The Correct Teachings of Nichiren Shoshu

Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, the Daimoku that we, as priests and lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu, chant every day, is the great Law that permeates the truth of the realm of the Law achieved by the fundamental Buddha, known as the Buddha with the property of intrinsically perfect wisdom (jijuyū hōshin nyorai), in the infinite past of kuon-ganjo. It transcends all concepts of time and space and our thought patterns as common mortals. This Daimoku functioned to reveal the fundamental Buddha in his original state (honchi) and to support Shakyamuni’s teaching of the Lotus Sutra 3,000 years ago in India, through Bodhisattva Jōgyō who emerged from the earth. Furthermore, when Nichiren Daishonin made his advent into this world as the True Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, he endured multiple, severe persecutions to propagate this Daimoku, based on his great compassion to enable all mankind to attain enlightenment. Thus, this Daimoku is not merely the title of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra.

In Japan, there are many Buddhist sects and religious organizations other than Nichiren Shoshu that chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. However, these other groups have never been able to understand the true intent of Nichiren Daishonin and unfortunately have opposed him. Therefore, even though the Daimoku that they chant may sound identical to ours, it absolutely does not possess the inherent power to bring salvation to all the people. Nichiren Shoshu alone reveres Nichiren Daishonin as the True Buddha of the infinite past of kuon-ganjo. And Nichiren Shoshu alone has come to correctly teach the true Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin to this day.

In the Gosho, On the Transmission of the Three Great Secret Laws (Sandai hihō bonjō ji), Nichiren Daishonin states:

Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, the Daimoku that Nichiren chants is different from that of previous ages. It is the Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo of the practice for oneself, and the practice for others. These five characters of the Daimoku possess the five major principles for interpretation: name, entity, essentials, function, and teaching.

(Gosho, pp. 1594-1595)

The lifetime teachings expounded by Shakyamuni over a period of 50 years can be explained entirely through the five principles of name, entity, essentials, function, and teaching. These are known as the five major principles for interpretation (gojūgen). “Name” refers to the explanation of the title of a sutra. “Entity” represents the clarification of the true entity and principle of the sutra. “Essentials” indicates the elucidation of the power of cause and effect and the special qualities of the doctrines contained in a sutra. “Function” refers to the discussion of the benefits and power of a
sutra. “Teaching” indicates the judgment of the position and power of the sutra among other sutras. When we look upon the entirety of the sutras based on them, we can clearly see that the Lotus Sutra was the true teaching which was the ultimate purpose of Shakyamuni Buddha’s advent into this world.

Shakyamuni’s Lotus Sutra was exceedingly superior to all the other sutras. However, the people who would appear in the Latter Day of the Law would be those who had not yet received the Buddha’s seed of Myoho-Renge-Kyo in their hearts, and Shakyamuni’s Lotus Sutra would not be able to lead them to attain enlightenment. Therefore, Shakyamuni collected the entirety of his sacred teachings and tied them together in the Lotus Sutra as “the essential Law in four phrases” (shiku no yōbō). He transferred them to Bodhisattva Jōgyō, who emerged from the earth, and entrusted him with propagation after his passing, in the Latter Day of the Law.

The essential Law in four phrases appears in the Wondrous Powers of the Tathagata (Jinriki; twenty-first) chapter of the Lotus Sutra:

In essence, the entire doctrine possessed by the Buddha; the entirety of the supernatural functions of the Buddha; the entirety of the secret essential storehouse of the Buddha; and the entirety of the most profound matters of the Buddha are all revealed and expounded in this sutra.

(Hokekyō, p. 513)

The actual entity of what was transferred is none other than Myoho-Renge-Kyo, the essence of the Life Span (Juryō; sixteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It is the fundamental source that incorporates the entirety of all the sutras expounded by Shakyamuni, including the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. It is the original seed from the infinite past of kuon-ganjo, which will lead all people to enlightenment. Bodhisattva Jōgyō, who received this transfer, was reborn as Nichiren Daishonin in the Latter Day of the Law. He sowed the seed of true Buddhism into the hearts of the people in the Latter Day of the Law, who could not be saved by the Lotus Sutra of Shakyamuni. This is indicated in the following Gosho passage:

Now, in this age of the Latter Day of the Law, neither the Lotus Sutra nor the other sutras have the power to save the people. Only Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo can lead all people to Buddhahood.

(Gosho, p. 1219; The Gosho of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, pp. 33, 35)

The Buddha of the infinite past of kuon-ganjo, who was enlightened to the essential Law that would enable all mankind to attain Buddhahood, named it Myoho-Renge-Kyo so as to reveal it to the people. This represents the “mystic name,” the first of the five major principles for interpretation. It also represents “the entire doctrine possessed by the Buddha,” expounded in the essential Law in four phrases.
If there is a name, there is always an entity indicated by and corresponding to that name. The “mystic entity” of Myoho-Renge-Kyo represents the entire universe existing in the ultimate realm of the Law. It refers to the actual mystic phenomena of all laws, including all functions of life from the world of hell at the bottom to the supreme world of Buddhahood at the top. This is indicated by the phrase “the entirety of the secret essential storehouse of the Buddha.”

Next, the “mystic essentials” refer to the manifestation of the beneficial effects of profound enlightenment through the amassing of the causal practice of embracing the Daimoku of Myoho-Renge-Kyo. Within the essential Law in four phrases, this is expressed by the phrase “the entirety of the most profound matters of the Buddha.” Furthermore, the “mystic function” represents the showing of compassion and the act of naturally leading the people, and it corresponds to what is described in the phrase “the entirety of the supernatural functions of the Buddha.”

Finally, the “mystic teaching” means that all the sutras taught by Shakyamuni for fifty years and the Lotus Sutra actually were expounded in order to reveal the entity of the Law of Myoho-Renge-Kyo. This is described by the concluding phrases that they “are all revealed and expounded in this sutra.” In this way, the Daimoku of Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, which Nichiren Daishonin began to chant, is the great Law possessing the five major principles for interpretation of name, entity, essentials, function, and teaching, and it will lead all the people in the Latter Day of the Law to enlightenment.

The following is expounded by Nichiren Daishonin in the Gosho, One Hundred and Six Articles (Hyaku rokka-sho):

The Law does not spread by itself. Since a person propagates it, both the person and the Law are equally revered.

(Gosho, p. 1687)

Thus, just the fact that the great Law of Myoho-Renge-Kyo exists would not enable anyone to believe in it and practice it. It was necessary for there to be a person who would be enlightened to this great Law, correctly expound it to the people, and enable them to see it with their eyes and revere it. Of the elements of the five major principles for interpretation contained in Myoho-Renge-Kyo, three principles—entity, essentials, and function—manifest the virtue of the “person.” Therefore, the Daimoku chanted by Nichiren Daishonin in the Latter Day of the Law is Myoho-Renge-Kyo in which the person and the Law are combined. In other words, Nichiren Daishonin and the great Law of Myoho-Renge-Kyo are united as one, and they are not separate existences.

Nichiren Daishonin writes:
I, Nichiren, with sumi ink, have infused my life [into the Gohonzon]. So believe in it. The will of the Buddha is the Lotus Sutra, but the spirit of Nichiren is nothing other than Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.

(Gosho, p. 685)

The Daishonin established Myoho-Renge-Kyo of the oneness of the person and the Law (nimbō ikka) in the form of the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of the Essential Teaching. He characterized this Gohonzon as:

...the supreme object of worship for the entire world in this country [Japan], with Shakyamuni of the essential teaching playing a subordinate role.

(Gosho, p. 661)

Thus, even Shakyamuni, who was born in India, was accorded a subservient position under the Dai-Gohonzon, which is the entity of the oneness of the person and the Law and the sole essential teaching (dokuichi hommon). Nichikan Shonin, Twenty-sixth High Priest of the Head Temple states:

The Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of the Essential Teaching, inscribed in the second year of Ko'an (1279), is the supreme entity of the Law of Nichiren Daishonin’s entire life, and is the ultimate and conclusive purpose of his advent. It is the core of the Three Great Secret Laws.

(Mondan, p. 197)

The Dai-Gohonzon is the fundamental source that enables the existence of true Buddhism, and it is the ultimate purpose for the advent of Nichiren Daishonin in the Latter Day of the Law. Since the time of Second High Priest Nikko Shonin to the present day, under High Priest Nichinyo Shonin, the Dai-Gohonzon has been protected through times of political strife, calamities of warfare, ferocious bouts of natural disasters, and even during occasions when the schemes of slanderers to destroy true Buddhism had to be defeated. The Dai-Gohonzon has remained solidly protected at Nichiren Shoshu Head Temple Taisekiji, at the foot of Mount Fuji, the supreme mountain in Japan.

Based on the transmission of the Lifeblood Heritage of the Law, the successive High Priests have transcribed the internal enlightenment of the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of the Essential Teaching, and they have bestowed it in the form of the Gohonzon upon those with strong faith who possess the conviction to protect it. Inherent in the Gohonzon are infinite and immeasurable benefits, and this Gohonzon will bring salvation without fail to all people, regardless of the severity of the suffering and hardships they may encounter.

High Priest Nichinyo Shonin states:
We must polish our faith. In other words, we must uphold faith based on the principle of “faith means to have no doubt” (mugi wasshin) and powerfully chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. When we do so, the vast and infinite power of the benefits of the Dai-Gohonzon will be manifested, and through the fusion of objective reality and subjective wisdom (kyōchi myōgō), we will be able to achieve and manifest our body and mind as the true form of the unchanging truth. As a result, we can resolve all forms of suffering. This is the great benefit of our faith and practice.

(Dai-Nichiren, No. 797, p. 68)

Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, Nichiren Daishonin established the Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo of the oneness of the person and the Law (nimbo ikka) from the infinite past of kuon-ganjo in the form of the Dai-Gohonzon. We must believe the Daishonin to be the True Buddha. And under the direction of the High Priest, who has received the transmission of the Lifeblood Heritage of the Law from the Daishonin, we must chant sincere Daimoku in our practice for ourselves and for others. By doing so and striving for kōsen-rufu, we will achieve the great benefit of attaining enlightenment in our present form. Herein lies the pure flow of the Fuji School and the correctness and truth of Nichiren Shoshu.

Currently, we are advancing toward 2021, the 800th anniversary of the advent of our Founder, Nichiren Daishonin, with the objective of establishing a Hokkeko organization of 800,000 believers. I would like to conclude my sermon by praying that each individual will courageously and joyfully advance with devotion to propagate true Buddhism, under the directions of High Priest Nichinyo Shonin, so that we can establish the Buddha land, attain enlightenment, and enable others to do the same.