

A GUIDE TO HBS Part II

*The Teachings and Practices
of
Honmon Butsuryu Shu*

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This book contains a collection of various articles
(on the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Buddhism, HBS etc.)
as well as a record of question answers session etc.
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The Lotus Sutra—The Most Worshipped Sutra

The King of Sutra—The Lotus Sutra

Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra, The Lifespan of the Eternal Buddha, elucidated that Shakamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha, who appeared in India stated: "My good sons, I became Buddha in the very far distant past and it has been countless, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I, in fact, attained Buddhahood. Thus, my lifetime is of infinite asamkhya kalpas, forever existing and immortal." This Chapter also expounded that the Eternal Buddha's true form has been preaching the law beyond time and space for the salvation of mankind. This is an extremely significant point for the people born in the period of the last and decadent Dharma, the Mappo Period.

To some people the word, Buddha, makes reference to Amida Buddha, Yakushi Buddha, Dainichi Buddha, and provisional buddhas of the Eternal Buddha. They differ depending on one's image. But, the Lotus Sutra brought an end to this general confusion. The Lotus Sutra clarified that the Eternal Buddha is the original body and all other buddhas are manifestations of the Eternal Buddha. With this clarified, it became apparent that men should follow the true teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

In order for mankind to attain rewards of enlightenment, it is important to sow the seed of Buddhahood. The seed of Buddhahood is the seed that creates merits and virtues of Buddha enlightenment. The seeds of Yakushi Buddha or those of Amida Buddha are not true seeds for Buddhahood because those buddhas are only manifestations of the Eternal Buddha. In other words, they are provisional buddhas and not buddhas that possess the root of eternal life. To summarize, by relying on the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra (Chapters 15 to 22 in which Shakamuni Buddha revealed that he was the original Eternal Buddha in the primordial land) one could receive the true seed of Buddhahood.

Nichiren Shonin, who appeared in this Mappo Period, preached faithfully the teachings of the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutras that ordinary people could receive the seed of merits and virtues of Buddhahood by repeated chanting of the Odaimoku, NamuMyohoRengeKyo.

As mentioned above, the Lotus Sutra is the only sutra which gives a chance to everyone to attain Buddhahood. In addition, the Lotus Sutra expounds a path for people of inferior capabilities and common people in the Mappo Period. Also, it elucidated the message of the Eternal Buddha as the true guide. Therefore, the Lotus Sutra transcends all other sutras. Based on such integrated teachings it has continued to be revered by many people from ancient times.

Buddha's message contained in the Lotus Sutra

Shakamuni Buddha's message in the form of similes or parables contained many expressions and descriptions. People living in the 21st century can learn about the hidden messages contained in the following parables:

Within Chapter 1, Introduction of the Lotus Sutra exemplifies strange accounts in succession. First of all, it claimed that the names of people that assembled to hear Shakamuni Buddha's sermon were lined up in a row. The hidden message in this parable is the teachings of the Lotus Sutra were for the salvation of all existences and not only for the buddhas and disciples of Shakamuni Buddha's lifetime, but for all realms.

The Buddha World Shook Everywhere and the Emission of a Ray of Light

Just prior to Shakamuni Buddha's sermon on the Lotus Sutra, the world shook in six different ways. That signified that the assembled peoples' souls trembled with excitement eagerly awaiting to hear Shakamuni Buddha's sermon. It can also be said that the six-sense organs were touched, or it can be described as the sleeping seeds deep within the soul or the soul of Bodhisattva were shaken into motion. In addition, it is elucidated that the Buddha emitted a ray of light from his forehead, one of his characteristic features lighting up eighteen thousand worlds in the eastern direction. This can be considered as Shakamuni Buddha's rationale exposition of principles to reveal vividly that the true teachings were for the salvation of mankind and that people should grasp the true faith.

Chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra, "Expedient Means", elucidated, "Because Shakamuni Buddha and other Buddhas desired to cause all living beings to open their eyes to the wisdom or insight of the Buddha, (Butchiken), they appeared in world to assist the people to gain a pure mind." Butchiken is said to be "The Eyes of the Mind". That is, one should not be self-centered and have a soul that thinks and sees only for one's selfishness. Butchiken is having a soul of wisdom that can judge matters from a big-hearted viewpoint.

Shakamuni Buddha's purpose in appearing in the world was to propagate the above mentioned objectives.

The Worms that Grew for Money and Sex

Nissen Shonin, the founder of HBS, stated: "Greed for money and sex is a worm, that is man himself." That is surely true. Human beings may be likened to a greedy slave of money and sex. There are some people that will abuse friendship to accumulate money. There are some people that will go out of their way to gain favors of women they take a fancy to even if they have to break the law. Nissen Shonin is referring to those types of people.

In short, Shakamuni Buddha appeared in the world to awaken mankind to lead a life worthy of living through proper thinking and observation. The Lotus Sutra's elucidated: "To open 'Butchiken' for the salvation of mankind is to have mankind understand 'Butchiken' and enter the path of 'Butchiken'. However, to the common people that have become prisoners of greed, it is difficult to "open the door to Buddh—wisdom, or to reveal it, or to let all beings know it and to let them enter into it. (Kai—ji—go—nyu)." Thus, Shakamuni Buddha, while preaching the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, used various similes and parables to get people to comprehend the correct way of observing and thinking about things. The following parable is an example:

Three Kinds of Carts and a Burning House

In ancient times, there was a wealthy man living in a town in a certain country. One day, a fire broke out in his residence. The children, however, were oblivious to the fire. The father desperately shouted to his children to get out of the house, but they ignored his call. Out of desperation, the father called out to them claiming there were goat-carts, deer-carts and ox-carts outside. Because such things were just what the children had wanted, they all came wildly dashing out of the burning house and were able to escape death. The father later purchased a cart led by a white ox.

In this parable, the father was Shakamuni Buddha himself. The children represented the people that Shakamuni Buddha had wanted to guide. The burning estate represented the society in which the people lived in. Shakamuni Buddha attempted to guide the people who were suffering from the affliction of the fire to a tranquil world, but the people who had short-sighted souls for only profit, pleasure and comfort ignored Shakamuni Buddha's plea.

Shakamuni Buddha, therefore, invented an expedient way to have people lend their ear to his sermon. The people that left the burning house to go outside are a condition represented by the goats, deer, and oxen. The white oxen represented the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

Unbeknown to the children, various flying creatures lived in the house, such as eagles, crows, owls, magpies and pigeons and from the animal family, such things as snakes, vipers, centipedes, millipedes, wall lizards, raccoons, foxes, and rats. In addition, there was the Kuhanda, (a demon who had a large testicle that deprived people of their virility and Yaksha (a devil) and other evil spirits that were jumping and running around. When the fire broke out hell broke loose. They killed one another, drank blood, and ate the flesh of one another. This exemplified our society.

The birds flying above in the sky represented an arrogant man who attained wealth or a high social status that looked down on the people. The poisonous scorpions and vipers that caused various harm to humans symbolized people that caused trouble.

Snakes symbolized vindictive people. Millipedes exemplified hated people. Pigeons exemplified timid people. Raccoons exemplified crafty persons. Owls that hide in shady spots exemplified crafty behind—the—scenes people. Or like Kuhanda, a metamorphosis, or people living with a soul of envy that are mutually engaged in greed, deception, quarreling and flattering are like the devil, Yaksha. This expedient story attempts to illustrate the ugly and filthy events that take place in this earthly world.

What methods of 'Butchiken' did Shakamuni Buddha use to lead the people possessed with suffering and perplexity to a world of tranquility, and to open the doors to Buddha—wisdom?

The Lotus Sutra is not a recording of Shakamuni Buddha's words, but is constructed like a script of a drama. Moreover, the nature of the script is quite far from reality. It appears like a dream. Chapter 11 of the Lotus Sutra, "The Emergence of the Treasure Tower" begins with an account of a treasure tower rising up out of the earth suspended in air. This event is truly an unrealistic scene not possible in this world.

From this standpoint let us study the message the Buddha elucidated in Chapter 11.

The Sermon About the Assembly in Space

In Chapter 10, 'The Teacher of the Law', Shakamuni Buddha stated: "Build a magnificent tower to enshrine the Gohonzon. Within this tower will dwell my entire body and soul. Revere this tower with your soul. Persons holding services for the dead will receive the merits of Buddha's enlightenment", but, in the next chapter, Chapter 11, "The Emergence of the Treasure Tower", a vast tower decorated with gold, silver and seven treasures appears suspended in mid-space after rising out the earth.

Then, a loud voice from within the tower is heard saying, "Good, good. Shakamuni Buddha you have

begun to preach the Way of Bodhisattva—hood that contains the spirit of the Buddha". The Way of Bodhisattva—hood has two aspects. 1) self-protection. 2) benefitting others.

The assembled people, astonished and yet moved by the unexpected happening, clasped their hands. Among them, Taigyosetsu Bodhisattva, representing the attendees asked, "Shakamuni Buddha, why on earth did such a huge treasure tower appear? "

Shakamuni Buddha answered, "Taho Nyorai is in there. He is in there to verify the true teachings of the Lotus Sutra that I am preaching."

Taigyosetsu Bodhisattva further requested: "We would also like to meet Taho Nyorai." Shakamuni Buddha replied, "In order to pray to the figure of Taho Buddha, the other buddhas who are expounding the teachings of the Lotus Sutra throughout the ten directions of the world must be gathered altogether."

At that instance Shakamuni Buddha emitted a ray of light from between his white brows to send a signal for every Buddha in the ten directions of the world to attend the assembly. Shakamuni Buddha opened the door of the treasure tower with his right hand. There, a figure of Taho Buddha sitting silently was observed.

Upon seeing Shakamuni Buddha, Taho Buddha said, "Good. Shakamuni Buddha I have come to listen to the pleasant sermons of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Please sit here". Taho Buddha shared his seat with Shakamuni Buddha, whereupon Shakamuni Buddha rose into space, entered the treasure tower, and sat alongside Taho Buddha.

The people who saw the scene wished they could rise into space and be permitted to sit near the Buddhas. Shakamuni Buddha perceiving the inner soul of the people through his supernatural power raised the people into space and thereafter transferring the place of the sermon into space, Shakamuni Buddha loudly shouted, "Is there someone that could spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra far and wide in this earthly world? I will probably die shortly. I desire that the teachings of the Lotus Sutra be eternally spread throughout the world after my death".

After pronouncing this, he further elaborated that to spread the teaching will be very difficult and anyone resigned to widely express and circulate the teachings should personally file a petition. Shakamuni Buddha concluded that those people will enter into the Buddha path. The above is the general gist of Chapter 11. However, what did it want to teach?

Becoming the Treasure Tower by Oneself

In Chapter 10, 'The Teacher of the Law', Shakamuni Buddha stated, "A mourning service for my remains is unnecessary. Within the Treasure Tower dwells my entire body and soul." The appearance of the huge Treasure Tower indicates that the Gohonzon of the wonderful Dharma should be enshrined in an altar as Shakamuni Buddha was enshrined in the Treasure Tower.

The Treasure Tower rising from earth and not descending from heaven was indicative that the spirit of the Lotus Sutra lies therein. That is, the faith of the Lotus Sutra is the earth. Its teachings are based on reality. Our society has been polluted by greedy people that caused defilement and sufferings in the world. The Treasure Tower floating in the sky represented the people who have not been polluted by greed and have overcome sufferings.

The Treasure Tower suggests that it was the form of faith based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. In other words, chanting the Odaimoku, *Namu Myōhō Renge Kyō*, which embodies the true body of Buddha's enlightenment and Bodhisattva practices, engages oneself in the faith of the HBS religion. Spreading it to others is sowing the seed of Buddha's enlightenment into the souls of others by doing so, worldly desires possessed by the common people will immediately turn into a Treasure Tower. This represents the people that rose into space through Buddha's magical supernatural power.

Nichiren Shonin wrote 'A Treatise Revealing the Spiritual Contemplation and the Object of Worship' for the first time in the fifth 500-year period after the death of Shakamuni Buddha. (Kanjin Honzon Sho).

In it, he displayed a text mandala of the Gohanzon for the first time. From within the "One Session of the Fine Congregation" (Myoko Ichiza), we recite "Homage Formula to the Buddha and Saints" (Namukaon No Mon) to reconfirm and increase our faith in the Gohonzon.

What Is Buddhism? What Is The Lotus Sutra?

The following is a discussion session between I, Reverend Nisso Fukuoka, and Mr. S.I. a member of HBS, and a graduate of George Washington University, Washington D.C, USA.

S: There are many fantastic descriptions in the Lotus Sutra. How should we interpret these descriptions?

N: The mind and the five senses humans possess have limitations. But, there is a reality beyond seeing, hearing or thinking. The Lotus Sutra's teachings go beyond the reality of the human mind or senses. For example, a gold fish living in a pond only knows about its own confine and is unaware that a wide world exists beyond it. We, human beings also perceive our own confined territory which can be observed with our mind and five senses. But around us there is a vast world beyond it. So, Shakamuni Buddha used many symbolic messages with fantastic descriptions to awaken us about it.

S: In America, during the 60's the hippies used various drugs including LSD to experience psychedelic images of seven colored lights and long lasting fictional images. Those images overlap the mandalas of Buddhism. People that experienced such conditions believe a world of fantasy exists. I am confused as to whether that is a real world or metaphorical world. During the drug culture, those people experienced seeing wild fantasies and sounds, and their mind wandered to a far away world. Such people maintained that the descriptions expounded in the Lotus Sutra truly exist.

N: That is not necessarily an illusion or fantasy. According to the theory of "Ichinen Sanzen" based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. (Ichinen means the single mind, Sanzen means all phenomena in the world), each individual mind possesses all existence and phenomena. All existence means, spatial (Space—wise), information contained in mind of others is also endowed in the mind of each individual. And, time—wise, everything that mankind experienced during its incalculable number of years are possessed in each individual mind. It means that the whole universe is contained in one's own mind. That is the basic idea of the Lotus Sutra since the entire universe is included in the mind, by observing one's own mind with special drugs or practices invisible or unseen truths may become visible. By engaging in meditation and practices one hopes to increase his ability to observe information contained in the inner mind. Through observation by the conscious mind of the inner soul, one may discover that there is a more truthful reality in the inner soul. The Hippies borrowed such types of practices by using the power of drugs. Usage of drugs for such purposes is undesirable though. On the other hand, Yoga practitioners or some Zen practitioner saw the "illusionary" world

which had never been seen before. Those practitioners claimed that they could not describe in words their experiences and the world they had seen. It was even difficult for Hippies to describe it in words. They described it in colors, sounds and fantastic images. The Buddhist description of seeing such a world is depicted in the mandalas of various forms and designs or drawings of fantastic descriptions in Buddhist writings. Zen's method of observing one's inner mind through meditation is effective for arousing one's sensitivity and self-ability. However, it sometimes causes the practitioner get into a dangerous situation. The danger is he will not be able to abscond it and face reality. He may fall into a condition of madness and face the "World of Hell" or what is known as "Zen meditation illness". So, Nichiren Shonin stated that we, common people should not try to search our unconscious mind through such a way. Instead, Nichiren Shonin recommended to the common people who are born in the Mappo Period to chant the Odaimoku repeatedly which contains the merits of enlightenment of the Buddha.

S: People who practiced meditation to search their mind saw illusions which coincided with those of the Hippies isn't that so?

N: The Esoteric Buddhism (Mikkyo) and Tibetan Buddhism methods of searching the inner mind are similar in nature to Carl Jung's psychology. Carl Jung tried to search and see the inner mind through psychotherapy. The methods employed by Buddhism and Carl Jung are different but the purpose is to search for something in the inner mind. Anyway, Buddhism is a religion that looks into the mind. Naturally, HBS does the same. However, HBS's way of doing this is quite different from Zen Buddhism or Tibetan Buddhism. Nichiren Shonin, after studying various Buddhist teachings, reached the conclusion that meditation or spiritual contemplation, is a practice for a well trained practitioners and is not suitable for the common people in the Mappo Period. It is better to become connected directly with the power of the Fine Dharma and the soul of the Buddha through chanting the Odaimoku faithfully. There is no need to seek the mind by using our brain. We just enter the world of enlightenment by pure faith by chanting the Odaimoku. Nichiren Shonin, in his younger days, studied Buddhist doctrines and practices at various temples, such as Kofukuji Temple of the Hosso Shu sect and other temples in Nara and the Shitennoji Temple in Osaka. While on Mt. Hiei in Kyoto, he studied various aspects of Buddhism. He also conducted research on various teachings at temples in Kyoto. He had great knowledge of Esoteric Buddhism (Mikkyo) of the Shingon Shu sect. As result of his studies, Nichiren Shonin judged that those teachings and practices provided by such temples and sects are not suitable for the people who are born in Mappo Period, for the common people who lack the ability to carry them out. Thus, he arrived at the conclusion that we should just chant the Odaimoku, NamuMyohoRengeKyo with pure faith based on the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra (Honmon Happon). Nichiren Shonin introduced the way of chanting by grasping the core of the Buddhism and by understanding the human state. Chanting the Odaimoku is a simple form of practice but it has deep doctrinal reasons.

S: Within the same school of Buddhism, what should I say when I am asked, "What are the differences between Nichiren Shonin's teachings and those of others?"

N: Nichiren Shonin divided the comparison the merits and demerits of religions into five levels. First, he constructed the logic to compare the differences between Buddhism and other religions. Then he discussed the differences between the Mahayana Vehicle and the Hinayana Vehicle of Buddhism. Third, Nichiren Shonin referred to the defenses between the Lotus Sutra and the other Mahayana Sutras. He, then, compared the differences between the primordial section of the Lotus Sutra (Honmon) with the provisional section (Shakumon). And finally, he divided the primordial section of the Lotus Sutra into two. One is the teaching for the practitioners in the Shakamuni Buddha's era and other is the teaching for the common people in the Mappo Period. However, the majority of HBS members in Japan have little desire to learn about such special doctrine. So, such sermons are rarely delivered at Oko meetings or at temples of HBS. But, non-members and beginners may want to hear to more about such things.

S: While I was staying in the USA, some of my American friends asked me various tough questions. For example, when I say that the Lotus Sutra is the most superior sutra among the Buddhist sutras, some people say that the Sutras of Hinayana Buddhism are easier to understand than those of Mahayana Buddhism because those teachings are more ethical and philosophical. On the other hand, the Mahayana sutras are out of touch with reality, so they are not approachable. Furthermore, since Mahayana sutras were composed about 400 years after the death of Shakamuni Buddha, they may not be considered to be the true teachings of the Buddha. Therefore, how can you say that the Lotus Sutra is a true teaching which was taught by Shakamuni Buddha? To that, I could not respond to my friend.

N: I mentioned before about the Lotus Sutra and the other Mahayana sutras. Regarding the age of the editing the Mahayana sutras, they were composed at the earliest about 400 years after the death of the Buddha or, they may have been 500 or 600 years later. The sutras of Esoteric Buddhism that Shingon Shu sect relies upon were composed approximately 700 or 800 years after his death. From this point of view, sutras of Mahayana Buddhism may not be the direct teachings of the Buddha. However, it is important to understand Buddhism from various points of view. It should be noted that the approach to Buddhist philology and approach to faith are entirely based on different dimensions. It is because Shakamuni Buddha's teachings were not recorded in writing; Shakamuni Buddha himself did not write any sermons. Neither, did the disciples that heard his sermons write any records of them. In those days, there was no paper to write on, besides people in India had the idea that sacred religions teachings should not be written down. So, people who heard his sermons tried to learn them by heart and passed them on verbally from person to person. For example, in Hokkaido, Japan, there is a large number of traditional songs of Ainu titled, "Yukar". These songs for several hundred years were not documented and were traditionally transmitted from mouth to mouth. It may appear that these voluminous songs were created, but not so. They were passed on without mistake. Actually, people who do not rely on the written word have rhythmic memories and can rhythmically pass them on to others. The Buddha's teachings were also passed on in a similar manner. A year after the death of Shakamuni Buddha, the first united assembly of disciples was held to mutually collate the teachings they had heard. Such assemblies were held periodically thereafter and the teachings were eventually put into writing. This was about 100 years after the Buddha's death. Thus, it can be said that the sutras of the Hinayana Buddhism and the sutras of Mahayana Buddhism have gone through many revisions with very little differences in how they have been edited and passed on to us today. Buddhism was transmitted through written sutras, and also handed down through practical practices. However, the form and appearance of the practices have been changed depending on the time and the circumstances. They formulated various precepts. They avoided amusement, such as listening to music or the theater. They only concentrated on building a pure world in their minds. However, some Buddhist followers gradually began to wonder what Shakamuni Buddha's motive and intention for enlightenment were and began to reconsider and return to basic spiritual devotion. They realized that Shakamuni Buddha became a practitioner not only to seek salvation for himself but for others. There is a documented episode on the "Four Views and Four Gates". It is about the four East, West, North, and South gates located in the compound of the castle where Shakamuni Buddha lived when he was a young prince. When he exited from one of the gates, he saw an elderly person getting weaker, the sick dying from a lack of medication, and the people suffering from various conditions. He began to wonder what was causing the sufferings. In search of this he decided to be a practitioner. If it was for self benefit only, he would not have been a practitioner and would not have engage in practice. There was no need to preach the teachings and guide the people for their salvation. However, after attaining enlightenment until his death at age 80, he continuously devoted himself in serving mankind for its welfare. Shakamuni Buddha was supposed to be the model for Buddhists, but they lost track of the true goal. As stated earlier, the practitioners wanted to reconsider what Shakamuni Buddha's basic spiritual devotion was. This was the starting point of the movement of Large Vehicle Buddhism.

S: Ah, so, we have a tendency to be particular about form only.

N: Through the movement of the Large Vehicle Buddhism various freely expressed sutras were born, but they consistently returned to the spirit of Shakamuni Buddha's true motive. The Large Vehicle Sutras were composed many years later after Shakamuni Buddha's death. Thus, it is hard to say that they were recorded through the Buddha's direct teachings. But the purpose of the movement was to restore Shakamuni Buddha's basic motive. The practitioners who edited the Large Vehicle sutras took pride in themselves in assisting in returning Buddhism to its true state. With regard to Christianity, the Christian churches were very powerful and the priests possessed boundless authority and used its name to continuously control the people. Amid this tight control, a movement by Protestants was initiated to return Christianity to its original, independent form. This new movement was launched several hundred years or more after the death of Christ, but it was severely criticized for going in a wrong direction. A third party objective assessment created various opinions as to whether it was right, wrong, good or bad. During the historic flow of religion, it is difficult to know which movement is connected to the founder's spirit and which suits the needs of the time and countries spiritual climate in order to be accepted by common people. For instance, offering light is very important practice since Shakamuni Buddha's era. So in Japan Buddhist practitioners have been offering light at the altar as an important practice. About 150 years ago, candles were displayed at the altar to brighten it. The object was to brighten the altar. Prior to the usage of candles, a wick inserted in oil was burnt to provide light. As years progressed, electric light was discovered and the use of electric bulbs became permissible. However, a feud among followers ensued concerning the types of light to be utilized. The conservative faction wanted to keep using candles as Nissen Shonin did. The progressive faction considered the use of electric bulbs as being no problem. The same thing happened after Shakamuni Buddha's death among his followers. The differences in stance between them created conflict among priests on which customs should be continued or not.

S: That was the reason for founding Large Vehicle Buddhism, wasn't it?

N: After the demise of Shakamuni Buddha, while the disputes were taking place, the priests confined themselves in mountains and monasteries to follow in the footsteps of Shakamuni Buddha in search of enlightenments. Thus, the priests severed communication with all outsiders to avoid various temptations. They did not speak to anyone.

S: Then, why is the Lotus Sutra so special among the Large Vehicle sutras. Why are the other sutras of the Large Vehicle wrong?

N: To say that the Lotus Sutra is correct and other Large Vehicle sutras are wrong is not an apt remark. From the details of (Buddhist) history, Buddhism leans toward the prerogatives of the priests. It became the Buddhism for the priests only, and common people were unable to affiliate themselves with it. Small Vehicle Buddhism was the mainstream Buddhism during the period of several hundred years after Shakamuni Buddha's death. During those years, the most the priests began to engage in their own practices and did not care about the common people. Then leaders of lay Buddhists who were not satisfied with this trend began to criticize the priest for engaging in the practices for their own benefits. Although 400 to 500 years had passed after the Buddha's death, the sutras edited at that time were composed as if they were written in the period of Shakamuni Buddha. Thus, the disciples such as Sharihotsu (Sariputra) Mokuren (Maugalyayana) and Kasyo (Kasyapa) figured in the stories in the sutras. In the Large Vehicle sutras they were criticized as selfish practitioners because they engaged in practices only for their own salvation. However, the Lotus Sutra contains merits for arbitration and unification. That is why the Lotus Sutra, which goes beyond the Large Vehicle and therefore has been called "The One Great Buddha Vehicle" which can invite practitioners like Sharihotsu, Mokuren, Kasho, etc who belonged to the two small vehicles (Shravakas and Pratyeka Buddhas) to the path of the Bodhisattvas. The Lotus Sutra can be considered as the most superior sutra based on such high appraisals. Thus, the Lotus Sutra has been called "The King of Sutras" from ancient times. Although Shakamuni Buddha was a great man for the people in his period,

they thought of him only a human being who was born as a son of a king of a small country in India and later was awakened to the truth. No matter how brilliant and great a man he may have been, the people thought he was just a human being. However, after Shakamuni Buddha's death, people gradually regarded him as superhuman whose original state was somewhere in a far away universe and was later born in this world with a mission to teach and save mankind. Shakamuni Buddha, himself stated "I attained enlightenment but I am not the only one who became a Buddha. The fundamental truth in this universe does not change whether it may be in the past, present or future worlds. It is the same in other celestial bodies as well. The Fine Dharma as his fundamental truth exists throughout others. Thus, the Large Vehicle sutras contained the names of the Buddha's disciples who were selfish practitioners and should be considered as models of the Small Vehicle Buddhism. The practitioners who were propagating the Large Vehicle Buddhism criticized the Small Vehicle Buddhists that they would never be able to attain enlightenment for being selfish and not practicing activities for other people. However, if Large Vehicle Buddhism rejects Small Vehicle, Large Vehicle Buddhism would disgrace itself, because the Large Vehicle is the teaching which carries all living beings from the shore of the Saha world to the shore of enlightenment like a big boat. This is the reason why the Large Vehicle is called the Large Vehicle. Thus, Large Vehicle Buddhism should maintain that anyone could be lead by engaging in the path of Bodhisattva's practices. Among the Large Vehicle sutras, the Lotus Sutra took a more positive and broadminded position. It maintains that even a person who committed a terrible crime should be given a chance to enter the Buddha—world by repenting and engaging in Bodhisattva's practices. The Lotus Sutra also possesses the content which can arbitrate between Large Vehicle Buddhism and Small Vehicle Buddhism. In other words, The Lotus Sutra wraps both the Large and Small Vehicle Buddhist concepts into its own ideology although they were antagonistic at one time. Therefore, people who have attained the fundamental truth like me also exist. Their enlightenment is identical to mine—and they may teach the truth and guide the people. They may also appear in the future world or in other far away worlds. As such, the various Buddhas like Amida Buddha of the Western Pure Land, Yakushi Nyorai of the Land in the East were later created. This is one of the characteristics of Mahayana (Large Vehicle) Buddhism. Hinayana (Small Vehicle) Buddhism does not have such ideas. The practitioners who belong to Hinayana Buddhism, historically, have respected only Shakamuni Buddha as a historical Buddha.

S: There are many sutras which are based on Shakamuni Buddha's teachings. Why is the Lotus Sutra only the truest teaching among the teachings of the Buddha?

N: During the period of Great Master Tendai (Tien—Tai, 538—597) in China, Buddhist scholars set out on the work of the classification of Buddhist teachings and probed into the Buddha's true intentions. Doctrinal classification to systemize and consolidate the teachings into various categories and judgment of the merits of the sutras was carried out. This kind of work flourished in China around 1500—1600 years age. The reason was that sutras were brought from India irregularly and each sutra encompassed inconsistency. Therefore, confusion resulted. These sutras were considered to be Shakamuni Buddha's teachings. Each separate sutra told what one should believe in, how it should be practiced, how matters should be looked at, and how it should be thought out. Shakamuni Buddha was a flexible person, so he taught various kinds of teachings for individual situations, circumstances, sufferings or capabilities. As a result, there was no uniformity in the contents of the Buddha's sutras. Thus, the teachings of the Buddha became incoherent over 50 years when they entered China. Consequently, the work of classification of the sutras began to flourish to search for the core of the Buddha's teachings. Among the scholars who engaged in this work, Great Master Tendai was the most outstanding. He researched many sutras and systematized them in a very precise way. Then Great Master Tendai judged the Lotus Sutra to be the most superior. Today, there are some Buddhist scholars, however, who do not approve of the Great Master Tendai's classification. They claim that it had no basis from the standpoint of philology. However, the evaluation of the sutras by Great Master Tendai was not based on philology. He attempted to determine the deep meaning

contained in the words of the Buddha from his deep religious experiences and strong faith. Nissen Shonin, the founder of HBS stated: "If the true teachings of the Lotus Sutra is doubted, how can we put faith in any other sutras. Receiving visible merits and remarkable benefits through faithful practice based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra makes you awaken to the fact that the Lotus Sutra is the true teaching of the Buddha. This is the strongest evidence for it."

Division of Religious Groups in Japan

Q: Since there are many different religious groups in Japan. Can you categorize them and tell us the names, teachings, and the state of each group?

A: There are more than 150 religious groups in Japan. Most of them can be divided into the following six sects: Nara, Tendai, Shingon, Jyodo, Zen and Nichiren.

The Nara Group

The Nara Group is a lineage of the "Nanto Riku Shu" (the six sects of Nara), which prospered in the Nara Era (8th century). Today there are seven schools. They are the Todaiji Temple of Kegonshu Sect, the Toshodaiji Temple of Risshu Sect, Yakushiji Temple and Kofukuji Temple of Hossoshu Sect. These temples are mainly engaged in the studies of Buddhist doctrines rather than focusing their attention on converting people to their religion and aiding them. Most of them are "tourist attraction temples" today.

Tendai Shu Sect Lineage

The Tendai Shu sect was founded in China by the Great Master Tendai (539–597), based on the Lotus Sutra. This sect was transmitted to Japan in 805 by Saicho (Dengyo Daishi) after studying the Tendai teachings. He is the founder of the Enryakuji Temple on Mt. Hiei in Kyoto.

After the death of Great Master Dengyo, Tendai Shu Sect's doctrines became a mixture of Tendai and Shingon teachings. Entering into the period of priest Ennin and Enchin, a conflict of interest had split them into two schools, that is, the school of Tendai Shu Sect on Mt. Hiei (Sanmon School) and the school in Shiga Prefecture (Jimon School).

From the Heian Era to the Kamakura Era, the Enryakuji Temple on Mt Hiei played the role of a university and it became the parent body of a new Kamakura Buddhism. Presently, there are about 20 factions and approximately 2,800 temples throughout the country. However, they have no uniform main figure to revere. Each temple has its own principal image, such as Yakushi Buddha, Amida Buddha, Dainichi Buddha, Shakamuni Buddha, Bodhisattva, Kannon, and Fudosen.

Shingon Lineage

Kukai, popularly known by his posthumous name of Kobo Daishi, studied the teachings of esoteric Buddhism in China at about the same time as Saicho. After returning to Japan, Kukai founded the Kongobuji Temple on Mt. Koya (816) and the Toji Temple in Kyoto (823), Shingon Shu Sect's main temple. Their object of worship is Dainichi Buddha. They burn offerings believing that in return heaven will give benefits to men. They chant incantations and use their hands and fingers to form images of enlightenment.

Presently, Shingon Shu Sect is divided into about fifty factions, but the schools of Mt. Koya and Mt. Chizan are the ranking representatives.

Jodo Lineage

Jodo Shu sect's object of worship is Amida Buddha, and their sources are the three sutras; The Buddha of Infinite Life Sutra, The Meditation on the Buddha of Infinite Life Sutra, and the Amida Sutra. It is a Pure Land School, founded by Honen in the Heian Era (1175). The Pure Land School is largely divided into the Jodo Shu Sect founded by Honen and the Jodo Shin Shu Sect founded by Honen's disciple, Shinran.

Presently, there are about 25 groups in the Jodo Shu sect lineage. Among them are the Jodo Shu Sect's Main Temple of Chionin Temple, the East Honganji Temple and the West Shin Shu—Otani Faction.

Zen Lineage

The Jodo Shu Sect and its affiliates vowed to save people by the powers of Buddhas, especially the Amida Buddha, whereas Zen Sect practitioners rely on their own efforts.

In this lineage, there are the Rinzai Shu Sect, founded by Eisai in the early part of the Kamakura Era, and the Soto Shu Sect which was founded by Dogen. There is also the Ohbaku Shu Sect founded by Ingen, a Chinese priest, upon his arrival in Japan in the Edo Period. The Rinzai Sect is further divided into 15 schools.

Nichiren Lineage

The Nichiren Shu sect claims Nichiren Shonin as its founder. Presently, there are about 40 Nichiren religious organizations. It has the largest number of followers. Among the major organizations are Honmon Butsuryu Shu (HBS). Others are the Nichiren Shu Sect on Mt. Minobu; the Nichiren Sho Shu Sect, Soka Gakkai, the Hokke Shu Hommon Sect and the Nakayama Myo Shu Sect. There are also other new religious groups, such as Reiyu Kai and Rissho Kosei Kai.

Four Sources of Suffering Maxim

Q: Nichiren Shonin stated: "There are four sources of suffering maxim", when he severely criticized other Buddhist sects. Which sects were they and what were the reasons?

A: There is a phrase, "The refutation of erroneous views is equal to the elucidation of right views". Evil things and wrong ideas must be refuted and broken. If not, true teachings and piety cannot be manifested. In order to clarify true teachings of the Lotus Sutra and the Dharma of Shakamuni Buddha, Nichiren Shonin criticized the mistaken views of the Nenbutsu sect (Jodo—Pure Land Sect), Zen Sect (primarily on the practice of meditation), Shingon Sect (based on teachings transmitted from China by Kukai) and Risshu Sect (a sect based on Hinayana precepts). Nichiren Shonin alone stated: "Amida Buddha's teachings are full of gaps. The Zen sect is a self—conceited organization. The Shingon Sect is a pernicious organization ruinous to the nation. Risshu Sect's observance of various precepts in general is a traitor to the country (stated in a letter to a follower Akimoto). Reasons for Nichiren Shonin's criticism of the four sects are as follows:

Reasons for Nichiren Shonin's Criticism of JODO Sect

Jodo Sect (Pure Land Buddhism) was founded by Honen in 1175. Its fundamental canons are the three "Pure Land Sutras", namely, the "Buddha of Infinite Life", "The Meditation on the Buddha of Infinite Life" and "Amida Sutra". Its object of worship is Amida Buddha. Nichiren Shonin stated: "Repeated recitation of Amida Buddha's name means one will fall into infinite hell instead of being born in the 'Pure Land' after leaving this earth."

In short, the Jodo sect claims that this world is full of sufferings and is defiled by evil passions. One should leave this world and be reborn in the paradise of the "Pure Land". To accomplish this objective, there is no other path other than to recite the name of Amida Buddha.

In Japanese history, during the period when Honen lived, the country was in chaos. The masses were suffering from the war between the Genji and Heike factions fighting for political power, recurring natural calamities, famine, and epidemics. Consequently, within the souls of the people, there was despair and a desire for a better future in the world to come. In that dark age, there was nothing for people to turn to, Honen's Nenbutsu spread like wild fire and the Jodo sect was able to recruit a large number of people to their religion.

However, Honen's Pure Land concept was unsparingly criticized by Nichiren Shonin and Dogen, the founder of the Soto Sect, one of Zen's schools. Nichiren Shonin's reasons for stating that "Nenbutsu is an act to fall into the infinite hell" are as follows:

Firstly, the Jodo Sect's object of worship, the Amida Buddha, is a Buddha of the "World of Utmost Bliss", a world unrelated to us.

Secondly, Honen's position of loathing the present world and stressing Amida's "Pure Land of Utmost Bliss" after one's death is counter to Shakamuni Buddha's real intention of having this world a better place to live in. He meant that a religion which could not save the people of this world from various sufferings had no qualification to speak about future warranty for the people.

Honen's endeavor to save people must be acknowledged, but Nichiren Shonin could not agree with Honen's teachings based on "Hoben" (a device of saving people) and it should be corrected. Presently, the Jodo Sect is engaged only in conducting funeral services and related activities for the deceased and they have lost the function of promoting fundamental religious teachings.

Reasons for Nichiren Shonin's Criticism of ZEN Sect

Zen Sect — The spirit of self—conceit — A heavenly devil:

"The Heavenly Devil" means the Zen Sect is a self—conceited sect, which neglects the teachings of Buddhism. It was established after Buddhism was introduced to China from India. The originator was Bodhidharma (Bodai—Daruma), an Indian, born in southern India, who introduced it to China.

The practice of Zen was introduced into Japan during the 7th or 8th century, but it was not recognized as a religious sect until the latter part of the Heian Period (12th century) after Eisai returned home from his second trip to Sung, China, and founded the Rinzai Sect.

Entering the Kamakura Period (13th century), Dogen built the Eihei-ji Temple in Fukui Prefecture and founded the Soto Sect. Today, the Soto Sect and the Myoshin-ji Temple of the Rinzai Sect are the two most influential bodies of among approximately 20 existing sects. Soto Sect emphasizes sitting in meditation while Rinzai Sect emphasizes both the sitting in meditation and Q & A sessions on enlightenment. In either case, they do not have a definite object of worship. One has to polish Buddha nature within one's soul by oneself known as "Seeing one's nature in order to become a Buddha". In this sense, both sects are similar in nature. Jodo Sect's affiliates are known to rely on "a original vow to save sentient beings by an outside power (Tariki), while the Zen Sects promote "one's own power" (Jiriki).

Nichiren Shonin stated: "Zen is the behavior of a heavenly devil". This severe criticism stems from the following reason:

Indeed, the "Ropparamitsu", the six kinds of practice by which bodhisattvas are able to attain enlightenment, donation, keeping precepts, forbearance, assiduity, meditation, and wisdom are practices for people of superior abilities, but are not suited for the common people in the Mappo Period. It is unthinkable that men can eradicate one's sin by one's own effort and manifest Buddha—nature. Moreover, Zen Sect has no object of worship. It adheres to, "not establishing words" and "transmission of doctrines without dependence upon sutras or other writings". Those are slanderous expressions and make light of Shakamuni Buddha. Nichiren Shonin stated: "It is the spirit of self—conceit." Today, Zen is booming in Europe and the United States, but the main and branch temples in Japan have become tourist attractions, and their priests, in contrast to their claim that there is no need for sutras, recite sutras during memorial services for the deceased, a self-contradictory situation.

Reasons for Nichiren Shonin's Criticism of SHINGON Sect

Shingon Shu Sect—Ruinous to the country:

The Shingon Sect, Mikkyo (esoteric Buddhism) founded by Kukai is criticized by Nichiren Shonin as a religion ruinous to the country. It has its origin in the Veda, the Scripture of Brahminism (ancient religion of India). The religion based on the Veda reveres fire as an intermediary to unite people with the Brahma (a heavenly deity) and engage in the ritual of the so-called burning of offerings (Goma). It has no connection with the teachings of Shakamuni Buddha. The Shingon Sect was born from the adaptation of the ceremonial fire performance and adopting the color of Buddhism. Shingon Sect divides Buddhism into the Mikkyo (esoteric teaching) and Kengyo (exoteric leading) teachings. They value the esoteric teaching of Dainichi-nyorai rather than the exoteric teaching of Shakamuni Buddha. As stated earlier, the original form of Dainichi-nyorai was Brahma, a deity in the Veda. Eventually, Brahma came to be worshiped as a buddha. Thus Dainichi-nyorai came into existence. The sutra they rely on is the Dainichi Sutra expounded by Dainichi-nyorai in a heaven called "Shiki Kukyoten", and is not based on the sutra elucidated by Shakamuni Buddha. Historically, the only Buddha, who appeared in this world and left Buddhist teachings, is Shakamuni Buddha. The Shingon Sect, which makes light of Shakamuni Buddha, is equivalent to slandering True Buddhism.

Shingon means "True Word" or "Secret Incantation". They recite secret incantations left by Dainichi Buddha and, in addition, create designated or established figures with their hands or using implements. By doing so, they claim man can gain immediate enlightenment even with an impure body.

Nichiren Shonin's criticism of the Shingon Sect as ruinous to the country stems from their disregard to the true founder of Buddhism, Shakamuni Buddha, and, instead, revering Dainichi Buddha, who had no connection whatsoever with Buddhism. In addition, Nichiren Shonin was enraged with their engagement in activities not recognized by true Buddhism, such as practicing fortune-telling, utilizing psychics, selling various types of charms, exercises, and conducting questionable prayer services.

If people must rely on superstition, like fortune telling or psychics, the culture will deteriorate and the nation will become disorganized. Presently, there are about 50 separate factions of Shingon Sect.

Reasons for Nichiren Shonin's Criticism of RISSHU Sect

Risshu Sect – Traitor to the country.

The Risshu Sect is a traitor to the country for attempting to gain influence through the protection of the Bakufu, the Kamakura Shogunate.

During the period of Nichiren Shonin, there was a priest known as Gokurakuji Ryokan (Ninsho), who prided himself on receiving influential authority and cordial support of the Kamakura Shogunate. Risshu is a sect which admonished people who opposed them. They abided by a strict rule to protect priests and nuns. Ryokan was the highest leader of Risshu, and the masses revered him as a living Buddha.

However, Nichiren Shonin severely criticized the Risshu Sect for protecting the Small Vehicle's 250 moral commandments and attempting to teach meaningless severe training programs unsuitable for the common people, and rules which could not offer aid to the common people. Nichiren Shonin's criticisms were aimed at the sects which could not spread the true teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

Nissen Shonin's Gokyoka (御教歌)—instructive poems:

ねんぶつは十万億のまわりみち 一足とびのすぐは妙法

*Nenbutsu consists of tens of thousands of paths, but
The wondrous Dharma is a one step jump*

禅宗は仏の説に順わず 是を天魔の眷属という

*The Zen Sect does not abide by Buddhist teachings
It is a household of self— conceited followers*

大日と釈迦各別と一國に 二人主を立る真言

*Buddhism's Great Master is Shakamuni Buddha
Dainichi Buddha is master of the Shingon Sect
But that is like having two masters in one country*

末法に時機相応の大法は 上行所伝の御題目のみ也

*The worthy Dharma for the Mappo Period is
Only the Odaimoku entrusted to Jojyo Bodhisattva*

An Explanation of Descriptions in the Lotus Sutra

"The Lotus Sutra is a supreme teaching", "It is the king of the Sutras" are what I repeatedly heard in my father's sermons since childhood. I was 22 years old when I became a priest and continued my devotion to the Lotus Sutra. "What is this? What's it all about?", That was my frank impression when I read the Lotus Sutra from cover to cover. I began to read it feeling it was a book on ideology teaching profound philosophical principles. But, I felt I was confounded by the accounts which were detached from reality and the development of fantasy—like stories. "On what basis is the Sutra considered the supreme teaching." "What was Nichiren Shonin's standpoint with regard to the teachings ", was what I wanted to know. I therefore began reading as many books as possible on the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin.

By reading books written by various people of my sect as well as others, I began to learn it was not so important that what was written in the Lotus Sutra was fact or not. To understand what it wanted to say or what it wanted to explain was important. But the descriptions in accounts in the Lotus Sutra are very unrealistic.

Following are some examples.

A light emitted from the forehead of Buddha lit up eighteen thousand worlds to the east; buddhas and future buddhas instantly came flying from the another universe; or from the ground an unbelievable large pagoda decorated with jewels appeared and began floating in a non—gravitational state; or innumerable buddhas appeared from the cracks of the earth.

Why did the lotus Sutra avoid description in a logical and scientific way and described in a poetic and fantasy fashion as if watching a huge magnificent opera? I thought that if these questionable aspects as to what the Sutra was appealing to and what it was trying to teach were not clarified, it could not be understood. Embracing such doubts, I learned the following after reading many books and listening to my senior priests.

First of all, what the Lotus Sutra wanted to appeal to was The "World of Enlightenment" or "Buddha's Enlightenment", and how the teachings could assist us in reaching the world of enlightenment.

Let's say that you enjoyed a meal that you had never eaten before in a splendid atmosphere, and you had to describe the atmosphere and what the food tasted like.

Can you do it? Most likely not. No Matter how skilful you may be in writing, it cannot be described with words.

If it was difficult to relate in words what you had sensed regarding the food you ate with your five

senses, it would be likewise difficult to describe in words what Shakamuni Buddha obtained through his original religious experiences concerning the world of enlightenment. As such, to describe the world of enlightenment which Buddha attained is impossible to explain in words.

The Buddha himself was reluctant to explain in words how he obtained enlightenment and how it should be explained to the people. However, if it was not put in words, how could he teach the world of enlightenment? It could not be conveyed. Overcoming these obstacles, the magnificent Lotus Sutra came into being, in the form of figure of speech and drama. It was to appeal to the people so they could use their five senses and their entire six senses to understand even a small portion of the world or enlightenment. In short, the sutra expresses what cannot be explained in words. It is substance before words, and it teaches the truth.

From the beginning, the world of religion (the left side of the brain) is not a world which can be understood by logic. It is a world which can be understood through admiration and sensitivity (the right side of the brain). Because the Lotus Sutra thoroughly appeals to the people in the form of sensitivity to teach the world of enlightenment, it is admired and praised by many people. In contrast, the deep philosophical Buddhist writings expressed scientifically and logically may have religious value, but they are not admired by the majority people.

What is the meaning of the emitted light?

What kind of message is included in allegory or daily life expressions embodied in the Lotus Sutra?

Only one example will be given because it would take too long to explain this. The first chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, "At that time, the light emitted from his brow shone over one million eight thousand territories to the east. There was nothing that could not be shone upon". Just before Shakamuni Buddha had gone into meditation, he explained the Lotus Sutra. It is said that he emitted the light just after the completion of his mediation.

However, no matter how virtuous a person may be, to portray the reality of events as they existed is irrational. It is only reasonable to think that there is a hidden meaning. What kind of message may have been hidden?

In Buddhism, the direction of the east refers to the past. It can be explained that when Shakamuni Buddha shone light over the territories to the east, he had taken into consideration the process of events of the past to present. Cause precedes results. If you want to know the cause of what is taking place today, it is necessary to grasp exactly the affairs of the past.

What you are doing today will be the cause that decides your future destiny. If you want to predict what the future holds for you, you must grasp what you are doing today. The actual cause and effect which takes place in this world is a repetitious chain of events of life and extinction. It is probable that Shakamuni Buddha accurately grasped this and emitted the light.

Another possible explanation is, in each of the lands that Shakamuni Buddha shone light, there was a Buddha who was teaching the law. What this means is the truth of the world of enlightenment is not for this world only. It's the only non—changing truth which penetrates the huge universe. Therefore, Shakamuni Buddha is not the only one who attained enlightenment. It exemplifies that other buddhas in the universe had also attained enlightenment.

Another interpretation can be made. Not only people of this world can be redeemed by the teachings of the Buddha who is a powerful savior of all existences. It can also be interpreted as a symbol of Buddha's vast merciful energy. What is portrayed and explained in the Lotus Sutra at a glance appears to be non—reality, but in it is various messages. An explanation will not be made here.

What is Enlightenment?

The aim of one who aspires to practice Buddhism is to remove perplexities and turn them into the path of enlightenment.

What is enlightenment? The Lotus Sutra explains that it cannot be explained in words. Perhaps it is only possible to imagine what enlightenment is. In the first place, Buddhism looked upon by the people as a teaching of logic and morality and stoicism, and enlightenment followed that image. What was the cause of this image? Is it because the teaching gives that impression? Not so. Examining the King of Sutras, The Lotus Sutra, it does not lean toward logic or morality. Who then depicted those images of Buddhism. It was the priests and followers after the death of Shakamuni Buddha.

After the death of Shakamuni Buddha, Buddhism became Buddhism for practitioners as priests who were engaged in learning the teachings. The priests put the Buddha's teachings into a framework of common, ordinary logic and morals. As a result, Buddhism became a tasteless, dehydrated philosophical instructive religion.

The image that Buddhism was stoic is the responsibility of the Small Vehicle Buddhist priests and followers after the demise of Shakamuni Buddha. They began to possess a peculiar elite concept, and the followers who could not complete certain religious commandments could not attain enlightenment.

They also thought of methods of religious practices which most ordinary people could not accomplish. This resulted in Buddhism becoming stoic, and the world of enlightenment was also considered as such. It goes without saying, in the state of enlightenment there is stillness apart from the worldly mundane attachments or perplexities. That is not the essence of enlightenment, the essence of enlightenment is more energetic and dynamic.

In the first place, Shakamuni Buddha became a Buddha because he attained enlightenment. He became a Buddha as a result of attaining enlightenment of the Fine Dharma. That is the universe itself and creator of the universe. It is the basic foundation of every existence, creator embracing all eternal life.

Imagine what the universe, including our planet, is like. On earth people and animals are born and raised, flowers bloom, clouds gather, wind blows, and red hot lava swirls in the center of the earth. In space, there are innumerable heavenly bodies, and, one after another, large scale life activities are being repeated. This is because a great law of existence is in action. The law of the universe instilled in our soul, which Shakamuni Buddha discovered was the Fine Dharma. If the basic foundation of Buddhist enlightenment is applicable to the ever changing arrangement of the universe, enlightenment is not a stoic static thing. It is full of energy.

In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha's enlightenment is explained as the teachings of Ichinen Sanzen.

Nichiren Shonin stated in his writing, "Kanjin Honzon Sho"

"When chanting the Odaimoku faithfully, the power of enlightenment of the Buddha will flow into our soul and be absorbed. Even an ordinary people can possess the same merits of Buddha and can gain enlightenment."

Earlier, I stated that the aim of Buddhism is to attain the goal or overturning perplexities and pave the way for enlightenment. There are two courses to accomplish this. One course is for a person who wants to use his mind to understand the law of logic of Ichinen—Sanzen. The other course is for a person who does not use his mind and solely raise his soul to believe and earnestly chants the Odaimoku. There is only one condition demanded for a person wants to take this path. That is to cut off all doubts and chant earnestly. The basic foundation of Buddhist practice is a soul faithfully believing in it. What course is better for us need not be discussed.

The difference between the teachings of Great Master Tendai (Tien—tai) of China and Nichiren Shonin is Tendai's course is difficult, whereas Nichiren Shonin's course is simple and easy for ordinary people. To describe it in other words, Tendai's Buddhism is recognition of the core of the teachings, whereas the core of Nichiren Shonin's teachings is active participation. When comparing Tendai's style

to that of Nichiren Shonin's, Tendai's course at first glance seems orthodox, and Nichiren Shonin's course is for the common people. But on the basis of the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Shonin's course is orthodox and original and Tendai's style is unorthodox. In the primordial (Honmon) eight chapters (Happon) of the Lotus Sutra, The world of the Fine Dharma is explained by the Eternal Buddha as the original stage of Shakamuni Buddha. The Fine Dharma, the philosophy of Ichinen Sanzen teaching mentioned here, is not for the comparison of impressions or logic. In the first place, the Fine Dharma was activities for Buddha and we should participate in Buddhist teachings. Although the Lotus Sutra gives us the impression that we are just watching a magnificent opera, it does not make us feel like we are just observers. It makes us feel as though we want to have a part and participate in it directly by going on stage. The story is written in such a fashion. The teachings in the Lotus Sutra present us with roles and rules which we must act out. The script prepared for us is the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. Our participation is in the third scene, "Mappo Period" (the Last Dharma Era), and our role is "Chanting the Odaimoku" which is brought by Bodhisattva Jyogyo not only for ourselves but for spreading it. If enlightenment is entering into the world of the Fine Dharma, which was given to us through Nichiren Shonin, by coming into contact with the breath of the Buddha and inhaled the powerful energy of his teaching through the Odaimoku, it can be understood that the world of enlightenment is not a serene, but an energetic and active thing.

Nissen Shonin, the founder of HBS stated that

All living beings are made from the five constituent elements and they are all in realms. Living beings, the five constituent elements, and realms are inseparably related to one another. The teaching of the Lotus Sutra which fully expounds the law of harmonious coexistence of the above—mentioned three is the doctrinal principle called 'Three thousand realms in a moment's thought' on the basis of the theory 'Each of the Ten Realms Mutually Contains the Other Nine'. NamuMyohoRengeKyo contains all the substance of this teaching and the merit of having a good knowledge of it. Thus there is no ocean, no mountain, no country, nothing, except the Fine Dharma. The sky, the earth, and all living beings are breathing altogether in the merit of the Fine Dharma. If one understood this real state of things, one could become a Buddha but an ordinary man, far from understanding it, acts against it and brings about his own ruin. An ordinary man doesn't know that the sunlight, the moonlight, fire, water, trees and plants, land, and changes of the seasons are all produced by the grace of the Fine Dharma. It is beyond our power to realize it, but the Fine Dharma which we believe and chant contains the meritorious power to enable us to attain Buddhahood.

—Kaidoyoetsu—831

If one chants NamuMyohoRengeKyo which is revealed in the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra entrusted to the Bodhisattva Jogyo and plants in the minds of all living beings the seed, the genuine cause of Buddhahood, this one practice based on chanting the Daimoku will produce all kinds of merits. If one listens to the chanting voice for even a moment and can surely attain the Buddhist Way, how much more so will it be if one feels grateful for the Daimoku in one's mind. That one thought of faith will lead you to get to the Buddha—land. The Buddha's enlightenment is attained in chanting the Daimoku. As a result, the three poisons (greed, anger, stupidity) with which our hearts have been stained are all eradicated, and also the five sins (to kill, to steal, to satisfy lust, to tell lies, to use indecent language) which have been accumulated since the past and are now lurking in ourselves will be eliminated through a moment's thought of

faith when chanting the Daimoku. Ordinary men as they are will be given the Buddha's merit. Nichiren Shonin said that practitioners of the Lotus Sutra would be able to become a Buddha without extinguishing evil passions and mortifying the five desires. How fortunate we are!

—Kaidoyoketsu—869

The Differences Between SGI (Soka Gakai) and HBS (Honmon Butsuryu Shu)

Q: People in general tend to have the idea that chanting Odaimoku, NamuMyohoRengeKyo is a practice which SGI's (Soka Gakkai) members are devoted to. So, once I introduce the HBS religion to a friend of mine, she asked me "It's almost the same as SGI isn't it? How does it differ from SGI?" I was at a loss for an answer to explain the differences. What are the differences between SGI and HBS?

A: A First of all, I would like to explain about the differences of the origins of the two. Nichiren Shonin, in his later years, nominated six priests among his many disciples as leaders of his Sangha. Later, these six priests were called "RokuRouSou", (six senior priests). HBS is descended from Nichiro Shonin who was one of the RokuRouSou. Nichiro Shonin made great efforts to spread the teachings of Nichiren Shonin in the Kanto area (now known as Tokyo, Chiba and Kamakura), but Kyoto where was a capital city of Japan was still not introduced to Nichiren Shonin's religion. The pioneer who brought and spread the Nichiren Shonin's teachings in Kyoto was Nichizo Shonin who was the youngest disciple of Nichiren Shoin. After Nichiren Shonin's death, he became a disciple of Nichiro Shonin and in 1294, he moved to Kyoto from Kamakura and devoted himself to spreading the teaching and its practices. Gradually he was welcomed by the citizens of Kyoto who were engaged in commerce and industry. About 150 years later, spreading of the teachings was passed down from Nichizo Shonin to Nichiryu Shonin. However, gradually, Nichiren Shonin's true intentions deviated in the missionary work and interpretation of doctrines. Under these circumstances, Nichiryu Shonin set out to clearly correct the meaning of what Nichiren Shonin had expounded. So, HBS looks up to him as a great reformer of Nichiren Buddhism. Nissen Shonin (1817—1890) later founded HBS (Honmon Butsuryu Shu) Buddhism based on the teachings of Nichiren Shonin and the guidance of Nichiryu Shonin. On the other hand, Soka Gakai (SGI) was founded during the Taisho era (1910's) by MAKIGUCHI Tunesaburo as an independent lay organization of the Nichiren Shoshu sect. Nichiren Shoshu is one of the Nichiren Buddhist sects which is also called the Komon Ha or Fuji Monryu descending from Nikko Shonin who was also one of the RokurouSou. Soka Gakkai was an organization of the lay followers which once followed the way of the Nichiren Shoshu sect. As the number of the members of Soka Gakkai gradually increased, Soka Gakkai tried to control the Nichiren Shoshu. This is a fundamental difference from HBS. Nichiren Shoshu and SGI shared the common idea that Nichiren Shonin is the Primordial Buddha (Honbutsu). However, Soka Gakkai began to hint that IKEDA Daisaku is Buddha in the present era. Priests of Nichiren Shoshu severely opposed such a movement. Then, some years later, relations between Soka Gakkai and Nichiren Shoshu deteriorated and Soka

Gakkai was excommunicated from the sect. Even now, they are strongly opposed to each other.

The Main Difference between SGI and HBS

There are two big differences in doctrine between SGI and HBS. One is the different standpoint with regard to the Lotus Sutra. The other is the different standpoint on Nichiren Shonin.

SGI expounds Juryou Ippon Nihan (the latter half of Chapter 15, the entire Chapter 16 (The lifespan of the Tathagata) and on the first half of Chapter 17) among the 28 Chapters of the Lotus Sutra. On the other hand, HBS regards the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra including Chapter 16 as the most important part of the Lotus Sutra.

Chapter 16 is entitled "The Lifespan of the Thathagata" because it shows how immeasurable the lifespan of the Buddha is. It is only in Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra that the historical Shakamuni Buddha revealed himself to be the Primordial Buddha whose span of life is eternal and immeasurable. So, there is no doubt that Chapter 16 is a very important chapter within the 28 chapters of the Lotus Sutra. However, Chapter 16 is not always a beneficial teaching for the people of the Mappo Period (The last Dharma Period).

Chapter 16 elucidates the Eternal Buddha's law of "Ichinen Sanzen" (All Phenomena in The world Contained in One Thought). For example, it is similar to an excellent ingredient for nourishing food.

However, common people of the Mappo Period are unable to grasp even a small portion of enlightenment on their own. In other words, we are infants from the standpoint of religion, unable to take nourishment by ourselves. Therefore, the Buddha, like an excellent cook, prepared the food that even a child can digest. That is the teachings of the Primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra.

A brief summary of what is elucidated in these eight chapters is as follows.

Chapter 15 illustrates dramatically the burden placed on Jyogyo Bodhisattva and other Bodhisattvas to circulate and spread its teachings to the people of the Mappo Period.

Chapter 16 reveals Shakamuni Buddha to be the Eternal Buddha, and the Odaimoku he preached to contain the merits of enlightenment of the Eternal Buddha.

Chapter 17, 18 and 19 elucidate that practitioners should place faith in the religion and abide by the methods of practices to gain virtuous deeds and good fortunes.

Chapter 20 elucidates that Never Disparaging Bodhisattva (Fukyo Bosatsu) should be a model for Lotus Sutra practitioners in the Mappo Period.

Chapter 21 and 22 elucidate that the Eternal Buddha entrusted Jyogyo Bodhisattva and other Bodhisattvas to circulate the Odaimoku and spread its teachings to the minds of the people of Mappo Period.

Thus, NamuMyohoRengeKyo, as the most sacred object of worship and the primordial practice, is not revealed only in Chapter 16 but in the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Shonin stated, "Such a sublime Sacred Object, NamuMyohoRengeKyo, was never revealed by Buddha Shakamuni during the forty plus years of his life as a preacher, and even during the eight years he taught the Lotus Sutra. However, his teachings of the primordial eight chapters are essential for the Mappo Period." (Kanjin Honzon Sho)

In 1253, at age 32, Nichiren Shonin conjectured that he may have been given the mission to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra by the Eternal Buddha. Approximately 20 years later, at age 51, Nichiren Shonin convinced himself that he had been a messenger of the Eternal Buddha based on the many catastrophic evidence of persecutions he had experienced. It was predicted in the Lotus Sutra that a person who engaged in spreading its teachings in the Mappo Period will encounter many calamities, such as being exiled to a remote island, attempts of execution by swords and other persecutions. But, in every instance, he will be protected by the various Guardian Kings of Heaven. There is no other human being who fits these prophecies other than Nichiren Shonin. Had not Nichiren Shonin appeared in this world

in the Mappo Period we would not have been exposed to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Thus, HBS considers him as their Great Master Jyogyo Bodhisattva, messenger of the Primordial Buddha.

Does HBS have Precepts?

Various religious sects have their own independent precepts, but the priests and members of HBS apparently do not have any precepts. Actually, there are no precepts for HBS priests and members, such as "Do not drink any liquor." "Do not marry." or "Do not eat any meat." etc.

Why does HBS not lay down such precepts?

One of the reasons is HBS is originally Buddhism for lay people. Since Shakamuni Buddha's time, priests who had to devote themselves to Buddhist practices for enlightenment had to keep various precepts as so not to lead a debauched life.

However, precepts that priests had to keep gradually became too detailed and Buddhism became a religion for the priests who could keep such a strict precepts.

If the priests who were only captured in personal searching for enlightenment and personal salvation, the common people would have had an existence irrelevant to Buddhism and would have been eternally exposed to sufferings. Thus a new Buddhist movement, Mahayana (The Great Vehicle) evolved with the aim of the popularization of Buddhism. Accordingly, Great Vehicle Buddhism, instead of protecting precepts, placed emphasis on saving common people from suffering and guiding them to the Bodhisattva path.

Since HBS is based on the basic principle of the Lotus Sutra which is called the King Sutra of Great Vehicle Buddhism, it does not place much emphasis on precepts.

Of course, Great Vehicle Buddhism has its own moral commandments. Its teachings were adjusted in accordance with the ability of the common people to understand them in different periods. So, precepts should be changed with time and the ability of the people to comprehend them.

After the death of Shakamuni Buddha, the time was divided into three periods; they are the Period of Shobo (Righteous Law), the Period of Zobo (Imitative Law), and the Period of Mappo (Last law).

The period of the Righteous Law (lasting 1,000 years) is the period when Buddhist doctrines, practices, and enlightenment all existed. The period of the Imitative Law (lasting 1,000 years) is the period when both doctrine and practices still exist, but there was no longer any enlightenment. The period of the Last Law (lasting 10,000 years) means the period when doctrine alone is still alive, but there is neither practice nor enlightenment.

We live in the Period of Mappo. Even if we believe in Buddhism and want to engage in the practice of it, our capability has declined with the passing of time. Therefore, precepts should be changed accordingly. During this period, the Mappo Period, severe precepts could not be performed by common

people precepts can be performed in words only without action. For that reason, Nichiren Shonin who appeared in this world of Mappo as a messenger of the Buddha did not impose such restrictions upon us, though Nichiren Shonin himself did not marry and did not eat any meat.

As stated above, HBS does not particularly impose precepts but, instead, emphasizes the chanting the Odaimoku earnestly from the bottom of one's heart for the sake of eradicating our sins, for the well-being of others, and to mutually advise each another on the importance of upholding the practice of the Odaimoku with pure faith. These are the most important precepts of HBS.

Nissen Shonin, the founder of HBS stated,

We are people lacking in ability, we are human beings full of sins. Therefore, by chanting the Odaimoku and upholding it wholeheartedly as elucidated in the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra, we are protecting the highest and the most important precept.

(Butsuryu Seiten, p857)

HBS's precepts are to realize that when one's religion is neglected, one should admonish oneself and offer a prayer of repentance. Likewise, we should engage in the practice of converting others to the religion of HBS as bodhisattva. Nissen Shonin stated that, "Since we are in position to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra to others, we should not become a target for criticism by our lack of common sense. We should refrain from saying and doing things that lack common sense. As a member of HBS, we should bear in mind not to lead a shameful life".

The Odaimoku—NamuMyohoRengeKyo

(The Odaimoku is a term used by HBS and other Nichiren Buddhist sects
for the sacred phrase NamuMyohoRengeKyo)

Q: Was chanting the Odaimoku, NamuMyohoRengeKyo advocated by Nichiren Shonin? Or was it being chanted before Nichiren Shonin?

A: The way of chanting NamuMyohoRengeKyo was practiced before Nichiren Shonin as one of the practices among Buddhist practitioners. Since 'Namu' is a word translated phonetically from Sanskrit 'Namas' or 'Namo' which is interpreted as to 'to take refuge in the Fine Dharma or the Buddha whole heartedly, or 'to revere'. 'Namu' means 'to believe and submit' or 'to take refuge in'. So, it is commonly said that NamuMyohoRengeKyo means to take refuge in MyohoRengeKyo (the Lotus Sutra). In this case, however, Myohorengekyo is not just the title of a Sutra but should be regarded as the fundamental truth of all the laws of the Universe which was enlightened by the Buddha. When we chant the Odaimoku, NamuMyohoRengeKyo, after the manner of Indian people, it may be pronounced "Namo—Saddharma—Pundarika—Sutra". Ninkai (953—1046) who was a priest in Heian period in Japan wrote in his work that Zenmui (Subhakarasingha, 636—735) chanted "Namo—Saddharma—Pundarika—Sutra". He was one of the great masters of esoteric Buddhism. He was born a prince in central India. He became a priest and studied Buddhism. In 716, he came to China with many Sanskrit manuscripts. So, the Odaimoku must have been chanted by other Buddhist priests over 1,500 years ago in India. In "Hokke Zanmai Zangi" which was written by the Great Master Tendai (Tien—tai 538—597). It was written chant NamuMyohoRengeKyo wholeheartedly and it is said that he chanted the Odaimoku many times. Also in this work, he stated that "Namu Buddhas in all directions, Namu Fine Dharma in all directions, Namu Shakamuni Buddha, Namu Taho Buddha (Prabhutaraua), NamuMyohoRengeKyo". We can see from this that the Odaimoku seems to have been chanted in China since over 1,500 years ago too. In Japan, there was the expression in the work "Shuzenji Soden" which is said to have been written by the Great Master Saicho (The founder of the Japanese Tendai sect 767—822) that "Chant NamuMyohoRengeKyo at one's death bed and the meritorious power of the Fine Dharma immediately causes one to attain Buddhahood and one's body to be freed from the cycles of suffering." He also stated in his work "Shikai Taishi"; that "When you go and worship to the sacred statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, salute 100 times to each object and chant "NamuMyohoRengeKyo". There is another work by Eshin Sozu (a Tendai monk, 942—1017), it stated "Keep a view of life as something transient and empty, pray for being guided to the Pure Land and chant Namu Amidabutsu (Namo Amitabha) NamuMyoho RengeKyo, Namu Kanzeonbosatsu (Namo Avalokitesvara)". As we can see before the appearance of Nichiren Shonin,

the Odaimoku seems to have been chanted in India, China and Japan. Then what is the difference between the Odaimoku chanted by such priests and that chanted by Nichiren Shonin? The Odaimoku chanted by the other priests was just a part of the overall practice of chanting sutras, etc. In contrast, Nichiren Shonin recommended us to chant the Odaimoku single-mindedly as the most important and primordial practice. Nichiren Shonin considered that based on the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra the quintessence of the Lotus Sutra is NamuMyohoRengeKyo wraps all the merits of enlightenment of the Buddha. By upholding and chanting the Odaimoku, we are promised its merits.

Is The Odaimoku Japanese?

Q: When the Odaimoku, "NamuMyohoRengeKyo" is written in kanji (Chinese characters), it consists of 7 kanji. Japanese pronounce it "NamuMyohoRengeKyo". However, Chinese people have their own pronunciation and Korean people have their own too. In India, maybe they chant it "Namo—Suddharma—Pundarika—Sutra". Why should we chant it "NamuMyohoRengeKyo"?

A: I will tell you of my own personal experience as an answer to this question. In October 2006, I visited India with twenty young priests and members of HBS from Japan, Italy, and Sri Lanka. It was my third visit to India on missionary work to propagate the chanting of the Odaimoku. In our schedule, a lecture meeting was scheduled at the School of Ancient Wisdom which is located in Bangalore, south India. It is a training institute for the learning of various kinds of religions, philosophies and cultures. I was invited to give a lecture to listeners who were interested in Buddhism at the institute. The number of the audience who were intelligent and cultured was around 50. I spoke on the subject of "the meaning of chanting the Odaimoku based on the teaching of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin." After finishing the lecture, we had a question period. During the period, a listener asked me the following question. "I think, pronouncing" NamuMyohoRengeKyo" is the Japanese way of chanting, the sacred syllables of the Lotus Sutra. So, is it acceptable for us Indian people to chant it "Namo—Suddharma—Pundarika—Sutra"? When I was about to answer the question, the chief officer of the institute, Mr. Ram Menon raised his hand and said "May I answer the question?" and gave the audience his opinion, "I do not think NamuMyohoRengeKyo is Japanese. When we think how we should chant the sacred phrase of the Lotus Sutra, it is important to think about the existence is the Bodhisattva Visistacaritra (Jyogyo Bosatsu). He is the highest of the immediate disciple of the Primordial Shakamuni Buddha. He listened to the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra (Honmon Happon) and was entrusted to propagate the Fine Dharma in the Last Dharma Period (Mappo Period). Then who was the person who appeared in the world as the Visista Caritra? He was the Great Master Nichiren. He was born in Japan about 780 years ago. His life and activities were in accordance with the Buddha's prophecy. Therefore, Nichiren Shonin should be considered the reincarnation of Visistacaritra. If this is so, we should follow the same way which Nichiren Shonin did. Nichiren chanted the Odaimoku NamuMyohoRengeKyo, so we, Indian people also should chant NamuMyohoRengeKyo like him. I had visited the institute before. That was in November, 2005. At that time, I handed my work entitled "A Guide To HBS". He read it carefully and answered the question about the meaning of chanting NamuMyohoRengeKyo based on my work. It was

more effective that Mr. Menon, an Indian person, answered the question to Indian people than me, a Japanese person. We held the chanting session after finishing the question period. All the Indian people who attended the meeting chanted the Odaimoku in unison in our way NamuMyoho RengeKyo not Namu—Suddharma—Pundarika—Sutra.

Why HBS displays the statue of Nichiren Shonin in front of the Gohonzon?

In this period of Mappo (the period of the Last Dharma), Nichiren Shonin is the greatest master for us who as the immediate disciple of the Buddha (Jyogyo Bodhisattva or Visistacaritra), appeared in this world to spread the Lotus Sutra.

Shakamuni Buddha stated in Chapter 16, "The Lifespan of the Tathagata", of the Lotus Sutra that: "My original state is the Primordial Eternal Buddha", and in Chapter 21, "The Supernatural Power of the Tathagata", he claimed: "I will temporarily disappear from this world, but I will send Jyogyo Bodhisattva on my behalf to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in the Mappo Period.

In the early part of the 13th century, Nichiren Shonin studied Buddhism for 20 years and he concluded the Lotus Sutra was the most supreme sutra among the sutras.

In 1253, at age of 32, Nichiren Shonin conjectured that he may have been given the mission to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra by the Eternal Buddha.

Approximately 20 years later, at age of 51, Nichiren Shonin convinced himself that he had been a messenger of the Eternal Buddha based on the many catastrophic experiences of persecutions he had experienced. It was predicted in the Lotus Sutra that a person who engaged in spreading its teachings in the Mappo Period will encounter many calamities, such as being exiled to a remote island, and face attempts of execution but would be protected by the various Guardian Kings of Heaven (Shoten Zenjin). There is no other human being who fits those prophecies other than Nichiren Shonin.

Had not Nichiren Shonin appeared in this world in the Mappo Period, we would not have been exposed to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and the beautiful practice of chanting the Odaimoku. Thus, HBS considers him as its Great Master.

Because, Nichiren Shonin is also a good, noble model as a practitioner, we display the statue of Nichiren Shonin in front of the Gohonzon to worship him as our greatest master and noble model.

Then why do we not display the figure of Shakamuni Buddha?

In Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra Shakamuni Buddha revealed himself to be Primordial Buddha whose span of life is eternal and immeasurable. This Buddha has no figure, he is the existence whose body is the universe itself, so it is impossible to express himself in the form of a statue or picture, so Nichiren Shonin expressed him as the Gohonzon with the sacred characters, NamuMyohoRengeKyo, so that the Gohonzon and the soul of the Primordial Shakamuni Buddha are identical. That is why we do not enshrine the statue of Buddha.

The Three Treasures—Sanbo

When we, HBS priests and members offer prayer in front of the Gohonzon, we use the term "The Three Treasures" (Sanbo).

What is the meaning of the three treasures?

There are three treasures—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha—that Buddhists should set great importance on. The Buddha is the one who realized the Dharma (the absolute truth). The Dharma is the absolute truth that the Buddha realized. Sangha is a person or a group of people who believe in the Dharma that the Buddha realized and strive to spread. According to the teachings of HBS, the Buddha is the Primordial Buddha in the remote past, the Dharma is the Odaimoku and Sangha is the Primordial Bodhisattva Jyogyo

Nissen Shonin explained in further detail that our sect of Buddhism regards the written sacred syllables, NamuMyohoRengeKyo as the Golden Buddha himself, and the treasure of the Dharma is the Odaimoku, the quintessence of the primordial teaching portion of the Lotus Sutra, entrusted to the Bodhisattva Jogyo, and that Sangha is a person who preaches about the immeasurable merits of the Odaimoku and the reason why the Odaimoku is said to possess all the laws of the universe, and who strives to spread the Odaimoku throughout the world, trying to benefit and save all living beings.

The reason for not displaying the figure of Shakamuni Buddha

Buddhism was born in India about 2600 years ago with the appearance of Shakamuni Buddha, who preached his teachings in general terms for approximately 50 years. Among the various teachings of Shakamuni Buddha, the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutras contained a special meaning. He revealed that "I did not attain enlightenment as an ordinary human being, but my true original form is the Fundamental Eternal Buddha that attained enlightenment in the remotest past and had continued to preach the Dharma, transcending time and space".

The Eternal Buddha's existence is the Dharma body, the universe itself and has no figure like us,

human beings. Therefore it is impossible to show it as a statue or picture. Accordingly, Nichiren Shonin expressed *NamuMyohoRengeKyo* as the soul of the Buddha, as the enlightenment of the Buddha itself that is the treasure of the Buddha for the Mappo Period.

What are the treasures of the Dharma for the believers in the Mappo Period?

Dharma as one of the three treasures is the teachings of Shakamuni Buddha.

Buddha's teachings were edited into many texts called sutras, so sutras are also the treasure of Dharma.

Among the many sutras, the Lotus Sutra has been respected by numerous people from all directions as the most superior sutra among Buddhist sutras, because its contents combine Buddhist teachings.

When we try to grasp the essence of the Lotus Sutra, it is the *Odaimoku*, *NamuMyohoRengeKyo* which is revealed in the Primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra and was entrusted to Jyogyo Bodhisattva.

Therefore, we, believers of HBS worship *NamuMyohoRengeKyo* as a treasure of Dharma and regard chanting the *Odaimoku* a more important practice than reciting the sutra. This practice is based on the guidance of Nichiren Shonin.

What is the treasure of Shanga?

Usually, Shanga means priests who are formally ordained. However, Nissen Shonin stated that practitioners who devote themselves to spreading the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and its beautiful practice to others, chant the *Odaimoku*, even though they are lay believers, are also Shanga.

The true treasures in the period of Shakamuni Buddha are as follows.

Treasure of Buddhashakamuni Buddha

Treasure of the Dharma—The teachings of Buddha

Treasure of Shanga—The disciples of Buddha

The treasures in the present time, Mappo Period, are as follows.

Treasure of Buddha—*NamuMyohoRengeKyo* as the Gohonzon

Treasure of the Dharma—The voice of the *Odaimoku*

Treasure of the Shanga—Practitioners who chant the *Odaimoku* and devoted themselves to spreading it.

Why we should respect the Gohonzon, the *Odaimoku*, and the practitioners as our most precious treasures.

Buddhism expresses that "Everything has an organic influential effect".

This simply means are that we people are all connected to one another and live by the blessing of various kinds of existences in many ways. Among such blessings, to be protected by the Gohonzon (Treasure of Buddha), to obtain the merits through chanting the *Odaimoku* (Treasure of Dharma), to be guided by the sacred teachings of the Buddha and the great masters (Treasure of Shanga) are the most precious treasures for us. There are no other precious blessings than the benefits from the three treasures.

Therefore, we priests and members of HBS have to bear in mind that the most important treasures are three treasures, the Gohonzon, the *Odaimoku* and the great masters and their followers and should devote ourselves to the daily practices and activities of HBS. Through such practices and activities,

the bonds between the three treasures and us will become stronger; we will be protected by these three treasures more and more.

Kanjo Mon

We, HBS members recite the Kanjo Mon (Invocation of the Buddha and Saints) in front of the Gohonzon before the chanting Odaimoku at an Oko meeting. However, most members of HBS seem to recite it without any understanding. So, I will explain the meaning of Kanjo Mon in words that everyone can understand.

Kanjo Mon is the verse we recite just before chanting the Odaimoku to pray (call upon) to Buddha, bodhisattvas and saints in the Gohonzon for protection while visualizing these figures.

Therefore when we recite it, we should reflect on its meaning.

The substance of The Kanjo Mon

In the treatise "Kanjin Honzon Sho" written by Nichiren Shinin on Sado Island. He described the aspect of the Gohonzon (true subject of worship) which we should really believe in as Buddhists.

The following is a summary of it.

This Saha world where we live is the Eternal Pure Land itself which is included in the life of the Eternal Buddha. Therefore, when we follow the teachings of the Buddha and devote our self to the practice, our faith can respond to the soul of the Buddha and our life can be in tune with the life of the Buddha.

Then, what is the life of the Buddha?

It is no more and no less than the Fine Dharma itself. This Fine Dharma is also called "Ichinen Sanzen" as a meritorious power of the enlightenment of the Buddha.

Buddhas in the ten directions, Bodhisattvas, and various kinds of Gods in the heaven believed in this Fine Dharma as the fundamental truth.

Therefore, we also should believe in this Fine Dharma as the most sacred object of worship (Gohonzon) and those holy saints who are good examples of faithful believers for us.

The Gohonzon is presented as follows.

NamuMyohoRengeKyo is situated in the center, Shakamuni Buddha as Reward—body and Taho

Buddha as a Dharma—body are seated on both sides of the NamuMyohoRengeKyo, the main attendants great Bodhisattva Jyogyo of the Shakamuni Buddha are the next line and other bodhisattvas and the gods are seated aside them.

Those sacred figures gather around the Odaimoku to worship it as the Fine Dharma, joining their hands in prayer.

This is the true form of the Gohonzon and true object of worship for everybody.

Such a sublime Sacred Object had never been revealed by other sutras except the Lotus Sutra. Even in the Lotus Sutra, it is only in the primordial eight chapters of the Sutra, it was revealed.

How fortunate we are, upholding this great Gohonzon

We would like to repay and express thanks to Shakamuni Buddha who taught the Lotus Sutra and Great master Nichiren who brought the sacred practice, chanting NamuMyohRengekyo to us in the Mappo Period the degenerate age as the immediate disciple of the Buddha.

NamuMyohoRengeKyo

The Gohonzon (The Object of Worship) of HBS

In other sects of Buddhism, statues or pictures of buddhas and bodhisattvas are usually adored as the object of worship. On the other hand, HBS adores NamuMyohoRengeKyo, the sacred seven characters as the sole sublime Sacred Object (Gohonzon).

Nissen Shonin explains the reason for this

The Honmon Butsuryu Shu (HBS) worships NamuMyohoRengeKyo as the Sacred Object (Daimoku Honzon), that is, the great Mandala containing all the teachings in the universe, to which is given scriptural evidence in "The Supernatural Powers of the Tathagata" of the Lotus Sutra. All the teachings of the Tathagata are revealed and expounded explicitly in this sutra." Nichiren Shonin said in his Shishin Gohon Sho that Myohorengekyo does not represent the sutra text, nor is it the meaning, and that it is none other than the intent of the entire sutra. Further he said that this is not only an objective truth but also the world of immeasurable merits inherent in the minds of people engaged in practicing the Lotus Sutra. One's behavior and deeds are caused by the function of the mind. If we focus our minds on NamuMyohoRengeKyo, the Sacred Object of Worship and chant the Odaimoku in order to shake off delusion and calm our minds, we will be able to obtain an unwavering view of life, never fearing to die, and returning to one's right mind. This is indeed the great way directly leading to the state of Buddhist enlightenment by sheer force of faith. If everyone thus returns to the Buddha mind, there will be no one who strays from the path of righteousness; accordingly the ideal of a peaceful world will be attained. The day will soon come when those who accumulate day and night the merits of their pious acts or religious practice will enjoy visiting the Pure Land. Confucianism also teaches as follows: it depends on whether each person's heart is in the right place or not that peace reigns over the realm. Much more Buddhism is the teaching which sets people right by the law of cause and effect in the past, present, and future, thus improving the present world and promising the security for life after death. That is why one Buddha or one Saint is not enshrined and worshipped in our sect, but the Fine Dharma, the great master to buddhas and bodhisattvas, is ordained as the Sacred Object of Worship in accordance with the scripture and the spirit of Nichiren Shonin when he established this sect. —Honmon Butsuryu Ko Koshi—805 -807

However, this was not Nissen Shonin's own discretion. He just followed Nichiren Shonin's instructions.

Nichiren Shonin considered that among the sutras which were taught by Shakamuni Buddha, the Lotus Sutra is the most important sutra. Because the Lotus Sutra contains the essence of all of Shakamuni Buddha's teachings and it unified and incorporated the sutras of others in which buddhas, bodhisattvas and the guardian kings of heaven appear and elaborated on its teaching.

Nichiren Shonin stated in his writing "Kanjin Honzon Sho" what the Gohonzon's aspect should be. So far as the spectacle of the Sacred Object (Myohorengekyo) is concerned, it was situated in the center of the jeweled stupa floating in the sky above the saha world, the land of the Primordial Buddha. Inside the stupa, on both sides of the Myohorengekyo, the Buddha Sakamuni and the Buddha Prabhutaratna (Taho) were seated. The main attendants of the Buddha Sakamuni were the four bodhisattvas, led by Visistacaritra (Jyogyo), while Manjusri, Maitreya and other bodhisattvas were seated below as attendants of the four bodhisattvas.

The great or small bodhisattvas, who had been converted by the manifestations of the Buddha or who had come from other worlds were there looking up at the above mentioned great buddhas and bodhisattvas like ordinary people looking up at nobles in court. The buddhas from the ten directions were seated on the ground, not in the sky; they were showing that they were as manifestations of the eternal Buddha representing their manifested lands.

So, in the Gohonzon Mandala composed by Nichiren Shonin, the Odaimoku, NamuMyohoRengeKyo, the Fine Dharma enlightened by the Eternal Buddha, is written in the center of the Mandala, and on the right side and left side of the Odaimoku, the names of Shakamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha, bodhisattvas and the guardian kings in heaven are written in order.

An allegory is given below for clarification.

The Odaimoku in the Gohonzon is like a large tree. Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and others are the many parts that comprise this tree like the branches and leaves. So there is no need to display the icons of them in front of the Gohonzon. To display icons of them in front of Gohonzon is like breaking off the branches and harming the tree.

Nissen Shonin, the founder of HBS noted:

Among the Three Great Secret Laws, the True Law which plants the seed, genuine cause of Buddhahood in the minds of living beings is the Daimoku and nothing else. It is obvious that only the Daimoku is the Sacred Object to those who perform Buddhist practice in the period of the last Dharma. At the beginning of "Questions and Answers on the Object of Worship" or Honzon Mondo Sho by Nichiren Shonin, it is said the only Buddhist teacher is the Dharma and it is absolutely out of place to revere Buddha Shakamuni as an object of worship. It is undeniable that the Odaimoku is the object of worship about which Nichiren Shonin said, 'Such a sublime Sacred Object was revealed only in the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra.' In his Kanjin Honzon Sho, Nichiren Shonin shows the Altar as the Saha World in the primordial time, the Odaimoku as NamuMyohoRengeKyo inside the stupa, and the Spectacle of the Sacred Object by the primordial Buddha and primordial bodhisattvas', and further shows the superiority of the primordial division of the Lotus Sutra to the provisional division by the fact that the primordial Buddha is in the sky above the Saha world, whereas the manifestations of the Buddha are on the earth. Nichiren Shonin says; 'the primordial Buddha Shakamuni wrapped all these things up in the Odaimoku and permitted believers to have it as the Sacred Object. This Sacred Object is nothing but Nichiren's soul and the meritorious world moving forward in faith. The Odaimoku is the greatest mandala without precedent as the Sacred Object of Worship.' —Soshoyojaku— 827

Different types of Gohonzon

There are largely three different ways of writing the Gohonzon. They are "Ko", "Ryaku", and "Yo".

"Ko" is a form which has the names of buddhas, future buddhas, and the host of sages (of the Pure Land) which are to the right and left of the Odaimoku. "Ryaku" has the names of the Eternal Buddha Shakamuni and Taho—nyorai and the four great Bodhisattvas, Jogyo, Muhengyo, Jogyo and Anryuryo.

"Yo" is a form with only the Odaimoku with the words "Sangashichu Ichidai Hiho." There is no need to show all the buddhas and bodhisattvas because they are embodied in the it.

The names shown on the right and left of the Odaimoku indicate that the Bodhisattvas and sages are facing the Scripture and are chanting the Odaimoku.

Although there are three types of Gohonzon, all of them are embodied with the soul of divinity. Therefore it makes no difference which type is used.

Nissen Shonin stated that:

Nichiren Shonin set the quintessence before everything and said that the Fine Dharma is the quintessence for the attainment of Buddhahood. On examination of Nichiren Shonin's thoughts through his writings after the period of his exile in Sado, I have understood that the Sacred Object of Worship should be the Odaimoku, the sole and Most Precious Dharma that includes everything, so I made up the Sacred Object of Worship by writing 'NamuMyohoRengeKyo which is revealed in the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra, entrusted to the Bodhisattva Jogyo and plants in the minds of all living beings the seed, the genuine cause of Buddhahood' with the phrase 'The Greatest Entity of the Three Most Important'. Those who received this object of worship but did not understand the reason criticized it saying the Odaimoku alone does not make the Object of Worship and it could hardly be called the mandala including all the ten realms when one of them is missing, since none of the Four Heavenly Kings such as Tamonten are described in this Object of Worship. Nichiren Shonin's Honzon Mondo Sho, or "Questions and Answers on the Sacred Object" states: 'Those who perform Buddhist practices in the period of the Last Dharma must worship the Odaimoku of the Lotus Sutra as the Sacred Object.' Shishin Gohon Sho states; 'This sutra's real intention lies in making people chant the Odaimoku exclusively.' And Shuyo Sho written by Nichiryu Shonin says; 'Most important for this religious sect is the Odaimoku entrusted to the Bodhisattva Jogyo because the Buddha's life is embrace in NamuMyohoRengeKyo, the title of the Lotus Sutra'.

—Butsuryu Yodan— 829

Q: What support from Nichiren Shonin's writings can you offer for the reason why 'Sangashichu Ichidai Hiho' is written on both sides of the Odaimoku? A: Hokke Shuyo Sho or On the Main Point of the Lotus Sutra by Nichiren Shonin says; 'The sacred laws which the two masters, Tendai and Dengyo, did not expound are the three laws, that is, the Primordial Sacred Object, the Primordial Altar, and the Primordial Daimoku, but Nichiren Shonin combines these in the quintessence of the Lotus Sutra, that is, the Odaimoku. Again Ota Sho says; 'The most honored one, Buddha Shakamuni, has left the sole and most precious Dharma, namely, the Odaimoku revealed in the primordial division of the Lotus Sutra in order to reprove unbelievers for their mistakes in the period of the Last Dharma. Receiving the Buddha's order, the four bodhisattvas spread the Odaimoku in the period of the Last Dharma.' —Odeshidanna Sho P.829

Okō
(*Gathering of Members for Religious Service*)

An Oko activity is an important function of HBS. "O" is an honorific. "Ko" means a prayer and lectures session. An "Oko" session is a gathering of members of HBS to pray and chant the Odaimoku and to listen to a sermon (Gohomon).

In Chapter 21 of the Lotus Sutra (Supernatural Powers of the Thathagata), Buddha stated that "For this reason, after the Thus Come One has entered extinction, you must single-mindedly accept, uphold, read, recite, explain, preach and transcribe it, and practice it as directed. In any of the various lands, wherever there are those who accept, uphold, read, recite, explain, preach, transcribe, or practice it as directed, or wherever the sutra scrolls are preserved, whether in a garden, a forest, beneath a tree, in monks quarters, in the lodgings of white-robed laymen, in palaces, or in mountain valleys or the wide wilderness, in all these places one should erect towers and offer alms. Why? Because you should understand that such spots are places of religious practice. In such places have the buddhas gained anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (enlightenment), in such places have the buddhas turned the wheel of the Law, in such places have the buddhas entered par nirvana."

Nissen Shonin, the founder of HBS, established the Oko system on the basis of Chapter 21 of the Lotus Sutra. The Oko system of HBS originated with the establishment of HBS. It has been held not only at temples but also at member's houses under the spirit of the Lotus Sutra. Oko is a practice uniquely characteristic of HBS which has continued for 150 years since Nissen Shonin founded HBS.

Oko is held at least once a month at various homes of members and are comprised of small groups who are divided into districts. An Oko is not only practiced at a temple but also at a member's home.

For a member of HBS, offering their home for Oko service is important. Occasionally, priests are invited and lay followers congregate to chant the Odaimoku together, listen to the Gohomon (Sermon) delivered by priests or lay priests, talk together about their sufferings, problems and make arrangements for future activities.

To sum up the purposes of Oko service

1. For the propagation of the teachings. (Kyoke)
2. For the improvement of the member's faith.
3. For transferring merits to their ancestors.
4. For building friendly relations and being united in mind although separated in body. (Itai Doshin)
5. For receiving family protection.

Points to note for an Oko

1. Visit the "Ganshu's home (home where Oko is held) early and assist in the preparation of an Oko service.
2. The group chief should inspect the Gokaidan (the altar) and make sure that the Gokaidan is clean, the ornaments and offerings are neatly arranged and displayed. The Okozui (sacred water) is offered.
3. Designation of receptionists to accept donations and Ofuse (the tithe for priests)
4. Arrive at Oko at least 10 minutes before the designated time.
5. Sit nearer to the Gokaidan in order of arrival.
6. Chant the Odaimoku clearly and in a loud voice.
7. The priest is representing you when offering prayer, (Gonjyo) so, join your palms together, and listen carefully to what is being said.
8. Listen carefully to sermons (Gohomon).
9. The tithe (Ofuse) is offered to the priest according to each member's ability and gratitude. Members who offer the tithe should express their appreciation to the priests.
10. Provide an after—Oko topic of conversation to positively enhance the atmosphere and to approach newly converted practitioners in a friendly manner.
11. An official should make an effort to call other members by phone to notify them of the date of an Oko service.
12. A personal invitations to an Oko service by Ganshu (the members who hold the Oko meeting in their homes) to other members or their acquaintances are a very effective.
13. While it is customary to conduct a memorial Oko service for ancestors, it would be well advised to also hold an Oko service to express our gratitude for things that happen in our daily life. Such events include birthdays, employment, marriage, anniversaries, retirement and the purchase of a Gokaidan or the enshrinement the Gohonzon.

*Chant the Odaimoku
With Your Prayer Wholeheartedly*

On the 27th of March, 2007, the meeting for reading research papers of HBS was held at the headquarters of HBS in Kyoto and was cosponsored by The HBS Institute and the HBS Buddhist School.

On this opportunity, we invited Dr. Kazuo Murakami, an honorary professor at Tsukuba University in Japan who makes a special study of genetics. He gave a very interesting lecture on DNA to the audience. However, for me, the topic he discussed with me personally in a waiting room was more interesting for me. He told me that "In my lecture, I will explain about effectiveness of laughter for our health. This is my proposition, I think that praying for others and good deeds are more effective than laughter. So, I will try to examine the effectiveness of prayer on our physical and mental health as my next research work".

Alexis Carrel, who received the Nobel Prize in physiology and medical science also mentioned the effectiveness of prayer in his work "MAN, THE UNKNOWN" (1935) that some kind of mental activities may have a good influence on our organs, especially prayer. However prayer should be unselfish prayer for others. So prayer of a man of modesty, ignorance, poverty, can be more effective than the man of intelligence or a man of riches.

By the way, recently, I began to get the impression that Japan is changing to a strange, unhealthy country. Parents killed their children, children kill their parents impulsively, still more grandparents kill their grandchildren, grandchildren kill their grandparents. Such events have been in the news papers lately. Major food companies and restaurants famous for their quality shops go into liquidation, executives of these companies or stores try to put the responsibility on their employees when their evil deeds come to light. These higher officials look after their own interests. These days, in Japan, even such men in responsible posts do not seem to have a moral guide to measure themselves.

Then what is the reason that brought this about?

I think it has been brought about by the lack of religious guidance.

The Michigan University Institute of Social Investigation investigated the sense of values of the people who are over 18 years old in 73 countries. There was one question "Is religion important or not for your life?" In the case of USA, 73 percent of the people answered "Yes, religion is important and necessary for my life". In Italy it was 66 percent, in Canada, 66 percent. We can see many people feel religion is

important for their life. On the other hand in the case of Japan, only 19 percent of the people answered "Yes, religion is important for me" and 81 percent of the people answered "No".

Japan was ranked second lowest of the 73 countries. The lowest ranked country was China. Needless to say, China is a communist society and people are educated that religion is useless, so that is a natural result. However, Japan is not a communist country and its people have respected religion since ancient times.

In the first place, each country has its own ethics and morals to measure people and to maintain public order. And such ethics and morals are related to native religious ideas which are generally accepted by ordinary people. Generally, in Europe and America, Christian teachings correspond to this. In Middle and Near East countries, it is Islamic teaching. In Japan, Buddhist teachings have been the Japanese guiding principle for many years. However, Buddhism has gradually lost its strong influence on Japanese society and people believe in scientific thought and think that Buddhism is old fashioned. As a result, some Japanese people have lost something which can discipline them. I think this is one cause of the disruption of morality.

Then, how should people accept Buddhist teachings to measure their life and to change their way of living?

Every action produced through our body, mouth and mind, whether it is good or evil is a cause and will have a result or an effect. That is what you have done whether good or bad, will be returned to you. This is a fundamental concept of Buddhism.

However, the result of this cause and effect occurs after a long time. The law of cause and result or effect extends over three lives; from past life to present live then to future life. So, what you have done in your past life may influence your present life. What you do in your present life may influence your future life whether it will be a good act or bad act. Therefore, sooner or later if someone who has done an evil deed, even if it goes unknown to others, he or she will pay for it. This is called the law of Karma. Japanese people for many generations have believed in such law of Karma. However many people of today in Japan no longer believed in such law.

If you would like to read about actual examples of how the law of Karma works, I recommend Prof. Ian Stevenson "Unlearned Language" University Press of Virginia or Dr. Braian Weiss "Many Lives, Many Masters".

How did Shakamuni Buddha teach us to create good Karma?

He pointed out the importance of the cultivation of our mind. He always stated, "Cultivate your mind to produce good Karma", because, our acts or behavior are based on the workings of our mind, good will produces good acts, ill will produce bad acts, as a result, this makes ourselves or others unhappy or it brings good luck, good fortune to us or others. Therefore, we must nip our bad buds to cultivate our mind and make the good buds grow to fruition.

If that is the case, how should we cultivate our mind? Before thinking about this, let us consider the question, "Where is the mind?"

In our brain? Have you ever heard of a doctor who looks into the human brain and say, Look! This is the mind". I have never heard of such story.

In our heart? I never read of a doctor who performed surgery of the heart and found the mind there. Then where is our mind? The mind exists, not as a visible thing but as a function. It is a kind of mental energy that influences our body and our environment.

What kind of mental energy can have good influence on our body and our environment?

It is a mind of prayer. Through prayer for others the energy of prayer cultivates kindness, compassion in our mind and then purifies our environment. In reverse, the cruel minds of the cruel, merciless and insincere make their homes, society and country unhealthy.

Nissen Shonin, the founder of HBS stated in his short teachings, "our minds influence our bodies, not only the bodies but also the society and the nation."

Dr. Murakami also refers to the importance of prayer from the same point of view.

Praying aloud or chanting is more effective than silent prayer, because the voice or sounds can be a mediator to create sympathy, or resonance between our minds and the minds of others and objects.

Here is an example. Mr. Masaru Emoto, a researcher of the crystal form of water took pictures of many kinds of crystal forms of water with a special camera. Through taking pictures of them, he examined how water responds to sounds or voices. For example, he wrote the word "Thank you" on paper, then put it on a bottle of water and call out to it "Thank you" many times, after that he took a picture of its crystal form. Then he wrote the word "Stupid", "Foolish" on the paper and put it on another bottle of water, then he called out to the water "You are stupid", "You are foolish". The crystal form of the water changed to a very ugly one.

Through this experiment, we understand that the crystal form of water changes its form in response to our approaches and we can say that not only water but also trees, flowers, and other plants sympathize with our voices and feelings.

When we, HBS believers offer prayer to the Gohonzon, we chant NamuMyohoRengeKyo (the Odaimoku) repeatedly based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin. We believe that through chanting the Odaimoku, our voices can synchronize with the soul of the Buddha, Bodhisattvas and gods in the Gohonzon. Therefore, our prayers will be granted.

So, let us chant the Odaimoku wholeheartedly to purify not only our soul but also our environment.

The Genealogy of HBS I

Nissen Shonin (1817–1890) founder of Honmon Butsuryu Shu (HBS) was admired as “a pioneer of popular Buddhism” in the latter half of the Tokugawa period says Prof. Shigeyoshi Murakami, a Buddhist scholar. However, Nissen Shonin considered himself as a restorer of the teachings of Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin. He wrote,

The messenger of Buddha Shakamuni was the great religious master, Nichiren Shonin. The messenger of Nichiren Shonin was the great religious master, Nichiryu Shonin, whose messenger is me, Nissen. It was Nichiryu Shonin that reestablished the Lotus School, so, I'm nothing but the one who is restoring the teaching of Nichiryu Shonin. Since the correct teaching has been transmitted to me, I am undoubtedly the messenger of Shakamuni Tathagata.

—Goshogyohaiken— 811

What he set out to do was not only to revive the doctrines of Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin but also revive them in a practical way through his missionary work. In this paper, I give an outline of Nichiryu Shonin's activities and doctrines and then how Nissen Shonin tried to revive them in an era of confusion and at a turning point from the Edo (Tokugawa) period to the Meiji period, around middle of the 19th century focusing on his missionary work.

The Succession from Nichiren Shonin to Nichiryu Shonin and on to Nissen Shonin—The Position of Nichiryu Shonin in Nichiren Buddhism

Nichiryu Shonin was born on October 14, 1385 in Toyama Prefecture, about a century after Nichiren Shonin's death.

It is said that Nichiryu Shonin was ordained as a priest at the age of 14, in 1402. He entered Myohonji Temple one of the temples of the Nichiren sect in Kyoto and learned the basic doctrines of Nichiren Shonin from his uncles, Nichizon Shonin and Nichido.

Before giving an outline of Nichiryu's missionary work and his writings, I will present a general view

of Nichiren Buddhism in Kyoto from the beginning of the propagation and the circumstances of the era when Nichiryu Shonin was active.

The pioneer who spread the Nichiren Shonin's teachings in Kyoto was Nichizo Shonin. He was a disciple of Nichiren Shonin and after Nichiren Shonin's death became a disciple of Nichiro Shonin who was one of six senior disciples of Nichiren Shonin.

Twelve years after Nichiren Shonin's death, Nichizo Shonin moved to Kyoto from Kamakura and devoted himself to spreading the teachings of Nichiren Shonin, and gradually received support from the people in Kyoto and built a foundation for propagation.

However, incidents of jealousy increased as his followers began to grow which constituted a menace to the Tendai Shu sect and other sects.

The sects began a revolt against Nichizo Shonin by claiming that he was spreading the evil teachings of Nichiren. There were incidents of Nichizo Shonin being apprehended and evicted from Kyoto on several occasions.

Nichizo Shonin was not discouraged by the continuous calamities which confronted him. Instead, he continued to engage himself in spreading of the teachings of Nichiren Shonin in Kyoto. In 1321, he built Myokenji Temple in Kyoto and twelve years later it was designated as a special temple dedicated to praying for the emperor.

In the latter half of the 14th century, the Muromachi Shogunate was established after the conflict between the Northern and the Southern Courts ended. The centre of political activity was moved from Kamakura to Kyoto again.

After this, groups of Nichiren Buddhism entered Kyoto actively competing with each other and in this way Nichiren Buddhism was welcomed by the citizens of Kyoto who were engaged in commerce and industry.

On the surface, Nichiren Buddhism temples made great progress. However, their activities gradually deviated from the true intention of Nichiren Shonin both in their missionary work and their interpretation of doctrines. With regard to missionary work, Nichiren Shonin stated

No matter what great good deed one may perform, even if he reads and transcribes the entirety of the Lotus Sutra a thousand or ten thousand times or masters meditation to perceive Ichinen Sanzen, should he but fail to denounce the enemies of the Lotus Sutra, he will be unable to attain the Way.

—Letter to Hyoeshichiro Nanjo ST 321—

In this age when the true and provisional teachings are completely confused, it would be equally very strange if one secluded oneself in mountain forests and performed the comfortable practices of shojū without attacking the enemies of the Lotus Sutra, and such a person would lose the time for practicing the Lotus Sutra.

—Nyosetsu Syugyo sho ST 736—

Although Nichiren Shonin claimed that Shakubuku, that is having people submit to the true teachings of Buddhism with mercy and compassion for others, is of great importance for followers of the Lotus Sutra; however, many priests belonging to Nichiren Buddhism in Kyoto lost a desire to propagate the teachings and adjusted to popular taste and also displayed greed and wanted to get power and reputation.

With regard to the interpretation of Nichiren Shonin's doctrines, many priests belonging to Nichiren sects were influenced by the theory of Tendai Hongaku (traditional Tendai doctrine, also known as the original state of enlightenment), they assented to the ideas that all existence and teachings are non—dual like good and evil, and adopted a compromising position on their way of learning the doctrines.

As to the interpretation of the primordial teaching portion (Honmon) and the provisional teaching portion (Shakumon) of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Shonin clearly stated firmly,

The primordial teaching portion and the provisional teaching portion are as different as water from fire or as heaven from earth. For instance, the difference is far greater than that between the sutras expounded in the period prior to the expounding of the Lotus Sutra and the Lotus Sutra itself.

—Reply to Nyudo Toki, ST 1518—

After Nichiren Shonin's death, many of his followers began to assert that the two divisions of the Lotus Sutra are identical.

According to the doctrine of the Tendai Shu sect, the primordial teaching portion and provisional teaching portion are identical in spiritual value. But according to Nichiren Shonin's doctrine, there is all the difference between the Honmon Division and Shakumon Division. The Honmon Division is regarded as being superior to the Shakumon Division because the Buddha in the provisional teaching portion is the Buddha who attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree as the historical Buddha, while the Buddha in the primordial teaching portion is the Shakamuni Buddha in the remote past as the Primordial Buddha so the seed of Buddhahood is expounded only in the primordial teaching portion, the Honmon Division. That was Nichiren Shonin's view.

In addition, as the time passed, the various Nichiren sects diverged and began to display many kinds of statues of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and gods in front of the Gohonzon mandala. Even though Nichiren Shonin had stated,

In this age of degeneration of the Dharma (Mappo Period), which object of worship should one select? The Odaimoku (Namu Myōhō Renge Kyō) should be the object of worship.

—Honzonmondo Sho, ST 1573—

Shortly after Nichiryu Shonin entered Myohonji Temple, a priest named Gatsumyo, a former court noble, was appointed head priest of the temple. Shortly thereafter, the atmosphere and mood of temple began to deteriorate as stated above.

Nichiryu Shonin together with Nichizon and Nichido repeatedly remonstrated Gatsumyo for his actions and wrong views, but to no avail.

Instead, Gatsumyo became infuriated and retaliated. Unable to withstand Gatsumyo's behavior, Nichiryu Shonin left the temple.

Nichiryu Shonin decided to make a pilgrimage through central Japan to spread the true teachings of Nichiren Shonin, building many temples during this period.

He also wrote many letters and texts to explain the correct meaning of what Nichiren Shonin had expounded and pointed out the true intentions of Nichiren Shonin's teachings.

How should a correct interpretation of Buddhist scriptures be given? It is to realize that the Buddhist mission was entrusted to Bodhisattva Jogyo in the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. In other words, we should understand that the Buddhist mission is to plant in the minds of all beings the seed of the Fine Dharma, the genuine cause of Buddhahood in the Mappo Period. Through such an interpretation, the true intention of the Lotus Sutra is clearly and completely understood. This Buddhist mission would explain the appearances of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas as well as Buddha Shakamuni in the Saha World. This is the essential point of the

Kanjin Honzon Sho.

—*Shijo Sho by Nichiryu Shonin*— 767

The Genealogy of HBS II

Nissen Shonin and HBS

Nissen Shonin (his honorific names are Kaidou Shonin and Daison Shi) was born in 1817 in Kyoto. The family he was born into ran a successful fancy goods store and had produced many men of culture and talent. He received a good education in calligraphy, poetry, art and literature in a good family background. At age nine, his achievements as a painter and a calligrapher were recorded in the "Heian Jinbutsushi" a publication which introduced famous cultural personalities of that time in Kyoto. He was also a brilliant scholar. At the age of 24, he lectured the court nobles on "Genji Monogatari" (a masterpiece of Japanese prose literature, written in the early 11th century by Murasaki Shikibu and considered the first great novel in the world of literature) in the Chigusaden Hall of the Imperial Palace in Kyoto.

However, when he was 25, an incident changed his life. His mother died. This was a great shock to him and he was deeply sad. He became very interested in Buddhism after the loss of his mother. He then began his study of Buddhism. He visited many temples and priests to learn the doctrines and teachings of many sects such as Zen Shu sect, Tendai Shu sect, Shingon Shu sect and Jodo Shu sect.

Based on his research, Nissen Shonin concluded that the most valuable and greatest sutra among the many sutras was the Lotus Sutra (Hokekyo), and he was convinced that the person who had faithfully spread its teachings was Nichiren Shonin. However, there were some different sects of Nichiren Buddhism and each sect had its own way of practicing Buddhism and its own doctrines. This situation annoyed him. Among those sects Nissen Shonin finally concluded that only sect which faithfully preached the true teachings of Nichiren Shonin was the Honmon Hokke Shu sect which had been revived by Nichiryu Shonin.

In 1845, at age 28, Nissen Shonin became a follower of Honmon Hokke Shu sect, and faithfully applied himself to the teaching of the sect.

In 1848, Nissen Shonin was ordained a priest at the age of 31 by his master, Nichiyo Shonin of the Ryusenji Temple on Awaji Island, Hyogo Prefecture.

Nissen Shonin became a priest determined to learn the true teachings of Nichiren Shonin. However, Nissen Shonin's spirit became extremely oppressed as time passed, and he suffered from deep disappointment, because the Honmon Hokke Shu began to deviate from spreading the true teachings of Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin. It had forgotten its fundamental mission of Buddhism, which

was to save and guide people. Instead it began to engage itself only in conducting funeral services for the deceased and praying for merit—transference. It refrained from regularly chanting the Odaimoku, NamuMyohoRengeKyo, as stipulated by Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin.

Since Nissen Shonin had observed the misguided workings of the internal affairs of Honmon Hokke Shu, he wanted to correct its wrongdoings. He wanted to restore the Honmon Hokke Shu to its original true state, and he aggressively attempted to persuade the eminent officials of the sect by offering advice and making proposals, but to no avail. They refused to listen to him. Instead, they turned against him and harassed him with continuous spiritual arguments.

Due to derogatory comments made against him by the priests, Nissen Shonin became disgusted with Honmon Hokke Shu, and decided to spread the teachings of Nichiren and Nichiryu Shonin faithfully himself.

Nissen Shonin founded HBS on January 12, 1857 at the home of Asahichi Tanigawa, a follower residing in Kyoto. At this time, there were only four or five other followers in attendance.

He sated:

As early as seven years after the decease of Nichiren Shonin there appeared different views as to whether the primordial and provisional divisions of the Lotus Sutra were equal to each other or the primordial division is superior to the provisional division. When this religious controversy heated up, Nichiryu Shonin appeared and pointed out the falsity of conventional Buddhism, thus reestablishing the true religious sect based on the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus sutra in accordance with Nichiren Shonin's intention. If things had continued like that, the followers of our sect would have been happier chanting and practicing in accordance with the teaching of both Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin. However, it was not long before some began to say that living beings in the realm of animals such as dogs and cats could become buddhas with their present bodies by force of merit—transference, which is a fallacious argument because becoming a buddha with one's present body is made possible only in the realm of humans. The prospect of reformation in the confused Buddhist circles was still far from certain. Thereupon I finally arrived at a definite decision and founded the Honmon Butsuryu Sangha on the twelfth of January in the fourth year of Ansei (1857) at the residence of Asahichi Tanikawa (Happon—do) in order to restore the righteousness of our sect. I don't hesitate to say positively that the righteousness our sect was made crystal clear through Buddha Shakamuni's scriptures, Great Master Tendai's elucidation, and the writings and instructions of both Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin. This is exactly how I have founded the Butsuryu Sangha.

—Honmon Butsuryu Ko Koki no Raiyu—807

At the age of 32, Nissen received religious instruction from Nichiyu Shonin whom I looked up to as my preceptor. Nichiyu Shonin was the head priest of Ryusen Kyoji temple in Tsukui, Awaji Island (Hyogo Prefecture). Then I thoroughly investigated the real situation of the Lotus School and found that it was so terrible as the priests had lost moral sense and their spirit as priests. I was completely at a loss what to say. It was exactly because of this that I founded the Butsuryu Sangha, denouncing the injustices done by many schools of the Nichiren sect.

—Honmon Butsuryu—ko Koki no Raiyu—809

How deplorable it is that Buddha Shakamuni's teaching has been obscured and lost! There is no one but Nissen and his followers who could restore the correct teaching. I would like to be born a

thousand times in this world and do my best from life to life in order to restore Buddhism.

—Shoryuhoboshakubukushinan Sho—809

The disciples of this sect are not permitted to establish a new sect according to their selfish view. By establishing the Butsuryu Sangha, I am merely taking over the Honmon Butsuryu Shu which Nichiren Shonin founded according to the Buddha's teaching. I am a disciple of Nichiren Shonin.

—Haiyo Sho—811

There were many oppressions against Nissen Shonin even after HBS was founded. Incidents of jealousy increased as HBS began to grow. There were incidents of Nissen Shonin being apprehended, imprisoned and evicted. Continuous calamities confronted him. However, he continued to engage himself in the spreading of the Lotus Sutra and the teachings of Nichiren Shonin in his home ground in Kyoto. HBS gradually began to spread into other areas, such as Shiga, Osaka, and Hyogo prefectures.

On the 17th of July in the 23rd year of Meiji (1890) he passed away at the age of 74 years old.

The instructions Nissen Shonin left behind were compiled into a complete collection and 35 books from the collection have so far been published.

As stated above, HBS was founded by Nissen Shonin. However, Nissen Shonin believed that it should be understood that Honmon Butsuryu Shu was established by Buddha himself and its teaching was propagated by Nichiren Shonin. Though the organization was founded in 1857 by Nissen Shonin, he instructed that he and his disciples did not establish any religious sect but organized HBS in order to propagate the Odaimoku, NamuMyohoRengeKyo, entrusted to Jyogyo (Visistacaritra) Bodhisattva, which was Nichiren Shonin's long cherished desire.

Nissen Shonin chose the name, Honmon Butsuryu Shu based on the ideals of Nichiren Shonin.

Nichiren Shonin stated in his writing "Hokke Shoshin Jyobutsu Syo",

Question: Of the eight sects, the nine sects of the ten sects, which is the true sect founded by Shakamuni Buddha? Answer: The Hokke (Lotus) sect is the sect founded by Shakamuni. We know this because of the statement that, of all the sutras he had preached, now preach and would preach in the future, the Lotus Sutra was foremost. These words were spoken by Shakamuni Buddha himself. Therefore (the sect based on) the Lotus Sutra is known as the Buddha—founded sect, Butsuryu Shu and is also called the Hokke sect.

Nichiryu Shonin stated:

Our Honmon Butsuryu Shu was established during the period of the Last Dharma beginning 2000 years after the Buddha's passing away, and is the fundamental religion which can develop various sutras and doctrines as the occasion demands. From this point of view, it follows that the Lotus School was established by Buddha Shakamuni, that is, the Buddha representing 'effect' and Bodhisattva Jogyo, that is, the Buddha representing 'cause'. (the word 'Butsu' in Butsuryu means Buddha and 'ryu' means to establish in Japanese). That is why the sect is called Butsuryu Shu.

—Gukyo Sho— written by Nichiryu Shonin—

At the beginning of the Hokke—Shu Naisho Buppo Kechimyaku Sho (The Transmission of the

Buddhist Teaching Realized Inertly by the Lotus School), Nichiren Shonin said that the sects spreading *NamuMyohoRengeKyo* are the true religious sects which were established by the Buddha Shakamuni, and gave grounds for designating them *Butsuryu—Shu*. Buddha Shakamuni in the remote past expounded Buddhism and established the *Butsuryu Shu*. He appears in various forms in this world in order to save people in the future everlastingly and make clear what the *Butsuryu Shu* is for.

—*Shijo Sho*—written by *Nichiryu Shonin*—

The Lotus School which was named after the title of the sutra means *Butsuryu Shu* if it is seen from the standpoint of the Buddha who established it. In a broad sense, it is the religious sect which was established by all sorts of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Some may ask why it is not called *Nichiren Shu*. This is because *Nichiren Shu* means the religious sect which has been spreading the *Fine Dharma* merely during the limited period of the *Last Dharma* after the Buddha's decease. The name *Nichiren Shu* can not represent the fundamental characteristics of the eternal religious sect existing forever through the three periods, that is, the remote past, the present period of the *Last Dharma*, and the future. The name *Nichiren* just refers to the aspect of his appearance in the realm of man and not to his other aspect of *Bodhisattva Jogyo*, even though *Nichiren Shonin's* previous incarnation was *Bodhisattva Jogyo*. Unlike *Butsuryu Shu*, *Nichiren Shu* is incapable of representing the true religion because it has not been in existence throughout the three periods. That is why the true religion is *Butsuryu Shu* and not *Nichiren Shu*.

—*Nijo Sho* written by *Nichiryu Shonin*—

The Genealogy of HBS III

An Outline of Nichiryu Shonin's Doctrine

In this Chapter, I give an outline of Nichiryu Shonin's doctrine. He systematized Nichiren Shonin's writings, an enormous volume, into more than 300 books. Among these books, his major writings are as follows: Shijyo Sho, Jyusan Mondo Sho, Ichijyo Sho, Shishin Jyo, Kaishakukenpon Syuyo Jyu, Rokusoku Shiki, Goji Shikyo Myomoku Kenmon.

Most of his writings are on doctrine regarding Nichiren Buddhism. Through his writings, we understand his serious feeling as a seeker after truth and an indomitable desire to spread Nichiren Shonin's true intention and pure sincere wish to protect the fine Dharma.

The writings of Nichiren Shonin which Nichiryu Shonin attached importance to elucidate the doctrine of Nichiren Buddhism. They are as follows;

- Kanjin Honzon Sho, Treatise of the True Object of worship in Contemplation (ST page 702)
- Nyosetsu Shugyo Sho, Practice in strict Accordance with the Buddha's teaching (ST page 731)
- Shishingohon Sho, The Treatise of the Four Stages of Faith and Five Stages of Practice (ST page 1294)
- Honzon Mondo Sho, A Summary of Questions and Answers Concerning the Object of Worship (ST page 1573)
- Kaimoku Sho, The Opening of One's Eyes to the Lotus Sutra. (ST page 535)
- Hoon jo, On Repaying Debts of Gratitude. (ST page 1192)
- Senji Sho, Selecting the Right Time. (ST page 1003)
- Shugokokka Ron (ST page 89)
- Jibyō—sho, Reply to Toki Nyudo. (ST page 1517)
- Hokke Shuyo Sho (ST 810)
- Soya Nyudo Moto Gosho (ST 895)
- Ichidai Shyokyo Taii (ST page 57)
- Hokke Daimoku Sho (ST page 391)
- Jussho Sho (ST page 488)
- Hokke Shu Naisho Gonjitsu Imoku (ST page 691)
- Totaigi Sho, The Entity of the Mystic Law (ST page 757)

- Rissho kanjo (ST page844)

Among these Nichiren Shonin writings, Nichiryu Shonin especially regarded Kanjin Honzon Sho, Nyosetsu Shugyo Sho, and Shishin Gohon Sho, these three treatises, as the most important writings of all Nichiren Shonin's writings.

He stated:

Great Master Tendai and Great Master Myoraku had set up the Provisional School of the Lotus Sutra, but the spirit of the Lotus Sutra which these two masters of old times had enshrined in their hearts and had not talked about was revealed by Nichiren Shonin in his three books, that is, Kanjin Honzon Sho, Shishin Gohon Sho, and Nyosetsu Shugyo Sho. These three books clearly explain that what is most important is the religious practice based on chanting the Daimoku, and to preach the easy practice which allows human beings attain enlightenment by the first and probably the last scriptural power, and declare that the Fine Dharma plants the Buddhaseed in the minds of the most ordinary people and enables them to attain Buddhahood.

—Gojo Sho—written by Nichiryu Shonin—819

Through those writings of Nichiren Shonin, The doctoral conclusion of Nichiryu Shonin's study was that the Odaimoku which was entrusted to Bodhisattva Jyogyo (Visistacaritra) in the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra to plant in the minds of all living beings the seed, the genuine cause of Buddhahood should be chanted with pure faith single-mindedly as our main practice.

Now, I would like to point out the specific characteristics of Nichiryu Shonin's doctrine through the phrases, "Revealed in The Primordial eight chapters" (Honmon Happon Shoken)", Entrusted to Bodhisattva Jyogyo" (Jyogyo Shoden), "Plant in the minds of living beings the seed, the genuine cause of Buddhahood" (Honin Geshu) and to follow up with the writings of Nichiryu Shonin.

In Nichiryu Shonin's view of the eight chapters he placed emphasis and esteem on the eight chapters 15 to 22 of the Essential Section (Honmon) of the Lotus Sutra and compared them to a clear mirror for the people of the Last Dharma Period (Mappo) to provide the true practice to the world. The reason that Nichiryu Shonin's placed emphasis the eight chapters of Essential Section (Honmon Happon) was based on the instructions of Nichiren Shonin as follows:

This truth was not revealed in the fourteen chapters of the provisional teaching portion of the Lotus Sutra, probable because the time was not yet ripe even in the Lotus Sutra. The Buddha did not even entrust the sacred five syllables NamuMyohRengeKyo, the quintessence of the primordial teaching portion of the Lotus Sutra, to such great Bodhisattvas as Manjusri or Bhaisajjaraja, not to mention the lesser Bodhisattvas, until after he had summoned Bodhisattvas of a thousand worlds welling up out of the earth and revealed to them the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra.

(*Kanjin Honzon Sho*)

Shakamuni Buddha's aim was to provide the teachings of the Lotus Sutra for the attainment of enlightenment to his disciples. But he also intended to provide the teachings to the world of the Mappo Period (the period of the Last Dharma).

Nichiren Shonin considered that among the 28 chapters the Lotus Sutra, Chapter 15 to 22 are considered the most important teachings for us.

The reason Nichiren Shonin places emphasis and esteem on the eight chapters is because they expounded how the religion should be practiced and upheld by the people born in the Mappo Period.

A brief summary of what was elucidated in those eight — Essential Section chapters—

Chapter 15 illustrated dramatically the burden placed on Jyogyo Bodhisattva and other Bodhisattvas to circulate and spread its teachings to the people of the Mappo Period.

Chapter 16 revealed Shakamuni Buddha to be the Eternal Buddha, and the Odaimoku he preached to contain the merits of enlightenment of the Eternal Buddha.

Chapter 17, 18 and 19 elucidated that practitioners should place faith in the religion and abide by the methods of practices to gain virtuous deeds and good fortunes.

Chapter 20 elucidated that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (Fukyo Bosatsu) should be a model for Lotus Sutra practitioners in the Mappo Period.

Chapter 21 and 22 elucidated that the Eternal Buddha entrusted Jyogyo Bodhisattva and other Bodhisattvas to propagate the Odaimoku and spread its teachings to the minds of the people of the Mappo Period.

The aforementioned is a synopsis of the circumstances and developments of the eight essential chapters.

After Nichiren Shonin's death, some Nichiren related sects gradually began to consider the teachings of the Provisional Section and the Essential Sections of the Lotus Sutra on an equal basis, and some considered Chapter 16 the only important chapter.

After the death of Nichiren Shonin some priests began to equally emphasize the importance of the Provisional and Essential Sections of the Lotus Sutra. The reason is that, a part of Nichiren Shonin's doctrine was generally based on Great Master Tendai's writings. And because the priests of Nichiren related sects were required to have some knowledge of Great Master Tendai's doctrines, they visited Tendai Shu's temples and studied his teachings. And through this influence, some priests considered the Provisional and Essential Sections equally important.

After gaining some background knowledge of Great Master Tendai's teachings, there were some priests who began to advocate the relative importance of both the Provisional and Essential Sections of the Lotus Sutra.

Since the Tendai Shu sect was extremely influential, the priests may have just wanted to flatter themselves. In any case, Nichiren Shonin stated: "The difference of the Essential Section compared to the Provisional Section is like water from fire and heaven from earth. There is a great difference between the Theoretical Section and the Essential Section. To advocate that those two sections are equal is a hindrance to the Essential Section. The Tendai Shu sect preaches the Provisional Section of the Lotus Sutra only, because the teachings of the Theoretical Section were spread to the people in the period before Mappo. During that period, only that section was necessary. There are some Nichiren sects (for example, Nichiren Shoshu or Sokagakkai) that only expound the teachings of the latter half of Chapter 15, the entire Chapter 16, and the first half of Chapter 17. They stress Chapter 16 only. It is true that Chapter 16 contains the Eternal Buddha's practices to gain religious merits and to attain the state of enlightenment. There is no doubt that Chapter 16 is important within the 28 chapters of the Lotus Sutra, but to advocate Chapter 16 only is the teaching for the people during age of Buddha Shakamuni.

Chapter 16 elucidated the Eternal Buddha's law of the "Three Thousand Realms Contained in One Thought" (Ichinen Sanzen). Ichinen means a life of one instant or a life of exceedingly short period of time, and Sanzen means all phenomena in this world are included in both our thought of one instant and even in a minute grain of sand). Thus, if it were not included among the eight essential chapters, it would not be a beneficial teaching for the Mappo Period.

I shall give an example. Chapter 16 is similar to an excellent ingredient for nourishment. However, common people of the Mappo Period are unable to grasp even a small portion of enlightenment on their own. In other words, we are infants from the standpoint of religion, unable to take nourishment by

ourselves. Therefore, the Buddha, like a good cook, prepared the food so that even a child could digest, and entrusted it to Jyogyo Bodhisattva to deliver it to the children of the Mappo Period. This is the process of the eight chapter's teachings.

The theory of Chapter 16 was a teaching that enlightened the people of the Shakamuni Buddha's period to harvest the seed of enlightenment. On the other hand, the Odaimoku is the seed of enlightenment to be sowed in the Mappo Period for the people to receive its merits. The teachings of Chapter 15 through 22 explicitly emphasized the planting of the seed of the Odaimoku in the Mappo Period.

Nichiren Shonin stated,

The Essential Section's eight chapters are teachings for the people of the Mappo Period to sow the seeds of Buddhahood. The latter half of Chapter 16 and the first half of Chapter 17 were teachings of harvesting the seed of enlightenment during Shakamuni Buddha's lifetime. And, for the benefit of the common people in the Mappo Period, the Eternal Buddha wrapped the Law of "Ichinen Sanzen" and the merits of enlightenment into the Odaimoku and entrusted it to Jyogyo Bodhisattva to spread it among the people of the Mappo Period.

Due to Buddha's entrustment of the Odaimoku and the true teachings of the Dharma to Jyogyo Bodhisattva, we, the children people in the Mappo Period, are able to attain the merits of the Odaimoku by just chanting it.

So that is why Nichiren Shonin stated in his writing Kanjin Honzon Sho that "such a sublime Sacred Object, NamuMyohoRengeKyo, was never revealed by Buddha Shakamuni during the forty plus years of his life as a preacher, and even during the eight years that he taught his teachings consisted of only the primordial eight chapters.

Nichiren Shonin also considered that the Odaimoku which is revealed in the eight chapters is the seed to be planted in the minds of all living beings as the genuine cause of Buddhahood. The seeds of Buddhahood are planted in the mind by chanting the Odaimoku faithfully. This is referred to as "to plant in the minds of all living beings the seeds of Buddhahood" (Honnin Geshu) because this seed is the primordial seed of the Bodhisattva's path that the Buddha Shakamuni in the remote past had practiced in order to attain enlightenment.

So the merits of the attainment of Buddhahood are inherent in the Odaimoku, NamuMyohoRengeKyo, as the seed. That is why, Nichiren Shonin highly considered the Odaimoku, Honnin Geshu, planting in the minds of all beings the seed, the genuine cause of Buddhahood.

Nichiryu Shonin stated,

How should a correct interpretation of Buddhist scriptures be given? It is to realize that the Buddhist mission was entrusted to Bodhisattva Jogyo in the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. To put it another way, we should understand that the Buddhist mission is to plant in the minds of us, all beings, the seed of the Fine Dharma, the genuine cause of Buddhahood, after the Buddha's decease. By interpreting it like this, the true intention of the Lotus Sutra is clearly and completely understood. This Buddhist mission is the only reason that would describe the appearances of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas as well as Buddha Shakamuni in the Saha World. The essential point of Kanjin Honzon Sho is nothing but this.

—Shijo sho—767

Nichiryu Shonin's view of attaining Buddhhood

As mentioned above, Nichiryu Shonin considered that chanting the Odaimoku faithfully without any doubt is the real path to and state of Buddhahood (Jyobutsu) for the people in period of the Last Dharma (Mappo) based on the teachings of Nichiren Shonin, especially, Shishin Gohon Sho.

In Shishin Gohon Sho written at the age of 56 in April in the third year of Kenji (1277) at Mt. Minobu, Nichiren Shonin gave the directions of how to practice the Lotus Sutra, on the basis of the teaching of Shishin Gohon expounded in Chapter 17 Discrimination of Merits of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Shonin provided in the treatise, Shishin Gohon Sho, that "The Single Moment's Faith and Understanding" and "Rejoicing Upon First Hearing of the Lotus Sutra" is the starting point of the "Four Stages of Faith and Five Stages of Practice". This teaching is elucidated in "Discrimination of Merits", Chapter 17 of the Lotus Sutra.

The "Four Stages of Faith" was the practice during Shakamuni Buddha's lifetime for those who embraced the Lotus Sutra. The "Five Stages of Practice" is the practice for believers to follow after Shakamuni Buddha's death. Following is a chart on the "Four Stages of Faith and Five Stages of Practice."

[Four Stages of Faith]

Shakamuni Buddha's Life (Zaise)	Stage 1	Ichinen Shinge— A Single Moment's Faith and Understanding
	Stage 2	Ryakuge Gonshu—Understanding the Sutra
	Stage 3	Koi Tasetsu—Spreading the Teachings
	Stage 4	Jinshin Kanjo—Observance of Truth with Deep Faith

[Five Stages of Practice]

After Shakamuni Buddha's Death (Metsugo)	Stage 1	Shozuiki—Rejoicing Upon First Hearing the Teachings of the Lotus Sutra
	Stage 2	Dokuju—To Read and Recite the Sutra
	Stage 3	Seppo—To Expound the Sutra to Others
	Stage 4	Kengyo Rokudo—To Embrace and Practice the Sutra
	Stage 5	Shogyo Rokudo—To Perfect One's Six Pamamitas

Nichiren Shonin stated: "within the first stages of the "Four Stages of Faith" and the "Five Stage of Practice" is the casket containing merits of enlightenment of the one hundred worlds and thousand factors and three thousand realms in a single life's moment (Ichinen Sanzen) and it is the gate from which all buddhas of ten directions and three existence emerged"

During Nichiren Shonin's lifetime the priests of the Tendai Hokke sect censured followers of Nichiren Shonin. They claimed that the followers of Nichiren Shonin were only chanting the Odaimoku and not abiding by the three practices of Buddhism — the precept, meditation, and wisdom.

In response, Nichiren Shonin wrote the "Treatise on the Four Stages of Faith" and "Five Stages of Practice"

The three types of learning are standard practices to be followed by one who is aspiring to engage in Buddhism. But, there are five other fundamental precepts established in Buddhism for priests. They are, not to kill, not to steal, not to commit unlawful sexual intercourse, not to lie, and not to drink intoxicants, and approximately 250 other practices. The core of Buddhist rule on moral practice was meditation in a

regulated environment. The purpose was to realize a higher level of spiritual development. Thus, abiding by the rules of moral conduct was supposed to be an indispensable condition to attain enlightenment.

However, Nichiren Shonin, in the "Four Stages of Faith" and "Five Stages of Practice", sublimated the three orthodox types of learning.

Nichiren Shonin refuted that concept. He stated "in the Period of the Last Dharma, there are no precepts". Nichiren Shonin's contention was that people in the period of the Last Dharma did not have the ability to attain Buddha enlightenment through the power of oneself. Nichiren Shonin wanted to point out that there was another path to attain enlightenment, but the people who could not understand his true intention just disregarded it. Naturally, priests who attached importance to the Buddhist precepts rebelled against Nichiren Shonin.

The pattern of rapprochement to observation, to meditation and to wisdom were the practices of the remote past when various Buddhas attempted to have former practitioners, who disengaged themselves from the religion to once again return to it. That practice is not applicable to people in the period of the Last Dharma because they have not as yet been exposed to Buddhism. The "Theory of the Four Stages of Faith and Five Stages of Practice" is the manuscript that describes the path to attain enlightenment without abiding by Buddhist precepts. The quintessence of the primordial teaching is the sacred words "NamuMyoho-RengeKyo", which includes all merits of Buddha. By upholding and chanting the Odaimoku, one is taking part in and preserving the precepts derived from the power of the Eternal Buddha and not by the power of oneself. Thus, there is no need to rely on Buddhist precepts. A precept is a non—entity in this world. It does not mean it is unwanted, but there is no necessity to uphold it. The precept that the original Buddha is providing to non—competent people with the power of a great teaching from the stage of sowing Buddha seeds to the stage of harvest is a mistaken expression. It is just the reverse. It is to receive support from the Gohonzon through faith and reverence.

Chanting the Odaimoku is the way of faith of Jyogyo Bodhisattva that was delegated to Nichiren Shonin, the rebirth of Jyogyo Bodhisattva, to spread the teachings of the Eternal Buddha in this world of the Last Dharma. Consequently, there is no need to turn your soul to other religions. Not chanting the Odaimoku and placing emphasis on other religions is a violation. Not believing the Odaimoku and the teachings of the Lotus Sutra is disparaging the Dharma. To correct that disorder is repentance. By not undoing those, one can understand Nichiren Shonin's intention to unravel it by way of the "Four Stages of Faith and Five Stages of Practice".

Nichiren Shonin stated that all three types of learning are included in chanting of the Odaimoku, as clarified in the "Four Stages of Faith and Five Stages of Practice". Why then do such theories exist? To describe it in few words, the purpose of Buddhism is to attain enlightenment. Enlightenment is correcting our delusions and warding off anger in order to become a Buddha. That is, cutting off the soul of greed, the soul of anger, and the soul of stupidity. It is to obtain the truth in one's soul in this universe and to observe oneself honestly without exaggeration.

The religion that Nichiren Shonin left us is to discontinue the soul of doubt and to create an unadulterated environment in order to again Buddhahood. It was to disregard religions that proclaimed enlightenment that could be attained through one's own effort. Nichiren Shonin stated that the condition to attain enlightenment could be found in the "Third Judgment of Three Kinds of Doctrinal Aspect". The practice of the primordial past that the Eternal Buddha delegated to Jyogyo Bodhisattva was the condition of enlightenment.

There are three kinds of judgments on the doctrine of the Lotus Sutra, which are known as "Sanju Kyoso" (theories originated by Great Master Tendai). HBS's teaching is based on the third judgment, the teachings of the Eternal Buddha in the remote past. The Eternal Buddha, who completed the esoteric practices, known as the genuine cause of Buddhahood, arrived at the world of enlightenment known as the effect of Buddhahood. The Eternal Buddha Shakamuni, who acquired the two merits of "Honin Myo and Honga Myo", summoned Jogyo Bodhisattva, and gave him lessons on the remote past and wrapped the two merits into the Odaimoku and, thereafter, the Eternal Buddha instructed Jogyo

Bodhisattva to spread the teachings of the remote past as the law of planting the seeds of Buddhahood into the minds of mankind in the remote past.

Among the people who had received the seeds of Buddhahood were some who faithfully believed in the religion and there were those who become disparaged and had gone astray. These people who fell by the wayside were people who only tried to understand religion by logic rather than by faith.

The state of religion that Jogyo Bodhisattava wanted to bestow on mankind, in lieu of the Eternal Buddha, was only the teachings of the eight chapters, 15 through 22, of the Lotus Sutra, which he received from the Eternal Buddha. They were teachings to be faithful to the Odaimoku, to chant it and to spread its merits to others as the religion of the remote past.

As elucidated, the "Four Stages of Faith" and the "Five Stages of Practice", which are considered to be the most important documents, are a condition of mind and enlightenment. An obedient practice is to reverently chant the Odaimoku and refrain from using one's mind. Nichiren Shonin stated: "When we revere the Law of MyohoRengeKyo, the essence of our own life, and chant NamuMyohoRengeKyo, we simultaneously manifest the Buddha nature, both in ourselves and in the world around us". People who became dispirited and moved away are those who disagreed with the teachings of Honmon and confided, instead, in the teachings of Shakumon. These people will fall into the delusionary world of the six lower stages of existence. However, the Eternal Buddha who possessed a soul of benevolence, once again attempts to have those people return to the state of the original religion of the remote past.

To lead people to return to the state of the original religion of the remote past begins with the Eternal Buddha appearing in the form of Daitsu Buddha in the age of three thousand dust—atom kalpas. Between the period of Daitsu Buddha and the period of the appearance of Shakamuni Buddha, the Eternal Buddha transformed his figure into various Buddhas and preached his teachings to guide and lead mankind to return to the original religious teachings of the remote past. These were the teachings preached by various Buddhas.

Soon after Shakamuni in the teachings of Honmon in which he revealed in Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra, "The Lifespan of the Tathagata", that he was the Eternal Buddha who attained enlightenment in the remote past, and, we mankind, had received his teachings of planting Buddha seeds of the remote past. Mankind, who had heard the teachings contained in Chapter 16, exclaimed, "Ah, so", and proclaimed that they understood it. This juncture was known as the fruition stage of the planted Buddha seeds, or "Datsu". However, this fruition is not, as yet, considered enlightenment. The fruition was nothing more than a stage of mind. Enlightenment is returning to the original teachings of "Kuon", the remote past. That is attainment of enlightenment.

The theory of the eight chapters—15 through 22—of the Lotus Sutra is to return, once again, to the stage of the original religious practices of the remote past. Why is it the eight chapters? It is because Jogyo Bodhisattva was exposed only to the teachings of those eight chapters. The conditions of enlightenment elucidated in those eight chapters are of the first stage of the "Four Stages of Faith" and "Five Stages of Practice." In other words, it is the practice of producing a moment's faith, understanding, and rejoicing. To put it simply, it is impossible to attain enlightenment through one's own efforts alone.

I would like to elaborate on the relationship of Buddha nature and Buddha seeds from Nichiryu Shonin's viewpoint. Our souls contain Buddha nature, and the Odaimoku is Buddha seeds. It is commonly said that the relationship between Buddha nature and Buddha seeds is as follows: Buddha nature is commonly referred to as the sleeping soul. It is like an unpolished, dull diamond stone. A blow to the soul must be given to awaken it. The Odaimoku will awaken it. It must then be polished. The process of polishing is looked upon as enlightenment. However, it is not so from the viewpoint of Nichiryu Shonin. If the Odaimoku is a mere tool to awaken the sleeping soul and to polish Buddha nature, there may be other ways to achieve the same results. Maybe an excellent practitioner can devise other tools to awaken Buddha nature and polish it. But this is a wrong idea.

On the theory of planting Buddha seeds into the minds, we do not consider the Odaimoku a mere tool. The Odaimoku we chant contains the merits of cause and effect of the Eternal Buddha. Enlightenment

cannot be attained unless one sows Buddha seeds by chanting the Odaimoku. In other words, one should not rely on Buddha nature, but must emphasize that the Odaimoku is the core practice of planting Buddha seeds. There is no substitute for Buddha seeds other than chanting the Odaimoku.

What does Nichiryu Shonin's doctrine which said that practitioners can instantly become Jogyo Boddhisattva; becoming a Buddha with one's present body? It means that practitioners participating in the religion granted to us by Jogyo Bosatsu became a family of Jogyo Boddhisattva, who is the manifestation of the primordial Eternal Buddha.

Why is Jogyo Boddhisattva an instantaneous Buddha? An instantaneous Buddha means to become a Buddha for the genuine cause of Buddhahood. For example, people are transported across a large river by a boat from one shore to the other. In this instance, the boatman is transporting people from the Saha World and dropping them off in the Buddha Land. The boatman, once again, returns to the Saha World with an empty boat. This act of repeated practices is the way of Buddha and is the true form of enlightenment. In other words, chanting the Odaimoku by oneself and recommending the practices of the way of Buddha to others are enlightenment and the moment to moment practices of building merits of Buddhahood are indications of instantaneous enlightenment. So, enlightenment is not only the result of practice, but practice itself through chanting the Odaimoku.

Nichiryu Shonin's view of Gohonzon (The Object of Worship)

The Ichinen Sanzen Theory of Nichiryu Shonin isn't the only factor. Rather, everything is based on Ji or "active". For example, Ji no Ichinen Sanzen, Ji no Honzon, Ji no Goriyaku.

The Ji no Honzon is "The Active Object of Worship of the Ten Worlds", the ten realms of living beings. Nichiren Shonin inscribed the Odaimoku in the center of the mandala, which is flanked by Shakamuni Buddha on the right of it and Taho Nyorai on the left. The names of future buddhas and Guardian Kings of Heaven are also inscribed on the mandala. The mandala illustrates that all buddhas, future buddhas and Guardian Kings of Heaven are all gathered together on the first stage of the "Four Stages of Faith" and "Five Stages of Practice" as faithful beginners are in the state of faith, understanding, and rejoicing. They are all facing the Odaimoku and chanting NamuMyohoRengeKyo.

In the case of the Nichiren Shu sects, they maintain that the scripture is not NamuMyohoRengeKyo but MyohoRengeKyo and "Namu" is just a prefix added to MyohoRengeKyo inscribed in the center of the Gohonzon which is the Gohonzon of the Odaimoku, and not the scripture of MyohoRengeKyo. To define it in another way, the mandala itself is chanting the Odaimoku. The mandala itself is active. Both the mandala and the practitioners are chanting the Odaimoku in unison. The buddhas, future buddhas and Guardian Kings of Heaven are all gathered together on the First Stage of the Four Stages of Faith and Five Stages of Practice known as faithful beginners who are chanting the Odaimoku together. This aspect is the mandala of the Ten Worlds. This is the condition of Ji no Gohonzon.

The One Session of Fine Congregation, (Myoko Ichiza), which was edited by Nissen Shonin states:

May all the saints to be invoked from the ten worlds, who leave their position as saints and recite as faithful beginners the sacred syllables, NamuMyohoRengeKyo, intensify the light of their wisdom, be adorned with the pleasure of the Buddha, become one with the Buddha mind and embrace us with compassion.

This is the form of the original religion of the Eternal Buddha. It is an example for us to follow. To accept this religious form of practices is indeed the substance of planting the seeds of Buddhahood. Facing the Ji no Gohonzon and chanting NamuMyohoRengeKyo is Ji no Ichinen Sanzen and by doing so, we enter into the Gohonzon and accomplish the Honnin Myo no Jobutsu and Ji no Jobutsu, and, thus, can receive the Ji no Goriyaku (Merits). This is Nichiryu Shonin's theory of planting into the minds

of all living beings, the genuine cause of Buddhahood.

There is an expression, "Kyochi Myogo", the object and subject being united as one. What is HBS's stand on the relationship of "Kyo" (the object) and "Chi" (the subject)?

The scripture, which is revered by priests and practitioners, generally is the mirror, an object. The priests and the practitioners who worship the Gohonzon by chanting the Odaimoku are the subject. According to Tendai Shu sect's logic, the law of society embodied in the souls is the mirror, the object, and the persons who are observing are the subject. However, it is just the opposite of HBS's concept. The Gohonzon is the subject and we, the practitioners who practice the religion are the object. The Gohonzon emits rays of light toward us. The various buddhas, future buddhas, and the Guardian Kings of Heaven who are our saviours embodied in the Gohonzon are the subject. In other words, according to Nichiryu Shonin's teachings, the Theories on the Scripture, Enlightenment, Practices and Emancipation were all based on the teachings of the eight chapters—15 through 22— of the Lotus Sutra producing a single moment's faith of understanding and rejoicing by chanting the Odaimoku in unison by the practitioners.

The Genealogy of HBS IV

Nissen Shonin's way of practice and propagation

As I mentioned before, Nissen Shonin struggled to realize the true intention of Nichiren Shonin through the guide of Nichiryu Shonin like a pilot of a boat. Finally, he believed:

The messenger of Buddha Shakamuni was the great teacher Nichiren Shonin. The messenger of Nichiren Shonin was Nichiryu Shonin, whose messenger is Nissen. It was Nichiryu Shonin who reestablished the Lotus School, so, I'm nothing but the one who is restoring the teaching of Nichiryu Shonin. Since the correct teaching has been transmitted to me Nissen, so aren't I undoubtedly the messenger of Shakamuni Tathagata.

—*Goshogyohaiken*—811

Nissen Shonin was an intuitive, shrewd person endowed with a strong and individualistic character. Nissen Shonin also had a self-conceited pride of being the successor to Nichiryu Shonin and Nichiren Shonin, messengers of Buddha.

Nissen Shonin was also an intelligent and understanding person, who was interested in creating civil advancements, and even after passing the age of 70, he did not lose his free and open-minded trait, a trait usually exhibited by literary scholars. Nissen Shonin portrayed himself as a man-about-town by claiming, "I am an ignorant snob", a statement he often used. Nissen considered the spreading of the teachings of Nichiren Shonin as his first priority in everything he did. His natural talents were useful in developing new approaches to preach the teachings in simple and easy comprehensible language. He used many parables and illustrations to explain how one can live in the Mappo Period.

Improving the Teachings of HBS

Nissen Shonin wrote approximately 3,400 Kyokas (instructive verses) and Haiku (17-syllable poems). He also utilized various ancient Japanese classics and other literary styles such as imayo (essays), shi (poems), yokyo-ku (ballads), komori-uta (lullabies), karuta (a card game), nagauta, jiuta, yoshikono,

dodoitsu, as formats to expound the teachings.

HBS strictly abides by the guiding principles set forth by Nissen Shonin's teachings (Goshinan, Gokyoka) in conducting their daily religious activities. An explanation will not be made in depth now as it is complicated and difficult to comprehend. Therefore, only several of Nissen Shonin's teachings will be enumerated.

Religion to Attain Nirvana

Meritorious acts and results or meritorious acts and comfort are the basic doctrines of Buddhism. A person who does not pursue religious practices called In (cause), will not be able to attain Nirvana. The true intent of religious practices advocated by Nichiren Shonin and the Lotus Sutra teachings began to deteriorate gradually with the introduction of the Tokugawa feudal government's Buddhist parishioner system (Danka Seido) about 400 years ago. This system was promulgated to suppress Christianity and to control and regulate religious practices. Affiliation to temples was based on one's place of residence. The priests of temples were assured of a stable livelihood based on this system. Consequently, the priests lost their interest in teaching religion and focused their attention primarily to holding perfunctory services for the deceased and funeral related activities.

Nissen Shonin revived the teachings of Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin, who lived during the early part of the Muromachi Era (about 600 years ago), because deeply convinced that the Honmon Happon was a special teaching for the Mappo Period. The Honmon Happon are the teachings of the 8 chapters (Chapters 15–22 of the Lotus Sutra). The Honmon Happon is the most important stance of HBS. That is to chant the Odaimoku oneself and to spread it to others. Nissen Shonin, himself, chanted the Odaimoku and entered into the religion of the Hokke Shu sect (a Nichiren sect) founded by Nichiryu Shonin. Nissen Shonin later became a priest.

The Hokke sect of the time, however, like many other religious sects which took advantage of the danka system, had already lost its basic role of spreading the teaching of Buddhism. Sects of the time merely attended to holding ceremonies for the deceased and funeral services to justify their existence. The priests believed that the deceased could attain Buddhahood vicariously through the rite held by reciting the Lotus Sutra.

Nissen Shonin said; "People can comfort the soul of the deceased, but to attain Nirvana is a different dimension. The belief that one can attain Nirvana without direct contribution to the Buddhist cause is in direct conflict with Nichiren Shonin's teachings and distorts the true principles of Buddhism." Nissen Shonin carried on his enlightenment activities despite the criticism of other priests who had relied on the parishioner system.

Nissen Shonin stated:

On examination of Buddhist teaching, the essence of Buddhism is to show the substance of the human mind and to awaken people to its true form, from which various teachings are all developed and constructed. This is Honmon Butsuryu Shu's way of teaching, which discards encyclopedic knowledge and adopts the learning of the quintessence. Moreover this is beneficial to living people. So—called "Funeral Buddhism" which gives all its energies to funeral rites and memorial services for the dead is not the true intention of Buddhism. Though it is an important duty to hold memorial services for one's ancestors and benefactors, the true intention of Buddhism is to teach the living. —Kaidoyoketsu—811

Chanting Only the Odaimoku

The basic practice of HBS is chanting the "Odaimoku".

Buddhist practices are achieved through the body, speech and mind. The use of the bodily organs to utter words, think and feel is also a practice. They are considered as behavioral actions.

From ancient times, the sutra Hokke Kyo (Lotus Sutra) was considered as the "King of Sutras". It was revered by many people. However, there was a lack of uniformity in how the Lotus Sutra was practiced. This was because there were so many ways to pursue the body, mouth and mind practices contained in the Lotus Sutra. To explain it roughly, the practices were divided into two, one for the elite and the other for the commoners.

Nichiren Shonin, who appeared during the Kamakura era (750 years ago) felt that people born in the Mappo Period were mediocre individuals lacking in the ability to practice elite religious practices. Therefore, he felt that more emphasis should be placed on the more simple task of practice by the mouth, that is chanting of the Odaimoku, NamuMyohoRengeKyo.

No matter what type of practice it may be, the aim of Buddhist practices is "Tenmei Kaigo" (to attain enlightenment), to wash away perplexities and impurities and to raise one's soul to the level of Buddha through meritorious acts. This is known as "Kanjin" (introspection into one's mind—essence). Through repeated chanting of the Odaimoku the soul will receive the merits of Kanjin.

Nissen Shonin stated:

By chanting NamuMyohoRengeKyo which is revealed in the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra, entrusted to the Bodhisattva Jogyo and plants in the minds of all living beings the seed, the genuine cause of Buddhahood, one will produce all kinds of merit. If one listens to the chanting voice for even a moment, one can surely attain the Buddhist way. How much more so will it be if you feel grateful for the Odaimoku. One thought of faith will lead you to attain the Buddha—land. The Buddha's enlightenment is attained by chanting the Odaimoku. As a result, the three poisons (greed, anger, stupidity) with which our hearts have been stained are eradicated, and the five sins (to kill, to steal, to satisfy lust, to tell lies, to use indecent language) which have been accumulated since the past and are now lurking within ourselves will be eliminated through a moment's thought of faith when chanting the Odaimoku. Ordinary men as they are will be given the Buddha's merits. Nichiren Shonin said that practitioners of the Lotus Sutra would be able to become a Buddha without extinguishing evil passions and eliminating the five desires. How fortunate we are!

—Kaidoyoketsu—869

Today, there are many Nichiren associated sects which do not chant the Odaimoku. They merely recite the sutras. HBS is a sect which carries out the will (teachings) of Nichiren Shonin and chants the Odaimoku. Nichiren Shonin said, "When entering into the Mappo Period, there is no need for other teachings and recitation of the Lotus Sutra. Only the chanting of NamuMyohoRengeKyo is required. Do not mix other teachings with the Odaimoku. Also, reciting other sutras will not be tolerated".

Nissen Shonin also stated:

Those who have no knowledge of the reason simply regard NamuMyohoRengeKyo as the title of a sutra, but that is wrong. NamuMyohoRengeKyo is neither the characters nor the meaning which the characters suggest. It is the original entity and soul on which the Lotus Sutra, composed of 69,384 characters in 8 scrolls, is produced and developed. Therefore it is called the profound

secret principles enshrined deep in the heart of the writings of the sutra. NamuMyohoRengeKyo is none other than the Buddha's enlightenment or his life. Isn't it a matter for deep satisfaction that you can listen to such a precious teaching as this, having obtained a human body. Casting away your self—pride and prejudice, you should exclusively chant NamuMyohoRenge-Kyo which was entrusted to Bodhisattva Jogyo.

—Daizoichiyo—863

The Pure Religion

One of the essential characteristics of HBS is that it does not revere any other scriptures or images except mandalas with the Odaimoku.

As mentioned before, the Lotus Sutra is the most respected sutra. The first reason is, Shotoku Taishi, in the introduction of one of his books wrote, “the sutra called the Lotus Sutra includes all goodness to attain enlightenment, and is a pasture of abundant crops to gain enlightenment and is a religious medicine that transforms life expectancy into eternal life. Shotoku Taishi continued, Shakamuni Buddha appeared in this world to explain the Lotus Sutra to people and give them a reason to acquire enlightenment. He wanted them to receive matchless religious merits.

As stated, the Lotus Sutra contains all of Buddha Shakamuni's teachings. It unified and incorporated the sutras of others in which buddhas, bodhisattvas and guardian kings of heaven appear and elaborated on their basic teachings. Because the Lotus Sutra was such a consolidated and synthetic sutra, its teachings could not stabilize and its goal began to take on a free and uninhibited form. If every Buddha were to be included, the recitation of the name of Buddha Amida could be considered practicing the Lotus Sutra, and in the same way to revering the scripture of Kanzeon Bodhisattva could also be considered revering the Lotus Sutra, to make a vow to Kishimojin would also be considered the practice of the Lotus Sutra. This trend became a generally accepted idea from the Heian period.

Nichiren Shonin said, “Buddhas are children. The Fine Dharma is the parent. Buddhas are the body. The Fine Dharma is a soul” (Honzon Mondo Sho). “The Fine Dharma is the parent, thus the Buddhist body is created” (Jussho—sho). Therefore, revere the Odaimoku of the Lotus Sutra.

Since there are some technical words used above, an allegory is given below for clarification.

The Odaimoku mandala of the Lotus Sutra is like a large tree. Buddhas, future buddhas and others are the many parts that comprise the tree, like the branches and leaves. To display Buddhist images etc, in front of the Odaimoku mandala and to pray to them is like breaking off the branches. Those branches which are broken from the tree will soon wither and die.

The scripture written by Nichiren Shonin contains the names of the various buddhas to the right and left of the Odaimoku mandala. Nichiren Shonin designated this mandala the object of worship.

In compliance with the teachings of Nichiren Shonin, Nichiren sects initially revered the Odaimoku mandala. As time passed, some Nichiren related sects diverged and began to display objects of guardian kings of heaven, such as Daimokuten, Kishimojin, Taishakuten and others. This led to the origination of different Nichiren religious sects.

Nissen Shonin, the founder of HBS, felt that those Nichiren sects were in direct conflict with the true intent of the religion taught by Nichiren Shonin. He proposed that the only object to be revered was the Odaimoku mandala, and forbade his followers to worship other objects.

In view of Nissen Shonin's strict posture, HBS was denounced by other sects as narrow-minded and too strict.

To this criticism, Nissen Shonin responded, “A faithful wife cannot look after two husbands. A warrior cannot serve two lords”. The basic law contains thousands of laws, so HBS cannot have two objects of

worship. The Lotus Sutra stated, “ashes are not of concern and there is no need to worship a cinerary urn”. Nichiren Shonin said, “I am not narrow—minded. I am only faithful to the Lotus Sutra. The soul of Buddha is included in the Odaimoku. Uphold the Lotus Sutra and ignore the others. To shun the soul of the Lotus Sutra is to deprive one of receiving special favors”.

Nissen Shonin stated:

Since a person can attain his or her dignity through Buddhist law, Buddhist law is far more important than buddhas and bodhisattvas. This is the reason why the Honmon Butsuryu Shu worships the Fine Dharma, the cause of all the buddhas, as the Sacred Object. HBS does not worship any one Buddha. In comparison with the Fine Dharma, even the Buddha with eternal glorious decorations of meritorious acts is not comparable. Because the Dharma one believes and upholds is so precious, the believer becomes a person of noble character who will in return purify the defiled world. It is aptly said that even the Primordial Buddha in the remote past did not give his name as Buddha but entrusted the Fine Dharma to Bodhisattva Jogyo in order to save this world. The Fine Dharma is the only seed that enables people to attain Buddhahood. This is exactly what Nichiren Shonin said. He said that the Buddhist teaching of Lotus Sutra expounds how to perform the practice based on chanting the Odaimoku, but scholars of other sects have no knowledge of this, that the ordinary people in the Mappo Period must worship the Odaimoku as the Sacred Object.

—Daizoichiyo—823

Nichiren Shonin set the quintessence before everything and said that the Fine Dharma is the quintessence for the attainment of Buddhahood. On examination of Nichiren Shonin's thoughts after his period of his exile on Sado Island through his writings, I have understood that the Sacred Object of Worship should be the Odaimoku, the sole and most precious Dharma that includes everything, so I created the Sacred Object of Worship by writing “NamuMyohoRengeKyo” which is revealed in the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra is entrusted to the Bodhisattva Jogyo and plants in the minds of all living beings the seed, the genuine cause of Buddhahood “with the phrase” the Greatest Entity of the Three Most Important”. Those who received this object of worship but did not understand the reason criticized it saying that the Odaimoku alone does not make the Object of Worship and it could hardly be called the mandala including all the ten realms when one of them is missing, since none of the Four Heavenly Kings such as Tamonten is described in this Object of Worship. Nichiren Shonin, however, translated the mandala as an accumulation of merits and said that the mandala is the aspect representing all the merits accumulated in NamuMyoho-RengeKyo. It is also written in “The Deep Meaning of the Lotus Sutra” written by Great Master Tendai that NamuMyohoRengeKyo is the entity of one thought of the Primordial Buddha and contains all the merits of enlightenment called Ichinen Sanzen or “Three Thousand Realms in a Moment's Thought”. Therefore ordinary people in the evil period of the Last Dharma must worship the Odaimoku as the Sacred Object of Worship. This is why it is called the greatest Mandala that ever existed after Buddha Shakamuni's passing away.

—Kaido Yoketsu—825

Importance of Manifested Evidence

Nichiren Shonin used three kind of evidence to judge the superiority of the law of Buddhism: reason

(logical substantiation), scriptural evidence (documents of Buddhist teachings, and manifest evidence (proven evidence). He mainly emphasized manifest evidence by stating that religious laws are not limited to reason of documents. Manifest evidence is more important than reasoning or documents.

Nissen Shonin wanted positive missionary work to be undertaken and by doing such work, manifest evidence can be seen in the form of the sick being cured or the poor being freed from poverty.

Nissen Shonin's activities generated criticism from priests of other sects because they felt that his line of missionary work that advocated inexplicable phenomenon was inappropriate for the present world thinking. Nissen Shonin, however, replied, "There are many people who feel that there is no heaven or hell in this Mappo Period. The intellectuals feel that to pray to God or Buddha is shameful and they do not feel the importance of afterlife. Therefore, if one can experience the phenomenon as a result of one's missionary work, then ordinary people may partake in religion in the future": Thus, Nissen Shonin continued to preach and emphasize the existence of inexplicable phenomenon which one can receive through fervent missionary work.

HBS advocates that through fervent praying and chanting of the Odaimoku, one can receive favorable results.

Bodhisattva Practice

The benefits as manifest evidence that one can receive through chanting the Odaimoku are not the sole objective of HBS. As Nissen Shonin said; "The divine favor in this world is for the aspiration after enlightenment". As such, it is to become aware of the Odaimoku and the evidence of reality and take the opportunity to further deepen one's religious activities".

What then is a higher level of the faith? It is the faith based on the Lotus Sutra. We should recommend it to others and share its religious merits with them. To help people through the Odaimoku is true help. To engage in such activities is the path to attain Buddhahood.

Honmon Butsuryu Shu (HBS)

A short biography of Nissen Shonin written by MURAKAMI Shigeyoshi, Lecturer on Buddhism, Tokyo University, recorded in the Japan Religion Encyclopedia. Publisher: Kodansha

NAGAMATSU NISSEN

The Honmon Butsuryu Ko (later known as HBS) was established in Kyoto by its followers in the last days of the Tokugawa regime. HBS was a pioneer of the new Buddhist religious movements which made remarkable progress during the Meiji era.

Nagamatsu Seifu Nissen (Nissen Shonin), the founder of HBS, was born in 1817 in Kyoto to a merchant family. Nissen was a student of MATSUZAKI Kodo, a renowned scholar of Japanese classical literature in Tokyo. Nissen was recognized as a brilliant, extraordinary scholar, a poet, an artist and a teacher of calligraphy before he reached the age of 30. Having doubts about the deep meaning of life, Nissen Shonin researched the teachings of Shingon, Tendai, Zen, and Hokke sects. Concluding that the "Homon" teachings (the essential chapters—11 to 22—of the Lotus Sutra) were superior to the other sutras, Nissen Shonin entered Ryusenji Temple of the Honmon Hokke Shu on Awaji Island, Hyogo Prefecture, in 1848 and vowed to become a priest, his long—cherished desire.

Although Nissen, who was burning with an inspiration to further his studies on Buddhism to save the people from the miseries of this world in the Mappo Period, he was prevented from entering the most prestigious school of Buddhism, located in the Honkoji Temple compound, by the stagnant and spiritless Honmon Hokke Sect. Denied entrance into the school and the road to become an educated priest, Nissen Shonin, in despair, left Amagasaki and returned to Kyoto, where he engaged himself in spreading the teachings of the Lotus Sutra as a lay priest.

About the same time, a controversy existed among the priests of Hokke Shu regarding the methods for attainment of Buddhahood. One group favored the "Sanzu Jobutsu" (the three realms to attain Buddhahood) theory and the other, the Sanzu Fu—Jobutsu" (the three realms were not necessary) group.

Reverend Fukuoka's clarification of Sanz Fu—Jobutsu and Sanzu Jobutsu:

Sanzu Fu-Jobutsu—Only through the chanting of the Odaimoku can one attain Buddhahood, favored by the reformist group.

Sanzu Jobutsu—Through praying for the deceased one can attain Buddhahood, favored by the conservative group.

This controversy was an extremely important aspect for the teaching principles of Hokke Shu, and Nissen Shonin supported the "Sanzu Fu—Jobutsu" reformist group.

Nissen became a lay priest in 1855 and began spreading the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. On January 1, 1857, Nissen Shonin founded HBS with TANIGAWA Asahichi, a merchant, and six other close friends at his home.

After the fall of the Tokugawa feudalistic government in Kyoto, the people were experiencing hardships from the political reform of the Meiji Restoration. Although Nissen Shonin, as a lay priest, continued his teachings of Nichiren Shonin to the disenchanted people, he met repeated oppressions and obstructions from various priests of other sects and government officials. Nonetheless, Nissen Shonin did not deviate from his stance of "possessing a genuine spirit to save the people, one should not be dispirited by interferences".

Two years after HBS was founded in Kyoto, it branched out to the Otsu (Shiga Prefecture) and Osaka areas. A Head Priest, Nichiben, a disciple of Nichiren Shonin built the Yuseiji Temple in Kitano, Kyoto (now the main temple of HBS) and used it as a training school for HBS's priests. It was also used as the headquarters from where the teachings of the Lotus Sutra were spread.

PHENOMENON MERITS AND DANKA PRINCIPLES

Nissen is referred to as the "founder" or "organizer" of HBS, which was founded under the laws of the Lotus Sutra. HBS's teachings are primarily based on the principle of its followers receiving phenomenal religious merits in this world by chanting the Odaimoku and spreading it to others in the Mappo Period. Nissen Shonin organized the followers into various small groups in areas of their respective homes and taught them the teachings of Nichiren Shonin after "Oko" praying sessions. Nissen Shonin stated: "My real intention is to preach the teachings of Nichiren Shonin to the followers in their homes so that they can receive phenomenal merits through the chanting of the Odaimoku". The teachings were taught by simple "Gokyoka" (verses). The followers were also taught to hold praying sessions for the ill, "Ojogyo", and the water, "Okozui", offered at the altar, which contains the merits of the Odaimoku, should be drunk by the followers for their well-being and taken by the sick to cure their illness.

NISSEN SHONIN'S ACTIVITIES TO SPREAD HBS

Nissen Shonin's efforts to spread the teachings to denounce and suppress evil and embrace the good were met with repeated oppressions from the priests of the other sects and by the government. He was imprisoned 3 times and purged 8 times before and after the Meiji Restoration, but being a person of strong determination, he utilized the powers of the officials of the Tokugawa Shogunates as well as the officials of the government to enhance the position of HBS.

Nissen Shonin's biting criticism and bold conviction to bring about reform within the Buddhist world brought about intense animosity, antipathy and a whirlpool of hostilities from his opponents within his own sect as well as from outside. Nissen Shonin was an intuitive, shrewd person endowed with strong

and individualistic character. Nissen Shonin also had a self-conceited pride of being the successor to Saint Nichiryu and Nichiren Shonin, a messenger of Buddha. Harassment against Nissen Shonin incessantly increased during his lifetime and he was even labeled an evil priest.

Nissen Shonin was an intelligent and understanding person, who was interested in creating civil advancements, and even after passing the age of 70, he did not lose his free and open-minded trait which was usually exhibited by literary scholars. Nissen Shonin portrayed himself as a man-about-town by claiming, "I am an ignorant snob", a statement he often used. Nissen Shonin considered the spreading of the teachings of Nichiren Shonin as his first priority in everything he did. His natural talents were useful in developing new approaches to preach the teachings in simple and easy comprehensible language. He used many parables and illustrations to explain how one can live in the Mappo Period.

IMPROVING THE TEACHINGS OF HBS

Nissen Shonin wrote approximately 3,380 kyokas (instructive verses) and (17-syllable poems). He also utilized various ancient Japanese classics and songs, such as imayo (essays), shi (poems), yokyo-ku (ballads), komori-uta (lullabies), karuta (a card game), nagauta, jiuta, yoshikono, dodoitsu, as formats to expound the teachings.

Nissen Shonin, as a lay priest, enthusiastically continued to exert his efforts in reforming HBS's doctrines to keep pace with the changing times and to maintain its permanency.

Through his training, experiences and chanting the Odaimoku as well as spreading its teachings, Nissen attained a state of "true faith". Nissen died in July 1890 at the age of 74 on his way to Osaka to preside at an "Oko" service.

LIFE (INOCHI)

Written by Rei Nakanishi

Composed by Hiroshi Akutagawa

A sacred song in praise of Nissen Shonin, the founder and great leader of HBS

NamuMyohoRengeKyo, NamuMyohoRengeKyo,

Chanting the Odaimoku, the sacred five syllables,

We desire to attain Buddhahood.

NamuMyohoRengeKyo, NamuMyohoRengeKyo,

The sacred five syllables, MyohoRengeKyo, are

The Buddha's life that allows us to live.

The rain of mercy and compassion for grass.

The song of boatmen who traverse the sea of suffering.

When we are happy being in peace.

The Buddha rejoices together with us.

The chanted Odaimoku embraces the whole creation causing us to have faith and understanding of the Buddha's teaching in one moment's thought.

In which the Buddha is seen.

In the rare land we understand

That all beings are Buddha in essence.

Bliss, merit or faith, lie in living with the Buddha.

Chant the sacred five syllables like breathing

Chant the sacred five syllables even in a dream.

Let's make our way for the Buddha's teaching

Endless advancement, infinite improvement!

Let's follow the way, guided by Nissen Shonin

The practice is the only way to the Treasure Land.

Indeed within myself.

Let us save all living beings

Beyond the period of the Last Dharma,

Let us compassionately convert all who tread the wrong path with all our might.

Coated in the robe of patience

Nissen Shonin, our great preacher!

We, true sons and daughters of the Buddha.

Our lives are nursed under your great wings.

Nissen Shonin, our great preacher!

Looking up at the sky

We see your wings emitting golden light.

We are grateful living with you.

Together with the Eternal Buddha

Living in this Saha world in eternal joy.

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The Reverend Nisso R Fukuoka

Author

born in 1945 in Kobe city, Japan, and graduated from Kansei Gakuin University in 1968. His major subjects were Linguistics and Sociology. When he was a college student, he was an outstanding athlete. When he was 21, he became a priest of Honmon Butsuryu Shu. Since then he has been studying Buddhism, especially Nichiren Buddhism. As a teacher, he has been teaching at the school of HBS to young priests for 25 years and has also been devoting himself to missionary work in USA, Italy and Sri Lanka for many years. He is the head priest of Kofuji temple in Kobe. Among Nisso Fukuoka's published works are *The Teaching of Honmon Butsuryu Shu* (in English), *Kokoro no Takara*, *Konna Ikikata Shitemitara*, *Jinsei wo Tsukuru Hinto*, and so on.