



Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood (MWND - Admonitions Against Slander) BACKGROUND

Lord Soya is a shortened form of Soya Jiro Hyoe-no-jo Kyoshin, an officer of the high court of the Kamakura shogunate who was converted to the Daishonin's Buddhism around 1260 by Ota Jomyo. Both men lived in the province of Shimosu.

In 1271, some eleven years after his conversion, Lord Soya became a nyudo (lay priest, literally "one who enters upon the way") and was given the Buddhist name Horen (the Law of the Lotus) by Nichiren Daishonin. Horen built two temples, living at one of them until his death at the age of sixty-eight in May 1291.

The Goshu's title is "Admonitions against Slander" ; it is an extremely important writing because it delineates key points in a person's practice to attain enlightenment. First, the Daishonin quotes the Hoben chapter of the Lotus Sutra and states, "The path to enlightenment lies within the two elements of reality (kyo) and wisdom (chi)," referring to the fusion of the person and the object to which he is enlightened. "Reality" or object means the Gohonzon, the objective embodiment of Buddhahood. "Wisdom" or subject indicates people, who develop their innate Buddha-wisdom by fusing their lives with the Gohonzon. The Daishonin next stresses that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the Law which encompasses both these elements and that this supreme law will be propagated by Bodhisattva Jogyo at the beginning of the Latter Day. Furthermore, he boldly states that he is the first one to set out on this great mission. "I am neither Bodhisattva Jogyo nor his messenger . . ." Superficially this seems like a mere expression of humility; he is really indicating that he is the original Buddha. The directness or ambiguity with which such statements are made in his writings varied according to his intended reader. He was far bolder about his real purpose and identity with such close followers as Shijo Kingo. And it should be remembered that, prior to the attempt on his life at Tatsunokuchi and the final exile, he rarely made such references at all. This is why, in the letter entitled "The Opening of the Eyes," he wrote, "A person named Nichiren was beheaded in the middle of the night on the twelfth day of the ninth month last year (1271), but his soul reached Sado Island..."

The "Admonitions against Slander" bears the date August 3, 1276.

The concept of the general and the specific is important in Buddhism, for it enables us to recognize the source from which the human potential for Buddhahood arises. In general, the essence of the Buddha's teaching was transferred to all Bodhisattvas of the Earth, but specifically, it was transferred to Bodhisattva Jogyo himself, indicating Nichiren Daishonin. The implication here is that one must seek out the original teacher who can lead him to enlightenment. Next, he makes clear that a teacher and his disciples who do not try to convert those who are committing slander against true Buddhism -- violating the Law of life -- will fall

"The Buddha, perfectly enlightened in the Three Bodies, takes the entire universe as his true body, takes the entire universe as his spiritual nature, takes the entire universe as his physical existence" (Nichiren Daishonin Goshu Zenshu, p. 563)

into a condition of hell. This amounts to a stern warning that people must be saved from their own ignorance.

He asserts his untiring dedication to the task of saving the people, but concludes by saying that not even he can save a person who refuses to put this Gosho's spirit of mercy into action

A "good teacher" is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.

Gosho Study: The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood (MWND: Admonitions Against Slander)

The Expedient Means chapter in volume one of the Lotus Sutra states, "The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable." A commentary says that the riverbed of reality is described as "infinitely profound" because it is boundless, and that the water of wisdom is described as "immeasurable" because it is hard to fathom. Is not the meaning of the sutra and the commentary that the way to Buddhahood lies within the two elements of reality and wisdom? Reality means the true nature of all phenomena, and wisdom means the illuminating and manifesting of this true nature. Thus when the riverbed of reality is infinitely broad and deep, the water of wisdom will flow ceaselessly. When this reality and wisdom are fused, one attains Buddhahood in one's present form.

This is a profound and difficult concept. In *On The Treasure Tower*, Nichiren says:

Thus, the Treasure Tower appeared in order to verify the theoretical teaching and to introduce the essential teaching. To put it another way, the closed Tower symbolizes the theoretical teaching and the open Tower, the essential teaching. This represents the two principles of object (kyo) and subject (chi), or reality and wisdom. ...In essence, the appearance of the Treasure Tower indicates that the three groups of Shakyamuni's disciples attained enlightenment only when they heard the Lotus Sutra and perceived the Treasure Tower within their own lives. Now Nichiren's disciples are doing the same.

And Dick Causton said (Buddha in Daily Life p.237):

"In the Treasure Tower, Shakyamuni himself represents the subjective wisdom (chi) inherent in each one of us, arising from our Buddhahood. Taho represents objective reality (kyo), the good fortune people can draw into their lives from their environment through manifesting the wisdom and compassion of their Buddhahood. Shakyamuni joining Taho in the Treasure Tower, represents the fusion of wisdom and reality; in other words, our realization of the true nature of life or enlightenment."

Nichiren states:

"In the Latter Day of the Law, there is no Treasure Tower other than the figures of the men and women who embrace the Lotus Sutra. It follows therefore, that those who chant Nam Myoho Renge Kyo, irrespective of social status, are themselves the Treasure Tower and likewise themselves are Taho Buddha." (BDL 237)

This is not just a literary device. Nichiren means that physically we are the Treasure Tower of Nam Myoho Renge Kyo and participate in the Ceremony in the Air. In the *Ongi Kuden*, he makes this clear in a passage I found very moving:

'Treasure' indicates the five components [earth, water, fire, wind, and ku] and 'Tower' their temporary union. To see that the five components in their temporary union are the five characters of the Mystic Law is to "behold the Treasure Tower." Now Nichiren and his disciples who chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo behold the Treasure Tower. .. The sutra states, "All four sides [of the tower] emitted a fragrance of tamalappatra sandalwood that pervaded the whole world." (LS p. 170, 3LS p. 195) The four faces of the Treasure Tower represent the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness, and death. These four aspects, or noble truths of life, dignify our individual lives. By chanting the Daimoku, through these four aspects, we send forth the fragrance of the four virtues, self, eternity, purity, and happiness, from our lives. 'Nam' indicates the perfection [paramita] of happiness, 'Myoho' is the perfection of self, 'Renge' is the perfection of purity and 'Kyo' is the perfection of eternity. Thus, we adorn the Treasure Tower of our bodies with the four aspects of birth, old age, sickness, and death. When we chant Nam Myoho Renge Kyo in birth, old age, sickness, and death, the fragrance of the four virtues emerges. (Gosho Zenshu p.739 - 740)

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The sutras expounded prior to the Lotus Sutra cannot lead to Buddhahood because they are provisional and expedient teachings that separate reality and wisdom. The Lotus Sutra, however, unites the two as a single entity. The sutra says that the Buddhas open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings, show it, cause them to awaken to it, and induce them to enter its path. By realizing this Buddha wisdom, one attains Buddhahood.

This inner enlightenment of the Buddha is far beyond the understanding of Voicehearers and Pratyekabuddhas. This is why the "Expedient Means" chapter goes on to say, "Not one of the voicehearers or pratyekabuddhas is able to comprehend it." What then are these two elements of reality and wisdom? They are simply the five characters of Nam myoho renge kyo. Shakyamuni Buddha called forth the Bodhisattvas of the Earth and entrusted to them these five characters that constitute the essence of the sutra. This is the teaching that was transferred to the bodhisattvas who had been the disciples of the Buddha since the remote past.

Note that the teaching was transferred to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth and that their qualification to receive that trust is their role as disciples from the remote past.

By contrast, Nichiren states that earlier teachings were provisional and do not contain the complete truth.

According to the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, attaining each of the Buddha's attributes—fortune, virtue, power, wisdom—requires its own corresponding Buddhist austerity. One had to be born over and over again for an unimaginably long period of time to carry out these austerities. This process is like the growth of a tree. Whereas the provisional sutras attempt to analyze each leaf and branch, the Lotus Sutra looks at the seed, the origin of the branches and the leaves. The statement in the Muryogi Sutra, "Infinite meaning derives from the one Law," is the declaration that the one Law produces infinite fortune and wisdom. The Fugen Sutra states that the fortune, virtue and wisdom of all Buddhas are derived from the one original law, but it is the Lotus Sutra that makes the definitive statement. (Selected Lectures – The True Object of Worship)

Obviously, someone who is deeply committed to the earlier sutras will find the Lotus hard going. In the Entrustment Chapter, 5000 monks and nuns are said to stand and leave as soon as Shakyamuni stops speaking. Bodhisattva Maitreya is forced to question his master as to how he could have found time to train thousands of Bodhisattvas of the Earth in only the few years since his enlightenment under the Bo tree. Why couldn't the Voice Hearers understand? Did they not have enough information?

We will see that the problem for Voice Hearers and Pratekyabuddhas is that they have an essentially passive view of Buddhism – they are Hearers, not Teachers. They seek understanding, but not propagation or active compassion. They cannot fuse wisdom and reality because they do not manifest the law in their lives.

When Nichiren inscribed the Gohonzon he manifested the life condition of a Buddha by depicting the Ceremony in the Air in great detail. It's all there. Except for the Buddha's Voice. Sensei comments on The True Entity of Life:

The ceremony in the air conveys the substance of Shakyamuni's enlightenment. The ceremony is itself the entity of the Law to which the Buddha was enlightened. That entity was revealed by Shakyamuni as the ceremony in the air, by T'ien-t'ai as the doctrine of ichinen sanzen, and by Nichiren Daishonin as the Gohonzon through which he gave the suffering generations of the Latter Day a means to express their faith and attain enlightenment.

The Daishonin is speaking of Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra in the above passage, so he says, "Judging the past from this point of view, I must have been at the ceremony in the air."

But the real meaning of this paragraph is that by embracing the Gohonzon, doing gongyo and chanting daimoku, we actually participate in the ceremony in the air each day. Our life itself is the ceremony in the air --- the manifestation of kutai.

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We complete the practice by chanting to the Gohonzon. As Taho Buddha, we voice our appreciation for Shakyamuni's wisdom:

"At that time a loud voice issued from the treasure tower, speaking words of praise: `Excellent, excellent! Shakyamuni, World-Honored One, that you can take the great wisdom of equality, a Law to instruct the bodhisattvas, guarded and kept in mind by the Buddhas, the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, and preach it for the sake of the great assembly! It is as you say, as you say. Shakyamuni, World-Honored One, all that you have expounded is the truth!"

The Gohonzon possess thirty-one of the Buddhas' thirty-two aspects or characteristics, but not his pure and far-reaching voice. Hence Nichiren says in *Opening the Eyes of Painted and Wooden Images*:

Since the Buddha's passing, two kinds of images, wooden and painted, have been made of him. They possess thirty-one features but lack the pure and far-reaching voice. Therefore, they are not equal to the Buddha. They are also devoid of the spiritual aspect."

We, in our daily Gongyo, contribute the Buddha's pure and far-reaching voice, the Subjective wisdom which brings the full Buddha nature of our own objective Gohonzon into play.

So we have, I hope, established that the fusion of wisdom and reality is something which depends on our practice, and that this practice is inherited from the Ceremony in the Air as Nichiren manifested it – not as a piece of paper, but as an active participation in which we complete the Treasure Tower we inherently possess and represent in our own physical and spiritual being.

Nichiren now turns to the means by which that Teaching could be transferred from the Wisdom Thus Come One, Shakyamuni, to us, as ordinary mortals of the Latter Day.

The problem with a truly profound teaching, an **Essential** teaching, is that it exceeds the written word. You can't just copy the words and pass them on willy nilly.

The Lotus Sutra states that Bodhisattva Superior Practices and the others will appear in the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law to propagate the five characters, the embodiment of the two elements of reality and wisdom. The sutra makes this perfectly clear. Who could possibly dispute it? I, Nichiren, am neither Bodhisattva Superior Practices nor his envoy, but I precede them, spreading the five characters to prepare the way. Bodhisattva Superior Practices received the water of the wisdom of the Mystic Law from the Thus Come One Shakyamuni and causes it to flow into the wasteland of the people's lives in the evil world of the latter age. This is the function of wisdom. Shakyamuni Buddha transferred this teaching to Bodhisattva Superior Practices, and now Nichiren propagates it in Japan. With regard to the transfer of teachings, it is divided into two categories: general and specific. If you confuse the general with the specific even in the slightest,³ you will never be able to attain Buddhahood and will wander in suffering through endless transmigrations of births and deaths.

For example, the voicehearers in Shakyamuni Buddha's lifetime received the seeds of Buddhahood from Shakyamuni in the distant past when he was the sixteenth son of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence. Therefore, they could not attain enlightenment by following Amida, Medicine Master, or any other Buddha. To illustrate, if a family member brings home water from the ocean, the entire family can use it. But were they to refuse even a single drop of that water and instead go looking for water

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from some other ocean, it would be terribly misguided and foolish. In the same way, to forget the original teacher who had brought one the water of wisdom from the great ocean of the Lotus Sutra and instead follow another would surely cause one to sink into the endless sufferings of birth and death.

One should abandon even one's teacher if he or she is misguided, though there will be cases where this is not necessary. One should decide according to the principles both of the world and of Buddhism. Priests in the Latter Day of the Law are ignorant of the principles of Buddhism and are conceited, so they despise the correct teacher and fawn on patrons. True priests are those who are honest and who desire little and yet know satisfaction. Volume one of *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* states: "Those who have yet to attain the truth should

humble themselves before the highest principle, which is comparable to heaven, and feel abashed before all the sages. Then they will be monks with a sense of shame. When they manifest insight and wisdom, then they will be true monks."

The Nirvana Sutra states: "If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him, or to punish him for his offense, then you should realize that that monk is betraying the Buddha's teaching. But if he ousts the destroyer of the Law, reproaches him, or punishes him, then he is my disciple and a true voice hearer." You should etch deeply in your mind the two words "see" and "disregard" in the phrase "sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him."

Both teacher and followers will surely fall into the hell of incessant suffering if they see enemies of the Lotus Sutra but disregard them and fail to reproach them. The Great Teacher Nanyüeh says that they "will fall into hell along with those evil persons." 4 To hope to attain Buddhahood without speaking out against slander is as futile as trying to find water in the midst of fire or fire in the midst of water. No matter how sincerely one believes in the Lotus Sutra, if one is guilty of failing to rebuke slander of the Law, one will surely fall into hell, just as a single crab leg will ruin a thousand pots of lacquer. This is the meaning of the passage in the sutra, "Because the poison has penetrated deeply and their minds no longer function as before."5

The sutra states, "Those persons who had heard the Law dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, constantly reborn in company with their teachers,"6 and "If one stays close to the teachers of the Law, one will speedily gain the bodhisattva way. By following and learning from these

teachers one will see Buddhas as numerous as Ganges sands."7 A commentary says, "Originally one followed this Buddha and for the first time conceived the desire to seek the way. And by following this Buddha again, one will reach the stage where there is no retrogression." 8 Another commentary says, "In the beginning one followed this Buddha or bodhisattva and formed a bond with him, and so it will be through this Buddha or bodhisattva that one will attain one's goal."9 Above all, be sure to follow your original teacher so that you are able to attain Buddhahood. Shakyamuni Buddha is the original teacher for all people, and moreover, he is endowed with the virtues of sovereign and parent. Because I have expounded this teaching, I have been exiled and almost killed. As the saying goes, "Good advice grates on the ear." But still I am not discouraged. The Lotus Sutra is like the seed, the Buddha like the sower, and the people like the field. If you deviate from these principles, not even I can save you in your next life. With my deep respect, Nichiren The third day of the eighth month in the second year of Kenji (.....), cyclical sign *hinoene* To S o y a

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The sutra and interpretation make clear that the path to enlightenment lies within the two elements of reality (*kyo*) and wisdom (*chi*). Reality means the **entity** of all phenomena in the universe, and wisdom means the perfect **manifestation** of this entity in the individual's life. When the reality is an infinitely broad and deep riverbed, the water of wisdom will flow ceaselessly. Enlightenment is the fusion of wisdom and reality.

All the sutras expounded prior to the Lotus Sutra are provisional teachings which cannot lead to enlightenment because they separate wisdom and reality. However, the Lotus Sutra joins the two. It expounds the purpose for which the Buddhas appear in this world: to open the door to the Buddha wisdom, to reveal it, to let all beings know it and enter into it. All people can attain enlightenment by realizing this wisdom of the Buddha.

And in *On Attaining Buddhahood*:

However, even though you chant and believe in Myoho-renge-kyo, if you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but some inferior teaching. "Inferior teachings" means those other than this sutra, which are all provisional and transient. No provisional teaching leads directly to enlightenment, and without the direct path to enlightenment you cannot attain Buddhahood, even if you practice lifetime after lifetime for countless aeons. Attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime is then impossible. Therefore, when you chant the Mystic Law and recite the Lotus Sutra, you must summon up deep conviction that Myoho-renge-kyo is your life itself.

This is also the relationship between Shakyamuni and Taho Buddha – Shakyamuni is the Wisdom Thus Come One, the Buddha in his Property of Wisdom aspect. Taho represents Objective Reality – the physical world and Consciousness:

Chapter Eight of the Hokke Mongu states, "The former Buddha [Taho-Many Treasures] was already present, and the present Buddha, Shakyamuni, sits at his side. And the same is true of future Buddhas as well."

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So Nichiren is talking about the process by which a Buddha transfers his wisdom to another enlightenment-seeker.

The *Hoben* chapter states that the Buddha wisdom is far beyond the understanding of the people of the two vehicles: "Neither men of Learning (*shomon*) nor sages of Realization (*engaku*) are able to comprehend it." What then are these two elements of reality and wisdom? They are simply Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Shakyamuni called forth the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, his disciples from ages past, to give them this Law which is the essence of his teachings.

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The Lotus Sutra states that Bodhisattva Jogyo and the other Bodhisattvas of the Earth will appear in the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law to propagate the Mystic Law, the crystallization of reality and wisdom. This sutra makes it perfectly clear. Who could possibly dispute it? I, Nichiren, am neither Bodhisattva Jogyo nor his messenger, but I was the first to begin the propagation of the Mystic Law and have already taught it extensively. Bodhisattva Jogyo received the water of wisdom of the Mystic Law from Shakyamuni Buddha to let it flow into the wasteland of the people's lives in the evil period of the Latter Day. That is the function of wisdom. Shakyamuni entrusted this teaching to Bodhisattva Jogyo, and now Nichiren propagates it in Japan. In general, this transfer was made to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, but specifically, to Bodhisattva Jogyo himself. If you confuse the general with the specific even in the slightest, you will never be able to attain enlightenment and will wander through endless lifetimes of suffering. ["transmigration of births and deaths"]

[In part 1 of his speech at the 17th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji on May 31, SGI President Ikeda says: "In the specific sense, 'someone who is spreading the Lotus Sutra in the evil world of the latter age' refers to the Daishonin. In the general sense, it refers to all of us of the Soka Gakkai who are directly connected to Nichiren Daishonin. Therefore, please have self-confidence.]

Reaffirming our path of Faith:

Nichikan's statement that the Treasure of the Priest includes lay believers as well as priests is completely in accord with the original meaning of the "treasure of the priest." Actually, the Japanese character so, translated as "priest" in "Treasure of the Priest," fundamentally indicates the samgha, or the Buddhist Order, which included the "four types of believers": monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.

In general, the treasure of the Priest is understood in Buddhism and even in Japanese society in general to mean "all those who uphold and propagate the Buddha's teachings." This is the definition that appears in standard Japanese dictionaries. In this sense, the SGI accords with this general definition of "Treasure of the Priest," while Nikko Shonin is the specific "Treasure of the priest" -- whose exemplary faith and practice as a disciple of the Daishonin we should all emulate. Nikken and his supporters, through his behavior that has betrayed the spirit of Nikko Shonin, has severed any relationship he might have had with the "Treasure of the Priest."

From SGI US Study Exam Paper:

"The Opening of the Eyes" was given in general to all the Daishonin's disciples but specifically to Shijo Kingo. The Daishonin mentions in a letter to Toki Jonin that he sent Shijo Kingo important teachings to be read with the utmost care. Shijo Kingo (1230-1300) was a samurai who served Lord Ema Mitsutoki of the Hojo clan, the de facto rulers of Japan. He was skilled in the martial arts and was also an excellent physician. He became the Daishonin's follower around 1256 and soon emerged as a central figure among the lay believers in Kamakura.

Selected Lectures on the Goshō:

The fifth of the six paramitas is meditation, implying concentration on the contemplation of truth. Shakyamuni Buddha gives us a typical example of this paramita of meditation or mental concentration. Abandoning severe ascetic practices, bathing in the Nairanjana River and having gruel offered by Sujata, Shakyamuni was purified both physically and spiritually and entered meditation

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under the Bodhi tree. Later on, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China established the idea of isshin sangan (the wisdom to see the Three Truths in views of the momentary existence of life) and ichinen sanzen (three thousand conditions in a momentary existence of life), stressing specifically the practice of meditation. That is why his teachings are generally referred to as "the Buddhism of the meditation of the mind and the Law."

As has been stated so far, meditation is a vital form of practice which is the final stage of Buddhist austerities. It is also one of the vital requirements for human existence. What is meditation? In a broad sense it is having goals and ideals to achieve, something fundamental to use as a guide for life. Without clear goals and a secure foundation, both the "perseverance" and "assiduity" will eventually be frustrated. Even if "perseverance" survives frustration, a person will eventually end up feeling a sense of aimlessness and futility. First President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi maintained imperturbable mental and spiritual calm even when he was in prison. His exalted life-condition shines through a passage in a letter he sent to his family from prison:

Unlike the time when I was in the custody of the Metropolitan Police Department, I now live alone in a three-tatami-mat room, and as long as I can read, I feel comfortable and satisfied. Please keep our home secure without worrying about me.... In this solitary prison cell, which I feel is for the better, I am able to dedicate myself to contemplation. I strictly observe morning and evening gongyo, and I never neglect making a special prayer.... Faith is first and foremost for both you and me. Even though this is an ordeal it pales into insignificance before Nichiren Daishonin's. Forge your faith all the more strongly. I think it totally inappropriate to lament the present hardship, for we live bathed in vast and boundless blessings. As the sutras and the Gosho teach us, we will certainly see later on through experience that "poison never fails to turn into medicine."

For example, the men of Learning in Shakyamuni's time received the seed of enlightenment from Shakyamuni in the distant past when he was the sixteenth son of Daitso Buddha. Therefore, they cannot attain enlightenment by following Amida, Yakushi or any other Buddha. Or, to give another example, if someone brings home water from the ocean, his entire family can use it. Should they refuse even a single drop of water and instead go seek water from some other ocean, they would be terribly misguided and foolish. In the same way, if one should forget the original teacher who brought him the water of wisdom from the great ocean of the Lotus Sutra and instead follow another, he is sure to sink into the endless sufferings of life and death.

A disciple should abandon even his teacher if the teacher is misguided. However, this is not always necessary. He should decide according to the laws of both society and Buddhism. With no knowledge of Buddhist law, most priests in the Latter Day grow so conceited that they despise the original teacher and flatter new-found patrons. Only honest priests who desire little and are happy with whatever they have can be called "priests" in the true sense of the word. Volume One of the *Hokke Mongu* states, "A priest who has yet to attain enlightenment should humble himself before the supreme law and all Buddhist saints. Then, he has true modesty. When he manifests the Buddha wisdom, he will be a true priest."

In the Nirvana Sutra Shakyamuni stated, "If even a good priest sees someone slandering the Law and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him or to punish him for his offense, then that priest is betraying Buddhism. But if he takes the slanderer severely to task, drives him off or punishes him, then he is my disciple and one who truly understands my teachings." Never

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forget this admonition against ignoring another's slander of Buddhism. Both master and disciple will surely fall into the hell of incessant suffering if they see enemies of the Lotus Sutra and fail to reproach them. The Great Teacher Nan-yueh wrote, "They will fall into hell with evil men." To seek enlightenment without repudiating slander is as futile as trying to find water in the midst of fire or fire in the midst of water. No matter how sincerely one believes in the Lotus Sutra, any violation of its teachings will surely cause him to fall into hell, just as one crab leg will ruin a thousand pots of lacquer. This is the meaning of the passage in the Lotus Sutra, "The poison has penetrated deeply, causing them to lose their true minds."

The Lotus Sutra teaches us: "In lifetime after lifetime they were always born together with their masters in the Buddha lands throughout the universe," and "If one seeks out the teacher of the Law, he will soon attain the way of the Bodhisattva. If he follows and studies under this teacher, he will be able to see Buddhas equal in number to the sands of the Ganges River."

T'ien-t'ai interprets this, saying, "One who first began to aspire for enlightenment when following this Buddha will follow him again and attain a stage of faith from which he can never backslide." Miao-lo adds, "One who first hears about the Law from some Buddha or bodhisattva will return to the same Buddha or bodhisattva to attain enlightenment." Above all, follow no one but your original teacher and go on to attain Buddhahood. Shakyamuni is the original teacher for all people, as well as their sovereign and their parent. Because I have expounded this teaching, I have been exiled and almost killed. As the saying goes: "Good advice is harsh to the ear." But still I am not discouraged. The Lotus Sutra is like the seed, the Buddha like the sower and the people like the field. If you go against these principles, in your next lifetime, not even I, Nichiren, can save you.

With my deep respect,

Nichiren

The third day of the eighth month in the second year of Kenji (1276)

Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, Vol. 1, page 163.

Background to Reply to Soya Nudo

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter at Minobu in the third month of 1275 to Soya Kyoshin, one of his followers who lived in Soya Village of Katsushika District in Shimosa Province. Soya

A "good teacher" is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.

Kyoshin converted to the Daishonin's teachings around 1260 and became one of the leading-believers in the area, together with Toki Jonin and Ota Jomyo. Later, he took the tonsure, and the Daishonin gave him the Buddhist name Horen Nichirai. He is also called Soya Nyudo, nyudo meaning a priest who continues to live as a layman even after taking Buddhist vows. In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin urges Soya Kyoshin to recite both a portion of the Hoben (second) chapter of the Lotus Sutra and the *Jigage* or verse section of the Juryo (sixteenth) chapter, the two key chapters of the Lotus Sutra, in his daily performance of gongyo. He also states that each character of the Lotus Sutra is in fact a living Buddha of supreme enlightenment. Therefore, to hold and recite this sutra is to hold the body of the Buddha - that is, to attain Buddhahood in one's present form.

“deluded by **evil** people, they eventually abandoned the Lotus Sutra.” – Letter to the Brothers

Although one studies Buddhism, it is difficult to practice it correctly because of the foolishness of his mind, or because, even though one may be wise, he follows an evil teacher and fails to realize that he is being misled. – Letter to Misawa

Because they wear robes and surplices, they look like ordinary priests and nuns. But in their hearts, they wield a sword of evil, hastening here and there among their patrons and filling them full of countless lies so as to keep them away from other priests or nuns. – 14 Slanders

When one chants the daimoku bearing in mind that there are no distinctions among those who embrace the Lotus Sutra, then the blessings he gains will be equal to those of Shakyamuni Buddha. – 14 Slanders

In the *Ninno* Sutra we read, "The evil monks, seeking for all the fame and gain they can get, will appear in the presence of the ruler, the heir apparent, and the princes and expound doctrines that lead to the destruction of Buddhism and the destruction of the state. – On the Buddha's Behaviour

the evil monks there will be those who practice meditation and, instead of relying on the sutras and treatises, heed only their own view of things, declaring wrong to be right. – Conversations between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man 2.

if a practitioner of Buddhism should fail to chastise evil persons who slander the Law but give himself up entirely to meditation and contemplation, not attempting to distinguish between correct or incorrect doctrines, provisional or true teachings, but rather pretending to be a model of compassion, then such a person will fall into the evil paths along with the other doers of evil. – Conversations between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man 2.

Even less do they distinguish between truth and error in Buddhism, or between good and evil teachers. But I will say no more of this. – Aspiration for the Buddha Land

Now in the Latter Day of the Law, even though the teaching, the people's capacity and the time for propagation are in accord, we must expect all the more hostility. For this is the age of conflict in which the Pure Law has been lost. Moreover, the teacher is but a common person, and his disciples come from among impious men defiled by the three poisons. For this reason, people reject the virtuous teacher and seek out evil priests instead. – On Practicing the Buddhas Teachings

King Ajatashatru was the ruler of Magadha. He murdered his father, King Bimbisara, a powerful patron of Shakyamuni, and became an enemy of the Buddha. In consequence, the heavens forsook him, the sun and the moon rose out of rhythm, and the earth shook violently as if to cast him off. All his subjects came to oppose Buddhism, and the neighboring kingdoms started to attack Magadha. All this happened because King Ajatashatru took the wicked Devadatta for his teacher. -- Winter Always Turns to Spring

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