

Selected Lectures on the Goshō—"The True Object of Worship" [now #39 in WND Pages 354-382 The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind Established in the Fifth Five-hundred-Year Period after the Thus Come One's Passing]

Q33: What does the Daishonin mean when he talks about "Shakyamuni" and "the Lotus Sutra" from the standpoint of his own enlightenment? (Pp. 207–09)

The Daishonin expounded in the Ongi Kuden (his oral teachings of the Lotus Sutra, compiled by Nikko Shonin): "Nam derives from Sanskrit and signifies devotion. There are two objects of devotion: the Person, which is Shakyamuni, and the Law, which is the Lotus Sutra. " The Daishonin used "Shakyamuni" and "Buddha" to mean exactly the same thing whenever he talked about the Lotus Sutra from the viewpoint of his own enlightenment. In the above quotation "Shakyamuni" indicates not Gautama Buddha of India, but the original Buddha who revealed the supreme teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as hidden within the Juryo chapter of the Lotus Sutra. If the original Buddha appeared in the Latter Day of the Law as Nichiren Daishonin, then what is the Lotus Sutra referred to in the passage above? It is not the twenty-eight-chapter Lotus Sutra expounded by Gautama Buddha, for the Daishonin wrote in Reply to Lord Ueno, "Now in the Latter Day of the Law neither the Lotus Sutra nor the other sutras are valid. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo alone is valid. " Whenever the Daishonin speaks of spreading the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day, he means the essence of the sutra, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Thus, "devotion to Shakyamuni and the Lotus Sutra" means "devotion to Nichiren Daishonin and Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. "

Q34: Explain the inscription of the Gohonzon in terms of the Person and the Law. (Pp. 207–10)

The following passages speak of the object of worship in terms of the Person: "The object of worship in the Juryo chapter is Shakyamuni, the Buddha appearing in this world who has possessed the three enlightened properties of life* since time without beginning" (from On the Three Great Secret Laws); "Throughout the world as well as in Japan all people should revere Shakyamuni of true Buddhism as the object of worship" (from Requital for the Buddha's Favor).

(Page 208) The Daishonin describes the object of worship alternately as the Person and the Law in order to clearly establish that the Person and the Law are united in the Gohonzon; or, the Person is the Law, and the Law is the Person. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the life of Nichiren Daishonin, and he embodied it in the form of a mandala. That is the Gohonzon. The Ongi Kuden passage quoted above assumes the oneness of the Person and the Law, as the Daishonin declares elsewhere in the same Goshō: "The supreme title of the Buddha who is originally endowed with the three enlightened properties of life is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. "

Q35: What is the meaning of the three powerful enemies in terms of Nichiren Daishonin's life? (Pp. 210–11)

By confronting and overcoming terrible, continuing persecutions, the Daishonin lived out all the predictions in the Lotus Sutra of the trials that those who propagate the Mystic Law in the Latter Day are destined to meet.

Because of his supreme compassion to save all people from their suffering, the Daishonin endured the worst sort of adversity for more than twenty years. Persecutions began from the moment he engaged in the propagation of the Mystic Law. In Buddhism, opposition by those in power is traditionally considered the most severe and unpredictable of the "three powerful enemies. " The Daishonin incurred the wrath of that enemy when he first remonstrated with the government, submitting his treatise, Risshō Ankoku Ron (The Security of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism). Problems might never have arisen had the Daishonin not

translated his boundless compassion into action. As he later wrote in the Gosho, "My present exile is not because of any crime. " He did not incur the anger of the government for breach of law or custom, but because he expressed his compassion through his actions. The government's fear of him only reflected the magnitude of the actions he took

Q36: In Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, what does it mean to "observe one's mind and to find the Ten Worlds within it"? (p. 213)

What is the meaning of kanjin? A passage from this Gosho says, "Kanjin means to observe one's own mind and to find the Ten Worlds within it. " The Daishonin added that just as a person cannot see his own face without a mirror, one cannot see the Ten Worlds in his own mind without the mirror of Buddhism. Another passage in the same Gosho reads, "... various sutras make reference here and there to the six paths and the four noble worlds [that constitute the Ten Worlds], but only in the clear mirror of the Lotus Sutra and T'ien-t'ai's Maka Shikan (Great Concentration and Insight) can one see his own three thousand conditions --- the Ten Worlds, their mutual possession, and the thousand factors. " As is clear from this passage, kanjin means to see ichinen sanzen, three thousand potential states, in a momentary existence of life. Yet, ichinen sanzen is the truth of one's life, confined to the realm of theory. The Daishonin concludes that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the concrete entity of ichinen sanzen, the ultimate reality containing three thousand potential states of life. Therefore, "to observe one's own mind and to find the Ten Worlds within it" means perceiving one's life to be the entity of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Q37: What is the difference between "a Buddha" and "a common mortal"? (p. 214)

The existing fact that every individual person is inherently the entity of the Mystic Law is not the same as the actual attainment of Buddhahood. If it meant Buddhahood, then there would be no difference between the Buddha and the common man, nor would there be any need for Buddhist faith and practice. The question is whether or not each individual awakens to the realization that he or she is an entity of the Mystic Law. The Kanjin no Honzon Sho describes the attainment of the supreme state of Buddhahood in one's own life. When people awaken to their true entity, they attain Buddhahood; one who does not remains an ordinary mortal. This is, as you know, what the Daishonin means in The True Entity of Life: "There is a clear distinction between a Buddha and a common mortal, in that a common mortal is deluded while a Buddha is enlightened. The common mortal fails to realize that he himself possesses both the entity and the function of the Buddha's three properties."

Q38: What tends to result from having a "subservient attitude" toward an object of worship [devotion]? (p. 216)

People have a subservient attitude in prayer when asking for salvation, forgiveness and compassion, or in some cases, try by subservience to satisfy those powers and avoid their wrath. Such attitudes have contributed to creating the special position of the clergy as intermediaries between man and his object of worship. The pursuit of external objects symbolizing the supernatural inevitably leads to the formation of a strict hierarchy in the religious world. This extended to the secular world, where the aristocracy, especially chieftains and kings, were often said to be sanctioned by the divine grace, which led to rigid social stratification as well. That is why so many religious groups developed negative, inhumane ideas about human dignity and equality.

Q39: Discuss the Three Great Secret Laws in terms of the One Great Secret Law (pp. 217–18)

Finally, I want to discuss kanjin no honzon in relation to the Three Great Secret Laws. Three comprise the Gohonzon which is the object of worship of the supreme teaching; chanting daimoku with firm faith in the Gohonzon; and kaidan, the sanctuary of the supreme teaching, which is the place where the Gohonzon resides. In essence, however, all three are contained in the One Great Secret Law: the Gohonzon-the object of worship for observing one's mind. The object of worship of the supreme teaching is the life of the Buddha of absolute freedom who is in perfect harmony with the universe. The daimoku of the supreme teaching is Nam- myoho- rengo-kyo --- the name of the original Buddha enlightened in the three properties of life. That is why Nichiren Daishonin stated in the Debates on the Object of Worship: "They should make the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra the object of worship. " Similarly, dan of kaidan (literally, sanctuary for ordination) is the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit mandala, and essentially it means that the Gohonzon is the "sanctuary. " The idea of sanctuary has its origin in ancient India, from the altar that was set up as a place where priests received precepts. It is said that the Four Heavenly Kings* were positioned at the four corners of the sanctuary to ward off demons, and a statue of the Buddha was enshrined in the center to dignify the ceremony for priests taking vows.

Questions 40–41 are based on President Ikeda's explanation of the following quote:

An arbitrary interpretation of these quotations may distort their meaning, but in essence they mean that Shakyamuni's practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the single phrase, Myoho-rengo-kyo. If we believe in that phrase, we shall naturally be granted the same benefits as he was. Unquote.

Q40:In this passage, Nichiren Daishonin explains the principle of "embracing the Gohonzon is attaining Buddhahood" (*juji soku kanjin*). Explain this principle in terms of practice. (Pp. 240–45)
That is why Nichikan Shonin, the twenty-sixth High Priest, explains the Gohonzon in The Exegesis of The True Object of Worship: This Gohonzon provides great and boundless benefits. Its mystic functions are vast and profound. so if you take faith in this Gohonzon and chant Nam-myoho-rengo-kyo even for a while, no prayer will go unanswered, no sin will remain unforgiven, all good fortune will be bestowed, and all righteousness proven.

This passage has profound significance, but first let me explain it literally. It means that all the virtues Shakyamuni Buddha attained through practices in past existences and all the benefits he acquired through his efforts to save people after attaining Buddhahood in this life are contained in Myoho-rengo-kyo. By embracing this Mystic Law, therefore, we will naturally receive all his virtues and benefits.

Q41: Beyond its literal meaning, how should we interpret the phrase "Shakyamuni's practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the single phrase Myoho-rengo-kyo" from the standpoint of the Daishonin's intent? (Pp. 242–44)

Nichikan Shonin classifies them into six categories in The Exegesis of The True Object of Worship. "Shakyamuni" here refers to the six types of the Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha revealed himself in different ways according to the depth of his teachings, as he expounded zokyo (Hinayana teachings), tsugyo (lower provisional Mahayana teachings), bekkyo (higher provisional Mahayana teachings) and engyo (true Mahayana). Engyo indicates the Lotus Sutra which consists of the theoretical and the essential teachings. The Buddha's five appearances in the zokyo, tsugyo, bekkyo and the two halves of the Lotus Sutra fall under the category of Shakyamuni's Buddhism, while Nichiren Daishonin reveals his identity as the Buddha of the Latter Day who expounds Nam-myoho-rengo-kyo- the ultimate law of life hidden in the depths of the Juryo (sixteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. In this connection, the Daishonin is also called "Shakyamuni, " expounded in the in-depth

interpretation of the Lotus Sutra. "Shakyamuni's practices and the virtues he consequently attained" in the Gosho text not only refers to the aspects of Shakyamuni mentioned above, but also any other Buddha. That is why Nichikan Shonin states in his Exegesis of The True Object of Worship: The practices of all Buddhas and all their resultant virtues are contained in the five characters of the Mystic Law. The benefits of the Gohonzon are therefore vast and boundless. Its mystic functions are vast and profound. Any mention of Shakyamuni in the passage therefore represents all Buddhas and the virtues they attained.

Q42: What is the difference between the Buddhism of the True Cause and that of the True Effect? (p. 246)

The major difference between the Buddhism of the True Cause and that of the True Effect hinges upon the interpretation of the true nature of the moment, which, endlessly succeeding itself, is the manifestation of what we call life. Buddhism of the True Effect refers to the past-oriented attitude which defines the present only as the result of the past, adhering to the results, whereas Buddhism of the True Cause is the belief that the present changes into a cause for the future.

Q43: How can those who believe in the Gohonzon today, in the Latter Day of the Law, apply the message of the Parable of the Three Carts and the Burning House? (Pp. 255–56)

The parable can also be applied to those who believe in the Gohonzon now, in the Latter Day of the Law. The immediate motives, which led us to receive the Gohonzon, were, in most cases, probably minor, trifling desires arising out of daily life. There are very few of us who took faith in the Gohonzon because we envisioned and yearned for the ideal state of Buddhahood. But as we take faith in the Gohonzon and study Buddhism more and more deeply, we come to understand that a Buddha means an entity of human life filled with wisdom, good fortune and vital force. Further we finally realize that the Gohonzon is not something merely to fulfill our trifling desires, but that it embodies the life of the Buddha. It is a priceless treasure that enables common individuals to become as noble as the Buddha. The jubilant life force the four great men of Learning manifested when they gained the supreme vehicle also dwells within the lives of us who embrace the Gohonzon.

Q44: Explain the significance of the phrase that opens the verse section of the Life Span (sixteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra that reads "*ji ga toku bu(tsu) rai*," meaning, "Since I attained Buddhahood. . . ." (p. 257)

Nichiren Daishonin explains this in the Ongi Kuden: "Ga (self) indicates the property of the Law, butsu (the Buddha) the property of wisdom, and rai (becoming) means the property of action. These three properties of the Buddha, who has neither beginning nor end, become one's own. From this, consider the meaning of gaining the supreme cluster of jewels without seeking it. " Ga is the Buddha's life existing throughout past, present and future, which is the enlightened property of the Law. Butsu signifies the wisdom that develops out of the great life force of the original Buddha, and enables one to fathom past, present and future existences, and to expound Buddhism freely among all people to save them and to create value at every moment. This is the function of the enlightened property of wisdom. Rai indicates the totally unrestricted activities of the original Buddha to save troubled people. It is therefore the enlightened property of action. Nichiren Daishonin is the original Buddha who holds all three enlightened properties of life, and the Gohonzon embodies his life. Ji ga toku butsu rai means that the three enlightened properties are obtained from oneself; they are not given by anyone or anything else.

Q45: What is the meaning of the statement, "The enlightened life of Shakyamuni Buddha is our own flesh and blood. His practices and resulting virtues are our bones and marrow"? (Pp. 264–67)

(Page 265) When we embrace the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws, we see that "the enlightened life of Shakyamuni Buddha is our own flesh and blood. " In his own words, Nichikan Shonin says, "If we believe and embrace this Gohonzon and chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, our flesh and blood is the Gohonzon of *ichinen sanzen*, the life of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. " Since the Gohonzon embodies the life of Nichiren Daishonin who is the original Buddha, we manifest the same entity when we believe and embrace the Gohonzon and chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, our flesh and blood is the Gohonzon of *ichinen sanzen*, the life of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin." When we believe in the Gohonzon, which embodies the life of the Daishonin- -the original Buddha- -and chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo we also manifest the entity of the Buddha, and we, his disciples, are also Buddhas- -thus, the oneness of master and disciple is realized. I am always moved anew; each time I read this passage, by the immeasurable compassion of the Daishonin's desire to allow all people to attain Buddhahood, and by the depths of the Buddhist principle of absolute equality.

(Page 266) There is profound significance in the fact that Nichiren Daishonin compares "the enlightened life of Shakyamuni Buddha" to "flesh and blood," and "practices and resulting virtues" to "bones and marrow."

Talking about himself, the Daishonin said in the Letter from Sado:

In my heart I cherish some faith in the Lotus Sutra, but my body, while outwardly human, is fundamentally that of an animal, which once subsisted on fish and fowl and was conceived of the male and female fluids. My spirit dwells in this body like the moon reflected in a muddy pond or gold wrapped in a filthy bag.

The physical and spiritual entity of a human being is more elevated than any other existence - it reflects the "moon" of Buddhahood and encloses the "gold" of Buddhahood.

Questions 46–50 are based on President Ikeda's explanation of the following quote: Chapter Eleven of the Lotus Sutra says: "Those who choose to protect this sutra serve Taho Buddha and me... They also serve all the other Buddhas present who dignify and glorify all the worlds." Shakyamuni, Taho, and all the other Buddhas in the ten directions represent the world of Buddhahood within ourselves. By searching them out within us, we can receive the benefits of Shakyamuni, Taho, and all the other Buddhas. This is what is meant by the following passage in Chapter Ten: "If one hears the Law for even a single moment, he will be able to attain perfect enlightenment."

Q46: Explain this passage in terms of the three enlightened properties of life. (Pp. 268–69)

This passage discusses the oneness of parent and child in terms of the three enlightened properties of life. "Me" in the quotation refers to Shakyamuni and means the enlightened property of wisdom. "Taho" stands for the enlightened property of the Law, and "all the other Buddhas" are the Buddhas who came to participate in the ceremony of the Lotus Sutra from the worlds in the ten directions of the universe. Since they appeared in those worlds as emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha, they collectively mean the enlightened property of action. Shakyamuni, Taho and all the other Buddhas symbolize the three enlightened properties of life. "Those who choose to protect this sutra (the Gohonzon)" succeed those Buddhas and manifest the three enlightened properties of life, just as children succeed their parents. By protecting the Gohonzon they receive the same benefits as they would receive for serving the Buddha with the three enlightened properties of life. That is why Shakyamuni, Taho and other Buddhas represent the world of Buddhahood within ourselves.

Q47: What does it mean to "choose to protect this sutra"? (Pp. 268–71)

(Page 269)"Protect" may sound conservative, but it is not a passive act. In order to let the flow of Buddhism continue, one must positively transmit it to others and make it prosper. The true spirit of Buddhism flows within the actions of propagation to save those who are unhappy. Let me also draw your attention to the word "choose" in the above quotation. Clearly, it suggests not a passive but a positive attitude; it means to practice Buddhism with your thoughts, words and actions. Protection is to maintain one's faith in the Gohonzon from beginning to end. By doing so, one guards the supreme life-condition of Buddhahood within oneself To protect the Gohonzon is to protect one's own life, as the Daishonin teaches us in the Gosho, On the Treasure Tower: "You may think you offered gifts to the Treasure Tower of Taho Buddha, but that is not so. You offered them to yourself"

(Page 270) Next, I ask you to protect the children of the Buddha just as you protect the Gohonzon. To protect the children of the Buddha is to protect the sutra and teachings. Thirdly, it is important to firmly protect the precious organization of Buddhists wherein you encourage and teach each other. Nichiren Daishonin states in The Three Priests' Prayers for Rain: "There is no better way to attain Buddhahood than to have good friends (zenchishiki). What good will one's own wisdom do? If one has sense enough to distinguish between hot and cold, he should treasure his good friends. However, the most difficult thing of all is to meet a good friend. " In order for us common mortals to attain Buddhahood, there is no way but to meet good friends, and the Daishonin therefore urges us to seek them out. I want you to understand that each one of you is a good friend to everyone else.

(Page 271) To protect yourself and your Buddhist organization dedicated to justice is to protect the future of all mankind.

Q48: What is the meaning of "If one hears the Law for even a single moment, he will be able to attain perfect enlightenment." (Pp. 268–72)

(Page 271) To "hear" in the quote from Chapter Ten means to embrace the Gohonzon. In the Ongi Kuden, Nichiren Daishonin interprets "hearing" in terms of faith and practice. The section concerning "Thus I heard" reads, "... according to T'ien-t'ai, 'I heard' symbolizes those who strongly embrace the sutra People who do not believe in the sutra never hear the sutra in this sense. Those who practice the Lotus Sutra hear the essence of this phrase. "

(Page 272) "To hear the Law for even a single moment" means that even if you only embrace the Gohonzon and practice for a moment, you are able to manifest the supreme enlightenment of the Buddha at that moment. Every moment that we believe in the Gohonzon and chant daimoku, the life-condition of Buddhahood wells up from within us. If you begin the day with a sincere recitation of gongyo, praying to achieve your goals, and conclude it with evening gongyo, chanting daimoku with gratitude to the Gohonzon, you will attain Buddhahood in this lifetime, and in all future existences. Let me quote a relevant passage from T'ien-t'ai's Hokke Mongu (Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra), which clarifies the meaning of "Thus I heard. " "Question: You should say, 'My ears hear. , Why do you instead say, 'I hear, ? Answer: 'I, indicates the master of the ears. It receives all perceptions. This is how the world is understood. " The true meaning of "hearing" is not merely the auditory function but perception with all the power of one's life itself. In other words, all human perceptions, including consciousness, work collectively at the same time. "I" thus signifies life in its totality.

Q49:If hearing is not merely listening, but life-to-life interchange, what hinders our "hearing"? (Pp. 271–74)

(Page 273)"Hearing" in this context is not merely listening to words; it means a life-to-life interchange. Onshitsu (hatred and jealousy) critically impedes this life-to-life contact of faith. To define onshitsu, Nichiren

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Daishonin quotes Miao-lo in the Gosho: "On indicates having ill feelings, and shitsu means unwillingness to listen [to the Buddha's teaching]. "

Think hard about what he means by "unwillingness to listen. " "Good advice sounds harsh to ears" and "Good medicine tastes bitter" are common proverbs. Common mortals remain common mortals exactly because they do not like hearing what is disagreeable and painful. On the contrary, they are all too easily swayed by flattery and adulation. As long as you take the line of least resistance, you cannot expect to grow. Worse, you are creating the cause for your own ruin, since you surround yourself with people who do not help build inner strength, but rather, serve to tear it down.

Q50: In his explanation of this passage, President Ikeda warns us of the danger of "hatred and jealousy" (*onshitsu*). What guidance does he give for overcoming this danger? (Pp. 272–75)

(Page 274) We must plunge in among our fellow members, speaking and carefully listening to everything they have to say. The horrible aspect about *onshitsu* is that it creates a wall between the hearts of members, destroying the unity. Once fenced off by these walls, our hearts become victim to the three poisons of greed, anger and stupidity. Then we unconsciously destroy all of our own good fortune. This is why individual guidance and sincere person-to-person encouragement are so significant. In the long run, an organization can live up to its purpose only when it can nourish each individual member. True, it requires tremendous life force to listen to your troubled and grieved friends and it also takes tremendous courage to open your hearts to those who are hard to get along with. But the very difficulty involved is a valuable thing in attaining your own human revolution and awakening souls that have long lain dormant in the lives of those friends.

(Page 275) I urge you to muster up your courage, to move, listen and speak to them all. The Daishonin says in the Gosho, "When you split one joint in the bamboo, all the others follow. " So, no matter how harsh your situation may be, when you face it directly and break through it, like splitting one joint in the bamboo, you can create a new, much better situation. Above all, pray to the Gohonzon with this conviction in your heart, for every prayer allows your inner, true self to shine.

Q51: Nichiren Daishonin states: "The Juryo chapter states: 'Once I also practiced bodhisattva austerities, and the life which I then acquired has yet to be exhausted. My life will last twice as many aeons from now.' He was speaking of the world of Bodhisattva within ourselves. The bodhisattvas of the earth are the followers of the Lord Shakyamuni." What is the function of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth in terms of supporting our inner life-condition? (Pp. 277–78)

(Page 277) "The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are the followers of Lord Shakyamuni in our lives. " The life-conditions of the nine worlds are represented by the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who maintain support of the life-condition of Buddhahood and help to manifest it. They are the followers of the Buddha within ourselves. Thus, the Daishonin assures us that both the Buddha of *kuon ganjo* and the Bodhisattvas of the Earth exist within our lives. To make the relationship between these two life-conditions easier for his contemporaries to grasp, Nichiren Daishonin used the example of subjects and lords. Ordinarily, one thinks first of feudalistic customs when mention of subjects and lords comes up, but what the Daishonin is stressing is the function of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth to help manifest the life of Buddhahood. He spoke of the oneness of subject and lord in terms of the internal development of human life.

(Page 278) The analogy is meant to show that though the life-condition of Buddhahood emerges when we first embrace the Gohonzon, it is still weak and underdeveloped. So what is necessary to make the Buddha's life-condition unshakable? The essential factor is the workings of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. They are the single factor that can activate the life-condition of Buddhahood.