life.

Changing poison into medicine can express itself in transient everyday situations like the example above. But most fundamentally, changing poison into medicine means that as intelligent beings who think independently, we are prone to get ourselves misaligned with the Universal Law; but by redirecting our intelligence under the guidance of our Buddha Nature, we can use our intelligence to regain a new oneness with the Universal Law. All of the little problems of life, such as a difficult boss, are the fuel that makes the more profound process possible.

The body and mind are essentially one, though superficially distinct. (Shikishin Funi)

For instance, once we transform a difficult boss from poison into medicine, our blood pressure may lower, our ease of sleep increase, and our general health improve. This is an example of the mind influencing the body. Of course, the body can also influence the mind. A motorcycle highway patrolman with hemorrhoids may be irritable at his job! This underscores the importance of taking care of our health; it affects not only our body but also our mind, life state and environment.

The entity of life is the 9th level of consciousness - enlightenment or Buddhahood. Each individual has its own unique entity, yet all entities are linked, uniting the entire universe and everything in it throughout space and time. Each entity has two functions: potential and manifestation. The reason our mental state is linked with our physical health is not merely because the mind and body are related, but more profoundly, because both body and mind arise from entity, and the entity is always in a life-state somewhere from Hell to Buddhahood.

In the Lotus Sutra, the ten factors of life represent the oneness of mind and body. The ten factors are listed in the Second ("Expedient Means") chapter of the sutra, where it states that the true aspect of all phenomena consists of appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, internal effect, external cause, external effect, and their consistency from beginning to end. The Gosho (letter) "On the Profound Meaning" states: "Appearance exists only in what is material; nature exists only in what is spiritual. Entity, power, influence, and relation in principle combine both the material and the spiritual. Internal cause and latent effect are purely spiritual; manifest effect exists only in what is material."

The Self and Environment are essentially one, though superficially distinct. (Esho Funi)

One needn't be a Buddhist to agree that when we put our 'best foot forward' with a positive attitude, others will respond to us more favorably, all other factors equal. This denotes a superficial, observable aspect of the relationship between self and environment. Buddhism illuminates this connection on a more profound level as well.

The universe is, in a sense, like a personal computer's motherboard. On top, the components appear separate; but flip it over, and it's clear they're all interconnected.

The Theory of 3000 Conditions expounds that each entity of life has ten life conditions and their mutual possession, ten factors, and three realms, making 3000 life states in a single moment. The Three Realms are the Realm of Individual Consciousness, and Realm of Living Beings, and the Realm of Environment. The Realm of Living Beings includes other sentient beings both human and non-human. The Realm of Environment is the Earth, solar system, galaxy, and universe throughout space and time.

Since every life has Three Realms, every entity is directly connected with its environment. That is why by living correctly, we invariably draw protection and good fortune from our environment - all other factors equal - even in situations where there is no discernible link between our good causes and our good effects. Our good effects do not always come through human intermediaries who consciously decide to help us because they like our way of living; sometimes our good effects appear to be random unrelated occurrences, separated by time and context from the good causes we made.

Conversely, if we carry bad causes and effects within our life, our environment and circumstances will eventually come to reflect that also, just like a body and its shadow.

Then why sometimes do good things happen to “bad” people, and bad things happen to “good” people? That is because karma is a process that can come to fruition across more than one lifetime.

All of the above illuminates our previous example of changing our relationship with a difficult boss by changing ourselves, rather than waiting for our boss to change, which is something over which we have no control.

How we fuse our lives with the Universal Law to tap our 9th Consciousness - Mantra Recitation.

A **Mantra** is a short syllabicated phrase chanted over and over rhythmically, to help attain some objective through spiritual means. A mantra is a symbolic device, but that does not mean it is ‘not real’. Symbolism belongs to the realm of mental functions, potential, and non-substantiality. Since potential and manifestation are both functions of the same life-entity, symbolic phenomena and actual phenomena are inherently connected. That is why the entity can express its power and influence in the realm of observable phenomena through both tangible and symbolic actions, especially when these two are combined and coordinated.

The idea of using a mantra will seem less foreign if we consider that many of us already use the mantra’s cousins - the proverb, the slogan, the refrain, the poem, and song.

“All’s well that ends well.” “A penny saved is a penny earned.” Proverbs usually have a positive message.

Slogans can be positive or negative. “Power to the people”, a common slogan of the late 1960s, expressed populist and democratic yearnings. Whereas “Heil Hitler” was obviously a negative slogan.

Refrains can also be positive or negative. “I love you” is a positive refrain; “let’s get to work” is another one. Whereas “Here we go again!” uttered while rolling one’s eyeballs to the ceiling, expresses exasperation and resignation; it helps create an external locus of control, removing both one’s responsibility for, and one’s control over, the annoying situation. If someone at work uses “Yes boss” as a refrain, he may get a reputation as “the boss’s yes-man”. And “Not now!” used too often may erode relationships within a family.

Poems are obliquely similar to mantras, especially when they are put to music as songs. In fact, chanting in Buddhist ceremonies is really no more strange or alien than singing in Christian Church worship. And Christianity has the famous, beautiful spiritual and musical tradition of the Gregorian Chant.

From our experience with proverbs, slogans and refrains, poems and songs, we can intuitively see that mantras are more than just rhythmic gibberish that evens out our brain waves. The content *matters*.

The lyrics of two different rap songs may be innocuous, in one case, and violent, in the other, even though the rhythm may be the same in both songs. Since the content of a *song* is important, not only the rhythm, why should the same not be true for *mantras*? Chanting “Bingo Bango Bongo” to a Coke bottle may sooth us, but it would also make us seem rather silly to anyone who heard us and saw us. Truly beneficial mantras are not merely rhythmical devices. They also have a deep and positive content - a hopeful, empathetic, and empowering message. Such as mantra is the one employed in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Mantra (and Sutra) recitation should be syllabic, rhythmic and seamless, and at a moderate pace, not rushed. In the beginning, slow is OK.

Nam Myoho Renge Kyo (chanted as “Nam myo ho ren ge kyo”)

Nam (*rhymes with “Mom”*)

Nam is a contraction of Namu. Within Namu, Nam means devotion to something, and U means getting back effects appropriate to what you devoted yourself to, and how intensely. For example, some businessmen are devoted to making profit. That’s their NAM. Their U is both good and bad – wealth, and ulcers perhaps. Buddhists choose the Universal Law, or the Buddha Nature, as their NAM. This NAM includes and embraces all lesser NAMs, such as making money. Indeed, a businessman who worships the Universal Law will succeed at business more than he ever did previously.

Myoho (*each syllable rhymes with “go”*)

MYO means the Mystic Law. The Mystic Law cannot be sensed directly. It is the cause and maintainer of all that exists. It is eternal. It exists within each one of us and within all things. It is the ultimate source of goodness, capability, wisdom, fortune and compassion. HO are the phenomenal manifestations of MYO. These expressions are both physical and spiritual. HO is the part that can be grasped through the senses.

Ren ge (*pronounced “Wren-Gay”*)

REN GE stands for the Lotus Flower, which flowers and seeds at the same time. Thus the Lotus Flower is a symbol for the simultaneity of cause and effect. When we chant, our Buddha Nature emerges simultaneously. On the other hand, it takes years of repeated daily chanting to make Buddhahood the central tendency in our lives. The Lotus Flower blooms from a muddy swamp yet is untainted by the mud, remaining immaculate. This symbolizes how Buddhahood can emerge from the life of an ordinary person, and real, actual society can be transformed for the better when enough people are chanting.

Kyo (*rhymes with “go”*)

KYO stands for Teaching (or Sutra). Specifically it stands for the Lotus Sutra, the teaching which uniquely bridges the gap between the Buddha and the common mortal.

Kyo also means voice; everything we utter is some kind of cause, positive or negative, and the highest cause we can make is to use our voices to chant and to discuss Buddhism with other people. KYO also means the warp of cloth, which symbolizes continuity – Nichiren Buddhism is over seven centuries old, and it comes from a long lineage of earlier Buddhist teachings going all the way back to Shakyamuni 2500 years ago in India.

As a whole, NAM MYOHO RENG KYO can be translated as “Devotion to the Mystic Law of cause and effect through sound.” But that is only one possible translation. MYOHO RENG KYO happens to be the title of the Lotus Sutra. By adding NAM, Nichiren discovered the mantra that actually taps the Buddha Nature, or the Law of the Universe.

How we fuse our lives with the Universal Law to tap our 9th Consciousness: Using a Mandala

A **mandala** is an external object used as a focus of concentration for meditation or chanting. Since we worship a Law which we believe to be within us, our mandala is not an idol, which entails worshiping something outside oneself.

Our Mandala is called the “Gohonzon”, which means the supreme object of worship. It is a paper inscription with calligraphic characters. It is a textual and graphic synopsis of our core teaching.

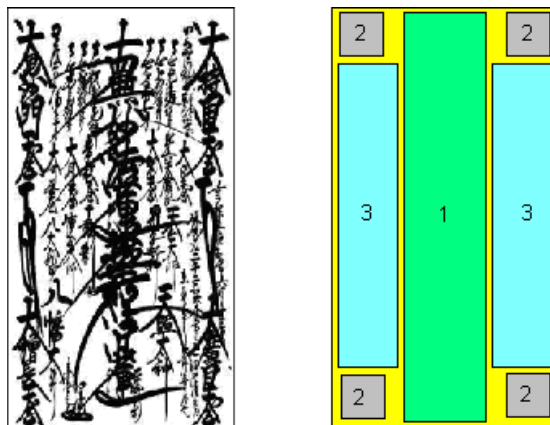
But it is more than just a listing of doctrines, like the table of contents of a book on Buddhism. As a mandala, it is a physical embodiment (manifestation) of a body of spiritual teachings (potential). Remember that manifestation and potential are the two functions of the entity, and that all three always occur together. So our mandala is not just a list of teachings, but the entity of our teaching in physical form.

Physical objects in our environment have the power to influence us. A good looking member of the opposite sex may arouse our Hunger nature. A good book may arouse our Learning nature. An entity of Buddhism helps make our Buddha nature leap from potential into manifestation. Our mandala is an entity of the core Buddhist teachings.

Our mandala is also a mirror. There is more than one kind of mirror in existence. A glass mirror shows our physical selves. Competitive sports put the athlete into a pressure cooker, revealing his or her psychological strengths and weaknesses, essentially functioning as a spiritual mirror. But both physical and mental functions arise from entity. Our mandala is a mirror of your life entity. It provides the deepest possible way to see yourself.

For instance, if someone chants to the Gohonzon about their difficult boss, the situation at work may seem to get worse before it gets better. That's because, with his life-eyes open, he can no longer kid himself. As he dimly begins to get an inkling that the buck stops with him, no matter how unfair it may seem, this heightens his pain in the short run. Yet this painful process enables him to make a fundamental change for the better,

both in his external situation and in his internal life condition. No pain no gain; this is true even for shallow achievements, and that much more so for fundamental ones. Not all Gohonzons are identical, but they are closely similar. We will now analyze the Nichikan Gohonzon with a brief overview. The Nichikan Gohonzon is the one granted to believers by the SGI. After the analysis, and the eye opening ceremony, there are links with which you can download the Nichikan Gohonzon or other Gohonzons inscribed by Nichiren himself.



1. Nam Myoho Renge Kyo, Nichiren. This symbolizes the Oneness of Person and Law. When you chant to the Gohonzon, what emerges is the oneness of *your* life with the Universal Law.

2. The Four Heavenly Kings. Mythological beings said to live on the four slopes of Mount Sumeru, north, south, east and west. These beings stand for protective functions innate within life that protect those who chant.

3. Representatives of the nine lower worlds. These worlds, such as learning and anger, are satellites of the world of Buddhahood on the Gohonzon. Thus the Gohonzon represents the ideal life condition, where Buddhahood illuminates the lower nine worlds and enables them all to reveal their enlightened aspect. There are also other protective functions, aspects of enlightenment, historical figures in the development of Nichiren Buddhism, and miscellaneous inscriptions such as the High Priest Nichikan's statement that he transcribed one of Nichiren's Gohonzons to make this one. There are inscriptions describing the good fortune worshippers will accrue and the negative karma that will come to those who slander the Gohonzon. The fundamental darkness inherent within life is also on the Gohonzon, because this too functions for good when Buddhahood is firmly established as one's central life tendency.

Is a downloaded Gohonzon as good as one officially granted to a believer by a sectarian organization, such as for example, the Soka Gakkai? Yes it is. Keep in mind that Gohonzons granted by Soka Gakkai, Nichiren Shu, Nichiren Shoshu, etc. are virtually nothing more than digital photocopies; they are manufactured as a scroll, but they are still digital copies. A downloaded Gohonzon is trimmed, framed, and mounted

above and behind your altar. It is the same thing as an official Gohonzon – a digital copy!

You do not need to worry that no priest has performed an eye-opening ceremony on your Gohonzon. As the Soka Gakkai points out, it is your own chanting with faith that opens the eyes of your Gohonzon. A priestly eye-opening ceremony is just a formality from esoteric Buddhism.

Nevertheless, for those who want an eye-opening ceremony, one is provided below. This is an eye-opening ceremony you can perform yourself. You are just as qualified to do it as a priest is, because the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Daishonin's teachings state that ALL people – including laymen – equally possess the Buddha nature.

Here is a Gosho quote to confirm that a common mortal can consecrate a Gohonzon: "A common mortal is an entity of the three bodies, and a true Buddha. A Buddha is a function of the three bodies, and a provisional Buddha. In that case, though it is thought that Shakyamuni Buddha possesses the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent for the sake of all of us living beings, that is not so. On the contrary, it is common mortals who endow him with the three virtues."

- - The True Entity of Life

"Shakyamuni Buddha" above can refer to any Buddha, including the Gohonzon. Although the quotation talks about bestowing the Three Virtues on the Gohonzon, once the Gohonzon possesses the Three Virtues that Gohonzon is a Buddha. By definition, a Buddha possesses all 32 Properties of the Buddha, including the 32nd property, the "clear and far reaching voice". So, if a common mortal bestows the Three Virtues on a Gohonzon, that common mortal is by definition also bestowing the 32nd property of the Buddha on the Gohonzon. Therefore, the above quotation can mean that common mortals can bestow the 32nd property of the Buddha on the Gohonzon. The 32nd property of the Buddha is spiritual. The other 31 properties of the Buddha are physical properties already contained within the scroll or paper before consecration.

Gohonzon Eye Opening Ceremony

For new Gohonzons

(This Eye-Opening Ceremony is based on a previously existing ceremony that exists in Nichiren Shu, a school of Nichiren Buddhism. The original can be found online at <http://nichirenscoffeehouse.net/Gohonzon/EyeOpeningCeremony.html>

The original provider of this link has passed away, and now, when you click the link, the eye opening ceremony page only appears for a split second, and then another Buddhist web-ring of some kind appears with a ponderous array of choices. To make the eye opening ceremony page reappear, use the "History" feature in your web browser. (Don't push the Back button. That won't work).

I made some modifications to the Nichiren Shu Eye Opening Ceremony to conform to my own beliefs. You too can modify it to conform to your own beliefs, perhaps comparing my version and the original then coming up with your own.

This special eye-opening ceremony may be performed, once the downloaded Gohonzon is trimmed, framed, and mounted on the wall above and behind your altar. You perform the eye opening ceremony by reading the entire text out loud, as you are seated at your altar.

This is an example. It is intended for someone who is consecrating both a Gohonzon and three Buddha statues. Modify it to suit your situation.

Eye Opening Ceremony

Dojoge (Verse, Place of Enlightenment)

This place of enlightenment is as luminous as the gems of the net of King Sakra.

All the Three Treasures of the worlds of the ten directions manifest themselves here. Now I am before them. I bow to the Buddhas and worship their feet with my head.

Samborai (Bow to the Three Treasures)

With my whole heart,
I bow to the Eternal Buddha emanating the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten directions. (bow)

With my whole heart,
I bow to the Eternal Dharma establishing the teachings of the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten directions. (bow)

With my whole heart,
I bow to the Eternal Samgha comprising the devotees of the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten directions. (bow)

Kanjo (Invitation)

With reverence I adore this Great Mandala and these three Great Buddha Statues. With reverence I venerate the Original Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni. With reverence I venerate the Great provisional Buddha Nichiren.

With reverence I venerate Prabhutaratna Tathagata, who appeared in this world to bear witness to the truthfulness of the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma.

With reverence I venerate the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten directions in the past, present and future, the emanations of the Original Buddha Shakyamuni.

With reverence I venerate Bishamonten, Anryugyo, Jyogyo, Jogyo Bosatsu, Muhengyo, the Eight Dragon Kings, Dengyo Daishi, the Jurasetsunyo, Kishimoin, Tendai Daishi, Zochoten, Hachiman, Tensho-daijin, Komokuten, Jikokuten, Aizen, Myojoten, Gattenno, and Taishaku.

With reverence I venerate the four kinds of devotees who joined the congregations of the Lotus Sutra.

With reverence I venerate the Senior Priests, who inherited and transmitted Nichiren Daishonin's teachings.

May all Venerable Ones come to this place of enlightenment, see me with their eyes of wisdom, and receive the savor of the Dharma out of their compassion towards me.

Kaikyoge (Sutra Opening Verse)

This sutra of the Supreme, Most Profound and Wonderful Dharma is difficult to meet in thousands of millions of kalpas. Now I have been able to see, hear, receive and keep it. May I understand the ultimate import of the teachings of the Tathagata. The Ultimate Truth of the Great Vehicle is, however, very difficult for me to understand. All who see, hear or touch this sutra shall come closer to Bodhi. The expounder of this sutra is the Sambhogakaya aspect of the Buddha. What is expounded in this sutra is the Dharmakaya aspect of the Buddha. The characters of this sutra are the Nirmanakaya aspect of the Buddha. Since innumerable merits are contained in this sutra, all living beings are benefited by this sutra without hindrance as implicitly as incense is perceived by a thing put nearby. By merits of this sutra, anyone will be able to expiate his sin, do good deeds, and attain the enlightenment of the Buddha, whether he is wise or not, whether he believes or slanders this sutra. The Dharma attained by the past, present and future Buddhas is expounded in this most profound and wonderful sutra. May my posterity, generation after generation, meet and receive this sutra with reverence.

Dokyo (Sutra Chanting. Chant the Hoben and Juryo Chapter excerpts normally done during Gongyo. See next section, "Lotus Sutra")

Shodai (Daimoku Chanting) (Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo) 5 minutes

Kaigen (Consecration)

I am a benighted common mortal in which both enlightenment and defilement coexist. Therefore, I beseech the soul of Shakyamuni, the Original Eternal Buddha, and the soul of the Great provisional Buddha Nichiren, to descend to this place of Consecration for a few moments, to support me by lending me a portion of their enlightened life conditions. Nam Myo ho Ren ge Kyo, Nam Myo ho Ren ge Kyo, Nam Myo ho Ren ge Kyo. Now, through my faith alone, and not due to my abilities, I have been spiritually reinforced by Shakyamuni and Nichiren. Therefore, I can now use my Buddha Nature to endow an insentient object with the 32nd property of the Buddha, the "clear and far reaching voice". I hereby consecrate this Gohonzon and my three Buddha Statues as objects of worship, as insentient beings in the state of Buddhahood, which possess the internal cause to make Buddhahood leap forth from the life of anyone who chants the sutra and the daimoku to them or near them. I hereby endow this Gohonzon and my three Buddha Statues with the 32nd property of the Buddha, the "clear and far reaching voice". Nam Myo ho Ren ge Kyo, Nam Myo ho Ren ge Kyo, Nam Myo ho Ren ge Kyo.

Eko (Dedication)

The present Buddhas as well as the past Buddhas have appeared in the worlds

for the purpose of expounding the Wonderful Dharma. So will the future Buddhas. Lord Teacher Sakyamuni Buddha, the World-Honored One, the Original Eternal Buddha, and the Great provisional Buddha Nichiren, the Founder of my religion, are nothing without the Wonderful Dharma. When I chant the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, all the Buddhas will immediately manifest themselves before me. When I chant the sutra before the Great Mandala inscribed on paper, the paper will instantly bear mind of its innate Buddhanature, and the Great Mandala will reveal the Pure World of the Original Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni and the Great provisional Buddha Nichiren. Now as I chant the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma and the Daimoku before this Great Mandala, and my Three Buddha Statues, they are consecrated. They will benefit me boundlessly. May the Great Mandala and my Three Buddha Statues do the work of the Buddha by releasing their brilliant light so that I may be able to keep my faith firm and strong, serve the Three Treasures with sincerity, and fulfill my goals for my present and future lives.

Shisei (The Four Vows)

I vow to save all living beings however countless they may be.
I vow to eliminate all illusions however numberless they may be. I vow to study all teachings however limitless they may be. I vow to attain the supreme enlightenment of the Buddha.

Sanki (The Three Refuges)

With most reverence, I take refuge in the Buddha.
May all living beings understand the Great Way and aspire to supreme enlightenment.

I take refuge in the Dharma.
May all living beings enter deep into the storehouse of the Lotus Sutra and their wisdom be as vast as the sea.

I take refuge in the Sangha.
May all living beings forge one great congregation without hindrance.

Buso (Farewell)

Venerable Ones! Remember me, be where you like, and come again out of your great compassion toward me!

Downloading a Gohonzon

Please remember that the Gohonzon is the physical embodiment of your ideal enlightened life condition, and as such, it must be treated with great care and respect. Here are some rules to follow when downloading a Gohonzon:

1. Print the Gohonzon on high quality 100 weight matte paper. (Do not use photo glossy paper, as this can create glare). Ordinary paper is not sufficient to match the dignity of the Gohonzon. Do not use a smeared printout of the Gohonzon. If necessary, try printing it two or three times until it comes out perfect. File away the imperfect copies, do not throw them away or destroy them.
2. After you print the Gohonzon file on your printer, do not delete the original file.

Keep it in “My Pictures” or “My Documents” or on a CD, some place safe.

3. Do not fold, bend, wrinkle, or stain your printed Gohonzon. You may *trim* the edges *carefully* with scissors, to fit the frame. Use a clean ruler and draw lines lightly in pencil to match the frame, then cut along the lines.

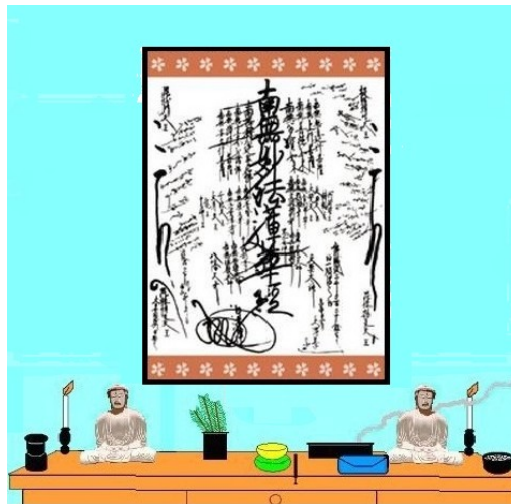
4. Do not print your downloaded Gohonzon until you have already bought a suitable frame (10 by 8) and have already arranged a place on the wall to frame it, with a proper Buddhist altar in front of it. Then when you finally do print the Gohonzon, frame it and mount it immediately. Then perform the Eye Opening Ceremony right away.

5. If in the future you replace your first printed Gohonzon with a scroll Gohonzon, or with a different printed Gohonzon, do not throw out the original. Keep it in a manila folder in your hard copy files under a topic such as “keepsakes”.
Download a Gohonzon inscribed by Nichiren himself (there are many to choose from).

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/GohonzonInfo/>

Note: These PDF images will print adequately on your inkjet printer or laser printer.

A downloadable virtual Gohonzon and altar you can use on your computer.



My website has links where you can download a PDF, PNG, or HTML image of this Gohonzon and altar. Then you can use it on your computer or tablet as a virtual altar, eliminating the need to set up a three dimensional full size altar. The downloaded image is a little larger than what is shown here.

The Basis of Our Mantra and Mandala – The Lotus Sutra

First a brief timeline:

Shakyamuni Buddha: 5th or 6th Century B.C., started Buddhism.

Kumarajiva: 343 or 344 – 413 A.D., China. Good translation of Lotus Sutra from Sanskrit into Chinese. Captured human-potential-affirming spirit of Lotus Sutra.

T'ien-t'ai: surnames Chih-i, Chih-k'ai, 531-597 A.D., China. Systematized the teachings implicit in the Lotus Sutra. Created a difficult, time-consuming, cumbersome, yet effective system of meditation for their realization.

Dengyo Daishi (surname Saicho), 767 – 822 A.D., Japan. Brought T'ien-t'ai Buddhism to Japan (Tendai sect). Unfortunately, the Tendai sect eventually allowed itself to be mixed with Pure Land Buddhism (see Hui-Yuan and Honen, next).

Hui-Yuan (334 – 416 A.D.) and Honen (1173-1212 A.D.): founders of Pure Land Buddhism in China and Japan, respectively. Pure Land capsulated Buddhism, making it accessible to ordinary working people. But it taught that happiness in this world was impossible and could be found only in death, thus sapping peoples' determination, vitality and potential.

Nichiren Daishonin (1222 – 1282 A.D., Japan): Capsulated the Tendai practice, making it accessible to ordinary working people, founding the Nichiren School of Buddhism. He was very courageous in his convictions, standing up to religious persecutions. He cared deeply about his followers and all humanity, and he did not seek personal gain.

Nichiren relentlessly refuted what he considered to be the errors of other Buddhist sects. He wrote the Goshō – letters to his followers – which are now the primary study material for believers. Nichiren fulfilled the purpose of his advent by leaving us with many Gohonzons (the object of worship – a piece of paper or wood with calligraphy on it, representing enlightenment). Nichiren was definitely not a religious pluralist. He believed his teaching alone was beneficial and all other teachings should be discarded. His publically proclaiming this brought on his many severe persecutions. Today many independent Nichiren Buddhists are religiously much more pluralistic and tolerant than Nichiren himself was.

(end of timeline)

The Lotus Sutra is Shakyamuni Buddha's declaration of human dignity and equality. Its essential message is that Buddhahood is inherent in the lives of ordinary common mortals (Hoben Chapter), that the lives of ordinary common mortals are inherent in Buddhahood (Juryo Chapter), and that everyone without exception has the potential for Buddhahood. This bridges the gap between the Buddha and the ordinary person. Buddhas are ordinary people who realize they have Buddhahood at the core of their lives. Common mortals are essentially Buddhas, but they do not yet realize this fact. Buddhas have the lower nine conditions (Hell to Altruism) of common mortals, and

common mortals have inherent Buddhahood, whether they are currently manifesting it or not.

Long after Shakyamuni, another Buddhist named Kumarajiva made a particularly good translation of the Lotus Sutra from Sanskrit into Chinese. And still later, a Chinese Buddhist named T'ien-t'ai derived the Theory of 3000 Conditions in a Single Moment of Life from the Lotus Sutra. He also devised a complex, subtle, arduous regimen of mind observing meditation, which is compiled in his "Great Concentration and Insight" (Maka Shikan). It was practical only for individuals of extraordinary ability who also had lots of free time – mostly monks, clergy, nobility, and wealthy retirees.

In the 13th century A.D. in Japan, Buddhist sages such as Nichiren and Honen came up with abbreviated forms of Buddhist practice more practical for ordinary working men and women. Some modern scholars look down on these systems, characterizing them as "coarse Buddhism" – as if "fine Buddhism" is identified by its abstruseness and difficulty. But many real-world examples show us that the more wisely conceived something is, the more accessible it is to the end user, all other factors equal.

This principle was the basis for developing the Graphical User Interface for personal computers. Suppose Xerox, Apple and Microsoft, and all other software developers, had tried to make the microcomputer as *difficult* to use as possible?

Conversely, the more superficial or confused something is, the more difficult it is to use. A good metaphor for this is a cat tangled up in a ball of yarn.

Compared to, say, 1976, people in the U.S. and elsewhere now work longer hours, are connected by more real-time communications devices, have more single-parent homes, and - for these and other reasons – now have less free time. According to the Mahayana ideal, sharing Buddhism with others is of paramount importance. One indispensable aspect of sharing it is making it accessible.

The Lotus Sutra uses parables, dramatic imagery, metaphor, verses of praise, affirmations, hyperbole, and other literary devices to convey key principles. This was in accord with the stylistic conventions of ancient Indian society. People in that society didn't have hundreds of emails every day. In today's society we must get right to the point, or the point will be missed in our haste.

The point of the Lotus Sutra is, again, that: Buddhahood is inherent in the lives of common mortals, the lives of common mortals are inherent in Buddhahood, and everyone without exception has the potential for Buddhahood.

Two sections of the Lotus Sutra, the Hoben and Juryo chapters, are chanted by believers.

Here are the two Lotus Sutra excerpts, with an English translation.

Hoben Chapter

Myo ho ren ge kyo. Ho ben pon. Dai ni.

Identifies the excerpt to come as the Hoben Chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

Niji seson. Ju sanmai. Anjo ni ki. Go shari-hotsu. Sho-but[^]chi-e. Jinjin muryo. Go chi-e mon. Nange nannyu. Issai shomon. Hyaku-shi-butsu. Sho fu no chi.

At this time the World-Honored One serenely arose from meditation and addressed Shariputra: "The wisdom of all Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable. The portal to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter. Neither men of Learning (shomon) nor men of Realization (engaku) are able to comprehend it."

Sho-i sha ga. Butsu zo shingon. Hyaku sen man noku. Mushu sho butsu. Jin gyo sho-butsu. Muryo doho. Yumyo shojin. Myosho fu mon. Joju jinjin. Mi-zo-u ho. Zui gi sho setsu. Ishu nange.

"The reason is this. A Buddha has carried out countless austerities under many hundred thousand myriads of kotis of Buddhas. He devoted himself to these practices so valiantly and untiringly that his name is universally known. He realized the profound, unparalleled Law and preaches it according to the people's capacity, yet his intention is very difficult to understand."

Shari-hotsu. Go ju jo-butsu irai. Shuju innen. Shuju hiyu. Ko en gonkyo. Mu shu hoben. Indo shujo. Ryo ri sho jaku.

"Shariputra, ever since I attained Buddhahood, I have widely expounded my teachings through many stories of past relationships and many parables, and by countless means have led the people to renounce all their attachments.

Sho-i sha ga. Nyorai hoben. Chiken hara-mitsu. Kai i gu-soku.

The reason for this is that the Tathágata is possessed of both means and perfect wisdom."

Shari-hotsu. Nyorai chiken. Kodai jinnon. Muryo muge. Riki. Mu-sho-i. Zenjo. Geda.[^]Sanmai. Jin nyu musai. Joju issai. Mi-zo-u ho.

"Shariputra, the wisdom of the Tathágata is all-encompassing and profound. His mercy is infinite, and his teaching knows no bounds. Endowed with power, fearlessness, concentration, emancipation [from sufferings and desires] and the capacity to meditate, he dwells in the boundless and awakens to the never before-realized Law."

Shari-hotsu. Nyorai no. Shuju fun-betsu. Gyo ses[^]sho ho. Gonji nyunan. Ekka shushin. Shari-hotsu. Shu yo gon shi. Muryo muhen. Mi-zo-u ho. Bus[^]shitsu joju.

"Shariputra, the Tathágata has the power to perceive which among the various teachings [is suited to his audience], to preach the teachings in a skillful way, and to

gladden the hearts of the people with warm and tender words. That is to say, Shariputra, the Buddha has realized the infinite, boundless and unparalleled Law."

Shi shari-hotsu. Fu shu bu setsu.^Sho-i sha ga. Bus^sho joju. Dai ichi ke-u. Nange shi ho.

"Shariputra, I will say no more, because that which the Buddha has achieved is the rarest and most difficult Law to comprehend."

Yui butsu yo butsu. Nai no kujin. Shoho jisso. Sho-i shoho. Nyo ze so. Nyo ze sho. Nyo ze tai. Nyo ze riki. Nyo ze sa. Nyo ze in. Nyo ze en. Nyo ze ka. Nyo ze ho. Nyo ze honmak^kukyo to.

"The true entity of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end."

Juryo Chapter

Myo ho ren ge kyo. Nyo rai ju ryo hon. Dai ju roku.

Identifies the excerpt to come as the Juryo Chapter of the Lotus Sutra.
This part may be omitted.

Niji butsu go. Sho bo-satsu gyo. Issai daishu. Sho zen-nanshi. Nyoto to shinge. Nyorai jotai shi go. Bu go daishu. Nyoto to shinge. Nyorai jotai shi go. U bu go. Sho daishu, Nyoto to shinge. Nyorai jotai shi go. Zeji bo-satsu daishu. Mi-roku i shu. Gassho byaku butsu gon. Seson. Yui gan ses^shi. Gato to shinju butsu-go. Nyo ze san byaku i. Bu gon. Yui gan ses^shi. Gato to shinju butsu-go

At this time the Buddha addressed the bodhisattvas and all the multitude: "Men of devout faith, believe and understand the true words of the Tathágata" Again the Buddha addressed the people: "Believe and understand the true words of Tathágata."

"At this time the bodhisattvas and the multitude beginning with Miroku, pressed their palms together and said: "World-Honored One, our only wish is that you teach us. Certainly we will believe the Buddhas words. Thus they spoke three times, repeating the words. " Our only wish is that you teach us. Certainly we will believe the Buddha's words.

Niji seson. Chi sho bo-satsu. San sho fu shi. Ni go shi gon. Nyoto tai cho. Nyorai hi-mitsu. Jinzu shi riki.

When the World Honored One says that the bodhisattvas repeated their petition three times and more without ceasing he addressed them "Listen well and hear the Tathágata's secret and his mystic power."

Issai seken. Tennin gyu. Ashura. Kai i kon shaka-muni-butsu. Shus[^]shaku-shi gu. Ko gayajo. fu on. Za o dojo. Toku a-noku-ta-ra san-myaku sanbodai. Nen zennanshi. Ga jitsu jo-butsu irai. Muryo muhen. Hyaku sen man noku. Nayuta ko.

"All gods, men and *asutras* of this world believe that after leaving the palace of the Shakyas, Shakyamuni Buddha seated himself at the place of meditation not far from the city of Gaya and attained the supreme enlightenment. However, men of devout faith, the time is limitless and boundless -- a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, hundred thousand, nayuta aeons -- since I in fact attained Buddhahood."

Hi nyo go hyaku sen man noku. Nayuta. Asogi. Sanzen dai sen sekai. Ke shi u nin. Matchi mijin. Ka o tobo. Go hyaku sen man noku. Nayuta. Asogi koku. Nai ge ichi-jin. Nyo ze to gyo. Jin ze mijin. Sho zen-nanshi. O i unga. Ze sho sekai. Ka toku shiyui. Kyoike chi go. Shu fu.

"Suppose there is one who reduces five hundred, thousand, ten thousand, hundred thousand, nayuta (10¹¹) asogi (10⁵⁹) major world systems to particles of dust, and then takes them all toward the east, dropping one particle each time he traverses five hundred, thousand, ten thousand, hundred thousand, nayuta, asogi worlds. Suppose that he continues traveling eastward in this way, until he has finished dropping all the particles. Men of devout faith, what is your opinion? Can the total number of all those worlds be imagined or calculated?"

Mi-roku bo-sat[^]to. Ku byaku butsu gon. Seson. Ze sho sekai. Muryo muhen. Hi sanju sho chi. Yaku hi shin-riki sho gyu. Issai shomon. Hyaku-shi-butsu. I murochi. Fu no shiyui. Chi go genshu. Gato ju. A-yui-ot-chi-ji. O ze ji chu. Yaku sho fu das[^]seson. Nyo ze sho sekai. Muryo muhen. Niji butsu go. Dai bosas[^]shu. Sho zen-nanshi. Konto funmyo. Sengo nyoto. Ze sho sekai. Nyaku jaku mijin. Gyu fu jaku[^]sha. Jin ni i jin. Ichi-jin ikko. Ga jo-butsu irai. Bu ka o shi. Hyaku sen man noku. Nayuta. Asogi ko.

Bodhisattva Miroku and the others said to the Buddha " World Honored One, these worlds are infinite and boundless. They are beyond calculation. They exceed the power of the imagination. Neither men of Learning nor men of Realization even with their illusion-free wisdom could imagine or calculate the number. Although we are now at the stage where we will never backslide in faith we are totally incapable of comprehending

this, World-Honored One, these worlds are infinite and boundless." Then the Buddha addressed the great bodhisattvas: "Now, men of devout faith I clearly proclaim to you. Suppose all these worlds, whether they received a particle or not are once more reduced to dust. Let one particle represent one aeon. Then the time which has passed since I attained Buddhahood suppose this by one hundred, thousand, ten thousand, hundred thousand, nayuta, asogi aeons."

Ji ju ze rai. Ga jo zai shi. Shaba sekai. Seppo kyoike. Yaku o yosho. Hyaku sen man noku. Nayuta. Asogi koku. Dori shujo.

"Ever since then I have been constantly in this world expounding the Law and instructing [the people]. Also I have led and benefited the people in one hundred thousand, ten thousand hundred thousand nayuta asogi other worlds."

Sho zen-nanshi. O ze chugen. Ga setsu nen-do-but^to. U bu gon go. Nyu o nehan. Nyo ze kai i Hoben fun-betsu.

"Men of devout faith during this time I taught people about Nento Buddha and others saying that I would end all sufferings and pass away. All this I did through different methods of teaching that were suited to the capacity of the people."

Sho zen-nanshi. Nyaku u shujo. Raishi ga sho. Ga i butsu-gen. Kan go shin to. Sho kon ridon. Zui sho o do. Shosho ji setsu. Myoji fudo. Nenki daisho. Yaku-bu gen gon. To nyu nehan. U i shuju hoben. Setsu mimyo ho. No ryo shujo. Hok^kangi shin.

"Men of devout faith, when the people came to me, I perceived with the eyes of a Buddha the degree of their faith and other qualities depending upon whether their capacities were keen or dull. I made my appearance teaching in many different worlds using different names, and explaining how long a period my teaching would be efficacious. On other occasions when I made my advent I told the people that I would soon enter nirvana, and employed many methods to expound the wonderful teachings and caused the people to be gladdened their hearts."

Sho zen-nanshi. Nyorai ken sho shujo. Gyo o shobo. Toku hak^ku ju sha. I ze nin setsu. Ga sho shukke. Toku a-noku-ta-ra. San-myaku sanbodai. Nen ga jitsu. Jobutsu irai. Ku-on nyaku shi. Tan ni hoben. Kyoke shujo. Ryo nyu butsu-do. Sa nyo ze setsu.

"Men of devout faith, I the Tathágata, observed that the people delighted in inferior teachings and were meager in virtue and weighted down by defilement. Therefore I taught them that I had renounced the world in my youth and later attained enlightenment. But in truth the time since I attained Buddhahood is the tremendously long period I have already revealed. This was only an expedient I used to teach the people and cause them to enter on the path to Buddhahood."

Sho zen-nanshi. Nyorai sho en kyoden Kai i dodas^shujo. Waku sek^koshin. Waku set^tashin. Waku ji koshin. Waku ji tashin. Waku ji koji. Waku ji taji. Sho sho gon-setsu. Kai jitsu fu ko.

"Men of devout faith the sutras which the Tathágata expounded are all for the purpose of saving people from their sufferings. Sometimes I spoke of myself sometimes of others; sometimes I presented myself, sometimes others; sometimes I showed my own actions sometimes those of others. All my doctrines are true and none are false."

Sho-i sha ga. Nyorai nyojit^chiken. Sangai shi so. Mu u shoji. Nyaku tai nyaku shutsu. Yaku mu zai-se. Gyu metsu-do sha. Hi jitsu hi ko. Hi nyo hi i. Fu nyo

sangai. Ken no sangai. Nyo shi shi ji. Nyorai myo ken. Mu u shaku-myo.

"The reason is that the Tathágata perceives the true aspect of the threefold word exactly as it is. There is no ebb and flow of birth and death nor life in this world and later extinction. It is neither substantial nor empty neither consistent nor diverse. Nor is it what those who dwell in the threefold world perceive it to be. All such things the Tathágata sees clear and without error."

I sho shujo. U shuju sho. Shuju yoku. Shuju gyo. Shuju oku-so. Fun-bek^ko. Yoku ryo sho sho zengon. I nyakkan innen. Hiyu gonji. Shuju seppo. Shosa butsu-ji . Mi zo zan pai.

"People have differing natures, differing desires, differing modes of behavior, and differing ideas and outlooks. Therefore out of my desire to plant the seeds of enlightenment in their hearts I have taught the various teachings through stories of past relationships parables and other sayings. This practice proper to a Buddha I have continued unceasingly."

Nyo ze. Ga jo-butsu irai. Jindai ku-on. Jumyo muryo. Asogi ko. Joju fu-metsu. Sho zen-nanshi. Ga hon gyo bo-satsu do. Sho jo jumyo. Kon yu mi jin. Bu bai jo shu. Nen kon hi jitsu metsu-do. Ni ben sho gon. To shu metsu-do. Nyorai i ze hoben. Kyoke shujo.

"Since I attained Buddhahood an unimaginably long period has passed. The length of my life is infinite aeons. My life has always existed and shall never end. Men of devout faith, once I also practiced the bodhisattva austerities, and the life, which I then acquired, has yet to be exhausted. My life will last yet twice as many aeons from now. Although I never really pass away I predict my own death. With this means, the Tathágata teaches the people."

Sho-i sha ga Nyaku buk-ku-ju o se. Haku-toku shi nin. Fu shu zengon. Bingugen. Ton-jaku go-yoku Nyu o oku-so. Moken mo chu. Nyakken nyorai. Jo zai fumetsu. Ben ki kyoshi. Ni e endai. Fu no sho o. Nanzo shi so. Kugyo shi shin.

"The reason is this: If the Buddha remains in the world too long those people with shallow virtue will not be able to accumulate the good fortune necessary to attain enlightenment. They will fall into poverty and debasement. Greedy with the five desires they will be caught in the snares of deluded thoughts and ideas. By seeing the Tathágata constantly present and undying in this world, they will become arrogant and selfish and will neglect their practice of Buddhism. They will fail to realize how difficult it is to meet the Tathágata and will feel no reverence for him."

Ze ko nyorai. I hoben setsu. Bi-ku to chi. Shobus^shus-se. Nan ka chigu. Sho-i sha ga. Sho haku-toku nin. Ka muryo. Hyaku sen man nok-ko. Waku u ken butsu. Waku fu ken sha. I shiji ko. Ga sa ze gon. Sho bi-ku. Nyorai nan ka tokken. Shi shujo to. Mon nyo ze go. Hit^to sho o. Nanzo shi so. Shin ne renbo. Katsu-go o butsu. Ben shu zengon. Ze ko nyorai. Sui fu jitsu metsu. Ni gon metsu-do.

"As an expedient, therefore, the Tathágata speaks to the monks, saying, "You should know it is a rare thing to live at a time when a Buddha appears in the world. "The reason is that even after the lapse of infinite hundred thousand, ten thousand, hundred thousand aeons, some of the men of little virtue may chance to see a Buddha, but others still may not." Therefore I tell them, "Monks, it is rare that may see the Tathágata" When the people hear these words, they are sure to realize how rare it is to see a Buddha, and then they will yearn and thirst for him. In this way they will plant the cause of enlightenment in their hearts. Therefore the Tathágata announces his own death even though he does not really become extinct."

U zen-nanshi. Sho-butsu nyorai. Ho kai nyo ze. I do shujo. Kai jitsu fu ko.

"You men of devout faith, any teaching of any Buddha is always like this. Since Buddhas reveal their teachings in order to save people all of them are true and none are false."

Hi nyo ro-i. Chi-e so-datsu. Myo ren ho-yaku. Zen ji shubyo. Go nin ta. sho shisoku. Nyaku ju niju. Nai-shi hyaku-shu. I u ji-en. On shi yo-koku.

"Imagine a wise and skilled physician who can compound medicines to cure any disease. He has many sons, perhaps ten, twenty, ore even a hundred. He goes off to a distant land to see some matter."

Sho shi o go. On ta doku-yaku. Yaku hotsu monran. Enden u ji.

"Later the children drink some kind of poison that makes them wild with pain, and they fall writhing to the ground."

Zeji go bu. Gen rai ki ke. Sho shi on doku Waku shitsu honshin. Waku fu shis[^]sha. Yo ken go bu. Kai dai kangi. Haiki monjin. Zen nan non ki. Gato guchi. Go buku doku-yaku. Gan ken kuryo. Kyo shi jumyo.

"At this time the father comes back to his home and finds that his children have drunk poison. Some are out of their minds while others are not. Seeing their father from afar all are filled with joy and kneel down to entreat him saying, "How wonderful that you have returned safely! We were stupid and by mistake drank some poison. We beg you to cure us and let us live longer."

Bu ken shi to. Kuno nyo ze. E sho kyobo. Gu ko yaku-so. Shiki ko mimi. Kai shitsu gu-soku. Toshi wago. Yo shi ryo buku. Ni sa ze gon. Shi dai ro-yaku. Shiki ko mimi. Kai shitsu gu-soku. Nyoto ka buku. Soku jo kuno. Mu bu shugen.

"The father seeing his children suffering like this follows various prescriptions. Gathering fine medicinal herbs that are perfect in color fragrance and flavor he grinds sifts and mixes them together. Giving a dose of these to his children he tells them, "This highly beneficial medicine is perfect in color fragrance and flavor. Take it and you will quickly

be relieved of your sufferings and will be free of all distress."

Go sho shi chu. Fu shis[^]shin ja. Ken shi ro-yaku. Shiki ko gu ko. Soku-ben buku shi. Byo jin jo yu. Yo shis shin ja. Ken go bu rai. Sui yak-kangi. Monjin gu-shaku ji byo. Nen yo go yaku. Ni fu ko buku.

"Those children who have not lost their senses can see that the beneficial medicine is good in both color and fragrance, so they take it immediately and are completely cured of their sickness. Those who are out of their minds are equally delighted to see their father return and beg him to cure their sickness but when they are given the medicine they refuse to take it."

Sho-i sha ga. Dokke jinnyu. Ship[^]ponshin ko. O shi ko. Shiki ko yaku. Ni i fu mi. Bu sa ze nen. Shi shi ka min. I doku sho chu. Shin kai tendo. Sui ken ga ki. Gushak[^]kuryo. Nyo ze ko yaku. Ni fu ko buku. Ga kon to setsu hoben. Ryo buku shi yaku. Soku sa ze gon. Nyoto to chi. Ga kon sui ro. Shi ji i shi. Ze ko ro-yaku. Kon ru zai shi. Nyo ka shu buku. Mot[^]tsu fu sai. Sa ze kyo i. Bu shi ta-koku. Ken shi gen go. Nyo bu i shi.

"This is because the poison has penetrated deeply, causing them to lose their minds. Therefore they think that the medicine will not taste good in spite of its fine color and fragrance. Then the father thinks, "My poor children! The poison has attacked them and completely deranged their minds. Although they are happy to see me and ask me to cure them, they refuse to take this fine medicine I offer them. Now I must use some means to get them to take it." So he tells them this: "Children, listen, I am now old and weak. My life is nearing its end. I leave this good medicine here for you now. You should take it and not worry that it will not cure you." So instructing them, he again goes off to another land, where he sends a messenger home to announce: "Your father is dead." "

Zeji sho shi. Mon bu haiso. Shin dai uno. Ni sa ze nen. Nyaku bu zai sha. Jimin gato. No ken kugo. Konja sha ga. On so ta-koku. Ji yui koro. Mu bu jiko. Jo e hikan. Shin zui shogo. Nai chi shi yaku. Shiki ko mimi. Soku shu buku shi. Doku byo kai yu. Go bu mon shi. Shichi toku sai. Jin ben rai ki. Gen shi ken shi.

"Hearing that their father has deserted them and died, the sons are overcome by anguish and reflect "If our father were alive, he would have pity on us and protect us, but now he has forsaken us and died in some faraway land. We are now mere orphans with no one to rely on." In their incessant grief, they finally awaken. They realize that the medicine actually does possess excellent color, fragrance and favor, and so they take it and are healed of all the effects of the poison."

Sho zen-nanshi. O i unga. Ha u nin no. Sesshi ro-i. Komo zai fu. Hot[^]cha. Seson. Butsu gon. Ga yaku nyo ze. Jo-butsu irai. Muryo muhen. Hyaku sen man noku. Nayuta. Asogi ko. I shujo ko. I hoben-riki. Gon to metsu-do. Yaku mu u no. Nyo ho setsu ga. Komo ka sha.

"Now, men of devout faith, what do you think about this? Can anyone say that this excellent physician is guilty of lying?"

"No, World-Honored One"

Then the Buddha spoke, saying: "It is the same with me. The time is limitless? A hundred, thousand ten thousand, hundred thousand, nayuta, asogi aeons ?since I attained Buddhahood. For the sake of the people I have used these expedient means telling of my own passing. But no one can reasonably accuse me of lying."

Niji seson. Yoku ju sen shigi. Ni setsu ge gon.

(End of part which may be omitted)

Ji ga toku bur[^]rai. Sho kyo sho kosshu. Muryo hyaku sen man. Oku sai asogi. Jo seppo kyoke Mushu oku shujo. Ryo nyu o butsu-do. Nirai muryo ko.

At that time the World-Honored One, desiring to emphasize this teaching once more, spoke in verse.

"Since I attained Buddhahood,
countless aeons have passed,
a hundred, thousand, ten thousand,
hundred thousand, asogi aeons.
I have taught the Law continuously
during these countless aeons
and caused infinite millions
to enter on the road to Buddhahood."

I do shujo ko. Hoben gen nehan. Ni jitsu fu metsu-do. Jo ju shi seppo.

"I let the people witness my nirvana
as a means to save them,
but in truth I do not die;
I am here always, teaching the Law."

Ga jo ju o shi. I sho jin-zu-riki. Ryo tendo shujo. Sui gon ni fu ken.

"I am here always,
yet because of my mystic powers
the deluded people cannot see me
even when I am close by."

Shu ken ga metsu-do. Ko kuyo shari. Gen kai e renbo. Ni sho katsu-go shin.

"When the people witness my passing,
they pay widespread reverence to my relics

All of them harbor thoughts of yearning,
and in their hearts a thirst for me is born."

**Shujo ki shin-buku. Shichi-jiki i nyunan. Isshin yok^ken butsu. Fu ji shaku
shinmyo. Ji ga gyu shuso. Ku shutsu ryojusen.**

"When they have become truly faithful, honest and upright, gentle in mind, singlemindedly
yearning to see the Buddha, not begrudging their lives to do so, then I and the
assembly of monks appear together on Eagle Peak."

**Ga ji go shujo. Jo zai shi fu-metsu. I hoben-rik^ko. Gen u metsu fu-metsu. Yokoku
u shujo. Kugyo shingyo sha. Ga bu o hi chu. I setsu mujo ho.**

"Then I tell the people
that I am always here never dying,
that I seem at times to live, at times to die,
merely as all expedient means.
If there are those in other worlds who are reverent and sincere in faith,
among them also I teach the highest Law of all."

**Nyoto fu mon shi. Tan ni ga metsu-do. Ga ken sho shujo. Motsu-zai o kukai. Ko fu
i gen shin. Ryo go sho katsu-go. In go shin renbo. Nai shutsu i seppo.**

"But you refuse to heed my words
and insist upon thinking that I die.
I see the mass of people
drowned in a sea of woe,
and for that reason I do not show myself,
causing them to thirst for me
When their hearts commence to yearn,
I appear to once to teach the Law."

**Jin-zu riki nyo ze. O asogi ko. Jo zai ryo jusen. Gyu yo sho jusho. Shujo ken ko
jin. Dai ka sho sho ji. Ga shi do annon. Tennin jo juman. Onrin sho do-kaku. Shujo
ho Shogon. Hoju ta keka. Shujo sho yu-raku. Soten gyaku tenku. Jo sas^shu gigaku.
U mandara ke. San butsu gyu daishu. Ga jodo bu ki. Ni shu ken sho jin. Ufu
sho kuno. Nyo ze shitsu juman.**

"Such are my mystic powers.
For innumerable kotis of aeons
I have always been on Eagle Peak
and have lived in various other lands
When men witness the end of an aeon
and all is consumed in a great fire,
this, my land, remains safe and unharmed,
constantly filled with gods and men.
The halls and palaces in its gardens and groves
are adorned with all kinds of gems.

Precious trees bear plentiful flowers and fruit,
and the people there are happy and at ease.
The gods strike heavenly drums
making a ceaseless symphony of sound.
A rain of white *mandara* blossoms
scatters over the Buddha and the people.
My pure land is indestructible yet men see it as consumed in fire,
filled with sorrow fear and woe,
a place of countless troubles."

Ze sho zai shujo. I aku-go innen. Ka asogi ko. Fu mon sanbo myo.

"These people with their various crimes,
because of the effects of their evil deeds,
will never even hear the name of the three treasures,
though countless aeons go by."

**Sho u shu ku-doku. Nyuwa shichi-jiki sha. Sokkai ken gashin. Zai shi ni seppo.
Waku-ji i shi shu. Setsu butsu-ju muryo. Ku nai ken bussha. I setsu butsu nan chi.**

"But those who follow meritorious ways,
who are gentle, peaceful and upright,
all of them will see me
here in person, teaching the Law.
At times I will teach these people the immeasurable length of the Buddha's life,
and to those who see me only after a long while
I will explain how difficult it is to meet the Buddha."

Ga chi-riki nyo ze. Eko sho muryo. Jumyo mushu ko. Ku shugo sho toku.

"Such is the power of my wisdom
that it illuminates infinitely far.
This life that endures for countless aeons
I gained as the result of lengthy practice."

**Nyoto u chi sha. Mot^to shi sho gi. To dan ryo yo jin. Butsu-go jip^puko. Nyo i
zen hoben. I ji o shi ko. Jitsu zai ni gon shi. Mu no sek^komo. Ga yaku i se bu. Ku
sho kugen sha.**

"You men of wisdom,
rid yourselves of all doubts about this!
Cut them off once and for all.
The Buddhas words are true not false,
He is like the skilled physician
suing some devices to cure his deluded children.
He lives but tells them he has died.
No one can call his teaching false.

I am the father of this world,
saving those who are suffering and afflicted."

I bonbu tendo. Jitsu zai ni gon metsu. I joken ga ko. Ni sho kyoshi shin. Ho-itsu jaku go-yoku. Da o aku-do chu. Ga jo chi shujo. Gyo do fu gyo do. Zui o sho ka do. I ses^shuju ho.

"Because of the delusions of ordinary people,
I say I have departed though in fact I live,
for if they see me constantly,
arrogance and selfishness arise in their hearts,
Abandoning themselves to the five desires,
they fall into the paths of evil.
I am ever aware of which people practice the Way, and which do not."

Mai ji sa ze nen. I ga ryo shujo. Toku nyu mu-jo do. Soku joju busshin.

"This is my constant thought:
how I can cause all living beings
to gain entry to the highest Way
and quickly attain Buddhahood."

Recitation of the Sutra

Recite the "Expedient Means" (Hoben) chapter excerpt. When completed, sound the bell. Recite the Juryo chapter. When completed, sound the bell as you begin chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Continue chanting for as long as you wish. But you should chant for a minimum of five minutes.

When completed, sound the bell and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times. Then offer the first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth silent prayers below. Ring the bell three times before the first silent prayer, in between each silent prayer and after the last silent prayer, chanting three daimoku elongated and solemnly to with each bell ringing.

First Silent Prayer

I offer appreciation to the Shoten Zenjin, the functions in life and the environment that serve to protect us, and pray that these protective powers be further strengthened and enhanced through my practice of the Law.

Second Silent Prayer

I offer profound appreciation and pray to repay my debt of gratitude to the Original Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, to the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws, to the Great Provisional Buddha Nichiren Daishonin, to the Senior Priests who inherited and transmitted Nichiren's teachings, to Tientai, who systematized the Lotus Sutra, and to Kumarajiva, who translated the Lotus Sutra.

Third Silent Prayer

I pray that the great humanistic religions will permeate and transform society. I pray that I will personally contribute to this process during my lifetime. I offer appreciation and pray to repay my debt of gratitude to all those who have taught me Nichiren Buddhism.

Fourth Silent Prayer

I pray to bring forth Buddhahood from within my life, change my karma, and fulfill my wishes in the present and the future.

(Offer additional prayers here.)

Fifth Silent Prayer

I pray for my deceased relatives and for all those who have passed away, particularly for these individuals:

(Sound the bell continuously while offering prayers.)

Sixth Silent Prayer

I pray for peace throughout the world and the happiness of all living beings.

How to Perform this Religion

There are three aspects to the religion of Nichiren Buddhism: Practice, Study, and Faith. Practice can be divided into the Practice for Oneself and the Practice for Others.

The Practice for Oneself (Gongyo)

The Practice for Oneself consists of a twice-daily ritual, best performed at the start of the day, and the early evening. The ritual is called “Gongyo” which literally means “assiduous practice”.

Your altar consists of a small table, against a wall, with optional offerings of food, water, evergreens, incense, candles, and a small bell and gong (traditional Buddhist type is preferable). The food may be consumed sometime after the ceremony. The water should be emptied after the ceremony. The altar should, obviously, be kept clean, changing the evergreens as needed (artificial evergreens may be used in urban or tropical areas). Likewise the altar should be kept free of knick-knacks, personal memorabilia, extraneous esoterica, icons from other religions or sects, notes, clocks, wish lists, etc.

If you have a scroll style Gohonzon, the Gohonzon is enshrined in a Butsudan (traditional Buddhist protective box with doors that open and close) which can be purchased, built or improvised – as from an old, but clean and polished, wooden cabinet. You can find Butsudans you can buy on the Internet by simply doing a Google search for “Butusdans” or “Butsudan”.



The Butsudan is securely atop the altar and snug against the wall. Since I have cats, my altar table and Butsudan are anchored to the wall inconspicuously with small screw-eye hooks and thin metal wire. Be sure that the top one-third of the Gohonzon is just above eye level as you sit.

If you have this book's Gohonzon in a frame, mount the frame on the wall above and behind your altar.

Sit down (in a chair) in front of your Gohonzon, which is enshrined behind your altar. Open the doors of the Butsudan. Ring the (optional) bell three times. Chant the mantra or daimoku (Nam Myo ho Ren ge Kyo) three times, elongated and solemnly. The left hand holds the liturgy (if necessary); the right hand (and optionally the left hand) is in a prayer position. Then recite the Hoben excerpt, then the Juryo excerpt, then chant daimoku (Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo) for at least five minutes, ring the (optional) bell, then do the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth silent prayers, chanting daimoku three times and ringing the (optional) bell between prayers.

Then chant the mantra (daimoku) three times, elongated and solemnly, with the hands in a prayer position. Blow out the (optional) candle(s). Close the Butsudan. Extinguish the (optional) incense. Remove water and food, dump excess (optional) ashes, change the evergreens (once a week), and dust the altar area.

Once you get used to it, the whole ritual takes about 15 minutes – 10 minutes to perform the actual ceremony, plus 5 minutes to clean up. This is the Practice for Oneself.

Some believers use a *Juzu* – prayer beads. You can buy Juzu with a leather Juzu case. These, as well as other *Butsugu* (altar accessories) can be purchased from the Internet – just do a Google search for “Butsugu”. Butsugu includes an incense burner, a water cup with lid, candle holders, a rice cup, a bell with a cushion, and a container for evergreens. You can buy candles and incense usually at the same web site where you find Butsugu. Some Butsugu sites also sell artificial evergreens.

Below is an illustration of an altar with a downloaded, printed, trimmed and framed Gohonzon flanked by matching statues of Shakyamuni.



The Butsugu shown on the altar (excluding the statues) are – from left to right – a water cup, a candle, an evergreens holder, a bell with cushion and gong, an incense burner, a juzu case with juzu beads inside it, another candle, and a rice cup. The drawer beneath the table-top contains a supply of incense sticks, candles, and matches. If the believer is new to Gongyo, there is also an 8-1/2 by 11 copy of the Liturgy in the drawer, which the believer photocopied from this document (the Liturgy is near the end of this web page).

When using Buddha statues, just be sure to keep the Gohonzon in the center and highest, with the Buddha statues on the periphery and lower. Also, the Buddha statues should be a little smaller than the Gohonzon. You might be surprised, because earlier I stated that Shakyamuni is the Original Buddha and Nichiren is a Provisional Buddha. So why have Nichiren's work higher and larger? The reason is because the Gohonzon expresses the Oneness of Person and Law explicitly, whereas Buddha statues express the Oneness of Person and Law only implicitly.

The reader might wonder why the author recommends a minimum of merely five minutes' daimoku (chanting Nam Myoho Renge Kyo) with each Gongyo. That's only ten minutes a day.

First of all, whenever I, the author, have a serious problem, such as illness or unemployment, I chant an hour or more of daimoku each day, plus taking lots of conventional action. Normally I chant daimoku 30 minutes a day - 5 minutes in front of Gohonzon with morning and evening gongyo, and 20 minutes at work in the guard shack (when I'm alone).

Bear in mind that prescription medicines come in tiny tablets. This is because such substances are very potent, so a little is all that is needed. Likewise one tiny hereditary gene can fundamentally alter the entire future destiny of a fetus. The same is true of daimoku. *Precisely because* daimoku connects us with the core of our own lives, and the essence of all universal life, a small amount of daimoku exerts a tremendous beneficial influence.

One of my readers, a female independent Nichiren Buddhist in her sixties, reprimanded me for recommending on this web page that people chant as little as ten minutes of

daimoku a day. She is always chanting and reading the Goshō, several hours each day (she also works full time). She even chants daimoku under her breath while she is using public transportation, commuting to and from work.

And at every moment she is self-consciously examining and dissecting her motives and decisions to see if they are in harmony with the Universal Law. She never relaxes. She does not have any hobbies or interests outside of her Buddhist practice. She is afraid that if she lets up even a little, she will fail to attain enlightenment in this lifetime.

I have a few reactions to her. First of all, she reminds me of certain guilt-ridden fundamentalist Christians who are always beating up on themselves and always preoccupied with damnation and sin.

Second, she is anticipating some kind of magnificent transcendent enlightenment in the future that she will miss out on if she relaxes even a little. Whereas I say, if you do a brief gongyo to the Gohonzon with faith, twice a day, and study the Goshō ten or fifteen minutes a day, and live with basic compassion, generosity and integrity, then *you are enlightened*, quite naturally, just as you are. You do not have to self consciously pick apart your every thought, word and deed at every moment, living in a straight jacket. Chanting to the Gohonzon *automatically* elevates your thoughts, words and actions - as long as you do not act in *obvious and blatant* contradiction to the principles of common sense and benevolence.

The kind of self consciousness this woman practices is only necessary when we are about to get angry at someone, or when we are tempted to do something wrong, such as an opportunity for petty theft or cheating on one's spouse. At those times we need to scrutinize ourselves painstakingly. But to live like that twenty four hours a day is unnatural and unnecessary, and turns life into a tragic austerity, robbing us of spontaneity and joy. Relax! Trust the Gohonzon! You do not need to overwork your SuperEgo.

Is It OK to Chant for Material Benefits?

Yes it's OK, as long as you chant with a correct understanding.

I personally chant half an hour of daimoku each day. Fifteen minutes of that is daimoku for others – the people (and animals) I know and care about. Ten minutes is to improve my life condition. And only five minutes is for material and financial benefits.

Some people would claim that even my chanting only 5 minutes for material and financial benefits is wrong. These people – including many Theravada Buddhists – believe that Buddhism is only concerned with spiritual matters.

One such Theravada Buddhist currently has a You-Tube video which appears prominently in the Google results for Nichiren Buddhism. He is an academic, and he claims that SGI members and other Nichiren practitioners are not even Buddhists at all,

because they chant for material and financial benefits. This academic in his video claims that Nichiren's teaching "has nothing at all to do with Buddhism"

The truth is, Nichiren's teaching has little to do with Theravada Buddhism, the type of Buddhism this extremely arrogant academic practices. Theravada Buddhism – which is prevalent in Southeast Asia – teaches people to renounce desires and seek a state of nothingness after death. The problem is, desires are intrinsic to life, so this academic, whether he realizes it or not, implicitly believes that human life on earth has no value. Shakyamuni taught Theravada Buddhism in his early preaching career as a temporary expedient to lead his followers away from a life of seeking only temporary pleasures. But later in his preaching career Shakyamuni told his disciples to discard Theravada. The Buddha then taught the Lotus Sutra, and in the Lotus Sutra he implicitly taught that the Buddha Nature projects itself both spiritually and materially. Centuries later, Tientai, a medieval Chinese Buddhist scholar, extracted this implicit teaching within the Lotus Sutra, and made it explicit, in his theory of Ichinen Sanzen (3000 Conditions in a Single Moment of Life).

Therefore, it is important that our Buddhist practice should benefit us not only spiritually or emotionally but also bodily, materially and financially. A Buddhist should show actual proof in every aspect of his life, both spiritually and materially.

When we chant daimoku to the Gohonzon even motivated by a BASE desire, the Gohonzon elevates our life condition so that as we continue praying over many months and years, gradually our prayer will become a more enlightened prayer. That is because the characters on the Gohonzon show the lower nine worlds all arranged around the world of Buddhahood. This causes our own lower worlds to reveal the enlightened potential they inherently possess, as we chant daimoku to the Gohonzon.

So go ahead and chant for that BMW. I personally chanted for a used Volvo and got one. Your desire for a BMW is firewood, and, through daimoku to the Gohonzon, it creates the flame of your Buddha Nature being awakened.

But bear in mind:

- Half your daimoku each day should be for the happiness of others, not yourself.
- When you chant for something material, pray that the Gohonzon will grant your wish so that you can demonstrate the power of Buddhism to others.
- Chant more about your life condition than specifically for material benefits. After all, as you raise your life condition, your material benefits will come of themselves without your seeking them.
- Remember that even if you chant for a BMW, your daimoku to the Gohonzon is elevating your life condition, because that's how the

Gohonzon works, and it's the improvement in your life condition that really matters, not the BMW. The BMW is useful only because it provides a motivation for you to chant to the Gohonzon.

- Remember that your daimoku to the Gohonzon for a BMW is working to give you wisdom and life force, and to strengthen your character attributes such as being hard working and responsible. This way you will be able to save your money faster, and earn more money. Your daimoku is also reaching your environment so that you can form external connections that will give you more opportunities to make money.

The Practice for Others

The Practice for Others consists of sharing this religion with other people. If you have something efficacious and beneficial your natural inclination is to share it with others. It feels good to share, it benefits the people you share with, and it helps to make the world a better place.

At the same time, we do not pressure others to accept this religion. We simply make it available to those who step forward and express an interest in it. High pressure proselytizing is counterproductive and disrespectful of others' autonomy.

If you are practicing Nichiren Buddhism alone, and using this document as your guide, you need not practice alone forever. As soon as you introduce *one* other person in your neighborhood to this practice, your neighborhood thereby has a Buddhist Sangha (community of believers). Then if you and your friend each introduce two more people, you have a community of six believers. You can use this web site as the basis for your practice. You can meet in each other's homes to chant and study and share your experiences. Then if each of you six introduces one more person, you have a Sangha of twelve people – and so on and so on.

Practice for others, on a more general level, also optionally involves working with benevolent people of varied beliefs on secular good works.

Practice for others can even involve providing secular help to individuals in need. But it is unmerciful both to yourself and to the recipient of your help to allow yourself to be exploited, or to render *too much* help, keeping the disadvantaged person dependent longer than he or she needs to be. It's best in the long run to help people help themselves, except in cases of emergencies and permanent incapacities.

There are three main grades of compassion. Small compassion is giving someone a fish a day. Medium compassion is teaching him how to fish, then insisting he fish for himself. Great compassion is giving him a means to reveal his enlightenment. Then he will learn to fish on his own, and acquire by himself the discipline to fish for his own supper.

Thus there are three aspects to the religion of Nichiren Buddhism: Practice, Study and

Faith. We have examined Practice for Oneself and Practice for Others.

Study

Keep in mind the preeminence of the Lotus Sutra in asserting and justifying human dignity, equality, and potential. Shakyamuni taught that it was preeminent among the Sutras in this respect. And this is demonstrable when one examines the Sutras – by looking for disparity, and the closure of disparity, between the Buddha and the common mortal.

In the Juryo Chapter Shakyamuni states: “All gods, men and ashura of this world believe that after leaving the palace of the Shakyas, Shakyamuni Buddha seated himself at the place of revelation not far from the city of Gaya and attained the supreme enlightenment. However, men of devout faith, the time is limitless and boundless – a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, hundred thousand nayuta eons – since I in fact attained Buddhahood.”

Here Shakyamuni is telling his disciples that all human beings appear, on the surface, to be unenlightened common mortals, but are essentially Buddhas – have been so since the infinite past, and will be so eternally. A Buddha is simply a common mortal, an ordinary person, who realizes he or she has inherent enlightenment. Yet in this same Juryo Chapter Shakyamuni states: “Once I also practiced the Bodhisattva austerities.”

Superficially, he means that he himself was once a pre-enlightened seeker of the Law, not yet a Buddha. Yet Shakyamuni had to have the cause for Buddhahood in his life in order to attain Buddhahood, due to the Mutual Possession of the Ten Worlds. Therefore Shakyamuni was always essentially a Buddha, going back into the eternal past. Also, that Shakyamuni was once a pre-enlightened seeker of the Law is only the truth on a superficial level. On a more profound level, it is not the truth at all. More profoundly, Shakyamuni means that even a Buddha possesses the lower nine states (Hell through Altruism) and appears in the world as a common mortal. By extension this means a Buddha is an ordinary person who has goals, hopes, relationships, worries, problems, and so on. Shakyamuni is really saying that although he has been a Buddha eternally, he has been a common mortal also, at the same time, with all the lower nine worlds in his life also.

Shakyamuni’s disciples naturally revered their Teacher and saw themselves as incapable of attaining anything that approached his state of life. So for Shakyamuni to suddenly tell them that there is no fundamental difference between a Buddha and an ordinary person – that ordinary persons can and should become Buddhas – would have been too much for them to believe and understand, without preparation.

So Shakyamuni first preached the Hoben Chapter to prepare his disciples to believe and understand the Juryo Chapter. The Hoben Chapter lays the theoretical groundwork for the Juryo Chapter by revealing the Ten Factors – Appearance, Nature, Entity, Force, Influence, Inherent Cause, Manifest Cause, Inherent Effect, Manifest Effect, and

Consistency From Beginning To End.

Our Buddhist practice in this lifetime is a Manifest Cause, which wakes up the Inherent Cause of our intrinsic Buddhahood. The Inherent Effect is the activation of this Buddhahood in the depths of our lives. The Manifest Effect is that while outwardly, we still appear in the world as common mortals (Appearance), we go through life's ups and downs with new life force, confidence and compassion resulting from our realization of our inherent Buddhahood (Nature). There is no essential difference between our outward appearance as common mortals struggling to make achievements and overcome problems (Force) in the real world (Influence), and our inner life as Buddhas residing in a place of perfect serenity (Entity; Consistency From Beginning To End).

The other Buddhist Sutras and their attendant Treatises and Commentaries make sense only in the context of the Lotus Sutra's essential message. Without this prime point, exploring the Sutras is like getting lost in a vast, remote, untracked rain forest. ***The point of the Lotus Sutra is, again, that: Buddhahood is inherent in the lives of common mortals, the lives of common mortals are inherent in Buddhahood, and everyone without exception has the potential for Buddhahood.***

Therefore, it is recommended that further study be focused on:

- The Lotus Sutra from T'ien-t'ai's perspective, especially the Juryo and Hoben Chapters. Preferably, use a Lotus Sutra English translation taken from the Kumarajiva version.
- Nichiren Daishonin's Gosho (letters to followers).

You can find the Gosho online at:

<http://www.sgilibrary.org/writings.php>

Doing the lengthy, cumbersome, difficult regimen of meditation prescribed in T'ien-t'ai's Maka Shikan (Great Concentration and Insight) is not part of the practice of Nichiren Buddhism. Instead we use the condensed practice you just read about – Sutra, Mantra, Mandala. "Time" (cosmic time) is very important in Buddhism, and this is a time when Buddhism must be accessible to masses of busy working people, to make any difference for the better in society. That is because for society to improve, the Sovereign must have a life affirming philosophy, and today, the Sovereign is the common people.

Those who get lost in a maze of complex practices may tend to neglect their daily responsibilities, thereby negating their personal benefits, and becoming poor reflections of Buddhism in the eyes of others.

Study is not just 'reading more'. The important thing is how much you can actualize what you've already read, not how much added theoretical detail you can acquire. The foremost type of study is experiential – carefully noting your experiences as you try to

apply what you've read in daily life.

Added reading is secondary and optional, and its main function is to help deepen faith, not knowledge for its own sake.

So much for Practice and Study. The third aspect of this religion is Faith.

Faith

Faith is having a positive expectation that your efforts in Practice and Study will yield a positive result. At first this means merely being open to the possibility that this will happen. As you experience benefit, your faith will deepen, and your deepened faith will attract still more benefit, starting a self fulfilling positive momentum.

As one's practice and study accumulate and mature, faith deepens to become a commitment to support the well being of others and to live with integrity. But these fine attributes are not absolutely necessary in the beginning. That's because this practice transforms earthly desires into enlightenment, so you don't need to be fully enlightened already just to start practicing.

Buddhist Apology (Zange)

In the SGI-USA in 1977, ZANGE (Buddhist Apology) was a big fad. It was carried a little too far. People were apologizing to the Gohonzon all the time, even for minor things. So then Zange fell out of favor and the organization avoided mentioning it or teaching it.

But if we re-examine Zange with a moderate perspective, and avoid taking it to extremes, we see that, at times, it is a very useful Buddhist technique which can help us break through a problem and change our karma.

You do not want to apologize to the Gohonzon because you had a traffic ticket, or because you and your spouse had a minor quarrel. But if you have major, major, heavy karma that has defied all your efforts to overcome it, or if you have an immediate crisis that threatens your survival, that is when you want to apply Zange.

Appreciation, Apology, Determination, Altruism, and then Your Request

You can do a good Zange with about half an hour of daimoku. First chant daimoku of Appreciation – for having the Gohonzon and for all your past benefits. Then Apologize for whatever causes you made, earlier in this lifetime or in your past lifetimes, to create the predicament you are faced with now.

Next offer your Determinations to the Gohonzon. Determine that you are going to keep up your Buddhist practice for the rest of your life, no matter what. Determine that you are going to overcome your current problem, so you can show actual proof of the power of Buddhism to others, so they will chant. Determine that you will live humanistically,

compassionately, and generously for the rest of your life.

Then offer daimoku of Altruism – chant for the happiness of the people (and animals) you know, especially the people you hope will practice Buddhism once they see you show proof by overcoming this problem. You must especially chant for the happiness of anyone who seems to be your “antagonist” in the problem you are facing, realizing it is you, not him or her, who must change (when you change, then they will change).

Then, finally, make your request to the Gohonzon: “Please help me cure my cancer”, “Please help me find a job quickly before I am evicted”, or any request that if answered would solve the extremely serious obstacle you are faced with. Remember that after you pray, you must take action – seek the best doctor you can find, look hard for a job, or whatever action it takes to solve the problem.

Since 1977 when I first heard about Zange, I have employed the technique several times when I was faced with an extremely serious situation. And it worked every time. I was able to change the karma I faced. With Zange, you can change any karma, no matter how serious, as long as you are extremely sincere.

The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path

Traditional Buddhism has a concept called The Four Noble Truths and The Eightfold Path. Independent Nichiren Buddhism interprets this concept in a unique way.

The Four Noble Truths are:

1. Life is fundamentally suffering.
2. The cause of suffering is egoistic desire.
3. The way out of suffering lies in elevating and redirecting egoistic desire, changing earthly desires into enlightenment.
4. The method for doing this is the Eightfold Path.

The Eightfold Path consists of:

1. Right Knowledge – having conviction in the Four Noble Truths.
2. Right Aspiration – One’s fundamental desire should be to overcome life’s basic dislocation.
3. Right Speech – Truthfulness, clarity. Speech first as an indicator of our character, then as a lever for improving it.
4. Right Behavior – Do not kill, do not steal, do not lie, do not be unchaste, do not

drink intoxicants. Analyze your behavior, understand your motives, then make improvements.

5. Right Livelihood – Monasticism, or for laymen, engaging in occupations that promote life rather than destroy it.

6. Right Effort – Strong will. Perseverance. Effort like a flowing river, not like a raging fire.

7. Right Mindfulness – Counter basic human ignorance with continuous alertness and self examination.

8. Right Absorption – Tap an awareness of your innermost layer of consciousness. In Independent Nichiren Buddhism, the Eightfold Path consists of chanting the mantra and sutra to the mandala, study, and helping other people. All of the 8 points of the Eightfold Path are implicit in the three practices of Faith, Practice (for oneself and others) and Study.

Right speech, behavior, and livelihood are decided by situation ethics on the basis of our Buddha wisdom which we bring forth through Practice, Study and Faith. There are no absolute rules for speech, behavior and livelihood. As long as decisions about speech, behavior and livelihood are made on the basis of sincere chanting, then those decisions will reflect Right Knowledge, Right Aspiration, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Absorption, because those properties are already embedded in the mandala we chant to.

Then Right Speech, Right Behavior and Right Livelihood will come of themselves, adapted to the specific circumstances of the believer's life, due to Consistency From Beginning To End, one of the 10 Factors.

A comparison of Nichiren Buddhism with other religions

First let's compare Nichiren Buddhism with other forms of Buddhism. Then we will compare Nichiren Buddhism with the major non Buddhist religions.

Nichiren Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism

There are two main streams within Buddhism, Theravada and Mahayana. Theravada is the original stream of Buddhism. Mahayana came later. Nichiren Buddhism is a branch of Mayahana Buddhism.

Theravada Buddhism has hundreds of rules or precepts for conduct, in order to maintain monastic discipline. Enlightenment is only open to priests and monks, who have renounced society. The only way lay people can advance toward enlightenment is to financially support the monastery, which gives the lay believer karmic merit which, when sufficiently accumulated, will enable the lay believer to be reborn himself or herself as a monk, whence he can proceed to develop his enlightenment.

Theravada Buddhist monasteries tend to be aloof from society. The goal is personal perfection for the practitioner. The ultimate reward for Buddhist practice is to attain, after death, a state of *nirvana* - a blissful oneness with the universe from which rebirth onto earth or earth like planets is no longer necessary.

Theravada Buddhism is widely practiced today in southeast Asia.

Mahayana Buddhism split from Theravada in the first few centuries after the Buddha's death. The Mahayanists claimed that Theravada was too oriented toward individual self perfection and that the Theravadins were ignoring the welfare of the mass of common people. Mahayana Buddhism reduced the number of monastic precepts and instead emphasized the essential Buddhist spirit of compassion. A Mahayana *bodhisattva* (seeker, altruist) takes a vow to postpone his or her entry into nirvana until all other sentient beings can likewise be saved. Thus the Mahayana practitioner continues to be reborn onto earth or earth like planets in order to save his fellow sentient beings by spreading Buddhism.

In Nichiren Buddhism, the bodhisattva is PERPETUALLY reborn on earth or earth like planets to work compassionately for his fellow sentient beings. Thus nirvana in Nichiren Buddhism occurs while alive on earth – and it consists of a serene realization that any obstacle or problem can be turned around into an impetus for growth and a source of benefit.

Nichiren Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism

Pure Land Buddhism became popular in Japan just before Nichiren appeared on the scene. Like Nichiren Buddhism, Pure Land acknowledges that people in this age have diminished capacity, and are more benighted by greed, anger and stupidity, and so, people today need a simpler religious practice. That is why Nichiren invented a simple regimen of reciting a mantra and portions of the Lotus Sutra to a mandala.

However Pure Land takes this idea to an extreme. Pure Land teaches that people today are utterly incapable of attaining enlightenment on earth. Pure Land teaches people to pray to be reborn in the Pure Land, which, being a paradise, is more conducive to attaining enlightenment than earth. By teaching this, Pure Land drains people of their determination, vitality and initiative. Perhaps Karl Marx was thinking of Pure Land Buddhism when he wrote that religion is the opiate of the people.

Nichiren Buddhism is definitely NOT an opiate. Nichiren taught that even in this age, human beings CAN attain enlightenment through their own efforts here on earth. They just need a simple practice. Thus Nichiren Buddhism, instead of teaching people to “give up”, instead gives people the means to challenge their destiny right here, right now, both individually and as a society.

Incidentally, although the ultimate reward in Christianity, Judaism and Islam is to attain a paradise after death, these three religions also teach that the human condition can

and should be improved here on earth, right now. So the western deistic religions are a far cry from Pure Land Buddhism.

Nichiren Buddhism and Zen Buddhism

It is well known that Zen Buddhism uses primarily meditation as its means to develop enlightenment. There are two main schools of Zen Buddhism. Soto Zen believes meditation should be not only done seated, but also accomplished in everyday actions. So in Soto Zen monasteries, the way everyday actions are performed is highly prescribed. Soto believes enlightenment is a gradual process. Whereas Rinzai Zen believes in sudden enlightenment through contemplating *koans* (paradoxical riddles, such as, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?"). In actual practice in the United States, the distinction between these two schools of Zen is sometimes blurred.

Some Zen adherents have a very high opinion of the Lotus Sutra, and so Zen Buddhists are definitely not the "devils" and "slanderers" Nichiren made them out to be.

The obvious difference between Zen Buddhism and Nichiren Buddhism is that Nichiren Buddhism primarily relies on mantra and sutra recitation to a mandala, whereas Zen Buddhism relies primarily on mindful meditation.

What technique a person uses to manifest his Buddha-nature is a matter of personal choice. Some techniques are suited to certain people, whereas other techniques are better suited to other people. It is very dangerous to prescribe a single technique to the entire human race, to the exclusion of all other methods, as if one size fits all.

Nichiren Buddhism and Tibetan (Tantric) Buddhism

Tantric Buddhism uses meditation, mudras (hand gestures), esoteric rituals, many kinds of mantras, sutra recitation, and, in some schools, the harnessing and elevation of sexual energy. Tantric Buddhism is practiced in Tibet and in areas culturally influenced by Tibet. Like Zen and Nichiren Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism has gained a foothold in the west.

Tibetan Buddhists believe that when their Teacher dies, he will be quickly reincarnated among them to lead them again. They believe he can be identified in childhood by auspicious signs that had accompanied his birth, his exceptional abilities and his past life recollections.

The leader of one Tibetan school is the Dalai Lama, who until recently was also the political leader of the Tibetan government in exile in India.

In contrast to Tibetan Buddhism, Nichiren Buddhism:

- Does not use meditation.
- Does not use mudras (except for holding the hands in an ordinary prayer position)

when chanting).

- Does not employ esoteric rituals (except possibly the Gohonzon Eye Opening Ceremony).
- Uses only one mantra, not many kinds.
- Does not seek to employ sexual energy.
- Does not believe that Nichiren is reborn among his followers.

We have finished comparing Nichiren Buddhism with the other forms of Buddhism familiar in the west. Now let's compare Nichiren Buddhism with the major non Buddhist religions.

Nichiren Buddhism and Hinduism

Buddhism came from Hinduism. Like Buddhists, Hindus believe in karmic causality and reincarnation. Hindus try to develop enlightenment by practicing various types of Yoga. Whereas the method in Nichiren Buddhism is mantra and sutra recitation to a mandala. Practitioners of Hinduism each have a personal *guru* to whom they are devoted.

Whereas independent Nichiren Buddhists revere Shakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Daishonin, even in the absence of being able to see them personally. Independent Nichiren Buddhists develop a connection with Shakyamuni's life by studying the Lotus Sutra and perhaps having statues of Shakyamuni on the periphery of the altar. Independent Nichiren Buddhists develop a connection with the Daishonin's life by studying the Goshō (letters written by Nichiren to followers) and by chanting to the Gohonzon (which Nichiren inscribed, or which is a transcription of a Gohonzon by Nichiren, rendered by a subsequent high priest).

Hindus believe in multiple gods, which they believe actually exist. But these multiple gods are actually "aspects" or "manifestations" of a single supreme God. God is not considered an entity, but an eternal consciousness that exists in the universe. So essentially Hinduism is a monotheistic religion. Nichiren Buddhists likewise believe in a single Universal Law. Multiple gods exist in Nichiren Buddhism, but they are metaphorical. They symbolize the various protective forces in nature and society that are activated by chanting.

It is well known that Hinduism has been historically associated with the caste system in India. Whereas in Nichiren Buddhism, all believers (and even non believers) are considered fundamentally equal, regardless of social status, because all people equally possess the Buddha nature.

Nichiren Buddhism and Taoism

Taoists believe in a Path or Tao which is imminent within everything. This is akin to the Nichiren Buddhist belief in a Universal Law.

Taoists try to get close to the Tao by meditating, sometimes practicing Tai Chi Chuan, and by living simply, naturally, quietly and spontaneously. Whereas Nichiren Buddhists use a method of mantra and sutra chanting to a mandala, and Nichiren Buddhists try to master the complexity of their lives rather than seeking to avoid it.

Taoists believe the Tao consists of a female principle (yin) and a male principle (yang). Yin and Yang are accepted in Nichiren's teachings, but they are considered phenomenal attributes of the Universal Law, not the Universal Law itself.

When Taoists are confronted by misfortune, they do not struggle to overcome the adversity. Instead they go with the flow, passively accepting their destiny. They believe doing this will bring them better destiny in the long run. Whereas Nichiren Buddhists actively struggle to turn every obstacle or problem into an impetus for growth and a source of benefit, changing poison into medicine.

Nichiren Buddhism and the western deistic religions

First let's discuss generalities that apply to Christianity, Judaism and Islam equally. Then we will discuss each specific religion.

Christianity, Judaism and Islam all believe in a God or Supreme Being who has a human like personality. Whereas Nichiren Buddhists believe in a Universal Law which is not a personality, but more like a force or like a law of physics.

Accountability in the western deistic religions is obtained by telling people that if they are good, they will go to heaven after they die, whereas if they are bad, they will go to hell. In Nichiren Buddhism, accountability is achieved by telling people that all their actions, good and bad, will eventually come back to them as effects, whether later in this lifetime or in a future lifetime.

The Ten Commandments of the western deistic religions are not unlike some Hinayana Buddhist precepts, especially the famous "Five Precepts" of Buddhism - do not lie, do not steal, do not kill, do not be unchaste, and do not drink intoxicants. In Nichiren Buddhism there is only one precept - to worship the Gohonzon and remain faithful throughout your life. Then any errors in your behavior will correct themselves naturally. So much for the broad generalities. Now to each specific religion.

Nichiren Buddhism and Christianity

Christianity teaches that God is a Trinity consisting of God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. This is not unlike the Nichiren Buddhist doctrine of Ku Ke Chu no Santai, which explains that the entity (Chu), physical aspect (Ke), and spiritual aspect (Ku) are inseparable and are all part of one whole being. In this case, Chu (entity) is parallel to God the Father, Ke (physical aspect) is parallel to God the Son

or Jesus, and Ku (the spiritual aspect) is parallel to God the Holy Spirit. The difference is, the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity is referring only to God, whereas the Nichiren Buddhist doctrine of Ku Ke Chu no Santai refers to each and every human being.

In Catholicism and in some Protestant Churches, the transubstantiated sacrificial bread and wine are thought to be tantamount to the body and blood of Christ. This is vaguely reminiscent of how, after a Nichiren Buddhist Eye-Opening Ceremony, the Gohonzon or Buddha statue being so treated has been endowed with a spiritual aspect, and is, in a sense, living.

In most forms of Christianity God is thought to have manifested Himself in human form as Christ. In Nichiren Buddhism, the Original Buddha, though not a God, always manifests himself in humanoid form, on every earth-like planet throughout the universe, to teach Buddhism to the people there.

Nichiren Buddhism and Islam

Islam, unlike Christianity, teaches that God (Allah) is not a Trinity but a single being, indivisible, without helpers or partners. Islam regards Jesus as a legitimate prophet, but not as the Son of God.

Islam's monotheism is akin to the Nichiren Buddhist belief in a single Universal Law. The difference is, in Nichiren Buddhism the central force is like a law of physics, not a human-like personality.

Also, Islam's reliance on the prophet Mohammad is reminiscent of the reliance by conservative Nichiren Buddhists on the prophet Nichiren (of course, that is where the similarity ends. Mohammad and Nichiren are radically different from each other). The militancy we see in some Muslims is not unlike the militancy of some of Nichiren's followers during Nichiren's lifetime and beyond. At the same time, many moderate Muslims seek brotherly outreach with people of other faiths, and this is more akin to the modern independent Nichiren Buddhist, who respects other religions.

Nichiren Buddhism and Judaism

Judaism emphasizes the family and family life, and community, and this is not unlike the Nichiren Buddhist belief that "faith equals daily life". In Nichiren Buddhism in Japan, the Hokkeko in particular is a family oriented branch of Nichiren Buddhist practice. Judaism is monotheistic, and this is not unlike the Nichiren Buddhist belief in a single Universal Law. But again, in Nichiren Buddhism the central force is not a human-like personality.

Everyone knows that Judaism is a mostly ethnocentric religion. Nevertheless, my personal experience tells me that many Jews are world citizens who embrace all of their fellow men, both Jewish and Gentile. For example, in early 2014 I obtained a diploma in Accounting from the NewStart Institute, a free online school that offers six business

and technology majors. This school was started in 2009 by Issie Rabinowitz, of Ottawa, Canada, who was then dying of ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease). His final wish was to establish a free online school to help other people who could not afford tuition to get ahead. You do not have to be Jewish to utilize the NewStart Institute; it is open to everyone, and their list of graduates includes a number of people with Muslim names. By the way, as of 2014 Issie Rabinowitz is still alive and operating his school and his health has improved. The doctors had predicted he would die in 2010. Issie's dedication to helping others has caused the pure life force of the Ultimate to infuse his life and boost him up. This shows that people of all faiths have access to the Ultimate, not only Nichiren Buddhists.

A note about practitioners of other religions

When someone makes a cause, by far the greatest component of that cause is its INTENT. For this reason, since followers of other religions MEAN to make good causes through their religious practices, they DO make good causes. Thus Nichiren Buddhism is not the only way.

The only toxic religion is Pure Land Buddhism. It teaches people to give up on ever becoming happy while alive here on earth, and so its message is fundamentally pessimistic and negative.

The preceding paragraphs seem to imply that most other religions are just as good or nearly as good as Nichiren Buddhism. The reader surely notices that this contradicts Nichiren himself, who taught that only his teaching was valid and that all the other forms of Buddhism, as well as all the non-Buddhist religions, should be utterly discarded. Bear in mind that Nichiren lived in a feudal society, in a time of rigid absolutes. But today we live in a modern, pluralistic society. Remember that medieval Christians went on bloody crusades against the Muslim "infidels", whereas today many Christian leaders seek dialogue and brotherly outreach with Muslims. Likewise, the modern Nichiren Buddhist can take a more tolerant and open minded attitude toward other religions than Nichiren himself did.

The reader might be confused, because earlier in this web site I asserted that Nichiren is a Great Bodhisattva and a Provisional Buddha, whereas now I am saying that Nichiren was WRONG about something. But in reality there is no contradiction. The Dalai Lama is undoubtedly a Buddha; yet when he instigated a Tibetan uprising before the 2008 Olympics, he only got thousands of monks murdered by Chinese soldiers, most by having their heads smashed against the walls of their own temples. Thus although the Dalai Lama is undoubtedly a Buddha, he is still capable of making a mistake; he is not infallible. That is because the life of Buddha and the life of common mortals coexist within everyone. The same applies to Nichiren. Although Nichiren is great, he is not infallible. He was wrong to say that all other religions besides his own are no good, and the modern Nichiren Buddhist can be more tolerant of other religions than Nichiren himself was.

In the Goshō, when Nichiren talks about discarding Pure Land Buddhism, we should

take it literally. But when Nichiren talks about discarding other forms of Buddhism or non Buddhist religions and philosophies, we should take it as a *metaphor* for our process of “discarding” any lingering non-Buddhist attitudes which still may crop up occasionally within our lives - such as: being irresponsible; blaming our environment; skipping gongyo; being pessimistic, doubting the Gohonzon; being dishonest; being unkind; being lazy; being intolerant; being selfish; etc. etc.

Nichiren Buddhism and Magic / Shamanism

Magic is very familiar. Shamanism is closely related to magic, employing some of the same practices, except that Shamanism tries to form alliances with allegedly existing spirit entities in order to fulfill one’s desires. From the standpoint of Nichiren Buddhism, the danger of using magic is that there is no guide. Therefore, a person can get himself into a lot of trouble by using magic. For instance, if one casts a magic spell to attract a million dollars, he may be involved in a traffic accident that turns him into a paraplegic, and then the lawsuit may indeed yield a net sum of one million dollars. In the case of Shamanism, even assuming that the spirit entity being entreated is real, the spirit entity may have evil ulterior motives for answering the prayer. Also, Buddhism teaches that no one can create fortune for us, or change our negative karma, except we ourselves. Nothing bad can happen when we chant to the Gohonzon for the fulfillment of our desires, no matter how base our desires might be. That is because, when we chant for something unwise, it will not happen. Instead, our chanting will elevate the desire until the desire becomes wiser, and then, when we are chanting for a wise desire, our wish will finally be fulfilled.

If a Nichiren Buddhist chants to the Gohonzon for a million dollars (and it is perfectly alright to do so), the Gohonzon *guides* the prayer. The believer may not get a full million, but he will get the money he truly currently needs, and in a way that is fully compatible with EVERY aspect of his happiness. The believer’s chanting will also cause him to mature, so that he becomes more industrious, more creative, more hard working, and better connected, so that he can earn more money by his own efforts in a “conventional” manner. And his chanting might cause him to adopt wiser spending habits, living within his means, so that he can save more money.

For these reasons, just as magic and Shamanism are prohibited in Christianity, likewise, Nichiren Buddhists never practice magic or Shamanistic techniques.

Also, it is wrong to regard the Gohonzon as a “magic charm” that literally makes every desire materialize. The Gohonzon doesn’t work that way. Chanting to the Gohonzon puts us into the orbit of *true* happiness, long term, and this does not always mean fulfilling every short term desire, since some of our desires are mistaken.

Nichiren Buddhism and Numerology/Astrology

It is well known that numerology postulates that karmic tendencies and likely future outcomes can be deciphered through the patterns of numbers surrounding a circumstance. Likewise, astrology teaches that one’s birth date, astrological sign, and

the positions of the stars can illuminate karmic tendencies and likely future outcomes. Nichiren Buddhism does not exclude these possibilities per se. Perhaps numbers and the stars can indeed tell us something about our momentum and tendencies. But Nichiren Buddhism would add that we are not bound by these correlations, because any negative tendency or probability can be altered for the better through Nichiren Buddhist practice, since chanting Nam Myoho Renge Kyo allows us to transform and supersede our negative karma. Nichiren Buddhism does not explicitly deny numerology or astrology, but Nichiren Buddhism states that ultimately we have free will, and that we can actively determine our own destiny, despite any numerological or astrological context. It is alright for a Nichiren Buddhist to consult a horoscope, use numerology or even read tea leaves, as long as it does not become a distraction. The primary emphasis should be placed on Buddhist practice. Then, these other predictive pseudosciences can play a useful limited role in alerting us to things which we can then change through our Buddhist practice.

Is Nichiren Buddhism pacifistic?

In 1279 Nichiren wrote "Reply to Shijo Kingo" to Shijo Kingo, a samurai physician who was one of Nichiren's most loyal followers. Kingo had reported to Nichiren that he had been ambushed by other samurai, who were jealous of his success, and that he had fought his way out of the ambush and had escaped unharmed. This is an excerpt from Nichiren's reply letter to Kingo:

"I have carefully read your letter, in which you described the recent skirmish with powerful enemies. So they have finally attacked you. It is a matter of rejoicing that your usual prudence and courage, as well as your firm faith in the Lotus Sutra, enabled you to survive unharmed... You must have escaped death because of this deity's [Marishiten's] protection. Marishiten gave you skill in swordsmanship, while I, Nichiren, have bestowed upon you the five characters of Myoho Renge Kyo. There can be no doubt that Marishiten protects those who embrace the Lotus Sutra. Marishiten also upholds the Lotus Sutra and thus helps all living beings. Even the words "Those who join the battle are all on the front line" [from a Taoist work] derive from the Lotus Sutra. Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other. Then, "All enemies are crushed." These golden words will never prove false. The heart of strategy and swordsmanship derives from the Mystic Law. Have profound faith. A coward cannot have any of his prayers answered."

Here is an imaginary reply letter which Nichiren DID NOT send to Kingo:

"Shijo Kingo, I understand from your messenger that several of your fellow samurai, jealous of your success, ambushed you and tried to kill you. Your messenger further indicated that you fought with your sword to save your life and that you escaped the melee unharmed. Shijo, you should be ashamed of yourself! You should have chanted daimoku under your breath, gotten down from your horse, given up your sword, knelt down on your knees, and begged for your life."

Again, Nichiren did not send this kind of letter. It should be obvious from the reply Nichiren did send that Nichiren never equated Buddhism with pacifism.

By the way, Shakyamuni himself, while a royal prince, was trained in an ancient Indian martial art called Vajramushti. In 520 a.d., an Indian Buddhist monk named Bodhidharma brought Vajramushti to the Shaolin temple in Hunan province, China, and in the following centuries, the Shaolin monks expanded Vajramushti to create Shaolin Kung Fu.

It is common sense that Nichiren Buddhists should never attack anyone first, unless to defend a helpless woman who is about to be raped, for example. But when you are attacked, and the attacker is morally wrong to attack you, and your safety is in jeopardy, you may act to defend yourself and your loved ones. And with all the crime in today's world, particularly if you live near a city, you are morally justified if you decide to study karate or boxing or something similar to prepare yourself. Besides, it's also good exercise.

It is important not to over-react, and it is important to limit ourselves to proportionate force. And stop attacking once there is no more danger - do not keep on attacking just to punish the offender. Instead of punishing the offender yourself, call the cops. Let the judge decide on the punishment.

Nichiren Buddhism and Sexuality

We can all come up with our own set of moral rules for sexuality, based on common sense and the wisdom we get from chanting, but here's my stab at it:

1. Practice safe sex.
2. Loyal monogamy is preferable to wild promiscuity.
3. In a relationship, don't back out the minute there's a problem. Learn from The Greatest Generation (the 1940s generation) and emulate them by showing commitment in your relationship and developing relationship problem solving skills.
4. Never knowingly spread social disease.
5. Always be honest with your partner. For example, if a man is merely attracted to a woman physically, he should not deceive her into thinking he loves her.
6. Marry for love not for money (this especially applies to women).
7. If you're in a heterosexual partnership and you don't want children right now, use contraception.

Sound files of people reciting the Sutra

Here is a link to downloadable sound files of people slowly chanting the Hoben and Juryo Chapters of the Lotus Sutra. You can follow along with your printed Liturgy in hand and thus learn how to chant. Only the mandatory parts are recorded; the long

optional part in the middle is not recorded. However by following along and learning Part A and Part C, you will later be able to do Part B spontaneously.

There are two versions of Gongyo (the sutra chanting), Nichiren Shu's version and the SGI version. The author recommends the SGI version, which corresponds to what is printed below. Also I recommend "SGI Daimoku" which is a recording of Nam Myoho Renge Kyo being chanted continuously and rapidly by a group of people.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nichirenpix/>

The Liturgy of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism

Hoben Chapter

Myo ho ren ge kyo. Ho ben pon. Dai ni.

Niji seson. Ju sanmai. Anjo ni ki. Go shari-hotsu. Sho-but[^]chi-e. Jinjin muryo. Go chi-e mon. Nange nannyu. Issai shomon. Hyaku-shi-butsu. Sho fu no chi. Sho-i sha ga. Butsu zo shingon. Hyaku sen man noku. Mushu sho butsu. Jin gyo sho-butsu. Muryo doho. Yumyo shojin. Myosho fu mon. Joju jinjin. Mi-zo-u ho. Zui gi sho setsu. Ishu nange.

Shari-hotsu. Go ju jo-butsu irai. Shuju innen. Shuju hiyu. Ko en gonkyo. Mu shu hoben. Indo shujo. Ryo ri sho jaku.

Sho-i sha ga. Nyorai hoben. Chiken hara-mitsu. Kai i gu-soku.

Shari-hotsu. Nyorai chicken. Kodai jinnon. Muryo muge. Riki. Mu-sho-i. Zenjo. Geda.[^]Sanmai. Jin nyu musai. Joju issai. Mi-zo-u ho.

Shari-hotsu. Nyorai no. Shuju fun-betsu. Gyo ses[^]sho ho. Gonji nyunan. Ekka shushin. Shari-hotsu. Shu yo gon shi. Muryo muhen. Mi-zo-u ho. Bus[^]shitsu joju. Shi shari-hotsu. Fu shu bu setsu.[^]Sho-i sha ga. Bus[^]sho joju. Dai ichi ke-u. Nange shi ho.

Yui butsu yo butsu. Nai no kujin. Shoho jisso. Sho-i shoho. Nyo ze so. Nyo ze sho. Nyo ze tai. Nyo ze riki. Nyo ze sa. Nyo ze in. Nyo ze en. Nyo ze ka. Nyo ze ho. Nyo ze honmak[^]kukyo to.

Juryo Chapter

Myo ho ren ge kyo. Nyo rai ju ryo hon. Dai ju roku.

(This part may be omitted)

Niji butsu go. Sho bo-satsu gyo. Issai daishu. Sho zen-nanshi. Nyoto to shinge. Nyorai jotai shi go. Bu go daishu. Nyoto to shinge. Nyorai jotai shi go. U bu go.

Sho daishu, Nyoto to shinge. Nyorai jotai shi go. Zeji bo-satsu daishu. Mi-roku i shu. Gassho byaku butsu gon. Seson. Yui gan ses^shi. Gato to shinju butsu-go. Nyo ze san byaku i. Bu gon. Yui gan ses^shi. Gato to shinju butsu-go

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Niji seson. Chi sho bo-satsu. San sho fu shi. Ni go shi gon. Nyoto tai cho. Nyorai hi-mitsu. Jinzu shi riki.

Issai seken. Tennin gyu. Ashura. Kai i kon shaka-muni-butsu. Shus^shaku-shi gu. Ko gayajo. fu on. Za o dojo. Toku a-noku-ta-ra san-myaku sanbodai. Nen zennanshi. Ga jitsu jo-butsu irai. Muryo muhen. Hyaku sen man noku. Nayuta ko.

Hi nyo go hyaku sen man noku. Nayuta. Asogi. Sanzen dai sen sekai. Ke shi u nin. Matchi mijin. Ka o tobo. Go hyaku sen man noku. Nayuta. Asogi koku. Nai ge ichi-jin. Nyo ze to gyo. Jin ze mijin. Sho zen-nanshi. O i unga. Ze sho sekai. Ka toku shiyui. Kyoikei chi go. Shu fu.

Mi-roku bo-sat^to. Ku byaku butsu gon. Seson. Ze sho sekai. Muryo muhen. Hi sanju sho chi. Yaku hi shin-riki sho gyu. Issai shomon. Hyaku-shi-butsu. I murochi. Fu no shiyui. Chi go genshu. Gato ju. A-yui-ot-chi-ji. O ze ji chu. Yaku sho fu das^seson. Nyo ze sho sekai. Muryo muhen. Niji butsu go. Dai bosas^shu. Sho zen-nanshi. Konto funmyo. Sengo nyoto. Ze sho sekai. Nyaku jaku mijin. Gyu fu jaku^sha. Jin ni i jin. Ichi-jin ikko. Ga jo-butsu irai. Bu ka o shi. Hyaku sen man noku. Nayuta. Asogi ko.

Ji ju ze rai. Ga jo zai shi. Shaba sekai. Seppo kyoike. Yaku o yosho. Hyaku sen man noku. Nayuta. Asogi koku. Dori shujo.

Sho zen-nanshi. O ze chugen. Ga setsu nen-do-but^to. U bu gon go. Nyu o nehan. Nyo ze kai i Hoben fun-betsu.

Sho zen-nanshi. Nyaku u shujo. Raishi ga sho. Ga i butsu-gen. Kan go shin to. Sho kon ridon. Zui sho o do. Shosho ji setsu. Myoji fudo. Nenki daisho. Yaku-bu gen gon. To nyu nehan. U i shuju hoben. Setsu mimyo ho. No ryo shujo. Hok^kangi shin.

Sho zen-nanshi. Nyorai ken sho shujo. Gyo o shobo. Toku hak^ku ju sha. I ze nin setsu. Ga sho shukke. Toku a-noku-ta-ra. San-myaku sanbodai. Nen ga jitsu. Jobutsu irai. Ku-on nyaku shi. Tan ni hoben. Kyoike shujo. Ryo nyu butsu-do. Sa nyo ze setsu.

Sho zen-nanshi. Nyorai sho en kyoden Kai i dodas^shujo. Waku sek^koshin. Waku set^tashin. Waku ji koshin. Waku ji tashin. Waku ji koji. Waku ji taji. Sho sho gon-setsu. Kai jitsu fu ko.

Sho-i sha ga. Nyorai nyojit^chiken. Sangai shi so. Mu u shoji. Nyaku tai nyaku shutsu. Yaku mu zai-se. Gyu metsu-do sha. Hi jitsu hi ko. Hi nyo hi i. Fu nyo sangai. Ken no sangai. Nyo shi shi ji. Nyorai myo ken. Mu u shaku-myo.

I sho shujo. U shuju sho. Shuju yoku. Shuju gyo. Shuju oku-so. Fun-bek^ko. Yoku ryo sho sho zengon. I nyakkan innen. Hiyu gonji. Shuju seppo. Shosa butsu-ji . Mi zo zan pai .

Nyo ze. Ga jo-butsu irai. Jindai ku-on. Jumyo muryo. Asogi ko. Joju fu-metsu. Sho zen-nanshi. Ga hon gyo bo-satsu do. Sho jo jumyo. Kon yu mi jin. Bu bai jo shu. Nen kon hi jitsu metsu-do. Ni ben sho gon. To shu metsu-do. Nyorai i ze hoben. Kyoze shujo.

Sho-i sha ga Nyaku buk-ku-ju o se. Haku-toku shi nin. Fu shu zengon. Bingus gesen. Ton-jaku go-yoku Nyu o oku-so. Moken mo chu. Nyakken nyorai. Jo zai fumetsu.

Ben ki kyoshi. Ni e endai. Fu no sho o. Nanzo shi so. Kugyo shi shin. Ze ko nyorai. I hoben setsu. Bi-ku to chi. Shobus^shus-se. Nan ka chigu. Sho-i sha ga. Sho haku-toku nin. Ka muryo. Hyaku sen man nok-ko. Waku u ken butsu. Waku fu ken sha. I shiji ko. Ga sa ze gon. Sho bi-ku. Nyorai nan ka tokken. Shi shujo to. Mon nyo ze go. Hit^to sho o. Nanzo shi so. Shin ne renbo. Katsu-go o butsu. Ben shu zengon. Ze ko nyorai. Sui fu jitsu metsu. Ni gon metsu-do. U zen-nanshi. Sho-butsu nyorai. Ho kai nyo ze. I do shujo. Kai jitsu fu ko.

Hi nyo ro-i. Chi-e so-datsu. Myo ren ho-yaku. Zen ji shubyo. Go nin ta. sho shisoku. Nyaku ju niju. Nai-shi hyaku-shu. I u ji-en. On shi yo-koku.

Sho shi o go. On ta doku-yaku. Yaku hotsu monran. Enden u ji. Zeji go bu. Gen rai ki ke. Sho shi on doku Waku shitsu honshin. Waku fu shis^sha. Yo ken go bu. Kai dai kangi. Haiki monjin. Zen nan non ki. Gato guchi. Go buku doku-yaku. Gan ken kuryo. Kyo shi jumyo.

Bu ken shi to. Kuno nyo ze. E sho kyobo. Gu ko yaku-so. Shiki ko mimi. Kai shitsu gu-soku. Toshi wago. Yo shi ryo buku. Ni sa ze gon. Shi dai ro-yaku. Shiki ko mimi. Kai shitsu gu-soku. Nyoto ka buku. Soku jo kuno. Mu bu shugen. Go sho shi chu. Fu shis^shin ja. Ken shi ro-yaku. Shiki ko gu ko. Soku-ben buku shi. Byo jin jo yu. Yo shis shin ja. Ken go bu rai. Sui yak-kangi. Monjin gu-shaku ji byo. Nen yo go yaku. Ni fu ko buku.

Sho-i sha ga. Dokke jinnyu. Ship^ponshin ko. O shi ko. Shiki ko yaku. Ni i fu mi. Bu sa ze nen. Shi shi ka min. I doku sho chu. Shin kai tendo. Sui ken ga ki. Gushak^kuryo. Nyo ze ko yaku. Ni fu ko buku. Ga kon to setsu hoben. Ryo buku shi yaku. Soku sa ze gon. Nyoto to chi. Ga kon sui ro. Shi ji i shi. Ze ko ro-yaku. Kon ru zai shi. Nyo ka shu buku. Mot^tsu fu sai. Sa ze kyo i. Bu shi ta-koku. Ken shi gen go. Nyo bu i shi.

Zeji sho shi. Mon bu haiso. Shin dai uno. Ni sa ze nen. Nyaku bu zai sha. Jimin gato. No ken kugo. Konja sba ga. On so ta-koku. Ji yui koro. Mu bu jiko. Jo e hikan. Shin zui shogo. Nai chi shi yaku. Shiki ko mimi. Soku shu buku shi. Doku

byo kai yu. Go bu mon shi. Shichi toku sai. Jin ben rai ki. Gen shi ken shi.
Sho zen-nanshi. O i unga. Ha u nin no. Sesshi ro-i. Komo zai fu. Hot^cha. Seson.
Butsu gon. Ga yaku nyo ze. Jo-butsu irai. Muryo muhen. Hyaku sen man noku.
Nayuta. Asogi ko. I shujo ko. I hoben-riki. Gon to metsu-do. Yaku mu u no. Nyo ho
setsu ga. Komo ka sha.

Niji seson. Yoku ju sen shigi. Ni setsu ge gon.

(end of part which may be omitted)

Ji ga toku bur^rai. Sho kyo sho kosshu. Muryo hyaku sen man. Oku sai asogi. Jo
seppo kyo ke Mushu oku shujo. Ryo nyu o butsu-do. Nirai muryo ko.
I do shujo ko. Hoben gen nehan. Ni jitsu fu metsu-do. Jo ju shi seppo.
Ga jo ju o shi. I sho jin-zu-riki. Ryo tendo shujo. Sui gon ni fu ken.
Shu ken ga metsu-do. Ko kuyo shari. Gen kai e renbo. Ni sho katsu-go shin.
Shujo ki shin-buku. Shichi-jiki i nyunan. Isshin yok^ken butsu. Fu ji shaku
shinmyo. Ji ga gyu shuso. Ku shutsu ryojusen.

Ga ji go shujo. Jo zai shi fu-metsu. I hoben-rik^ko. Gen u metsu fu-metsu. Yokoku
u shujo. Kugyo shingyo sha. Ga bu o hi chu. I setsu mujo ho.

Nyoto fu mon shi. Tan ni ga metsu-do. Ga ken sho shujo. Motsu-zai o kukai. Ko
fu i gen shin. Ryo go sho katsu-go. In go shin renbo. Nai shutsu i seppo.
Jin-zu riki nyo ze. O asogi ko. Jo zai ryo jusen. Gyu yo sho jusho. Shujo ken ko
jin. Dai ka sho sho ji. Ga shi do annon. Tennin jo juman. Onrin sho do-kaku. Shujo
ho Shogon. Hoju ta keka. Shujo sho yu-raku. Soten gyaku tenku. Jo sas^shu gigaku.
U mandara ke. San butsu gyu daishu. Ga jodo bu ki. Ni shu ken sho jin. Ufu
sho kuno. Nyo ze shitsu juman.

Ze sho zai shujo. I aku-go innen. Ka asogi ko. Fu mon sanbo myo.
Sho u shu ku-doku. Nyuwa shichi-jiki sha. Sokkai ken gashin. Zai shi ni seppo.
Waku-ji i shi shu. Setsu butsu-ju muryo. Ku nai ken bussha. I setsu butsu nan chi.
Ga chi-riki nyo ze. Eko sho muryo. Jumyo mushu ko. Ku shugo sho toku.

Nyoto u chi sha. Mot^to shi sho gi. To dan ryo yo jin. Butsu-go jip^puko. Nyo i
zen hoben. I ji o shi ko. Jitsu zai ni gon shi. Mu no sek^komo. Ga yaku i se bu. Ku
sho kugen sha.

I bonbu tendo. Jitsu zai ni gon metsu. I joken ga ko. Ni sho kyoshi shin. Ho-itsu
jaku go-yoku. Da o aku-do chu. Ga jo chi shujo. Gyo do fu gyo do. Zui o sho ka
do. I ses^shuju ho.

Mai ji sa ze nen. I ga ryo shujo. Toku nyu mu-jo do. Soku joju busshin.

Silent Prayers

Ring the bell three times before the first silent prayer, in between each silent prayer and

after the last silent prayer, chanting three daimoku elongated and solemnly to with each bell ringing.

First Silent Prayer

I offer appreciation to the Shoten Zenjin, the functions in life and the environment that serve to protect us, and pray that these protective powers be further strengthened and enhanced through my practice of the Law.

Second Silent Prayer

I offer profound appreciation and pray to repay my debt of gratitude to the Original Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, to the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws, to the Great Provisional Buddha Nichiren Daishonin, to the Senior Priests who inherited and transmitted Nichiren's teachings, to Tientai, who systematized the Lotus Sutra, and to Kumarajiva, who translated the Lotus Sutra.

Third Silent Prayer

I pray that the great humanistic religions will permeate and transform society. I pray that I will personally contribute to this process during my lifetime. I offer appreciation and pray to repay my debt of gratitude to all those who have taught me Nichiren Buddhism.

Fourth Silent Prayer

I pray to bring forth Buddhahood from within my life, change my karma, and fulfill my wishes in the present and the future.
(Offer additional prayers here.)

Fifth Silent Prayer

I pray for my deceased relatives and for all those who have passed away, particularly for these individuals:

(Sound the bell continuously while offering prayers.)

Sixth Silent Prayer

I pray for peace throughout the world and the happiness of all living beings.
Sound the bell and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo three times to conclude (group chants in unison).

Glossary

Ashura: Allegorical “demons” that demonstrated a reorientation of evil toward good.

Austerities: Shakyamuni rejected severe religious hardships in favor of the Middle Path.

Bodhisattva: Seeker of the Way; one who cares for others.

Buddha: One who is aware of Buddhahood within his or her life.

Buddhahood: A state of life in which one manifests his or her Buddha-nature.

Buddha-nature: The innermost pure self; exists within whether one is aware of it or not.

Buddhism: The religion started by Shakyamuni in India (5th-6th century B.C.).

Commentary: Written comments on a Buddhist Treatise.

Daimoku: The invocation of Nam-Myo-ho-Ren-ge-Kyo (a mantra).

Dengyo Daishi: Brought T'ien-t'ai Buddhism to Japan, founding the Tendai sect.

Enlightenment: An awareness that one's life has the Buddha-nature within.

Gaya: A city in ancient India near where Shakyamuni attained enlightenment.

“gods”: Allegorical beings who showed how important Buddhism is by humbly seeking it.

Gohonzon: A mandala which most Nichiren believers consider to be the supreme object of worship.

Gongyo: “Assiduous practice” – the ceremony performed morning and evening by believers.

Gosho: Letters Nichiren Daishonin wrote to his believers. They contain his teachings.

“Great Concentration and Insight”: T'ien-t'ai's systematization of the Lotus Sutra.

Hoben Chapter (Lotus Sutra): Preparatory teaching for oneness of Buddha and common mortal.

Honen: Brought Pure Land Buddhism from China to Japan.

Hui-Yuan: Originated Pure Land Buddhism, in China.

Incarnation: See Reincarnation.

Juryo Chapter (Lotus Sutra): Full teaching of oneness of Buddha and common mortal.

Karma: Self created good and bad destiny. Can carry over between incarnations.

Kumarajiva: Translated Lotus Sutra from Sanskrit into Chinese.

Lotus: Flower that provides metaphor for simultaneous cause and effect in

enlightenment.

Lotus Sutra: Uniquely bridges the imagined gap between Buddhas and common mortals. Also states that all people without exception have the potential for Buddhahood. The pre-Lotus-Sutra teachings lack these two qualities.

Mahayana (stream of Buddhism): Emphasizes underlying wisdom, aiding society. See Theravada.

Maka Shikan: See “Great Concentration and Insight”.

Mandala: Object to focus on when chanting or meditating; often crystallizes doctrine.

Mantra: Short repetitive phrase chanted rhythmically to achieve some spiritual objective.

Middle Path: One bases himself on the Universal Law, living wisely and avoiding extremes.

Middle Way: See “Middle Path”.

Nayuta: In pre-computer, early Buddhist times, meant to signify an incalculably large number.

Nichikan: (1665-1726) A great restorer of the orthodoxy of Nichiren Buddhism.

Nichiren Daishonin: A Great Bodhisattva and a Provisional Buddha; started the Nichiren School of Buddhism. He passed on his teachings to the Six Senior Priests.

Nirvana: In provisional (pre-Lotus-Sutra) Buddhism, Nirvana was a blissful state of latency to which enlightened people could retire, thereby removing the need to be reborn on earth or an earth-like planet. But when Shakyamuni preached the mature teaching of Buddhism (the Lotus Sutra), he revealed that Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are forever reborn onto earth-like planets, in order to save other living beings. Nirvana then becomes a state of absolute confidence that any problem or suffering can be transformed into a positive experience through Buddhist practice.

Oneness of Person and Law: The Universal Law is at the core of the individual’s life, and he or she realizes this.

Precepts: Specific rules of conduct; used in Theravada, but not in Nichiren Buddhism.

Pure Land School: Tried to streamline Buddhism, but produced a pessimistic philosophy.

Reincarnation: Our entity is eternal; our surface aspects are reborn, with changes, perpetually.

Shakyamuni: The Eternal, Original Buddha; founded Buddhism in India 5th-6th century B.C..

Shakyas: Blood relatives of Shakyamuni; were the royalty in a small kingdom.

Sutra: In theory (but not always), a written compilation of a section of Shakyamuni's direct oral preachings.

Ten Factors: They show how our life condition changes from one state to another.

Ten States: Ten main life-conditions among which we fluctuate, like a 10-story elevator.

Theory of 3000 Conditions in a Single Life-Moment: Systematized the Lotus Sutra.

Theravada (stream of Buddhism): Emphasizes precepts, isolation from society. See Mahayana.

Three Great Secret Laws: The Gohonzon (your object of worship), the Daimoku (your recitation of the mantra Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo), and the High Sanctuary (which is wherever you have your Gohonzon enshrined with an altar, the place where you chant daimoku and recite the Sutra).

Three Realms: How each individual life is inseparable from its environment.

T'ien-t'ai: Created Theory of 3000 Conditions in a Single Life Moment; founded a sect.

Transmigration: Life can change form (species) during the process of Reincarnation.

Treatise: A major written analysis of the teachings implicit in a Sutra.

Universal Law: Cause and maintainer of all that exists; unites person with macrocosm