

# The Reality of Myohoji

*2nd Printing*



By Rev. Takamasa Yamamura

# **The Reality of Myohoji – First Issue**

*Second Printing*

by

Rev. Takamasa Yamamura  
Head Minister, Honolulu Myohoji

Translated by  
Dean Makinodan



**Honolulu Myohoji**

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2003 Nuuanu Avenue  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817  
808-524-7790  
honolulumyohoji@hotmail.com  
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The Stupa for the Buddha's Relic (Peace Tower) at Honolulu Myohoji

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# Contents

When Bringing Out the First Issue of <i>The Reality of Myohoji</i> .....	4
A New Beginning and Golden Age—A Word by the Translator.....	6
On the Second Printing of <i>The Reality of Myohoji</i> .....	8
The Three Missions of Honolulu Myohoji .....	10
Why Must We Go to the Temple?.....	12
God = Buddha = Universal Nature .....	14
The Path to Happiness .....	22

## **When Bringing Out the First Issue of *The Reality of Myohoji***

Are you happy? If you can clearly say “I am happy,” you need not read this booklet. If, however, you have some worries or are burdened by concerns for the future, I ask that you by all means open and read it. It goes without saying that I am also worried about the future. Nevertheless, I am now living happily. Why am I living happily? I am practicing, as best that I can, the hints to happiness that are written in this booklet.

One Sunday morning, two years ago, I was giving a sermon at Myohoji before a handful of our followers. I felt lonely at that gathering. Then, that afternoon, I went to hear the message of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, at the University of Hawaii. Nine thousand people had come to hear him speak. There were ten people at the worship service at Myohoji. I pondered over this difference. Both His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, and I are Buddhist priests. What could be the reason for this difference in attendance? The lecture by the Dalai Lama was simple and moving. What was it that he taught us? “How can people live a happy life?” That was all that he taught. He spoke nothing about the difficult technicalities or dogmas of Buddhism. And yet, myself and all present had smiles on our faces and went home with feelings of kindness and compassion.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is an age where difficult religious sermons are behind the times. What is important for human beings? It is daily life. How can we live happy and peaceful lives? I began to talk about such

teachings at Myohoji. The number of worshipers at the Sunday Services gradually increased.

A year later, I was able to meet His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, in Japan. That meeting was thanks to the kind favor of Bishop Tsumyo Ito, the High Officiating Priest of our Celebratory Service for the 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our temple's founding. I am sincerely grateful to him. Bishop Ito has shared many of his valuable life experiences with me. I had hoped that the people of Hawaii could hear the wonderful message of Bishop Ito, and through this wish we were able to invite him to our celebration. From around the year 2012, our earth has become a place where plans for what we think are good for the spiritual advancement of people and society, are soon realized. A new beginning and golden age has arrived.

Finally, as we greet this wonderful day of our Celebratory Service, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Ministers, who have come from Japan, the Ministers who helped us with preparations, the Board of Directors and members of the Myohoji, and to Dean Makinodan, the faithful translator of our temple.

**Rev. Takamasa Yamamura**  
**Head Minister, Honolulu Myohoji Mission**

## **A New Beginning and Golden Age—A Word by the Translator**

I have been helping Rev. Yamamura with his translations for more than a year now. What inspired me to help him were the words of his Kanjo, the Invocative Prayer, on New Year's morning service on January 1, 2014. As I listened carefully to his words of prayer, at first I could not believe what I was hearing since the Reverend was indeed also inviting, in addition to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and protective deities that are traditionally associated with the Gohonzon, a sacred entourage of the gods of Japan, the gods of Hawaii and the American mainland. Moreover, he prayed for peace and prosperity of the people and the land. I was impressed by what I heard. I knew that the Lotus Sutra had in fact been instrumental in the amalgamation of the Buddhas and Gods, which is unique to the Japanese religious geography, but I had never heard of such prayers being actually practiced, except perhaps by some of the newer religious movements in an abbreviated form. I strongly felt that the spirit of the Lotus Sutra was indeed being voiced here, and at our temple there was a message, that, although quiet at first, could grow and enable all to come together in a spirit of respect and acceptance.

In addition to being a fine minister of the Nichiren Order, Rev. Yamamura is a serious student of the Way, who earnestly seeks to practice in daily life and give voice to the vision of the Lotus Sutra's message of universal salvation, and he does not hesitate to state his belief in an expanded One Vehicle of the

Lotus Sutra, which calls not only for the unity of the traditional vehicles of Buddhism, but for the harmonious coexistence and union of all religions and beliefs in the Truth of the inherent Buddha-nature of all beings. A single Buddha, who was already enlightened from the distant past, has appeared as the Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Gods, Deities, Angels, Saints, Holy men and women. Each is the most appropriate manifestation of the inherent Truth according to time, place and understanding.

I am told that this booklet will be the first of a series of similar undertakings by Rev. Yamamura. I look forward to the opportunities to support him in the attempt to give voice to the vision of the Lotus Sutra, and which honors the spirit of the founder of the Nichiren Order, Nichiren Daishonin, and the hopes of the forefathers who had built the Honolulu Myohoji. A new beginning and golden age is coming for our temple and our community.

Namu Myoho Renge Kyo

**Dean Makinodan**

**Priest of the Haguro Shugendo Order**

**Member of the Board of Directors of the Honolulu Myohoji**

## On the Second Printing of *The Reality of Myohoji*

It gives me great pleasure to announce the second printing of the first issue of *The Reality of Myohoji*. This booklet was produced and published to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the founding of the Honolulu Myohoji. It has been praised as being most understandable and the 750 copies that were published were distributed within a year. While an important purpose for the booklet was the education of Myohoji members, it has been read by many who are not members of the Nichiren Shu. A retired University of Hawaii professor became interested in the booklet and shared several tens of copies with various academics, including physicists. It was also read by a Christian minister and many followers of other religions.

In *The Reality of Myohoji*, matters that seem simple, but are not easily understood, are being explained, such as what is God? and what is the Buddha? Moreover, it is written with a focus on “relevancy.” Why must we come to the temple? Why must we study and train ourselves in Buddhism? And what must we do to live happily? These topics are discussed.

Nevertheless, in terms of contents, the explanations are far from complete. Various questions must have surfaced in the minds of the readers. In the future the second issue and the third issue of *The Reality of Myohoji* will be published. It is my hope that as you continue to read these booklets you will come to gain

an awareness of the answers to questions on religion, spirituality, and truth. Spirituality and truth cannot become words and letters. Moreover, truth is also not something that can be understood by the brain as knowledge. Truth is something that is felt and realized by the mind of each person. It goes without saying that information is important. And it is for this very reason that I believe that a booklet such as *The Reality of Myohoji* is important.

Finally, I express my gratitude to Dean Makinodan for his translation. I also wish to express my gratitude to Dan Liu, the President of our temple board. Without their effort and willpower the publication of this booklet could not have been realized.

**Rev. Takamasa Yamamura**  
**Head Minister, Honolulu Myohoji Mission**

## **The Three Missions of Honolulu Myohoji**

- I. To become a person that purely loves others through Buddhism.
  
- II. To respect all religions and all beliefs of all people.
  
- III. To make our joy the acts of serving others.

1. The teachings of Buddhism are simple and they belong to the people of the entire world. People want to be happy and avoid pain. There is no difference in the color of skin here. We call upon all the communities to be tolerant, to reject prejudice based on culture, color, religion or gender, and to ensure freedom and equality for people. People love others based on their self-interest. They love those who treat them well, and hate those who do not serve their interest. Regardless of their attitude toward us, we love all people. This is to love people purely.

2. If someone said, “you’re wrong,” we should answer, “yes, I am wrong.” Religion is idealism. We, who study idealism, must not fight. We must not complain about what another had done with good intentions. A person who quarrels is not a follower of Buddhism.

3. The purpose of human life, the meaning of living, is to be of service to others, to be of service to society, to do things that bring happiness. This is the answer. Moreover, to live for the happiness of other is for ourselves to also live.

## **Why Must We Go to the Temple?**

First of all, Honolulu Myohoji is a Buddhist temple and not a Christian church and that is why it is not necessary to go to the temple on Sunday. We must always go to the temple. Sunday services are a Christian custom and not a custom of Buddhism.

Why must we go to the temple? The answer is twofold.

First, to study the methods to live a peaceful life. To practice the methods to live a peaceful life. There are many fears in human life. The fear for the future. The fear of death. By studying the Buddhist teachings, by practicing meditation, we can forget these fears. To read the Sutra in the temple is meditation, even if we do not understand the meaning. While reading the Sutra, our mind is in peace. We have no thoughts of worry. While it is important to read the Sutra and meditate by ourselves, by reading together with others under the direction of a teacher, we can achieve the result of far greater mental peace. When practicing by ourselves, we are often prone to laziness or illusory thoughts. That is why it is important to come to the temple and read the Sutra with everyone.

Second, to do things that are of service. A person cannot live alone. A person is living through the help of many people. The purpose of human life is to live to serve others. If we do not live to serve others, life becomes unpleasant and we experience misfortune. When we seek only our benefit, and we think and act with the thought that it is enough that we ourselves

are well off, illness and accidents come to us as punishment. These are the advice from the Universal Nature (Reality) that our thoughts and actions are wrong. We come to the temple and meet many people. And we strive to do things that will benefit them. This is the secret to living a happy life.



*Worshippers offering and incense*

# **God = Eternal Buddha = Universal Nature**

## ***God***

God is the source of life, love, kindness and compassion. God became close to man through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

God may also be called the Atman, the existence that created the universe, the unchanging, absolute existence.

## ***Eternal Buddha***

The Eternal Buddha is the source of all life in the universe. He dwells in all beings of heaven and earth as their essence. Here we require no sacrifice to be close to the Eternal Buddha. He is always changing His appearance for our salvation. There is no beginning or end since the Eternal Buddha continues on eternally.

***According to human philosophy, there are many differences between God and the Eternal Buddha. However, there is spiritually and essentially no difference between the Eternal Buddha and God.***

## ***Universal Nature (Reality)***

We can call God and the Eternal Buddha by the name of Universal Nature (Reality). The Universal Nature is the source of all life in the universe.

Through the workings of Mother Nature, human beings can now live in this world. The air, water, fire, the earth, sun, moon and stars—these are all

the workings of the Universal Nature (Reality).  
***God=Eternal Buddha=Universal Nature.***

### ***Historical Buddha***

The Historical Buddha is a human being who had become one with God (Eternal Buddha). We can Him an existence that had become enlightened to and fully experienced the Truth. Rather than having had “become one with,” let us think of His experience as a human being that had realized His essence.

One of the ***Historical Buddhas is Buddha Shakyamuni***, who lived in India 2,500 years ago. The Buddha Shakyamuni is the founder of Buddhism. The Buddha Shakyamuni is a manifestation of the Eternal Buddha.

At the top of the altar of Honolulu Myohoji, we worship the relics of the Historical Buddha, Buddha Shakyamuni. This is the only temple in Hawaii to possess His relics.

### ***Bodhisattvas***

Bodhisattva means practitioner of Truth and protector of human beings. Bodhisattvas are similar to the guardian angels of Christianity.

Bodhisattvas are invisible existences, but they exist and save people who suffer in this world. The famous Bodhisattvas include Kannon, Jizo and Miroku. There are living Bodhisattvas on earth—His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, St. Mother Teresa, and you, yourself. You will become a Bodhisattva when you help people or serve society.

## ***We worship all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, God and gods***

We welcome various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities and gods to Myohoji, transfer the merits of the Sutra chanting to them and pray. It might be difficult for those with monotheistic beliefs to accept the idea of summoning to church many Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and gods.

Nevertheless, these many Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities and gods are offshoots of a “single” Great Loving Energy (Eternal Buddha), and according to functions, this Energy becomes various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities and gods. It is taught in the Duration of the Life of the Tathagata, chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra: “All the sutras that I expounded were for the purpose of saving all living beings. I showed my replicas and my transformations. I described my deeds and the deeds of others.” The “I” that is spoken of here is the Eternal Buddha. Another name for Him is the Great Loving Energy that gives life to us. While there are philosophical differences with the Christian God, there are also inherent similarities. The aspect of the Great Loving Existence that gives life to us, which assumes a concrete expression that extends the hand of salvation to us, are the various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities and gods. In other words, the source is one.

While Japanese Buddhism is polytheistic, monotheistic elements are also included. Buddhism, however, professes a monism. When conceived in this way, the Single Existence and the various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities and gods are in a relative

relationship. This is not a correct understanding. A relative relationship is an expedient to explain the Truth. In the same way that the human mind and body cannot be separated, the Eternal Buddha (God) and the various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities and gods are originally one but their functions are different.

Buddhism was born in India and grew while absorbing Hindu culture. It also grew in China while doing the same. In Japan, it grew while taking in Japanese culture. The various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities and gods that are welcomed to Myohoji today had derived from the cultures of those countries. The service that we conduct here can also be thought of as a religious-cultural activity.

In the Japanese spirit, there is the spirit of *wa* (harmony). *Wa* (harmony) is a mental disposition that accepts a foreign culture, adapts it to Japanese culture, and absorbs it into the culture of Japan. From ancient times the Japanese had carefully followed the practice of accepting what was found to be good. There is something about the spirit of acceptance and harmony from the time of the ancient Japanese that agrees with the spirit of the Lotus Sutra. The fundamental spirit of the Lotus Sutra is loving-kindness, respect, acceptance and harmony.

Having been transmitted to Japan and fitting in with the Japanese spirit of *wa* (harmony), the Lotus Sutra exerted great influence on Japanese culture. And when the Lotus Sutra was read, according to this spirit, the Hindu gods, the gods of ancient Japan, which have a karmic affinity with the Lotus Sutra, were invited. Moreover, at the Honolulu Myohoji, we also welcome the gods of Hawaii. The spirit

of Nichiren-Buddhism is a spirit of respect for the culture, customs and religions of each land.

Yet is it the case that all the sects of Japanese Buddhism welcome the many gods? That is not so. For example, the Hongwanji invites only the Amida Buddha. The other sects often limit themselves to a Buddha or Bodhisattvas.

Moreover, whether it is Japan or Hawaii, in every land there are protective gods. The merits of the Lotus Sutra are transferred to these gods, we offer our gratitude for their daily protection and we ask anew for their protection in our lives. The cultural habits of human beings are diverse, the Bodhisattvas and gods that wish to save us are also diverse. Just as we are considerate of the cultural habits of each country, we cherish the various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities and gods that exist in this world through a variety of karmic affinities. And together we strive for *nirvana*, the absolute peace in human life.

### ***Nature too is sacred***

Animism is the thinking that a spirit dwells in all matter and it is also related to nature worship. Nature worship recognizes an indwelling divine nature in the mountains, sun, moon, stars and so forth. It reveres them as gods and worships them.

Nature worship has been continued by the Japanese from ancient times. There are similarities between Japanese nature worship and Hawaiian nature worship. For example, in Hawaii, Pele is the goddess of the volcano. In Japan, the volcano, Mt. Fuji is worshiped as the goddess, Konohanasakuya-hime.

Moreover, in Hawaii, the sun god is worshiped as Ku—. In Japan, the same god is Amaterasu Omikami, and in the Nichiren Order, the sun god is worshiped as Dainichi Tenno. The moon god in Hawaii is called Hina. In Japan, the moon god is Tsukiyomi-no-mikoto. In the Nichiren Order, the moon god is worshiped as Daigatsu Tenno.

In this way, from ancient times in both Hawaii and Japan, the name of a god was assigned to each manifestation of nature and worshiped.

The truth is that the thinking that recognizes manifestations of nature and worships them has come from the Lotus Sutra. Chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra affirms all existences as being an aspect of Reality and teaches that all existences, including matter, have life.

There was a holy man who spoke of a similar teaching. He was *St. Francis of Assisi*, who lived in 14<sup>th</sup> century Italy. St. Francis said that all forms of nature, the sun, moon and stars are all blessings from God and all are our brothers and sisters, who are living the same life as ourselves. This truth is teaching that human beings are originally existences that are one with nature and we should never think of ourselves as being apart from nature. It is teaching that we are living together with nature and that nature and ourselves are living the same life. There is essentially no difference between this truth and the teaching of the Reality of all things of the Lotus Sutra.

From ancient times, the Japanese people recognized the divine nature within all manifestations of nature and worshiped nature as god. This is also due to the fact that Japan is a country of agrarian

people, who could not live without the blessings of nature. Moreover, to have awe and respect for nature, to revere nature and to live in harmony with nature, is indeed an essential way of life for human beings to maintain their life in this world. When we compare the teachings of St. Francis and the thinking of Shinto of Japan, we can understand that the way of life of worshiping nature is truly the way to live as a human being.

The Nichiren Order was unique among the Buddhist denominations in giving form to the influence of Shinto from ancient Japan as Hokke Shinto. By influence, I am referring to worshiping the gods, who are manifestations of nature, as being existences that protect the Lotus Sutra. That is because, as earlier mentioned, within the Lotus Sutra there is the important teaching that recognizes life in all existences.

The way of life that recognizes all manifestations of life as god is the very basic faith for human beings to live as human beings. We are now able to live because of the sun. It is because of the sun that there is warmth and it is due to sunlight that plants grow. If the sun were to disappear, the plants would die. Without the moon, the earth's axis would shift and the resulting abnormal weather would make it impossible for human beings to live. It is for the very reason of the presence of the sun and moon that human beings can maintain their life on earth.

There are many people in the world who pray to God and Buddha. Yet, how many turn toward the sun and moon with their hands in prayer and express their gratitude? Furthermore, human beings

seek objects of their faith in such things as images, Buddhist statues and crosses. However, the fact of the matter is that there are existences that we should worship, which are near at hand. They are the sun and the moon. A person, who daily faces the sun or the moon and places his hands in prayer and offers his gratitude, will surely be protected by heaven. That is because to do so is the true path and it is the way of a human being that has continued without end from ancient times.



*The Eternal Buddha of the Lotus Sutra*

# The Path to Happiness

## *1. All of human life is decided by words.*

The Gospel of John

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

***The Word is Indeed Truth and Law. To daily use positive words is the way to live happily.***

What kind of words are you using? You will become just as you are speaking about yourself. The future depends on your words. ***That is because word is God (Eternal Buddha).***

We speak of God as the Eternal Buddha. The Eternal Buddha is the source of our life, and the Great Life that enlivens us. Moreover, your spirit and the Eternal Buddha are always joined together. Rather than describing this as joined together, we should say that your spirit is one portion of the Eternal Buddha. This is called our “Higher Self.” Our “Highest Self” is the Eternal Buddha. ***Therefore your essence is the Eternal Buddha.***

The words that you are speaking are always heard by the Eternal Buddha (God), and ***He will make you just as you have spoken.***

***To daily use positive words.*** This is the law to live happily. Since words are created from the mind, if the mind is pure, similar words come from us. Those who use negative and impure words have an impure mind. Negative words make their user’s life one of misfortune, and those words even bring misfortune

to their user's descendants. This is karma.

Nevertheless, do you really believe that you essentially are the Eternal Buddha (God)? You probably do not. I also do not think so. That is why we study Buddhism. And that is why we must come to the temple.

To become aware of our Higher Self (a part of the Eternal Buddha) who dwells within. To control the evil emotions, which contaminate the Eternal Buddha, who resides within our spirit. This is also what Buddhism is.

## ***2. Control the evil emotions, which contaminate the Eternal Buddha who resides within.***

Hatred, sadness, discontent, feelings of dislike for others—these feelings are the feelings of the devil. They are also called *mana* in Hindu philosophy. It is these feelings that make people unhappy. These feelings are darkness.

Light is needed for darkness. In the same way that darkness vanishes when we put on the light, we can deal with the feelings of the devil with light. What then is light? ***The light is feelings of compassion, kindness and happy expectation.*** If unpleasant feelings should come to us, we should just make ourselves bright. In any case, let us always think about happy things and things to look forward to in life. We should raise our spirits up. Nevertheless, in times of difficulty we cannot think of positive things. Here I will teach you the greatest light. ***The greatest light is the vibration of Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.***

This light is the vibration of salvation and the

vibration of healing. When we cannot think of happy things, when such evil feelings as anger and sadness rise up from within, let us chant in a loud voice, *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*. Through its light, the darkness will gradually vanish.

*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* is also words of gratitude for being sustained by the Eternal Buddha (God). When we chant these words, our mind is purified. When our mind is purified, the words that we use are pure. When a person's words are purified, his life is also pure and he becomes happy.

A person who speaks negative words and words that criticize others is not truly chanting *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*. If we truly chant *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*, our life and our words will also become pure.

While chanting *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*, our Higher Self, will appear.

### ***3. Live happily now, at this Moment***

Many people are mistaken. ***They think that happiness will come after a great suffering or difficulty.*** Many people are unhappy because of this mistaken thinking. ***Happiness is to be happy now, at this moment, and the next happiness will come.*** Why is this? It is the Buddha's hope that we live happily. In other words, to live happily is not a right, but our responsibility as a human being.

The nature of the phenomenal world is a repetition of flashing light. All things vanish in an instant and all things appear in an instant. This is the cycle of creation. What gives us the impression that things are continuing on is an illusion produced by our eyes.

The phenomenal world is shimmering in the same way as a movie screen. What appears disappears and what disappears appears. Why does the present moment seem to be continuing on? That is because in material objects there is the law of inertia, which makes them continue their present form. ***It is for this very reason that if we are unhappy at this moment, we should cut away that moment and become happy. By so doing, the next phenomenal manifestation will be one of happiness.*** Unhappy conditions are created from unhappy conditions. If we live the present happily, the future instant will be one of happiness. What is it that we should do? It is to keep a feeling of happiness and ideas of happiness in our heart no matter what our circumstances may be. It is to speak of happiness and to think of happiness. This will change our future to one of happiness.

For all things in human life, we must first of all appreciate and savor joy and happiness through our life, our mind and physical body. No matter what our circumstances may be, let us make the focus of human life the appreciation of true joy and happiness in life.

This is not an epicureanism that is satisfied if oneself alone lives a happy life. No matter what kind of happiness it may be, it must never disturb the life of another in even the slightest way. May all people of this world free themselves from the morality and ethics that had narrowed their abilities until now, and while abiding by the absolute standard of never obstructing the happiness of another, let us delight in and enjoy through a broad spectrum of our lives the original pure sensory enjoyment of a human being.

#### **4. Meditate**

Human beings are formed of spirit, mind, and body. ***The spirit is the human essence.***

In order to protect our spirit and to enable it to grow, we have received a ***mind*** and a ***body*** from the Eternal Buddha (God). And to live a happy life and to live to serve others, we must use our mind and body as efficiently as possible. ***The mind and body are our tools to live in this world.*** We must not be the servants of our mind and body. ***We are the master. The mind and body are the servants. We must control our mind and body.***

#### ***Controlling the body***

We should have a well-balanced and nutritious diet with much vegetables and fruits, and avoid such harmful foods as white sugars, old oils and junk foods. The cause of illness is impurities in our blood. How does blood become impure? It is because our intestines are in the same condition. That is why we should consume a good amount of fiber and so forth and improve our bowel movement. It is important to maintain the health of our colon. In addition, we should have a suitable amount of exercise.

#### ***Controlling the mind***

The most important for mental care is meditation. Our mind is full of worldly thoughts and distracting ideas. These could be worries for the future or our dissatisfaction with the present. It is because of our

worldly thoughts and distracting ideas that we cannot see the proper course for our lives to proceed on. And that is why we are confused and suffer. It is through meditation that we must cleanse our mind of these worldly thoughts and distracting ideas.

When we are able to control our breathing through meditation, we can control our emotions. We do not change such negative emotions as anger and sadness, but we become able to control them. Where does anger and sadness come from? We investigate their cause. And we come to know the cause. Just knowing about the cause brings us closer to mental peace. And knowing that anger is a harmful emotion, we make efforts to not bring harm to others. We strive to not accumulate bad karma. This is for the sake of our future happiness.

Moreover, it is being proven by many scientists that mental peace influences bodily health. Through mental peace alone can the human body also become healthy and be less susceptible to illness.

No matter how much good nutrition we partake and also exercise, without mental peace, we fall ill. In addition, with only mental peace and not providing good nourishment for our body, we again fall ill. We cannot become happy and we succumb to illness without caring for the two wheels of mental care and bodily care.

We care for our mind through meditation and care for our body through good nutrition. ***By establishing the two wheels of mental care and bodily care, we become happy and healthy.*** While this is simple, many people do not know this or practice it.

Without mental and bodily care, no matter how

we pray, we will not be saved. Buddhism is realistic. By taking it upon ourselves to eat good foods for our body and to practice meditation, we maintain our mental peace. By so doing, we can save ourselves. Buddhism is discipline and practice.

## 5. Chant “*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*”

### *What is Namu Myoho Renge Kyo?*

*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo is the power of the universe.* There is power in these words. And it is important that we recite these words.

*Namu* means to offer up our life to something.

*Myoho* is Eternal Buddha’s (God’s) infinitely free power.

*Renge* is a symbol of the teaching by which He wished to save us.

*Kyo* is a symbol of the practice of the Historical Buddha, Shakyamuni.

First, there is *Myoho*. The Historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, became one with the Eternal Buddha (God) and attained the freedom that transcends all sufferings of life. The power of the Eternal Buddha, which the Historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, had become one with, is *Myoho*. This is also called in Japanese, “*Nyorai Himitsu Jinzu shi Riki* (the Buddha’s Mystic Hidden Power).”

Next, there is *Renge*. The Historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, expounded a teaching for all to become equally happy. In India, as an expression of the wish to bring happiness to all people, a mark is placed on the forehead. In Sanskrit, the act of doing so is

*pundari*. Another name for the power of the *pundari* is **Renge**.

Finally, there is **Kyo**. **Kyo** means sutra, which is the record of the words and deeds of the Historical Buddha, Shakyamuni.

### ***Five elements of the universe***

Our founder Nichiren, taught us that the body is composed of the five elements of the universe—earth, water, fire, wind, and space. These five elements are also the five characters of the **Myo, Ho, Ren, Ge** and **Kyo**.

**Myo** signifies earth. It is the soil.

**Ho** stands for water.

**Ren** is a symbol for fire.

**Ge** stands for wind.

And **Kyo** represents air. It is that air that we breathe.

**Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo signifies the five elements of universe.** The human body is formed of these five elements of universe.

### ***Why should we chant it?***

### ***The power of gratitude***

The body is composed of the water element. But it is also composed of minerals and vitamins and protein. These are equal to the earth or soil element. My body has a temperature—this is the element of fire. When I inhale and exhale—this is the element of wind. And finally, the five senses that we all have—these are considered the element of space or air.

***When we chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, the five elements of our body are activated by the power of the five elements of the universe.*** When our body makes this connection to the Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, we can gain health, good fortune and happiness. Therefore the practitioner of Namu Myoho Renge Kyo is always youthful and healthy.

Moreover, in order to live, if a single one of the five elements of nature were lacking, we would no longer be alive. Without water or air, we could not continue to live. Who is it that gave us this fire, air or water? It was given to us free of charge by the Eternal Buddha (God). The Eternal Buddha has given them to us at no charge. To chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo is the same as saying thank you to the Universal Nature. ***To live happily in this world, gratitude is most important.*** To begin with, let us be grateful for being given life once again today. The vibration of gratitude that emits from us is essential and it is a key point for happiness. That is because our vibration of gratitude attracts to us things that we really can be grateful for.

Moreover, when we chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, we ourselves are purified, and our surroundings and the land are also cleansed. Before asking why, try this for yourselves. Those who devote themselves to the faith of the Namu Myoho Renge Kyo seem younger than their age. And even the land where they live becomes a pleasant one.

### ***The power of the word***

The words of human beings become the start of all actions. Isn't it the case that we first think about

something and then take action? Even our unconscious actions are influenced by the words that we daily use. Before our actions, our words have been decided. The great Myoho Renge Kyo will also not take form in the actualities unless it is expressed in words. Truth cannot exist in the actualities without words. To bring into the actualities the Universal Power, which is equally showered on all, is to think and chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo through words. It is inevitable that the Power, which has been actualized through words, will influence things and create lives that are filled with harmony and happiness.

### ***The other aspects of Namu Myoho Renge Kyo***

In the Lotus Sutra, Chapter 20, there is important parable for us. Never Despising Bodhisattva was a priest in India long ago. He did not read sutras at his temple or give sermons. What did he do? He would get up in the morning, put on his priestly attire and go into the town. As he met people, he would bow his head, put in hands together, and say before continuing on his path, "I respect you deeply. I do not despise you. Why is that? It is because you will be able to practice the way of Bodhisattvas and become Buddhas." This is all that he did. This practice is the spirit of the Lotus Sutra.

Our founder, Nichiren Shonin, taught us that these words "I respect you deeply. I do not despise you. Why is that? It is because you will be able to practice the way of Bodhisattvas and become Buddhas" is also the meaning of Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.

## ***Let us strive to respect others.***

There is the universal law: “The person in front of you is your mirror.” In general, the attitude of that person is a reflection of your attitude. When we do not respect another, that person will also not respect us. As long as the person before us is mentally normal, if we greet him with a smile, he will smile back at us. Except for extreme cases, ***the attitude of the person before us is a mirror of our attitude.*** That is why the people around us are our mirror. To become a person who respects others. This is the goal of Nichiren Buddhism. There is no merit or gain from chanting the Namu Myoho Renge Kyo without respect for another.

There is another important law. ***Unhappy people are those who cannot respect another.*** An unhappy person is a person who criticizes another and who cannot feel happiness. An unhappy person is a person who continually experiences loneliness, sadness, irritation and fear for the future within his heart, and is so concerned about himself that he has no leeway to think about others. To say nothing of the fact that he cannot worship another. He must first fill his mind with feelings of happiness, gratitude and love, and filled with these feelings he will be able to worship another. To make oneself happy is to bless oneself. By chanting Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, we will be naturally blessing ourselves. And we are naturally blessed and at the same time we can respect another.

Moreover, misfortune starts from self-hatred. Human beings know from the bottom of their heart that they will someday die. The greatest self-hatred

is the fear that we will someday die. No matter how great things we may say, death is, after all, frightening. The greatest goal of Buddhism is to escape from self-hatred and to bless ourselves. To bless oneself is “to respect oneself and to bless oneself.” ***To chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo is the practice of “blessing oneself and benefiting others.”***

### ***Summary***

I believe that you have more or less understood why we should chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo through these three interpretations. ***However, honestly speaking, why we chant Namu Myoho Renge Kyo cannot be understood by an intellectual understanding.*** We might then question the knowledge that we gained until now. Nevertheless, the Myoho of Namu Myoho Renge Kyo is, as the characters indicate, the wondrous teaching (law). It teaches us that the wondrous teaching cannot be understood by thinking with the human brain. To truly understand Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, there is no other way than to practice it. It is to simply chant with our voices Namu Myoho Renge Kyo. While simply chanting Namu Myoho Renge Kyo, we will naturally feel something, and what we come to know is Namu Myoho Renge Kyo. Our founder Nichiren Shonin said, “Turbid water is without mind, through the moon’s reflection, it naturally becomes clear.” We (turbid water), who are covered with greed, are naturally purified by the reflection of the moon (Namu Myoho Renge Kyo). We are made turbid by our obsessions and desires. This is probably unavoidable because

we are human beings. Yet, when the moon—*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*—shines upon us, our mind seems pure. The turbid water remains turbid just as it is. However, through *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* things seem beautiful to our eyes. To look at another, and to just think that the person is pure and genuine, is to be of service to that person and others. I believe that this, in itself, is a good deed.



*Children in India chanting the Odaimoku*

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*A view of the temple from the quiet of Nuuanu Stream*