

The Liturgy of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism

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Introduction

One of the most significant attributes of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is its easily accessible practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. This profound yet simple method of Buddhist practice is the perfect Buddhist teaching for the modern world.

Practice is one of the three pillars of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, the others being faith and study, through which we can bring forth our innate Buddhahood. Practice entails two aspects, practice for oneself and practice for others. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the primary practice for oneself. Nichiren Daishonin specified recitation of certain portions of the Lotus Sutra as a vital supporting practice for oneself. Doing both the primary and supporting practices each morning and evening gives rise to maximum joy and benefit in our lives.

Nichiren Daishonin never gave specific instructions on the format for the sutra recitation. But he did recommend reciting the "Expedient Means" (second) and "Life Span of the Thus Come One" (sixteenth) chapters of the Lotus Sutra, which are the heart of all Buddhist teachings.

He taught that our existence is identical to the universe as a whole and the universe as a whole is identical to our existence. Each individual human life is a microcosm of the life of the universe. We recite the sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the universal Law, so that our lives perfectly harmonize with the universe. Carrying out these practices activates the infinite power that the microcosm inherently possesses. It transforms our fate, helping us to break

through apparent deadlocks and convert sufferings into happiness. It creates a transformation of our inner realm, leaving us invigorated, refreshed and positive. Through our primary and supporting practices we develop wisdom and compassion to lead both ourselves and others to happiness.

Our twice-daily prayers establish a rhythm in our lives, moving us toward happiness and harmony. By making this consistent effort, we will attain perfect unity with the universal Law and experience the state of Buddhahood. Buddhism aims to make people free in the most profound sense; its purpose is not to restrict or constrain. Doing these daily prayers is a privilege, not an obligation. Tenacious efforts are required, but these are all for our own sake. To have great benefits or develop a profound state of life, we should exert ourselves accordingly.

As the language of the sutra is not English, people often ask if there is truly any value in reciting something we cannot understand. Certainly there is value in understanding the sutra's meaning. In addition to the translation found in the back of this booklet, there are in-depth explanations available in various SGI publications. Studying such material can help us strengthen our understanding of and commitment to the Law. But intellectual understanding without practice is of no use. Moreover, we cannot comprehend the real depth of the teachings through reason alone.

Birds have their own language, their own speech. People don't understand it, but other birds do. There are many examples among humans as well—codes, jargon, or foreign languages are well understood by experts or native speakers but unintelligible to others.

Similarly, the language of the sutra is the language of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Whether we understand them or not, the words we chant evoke a powerful response from the universal Law, which is depicted on the Gohonzon.

Our attitude during these daily prayers has far-reaching influence. Doing the daily practice joyfully and full of high expectations brings a much more positive result than doing so grudgingly or filled with doubt.

The daily practice, especially the sutra recitation, can take some time to master. Stumbling over pronunciation is common in the beginning. Nevertheless, one's sincere attitude during the learning phase will bring the full benefit of the practice. Diligence in our Buddhist practice will enable us to savour ultimate victory.

The Silent Prayers

As mentioned above, Nichiren Daishonin never gave specific instructions on the format of our daily practice, which has changed over the centuries, all the while staying true to his intent. The SGI recommends that we recite the Lotus Sutra excerpts contained in this booklet, which are portions from the two chapters Nichiren Daishonin emphasized.

In addition, the SGI has formulated silent prayers intended to express our shared sense of gratitude and resolve as believers in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and as SGI members. The wording of these prayers is meant as a guideline to help us express such gratitude and determination. It is not the specific wording of the silent prayers but our sincerity

and heartfelt thoughts while performing the prayers that are important.

According to the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, our wholehearted prayer is powerful enough to bring forth the protective forces innate in our lives and the environment. The first prayer, preceded by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times, is offered only in the morning before reciting the sutra. It expresses our appreciation for and empowers the functions of life and the universe that serve to protect us as a result of our Buddhist practice.

The second prayer expresses appreciation to the Gohonzon, the true object of devotion; to Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law; and to Nikko Shonin, his immediate successor. For practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, these three represent the three treasures of Buddhism: the Law, the Buddha and the Buddhist Order, or community of believers, respectively. In addition, we offer appreciation for Nichimoku Shonin, Nikko's successor, as representing practitioners who inherit the teaching into the future. In addition, we pray to repay our debts of gratitude to these teachers. In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, repaying such debts of gratitude means dedicating ourselves to Buddhist practice and attaining enlightenment.

The third prayer is focused on the attainment of kosen-rufu, the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law, which will bring about peace in society and in nature. We also pray for the continual advancement of the SGI, which is the community of believers sharing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the

world. We also express our appreciation for the three founding presidents, for their example as leaders of deep faith and commitment.

Our personal prayers are offered during the fourth prayer, along with our determination to bring forth Buddhahood and change our negative karma. Our chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and recitation of the sutra reach beyond the limits of time and space and affect the life of the entire universe, as indicated in our prayers for the deceased and prayers for the happiness of all humanity.

The second, third and fourth prayers are offered morning and evening at the conclusion of the sutra recitation and chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Pronunciation Guide

This book uses the Hepburn system of Romanization:

Vowels:	a	as in father
	e	as in ten
	i	as in machine
	o	as in open
	u	as in rule
	ai	as in Thailand
	ui	as in Louie

Consonants:	g	as in get
	j	as in joy
	ts	as in bets
	h	as in hello
	y	as in yet

Rhythm

As a general rule, there is one Chinese character for each beat, with the following exceptions:

しゃ り ほつ 舍 利 弗	shari-hotsu	□□	□	(two beats)
は ら みつ 波 羅 蜜	hara-mitsu	□□	□	(two beats)

Tone

Along with correct pronunciation and steady rhythm, it is also important to maintain a stable tone, neither raising nor lowering one's pitch unnecessarily.

Format

In the morning:

Face the Gohonzon, sound the bell and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times (group chants in unison) to begin. Then, in appreciation and for the empowerment of the protective forces, chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times again (group chants in unison). Then offer the first silent prayer.

In the evening:

Face the Gohonzon, sound the bell and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times (group chants in unison). Sound the bell again and proceed with the recitation of the sutra as explained on the next page.

FIRST SILENT PRAYER

Appreciation for Life's Protective Forces (*shoten zenjin*)

I offer appreciation to the functions in life and the environment (*shoten zenjin*) that serve to protect us, and pray that these protective forces be further strengthened and enhanced through my practice of the Law.

Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times. Then sound the bell and proceed with the recitation of the sutra as explained on the next page.

Recitation of the Sutra

Recite the “Expedient Means” chapter excerpt (pages 1-5). When completed, sound the bell. Recite the excerpt from the verse section of the “Life Span of the Thus Come One” chapter (pages 6-17). When completed, sound the bell as you begin chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Continue chanting for as long as you wish.

When completed, sound the bell and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times. Then offer the second, third and fourth silent prayers, located at the back of the book.

みょう ほう れん げ きょう
妙 法 蓮 華 經。

Myō hō ren ge kyō.

ほう べん ほん だい に
方 便 品。第 二。

Hōben-pon. Dai ni.

にじせそんじゅうさんまいあんじょう
爾時世尊。從三昧。安詳

Niji seson. Jū sanmai. Anjō

にきごうしゃりほつしょ
而起。告舍利弗。諸

ni ki. Gō shari-hotsu. Sho-

ぶつちえじんじんむりょうご
佛智慧。甚深無量。其

but chi-e. Jinjin muryō. Go

ちえもんなんげなんにゆういつさい
智慧門。難解難入。一切

chi-e mon. Nange nannyū. Issai

しようもんひやくしぶつしょ
聲聞。辟支佛。所

shōmon. Hyaku-shi-butsu. Sho

ふのうちよしあがぶつ
不能知。所以者何。佛

fu nō chi. Sho-i sha ga. Butsu

ぞうしんごんひやくせんまんのく
曾親近。百千萬億。

zō shingon. Hyaku sen man noku.

む しゅ しょ ぶつ じん ぎょう
無 數 諸 佛。 盡 行
Mushu sho butsu. Jin gyō

しょ ぶつ む りょう どう ほう ゆう みよう
諸 佛。 無 量 道 法。 勇 猛
sho-butsu. Muryō dōhō. Yūmyō

しょう じん みよう しよう ふ もん じょう じゅ
精 進。 名 稱 普 聞。 成 就
shōjin. Myōshō fu mon. Jōju

じん じん み ぞう う ほう ずい ぎ しょ
甚 深。 未 曾 有 法。 隨 宜 所
jinjin. Mi-zō-u hō. Zui gi sho

せつ い しゅ なん げ しゃ り ほつ
說。 意 趣 難 解。 舍 利 弗。
setsu. Ishu nange. Shari-hotsu.

ご じゅう じょう ぶつ い らい しゅ じゅ いん ねん
吾 從 成 佛 已來。 種 種 因 緣。
Go jū jō-butsu irai. Shuju innen.

しゅ じゅ ひ ゆ こう えん ごん きょう む
種 種 譬 喻。 廣 演 言 教。 無
Shuju hiyu. Kō en gonkyō. Mu

しゅ ほう べん いん どう しゅ じょう りょう り
數 方 便。 引 導 衆 生。 令 離
shu hōben. Indō shujō. Ryō ri

しょ じやく しょ い しゃ が にょ らい
諸 著。 所 以 者 何。 如 來
sho jaku. Sho-i sha ga. Nyorai

ほう べん ち けん は ら みつ かい
方 便。 知 見 波 羅 蜜。 皆
hōben. Chi-ken hara-mitsu. Kai

い ぐ そく しゃ り ほつ にょ らい
已 具 足。 舍 利 弗。 如 來
i gu-soku. Shari-hotsu. Nyorai

ち けん こう だい じん のん む りょう
知 見。 廣 大 深 遠。 無 量
chi-ken. Kōdai jinnon. Muryō

む げ りき む しょ い ぜん じょう
無 磯。 力。 無 所 畏。 禪 定。
muge. Riki. Mu-sho-i. Zenjō.

げ だつ さん まい じん にゅう む さい
解 脱。 三 昧。 深 入 無 際。
Gedas. Sanmai. Jin nyū musai.

じょう じゅ いつ さい み ぞう う ほう しゃ り
成 就 一 切。 未 曾 有 法。 舍 利
Jōju issai. Mi-zō-u hō. Shari-

ほつ によ らい のう しゅ じゅ ふん
弗。 如 來 能。 種 種 分
hotsu. Nyorai nō. Shuju fun-

べつ ぎょう せつ しょ ほう ごん
別。 巧 說 諸 法。 言
betsu. Gyō ses̄ sho hō. Gon-

じ にゅう なん えつ か しゅ しん しゃ り
辭 柔 輓。 悅 可 衆 心。 舍 利
ji nyūnan. Ekka shushin. Shari-

ほつ しゅ よう ごん し む りょう
弗。 取 要 言 之。 無 量

hotsu. Shu yō gon shi. Muryō

む へん み ぞう う ほう ぶつ しつ
無 邊。 未 會 有 法。 佛 悉

muhen. Mi-zō-u hō. Busshitsu

じょうじゅ し しゃ り ほつ ふ しゅ ぶ
成就。止 舍 利 弗。 不 須 復

jōju. Shi shari-hotsu. Fu shu bu

せつ しょ い しゃ が ぶつ しょ
說。 所 以 者 何。 佛 所

setsu. Sho-i sha ga. Bussho

じょうじゅ だい いち け う なん げ し
成就。第 一 希 有。 難 解 之

jōju. Dai ichi ke-u. Nange shi

ほう ゆい ぶつ よ ぶつ ない のう
法。 唯 佛 與 佛。 乃 能

hō. Yui butsu yo butsu. Nai nō

く じん しょ ほう じつ そう
究 盡。 諸 法 實 相。

kujin. Shohō jissō.

しょ い しょ ほう によ ぜ そ
所 謂 諸 法。 如 是 相。

Sho-i shohō. Nyo ze sō.

によ ぜ しょ によ ぜ たい
如 是 性。 如 是 體。

Nyo ze shō. Nyo ze tai.

によ ぜ りき によ ぜ さ
如 是 力。如 是 作。

Nyo ze riki. Nyo ze sa.

によ ぜ いん によ ぜ えん
如 是 因。如 是 缘。

Nyo ze in. Nyo ze en.

によ ぜ か によ ぜ ほう
如 是 果。如 是 報。

Nyo ze ka. Nyo ze hō.

によ ぜ ほん まつ く きょう とう
如 是 本 末 究 竟 等。

Nyo ze honmak^{ku}kyō to.

(Recite the section from "Sho-i shohō" to "Nyo ze honmak^{ku}kyō to" three times.)

みょう ほう れん げ きよう
妙 法 蓮 華 經。

Myō hō ren ge kyō.

によ らい じゅ りよう ほん だい じゅう ろく
如 來 壽 量 品。第 十 六。

Nyorai ju-ryō-hon. Dai jū-roku.

じ が とく ぶつ らい
自 我 得 佛 來。

Ji ga toku bur̄rai.

しょ きよう しょ こつ しゅ
所 經 諸 劫 數。

Sho kyō sho kossbu.

む りよう ひゃく せん まん
無 量 百 千 萬。

Muryō hyaku sen man.

おく さい あ そう ぎ
億 載 阿 僧 祇。

Oku sai asōgi.

じょう せつ ぼう きよう け
常 説 法 教 化。

Jō seppō kyōke.

む しゅ おく しゅ じょう
無 數 億 衆 生。

Mushu oku shujō.

りょう にゅう お ぶつ どう
令 入 於 佛 道。
Ryō nyū o butsu-dō.

に らい む りょう こう
爾 来 無 量 劫。
Nirai muryō kō.

い ど しゅ じよう こ
爲 度 衆 生 故。
I do shujō ko.

ほう べん げん ね はん
方 便 現 涅槃。
Hōben gen nehan.

に じつ ふ めつ ど
而 實 不 滅 度。
Ni jitsu fu metsu-do.

じよう じゅう し せつ ぼう
常 住 此 說 法。
Jō jū shi seppō.

が じよう じゅう お し
我 常 住 於 此。
Ga jō jū o shi.

い しょ じん すう りき
以 諸 神 通 力。
I sho jin-zū-riki.

りょう てん どう しゅ じよう
令 顛 倒 衆 生。
Ryō tendō shujō.

すい ごん に ふ けん
雖 近 而 不 見。
Sui gon ni fu ken.

しゅ けん が めつ ど
衆 見 我 滅 度。
Shu ken ga metsu-do.

こう く よう しゃ り
廣 供 養 舍 利。
Kō kuyō shari.

げん かい え れん ぼ
咸 皆 懐 戀 慕。
Gen kai e renbo.

に しょう かつ ごう しん
而 生 渴 仰 心。
Ni shō katsu-gō shin.

しゅ じょう き しん ぶく
衆 生 既 信 伏。
Shujō ki shin-buku.

しち じき い にゅう なん
質 直 意 柔 輓。
Shichi-jiki i nyūnan.

いっ しん よつ けん ぶつ
一 心 欲 見 佛。
Isshin yok ken butsu.

ふ じ しゃく しん みよう
不 自 惜 身 命。
Fu ji shaku shinmyō.

じ　が　ぎゅう　しゅ　そう
時 我 及 衆 僧。

Ji ga gyū shusō.

く　しゅつ　りょう　じゅ　せん
俱 出 靈 鷲 山。
Ku shutsu ryōjusen.

が　じ　ご　しゅ　じよう
我 時 語 衆 生。

Ga ji go shujō.

じょう　ざい　し　ふ　めつ
常 在 此 不 滅。
Jō zai shi fu-metsu.

い　ほう　べん　りつ　こ
以 方 便 力 故。

I hō-ben-rik ko.

げん　う　めつ　ふ　めつ
現 有 滅 不 滅。
Gen u metsu fu-metsu.

よ　こく　う　しゅ　じよう
餘 國 有 衆 生。

Yo-koku u shujō.

く　ぎょう　しん　ぎょう　しゃ
恭 敬 信 樂 者。

Kugyō shingyō sha.

が　ぶ　お　ひ　ちゅう
我 復 於 彼 中。

Ga bu o hi chū.

い　せつ　　む　じょう　ほう
爲　說　無上法。
I setsu mujō hō.

によ　とう　ふ　もん　し
汝　等　不　聞　此。
Nyotō fu mon shi.

たん　に　が　めつ　ど
但　謂　我　滅　度。
Tan ni ga metsu-do.

が　けん　しょ　しゅ　じょう
我　見　諸　衆　生。
Ga ken sho shujō.

もつ　ざい　お　く　かい
沒　在　於　苦　海。
Motsu-zai o kukai.

こ　ふ　い　げん　しん
故　不爲　現　身。
Ko fu i gen shin.

りょう　ご　しょう　かつ　ごう
令　其　生　渴　仰。
Ryō go shō katsu-gō.

いん　ご　しん　れん　ぼ
因　其　心　戀　慕。
In go shin renbo.

ない　しゅつ　い　せつ　ぼう
乃　出　爲說　法。
Nai shutsu i seppō.

じん ずう りき によ ぜ
神 通 力 如 是。
Jin-zū-riki nyo ze.

お あ そうぎ こう
於 阿僧祇 劫。
O asōgi kō.

じょう ざい りょう じゅ せん
常 在 靈 驚 山。
Jō zai ryōjusen.

ぎゅう よ しょ じゅう しょ
及 餘 諸 住 處。
Gyū yo sho jūsho.

しゅ じょう けん こう じん
衆 生 見 劫 盡。
Shujō ken kō jin.

だい か しょ しょう じ
大 火 所 燒 時。
Dai ka sho shō ji.

が し ど あん のん
我 此 土 安 穏。
Ga shi do annon.

てん にん じょう じゅう まん
天 人 常 充 滿。
Tennin jō jūman.

おん りん しょ どう かく
園 林 諸 堂 閣。
Onrin sho dō-kaku.

しゅ じゅ ほう しょう ごん
種 種 寶 莊 嚴。

Shuju hō shōgon.

ほう じゅ た け か
寶 樹 多 華 果。

Hōju ta keka.

しゅ じょう しょ ゆう らく
衆 生 所 遊 樂。

Shujō sho yū-raku.

しょ てん ぎやく てん く
諸 天 撃 天 鼓。

Shoten gyaku tenku.

じょう さつ しゅ ぎ がく
常 作 衆 伎 樂。

Jō sas̄shu gi-gaku.

う まん だ ら け
雨 曼 佗 羅 華。

U mandara ke.

さん ぶつ ぎゅう だい しゅ
散 佛 及 大 衆。

San butsu gyū daishu.

が じょう ど ふ き
我 淨 土 不 毀。

Ga jōdo fu ki.

に しゅ けん しょう じん
而 衆 見 燒 盡。

Ni shu ken shō jin.

うふしょくのう
憂怖諸苦惱。

Ufu sho kunō.

によぜしつじゅうまん
如是悉充満。

Nyo ze shitsu jūman.

ぜしょさいしゅじょう
是諸罪衆生。

Ze sho zai shujō.

いあくごういんねん
以惡業因縁。

I aku-gō innen.

かあそうぎこう
過阿僧祇劫。

Ka asōgi kō.

ふもんさんぼうみょう
不聞三寶名。

Fu mon sanbō myō.

しょうしゅくどく
諸有修功德。

Sho u shu ku-doku.

にゅうわしちじきしゃ
柔和質直者。

Nyūwa shichi-jiki sha.

そつかいけんがしん
則皆見我身。

Sokkai ken gashin.

さい し に せつ ぱう
在 此 而 説 法。
Zai shi ni seppō.

わく じ い し しゅ
或 時 為 此 衆。
Waku-ji i shi shu.

せつ ぶつ じゅ む りょう
說 佛 壽 無 量。
Setsu butsu-ju muryō.

く ない けん ぶつ しゃ
久 乃 見 佛 者。
Ku nai ken bussha.

い せつ ぶつ なん ち
爲 說 佛 難 值。
I setsu butsu nan chi.

が ち りき によ ぜ
我 智 力 如 是。
Ga chi-riki nyo ze.

え こう しょう む りょう
慧 光 照 無 量。
Ekō shō muryō.

じゅ みょう む しゅ こう
壽 命 無 數 劫。
Jumyō mushu kō.

く しゅ ごう しょ とく
久 修 業 所 得。
Ku shugō sho toku.

によ とう う ち しや
汝 等 有 智 者。

Nyotō u chi sha.

もつ と し しょう ぎ
勿 於 此 生 疑。

Motō shi shō gi.

とう だん りょう よう じん
當 斷 令 永 盡。

Tō dan ryō yō jin.

ぶつ ご じつ ふ こ
佛 語 實 不 虚。

Butsu-go jipū puko.

によ い ぜん ほう べん
如 醫 善 方 便。

Nyo i zen hōben.

い じ おう し こ
爲 治 狂 子 故。

I ji ōshi ko.

じつ さい に ごん し
實 在 而 言 死。

Jitsu zai ni gon shi.

む のう せつ こ もう
無 能 説 虚 妄。

Mu nō sek komō.

が やく い せ ぶ
我 亦 爲 世 父。

Ga yaku i se bu.

く しょ く げん しゃ
救 諸 苦 患 者。

Ku sho kugen sha.

い ほん ぶ てん どう
爲 凡 夫 顛 倒。

I bonbu tendō.

じつ ざい に ごん めつ
實 在 而 言 滅。

Jitsu zai ni gon metsu.

い じょう けん が こ
以 常 見 我 故。

I jōken ga ko.

に しよう きよう し しん
而 生 憐 恣 心。

Ni shō kyōshi shin.

ほう いつ じゃく ご よく
放 逸 著 五 欲。

Hō-itsu jaku go-yoku.

だ お あく どう ちゅう
墮 於 惡 道 中。

Da o aku-dō chū.

が じょう ち しゅ じょう
我 常 知 衆 生。

Ga jō chi shujō.

ぎょう どう ふ ぎょう どう
行 道 不 行 道。

Gyō dō fu gyō dō.

隨 應 所 可 度。
Zui ō sho ka do.

爲 說 種 種 法。
I ses̄shuju hō.

每 自 作 是 念。
Mai ji sa ze nen.

以 何 令 衆 生。
I ga ryō shujō.

得 入 無 上 道。
Toku nyū mu-jō dō.

速 成 就 佛 身。
Soku jōju busshin.

SECOND SILENT PRAYER

Appreciation for the Gohonzon

I offer my deepest praise and most sincere gratitude to the Dai-Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws, which was bestowed upon the entire world.

I offer my deepest praise and most sincere gratitude to Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

I offer my deepest praise and most sincere gratitude to Nikko Shonin.

I offer sincere gratitude to Nichimoku Shonin.

Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times.

THIRD SILENT PRAYER

For the Attainment of Kosen-rufu

I pray that the great desire for kosen-rufu be fulfilled, and that the Soka Gakkai International develop eternally in this endeavour.

I offer my most sincere gratitude to the three founding presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda, and Daisaku Ikeda, for their eternal example of selfless dedication to the propagation of the Law.

Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times.

FOURTH SILENT PRAYER

Personal Prayers and Prayer for the Deceased

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.)

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.)*

Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times.

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

Sound the bell and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times to conclude (group chants in unison).

Excerpts from the Lotus Sutra

Chapter Two: Expedient Means

At that time the World-Honoured One calmly arose from his samadhi and addressed Shariputra, saying: "The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable. The door to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter. Not one of the voice-hearers or pratyekabuddhas is able to comprehend it.

"What is the reason for this? A Buddha has personally attended a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million, a countless number of Buddhas and has fully carried out an immeasurable number of religious practices. He has exerted himself bravely and vigorously, and his name is universally known. He has realized the Law that is profound and never known before, and preaches it in accordance with what is appropriate, yet his intention is difficult to understand.

"Shariputra, ever since I attained Buddhahood I have through various causes and various similes widely expounded my teachings and have used countless expedient means to guide living beings and cause them to renounce their attachments. Why is this? Because the Thus Come One is fully possessed of both expedient means and the paramita of wisdom.

"Shariputra, the wisdom of the Thus Come One is expansive and profound. He has immeasurable [mercy], unlimited [eloquence], power, fearlessness, concentration, emancipation, and samadhis, and has

deeply entered the boundless and awakened to the Law never before attained.

“Shariputra, the Thus Come One knows how to make various kinds of distinctions and to expound the teachings skillfully. His words are soft and gentle and can delight the hearts of the assembly.

“Shariputra, to sum it up: the Buddha has fully realized the Law that is limitless, boundless, never attained before.

“But stop, Shariputra, I will say no more. Why? Because what the Buddha has achieved is the rarest and most difficult-to-understand Law. The true entity of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, inherent cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end.”

Chapter 16: The Life Span of the Thus Come One

Since I attained Buddhahood
the number of kalpas that have passed
is an immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten
thousands,
millions, trillions, asamkhyas.
Constantly I have preached the Law, teaching,
converting
countless millions of living beings,
causing them to enter the Buddha way,
all this for immeasurable kalpas.
In order to save living beings,
as an expedient means I appear to enter nirvana

but in truth I do not pass into extinction.
I am always here, preaching the Law.
I am always here,
but through my transcendental powers
I make it so that living beings in their befuddlement
do not see me even when close by.
When the multitude see that I have passed into
extinction,
far and wide they offer alms to my relics.
All harbour thoughts of yearning
and in their minds thirst to gaze at me.
When living beings have become truly faithful,
honest and upright, gentle in intent,
single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha,
not hesitating even if it costs them their lives,
then I and the assembly of monks
appear together on Holy Eagle Peak.
At that time I tell the living beings
that I am always here, never entering extinction,
but that because of the power of an expedient
means
at times I appear to be extinct, at other times not,
and that if there are living beings in other lands
who are reverent and sincere in their wish to believe,
then among them too
I will preach the unsurpassed Law.
But you have not heard of this,
so you suppose that I enter extinction.
When I look at living beings
I see them drowned in a sea of suffering;
therefore I do not show myself,
causing them to thirst for me.
Then when their minds are filled with yearning,

at last I appear and preach the Law for them.
Such are my transcendental powers.
For asamkhyas kalpas
constantly I have dwelled on Holy Eagle Peak
and in various other places.
When living beings witness the end of a kalpa
and all is consumed in a great fire,
this, my land, remains safe and tranquil,
constantly filled with heavenly and human beings.
The halls and pavilions in its gardens and groves
are adorned with various kinds of gems.
Jeweled trees abound in flowers and fruit
where living beings enjoy themselves at ease.
The gods strike heavenly drums,
constantly making many kinds of music.
Mandarava blossoms rain down,
scattering over the Buddha and the great assembly.
My pure land is not destroyed,
yet the multitude see it as consumed in fire,
with anxiety, fear and other sufferings
filling it everywhere.
These living beings with their various offences,
through causes arising from their evil actions,
spend asamkhyas kalpas
without hearing the name of the Three Treasures.
But those who practise meritorious ways,
who are gentle, peaceful, honest and upright,
all of them will see me
here in person, preaching the Law.
At times for this multitude
I describe the Buddha's life span as immeasurable,
and to those who see the Buddha only after a
long time

I explain how difficult it is to meet the Buddha.
Such is the power of my wisdom
that its sagacious beams shine without measure.
This life span of countless kalpas
I gained as the result of lengthy practice.
You who are possessed of wisdom,
entertain no doubts on this point!
Cast them off, end them forever,
for the Buddha's words are true, not false.
He is like a skilled physician
who uses an expedient means to cure his
deranged sons.

Though in fact alive, he gives out word he is dead,
yet no one can say he speaks falsely.
I am the father of this world,
saving those who suffer and are afflicted.
Because of the befuddlement of ordinary people,
though I live, I give out word I have entered
extinction.

For if they see me constantly,
arrogance and selfishness arise in their minds.
Abandoning restraint, they give themselves up to
the five desires
and fall into the evil paths of existence.
Always I am aware of which living beings
practise the way, and which do not,
and in response to their needs for salvation
I preach various doctrines for them.
At all times I think to myself:
How can I cause living beings
to gain entry into the unsurpassed way
and quickly acquire the body of a Buddha?

Glossary

Buddha: “Enlightened One.” One who correctly perceives the true nature of all phenomena and leads others to attain Buddhahood. This Buddha nature exists in all beings and is characterized by the qualities of wisdom, courage, compassion and life force.

Dai-Gohonzon: The object of devotion that Nichiren Daishonin inscribed at Minobu, Japan, on October 12, 1279, and which he referred to as the purpose of his advent. It is the Dai-Gohonzon that represents his intent for the widespread propagation of the Law. *Dai-Gohonzon* literally means the great object of devotion.

"Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra: The second of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra, in which Shakyamuni Buddha reveals that the purpose of a Buddha's advent in the world is to lead all people to enlightenment. Shakyamuni shows that all people have the potential for Buddhahood. This is the principal chapter of the theoretical teaching (first half) and one of the two pivotal chapters of the entire sutra, the other being the “Life Span of the Thus Come One” (sixteenth) chapter, the core of the essential teaching (latter half).

Gohonzon: The object of devotion. It is the embodiment of the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, expressing the life-state of Buddhahood, which all people inherently possess. *Go* means worthy of honour and *bonzon* means an object of fundamental respect.

kosen-rufu: Wide propagation, or wide proclamation and propagation. It is a term from the Lotus Sutra that literally means to declare and spread widely — Shakyamuni Buddha's injunction to his followers. The spread of the essence of the Lotus Sutra, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, will bring about peace and happiness in the world.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo: The name of the fundamental law of life and the universe expounded in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. The literal meaning is: *Nam* (devotion), the action of practising Buddhism; *myoho* (Mystic Law), the essential law of life and its phenomenal manifestations; *renge* (lotus), the simultaneity of cause and effect; *kyo* (sutra), the truth expressed through the sound of one's voice.

Nichimoku Shonin (1260–1333): The chief priest of Taiseki-ji temple in Japan who inherited the teachings from Nikko Shonin, Nichiren Daishonin's immediate successor. Known for his excellence at doctrinal debate and his numerous remonstrations with the government authorities, urging them to heed Nichiren Daishonin's teachings.

Nichiren Daishonin (1222–1282): The founder of the Buddhism upon which the SGI bases its activities for peace and happiness in the world. He established the chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon as the universal practice for attaining enlightenment. The name *Nichiren* means sun lotus, and *Daishonin* is an honorific title that means great sage.

Nikko Shonin (1246–1333): Nichiren Daishonin's designated successor. He concentrated on promoting his mentor's teachings, educating disciples and collecting and transcribing his mentor's writings.

Shakyamuni: Also known as Gautama Buddha. The founder of Buddhism. *Shakyamuni* means “sage of the Shakyas,” Shakya being the name of the tribe or clan to which his family belonged.

shoten zenjin: Literally, heavenly gods and benevolent deities, which protect the correct Buddhist teaching and its practitioners. They function to protect the people and their land and bring good fortune to both. These protective forces gain their strength through one's Buddhist practice.

Soka Gakkai: Value-Creating Society. The lay organization that promotes Nichiren Daishonin's teachings for peace and happiness. The Soka Gakkai was founded in 1930 in Japan, and the SGI, its international version, was established in 1975 on Guam.

three founding presidents: Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944) was the first Soka Gakkai president. An educator and scholar, he developed the philosophy of value creation (*soka*), from which the Soka Gakkai gets its name. Together with Josei Toda (1900–1958), he founded the Soka Gakkai in 1930 and taught that practising Nichiren Daishonin's teachings was the means for leading a life of the highest values and greatest good. Both Makiguchi and Toda were imprisoned by the

Japanese wartime government. The elderly Makiguchi died during his incarceration. Toda became the second president in 1951. After World War II, which saw the organization destroyed by military authorities, he led the reconstruction of the Soka Gakkai, taking the membership from 3,000 to more than 750,000. Toda's closest disciple, Daisaku Ikeda (1928-) became the third president in 1960. He took office as the first SGI president in 1975. Under his leadership, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism has spread to nearly 200 countries.