

April Discussion Topic - **Nam-myoho-renge-kyo**

On April 28th 1253, Nichiren Daishonin (1222-1282) first proclaimed Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. He revealed that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, being both the title and the essence of the Lotus Sutra, represents the universal enlightenment through which all human beings are able to attain Buddhahood.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the Mystic Law, is the natural law underlying all the functions of the universe, and the law to which all Buddhas are awakened.

By reciting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we activate our innate Buddhahood. In this way we can build a life state of indestructible happiness filled with wisdom, courage, compassion and life-force, and rise to the challenges of our daily lives.

Nichiren wrote: "If you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death you have endured since time without beginning and to attain unsurpassed enlightenment in this lifetime, you must perceive the mystic truth that is originally inherent in all living beings. This truth is Myoho-renge-kyo. Chanting Myoho-renge-kyo will therefore enable you to grasp the mystic truth inherent in all life." (WND-I, 788).

What is the meaning of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo? Nam-myoho-renge-kyo simply means "devotion to the Mystic Law of cause and effect", or to bring your life into rhythm with the universe.

Nam comes from the Sanscrit *namas*, meaning to devote or dedicate oneself. It indicates the correct attitude with which we can attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.

Myoho literally means Mystic Law. Myo can be translated as "mystic" or "wondrous"; and *ho* means "law". Nichiren says: "It is simply the mysterious nature of our life from moment to moment, which the mind cannot comprehend or words express." (WND-I, 4)

What exactly is it that is difficult to comprehend? It is the wonder of ordinary people, beset by delusion and suffering, awakening to the fundamental law in their own lives, bringing forth wisdom and compassion and realising that they are inherently Buddhas able to solve their own problems.

Myo indicates the essence of life that is "invisible" and transcends our understanding. This essence is always manifested in a tangible form (*ho*) that can be grasped with our senses. Nichiren says that the character *myo* has three meanings: "to open", "to be fully endowed", and "to revive", that is, to return to life.

Renge means lotus flower. The lotus puts forth flowers and fruit at the same time and illustrates the principle of the simultaneity of cause and effect. The circumstances and quality of our individual lives are determined by the causes and effects, both good and bad, that we create at any moment through thoughts, words and deeds. This is called "karma". Every person is responsible for his or her life. We create our own karma, and we possess the power to change it by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The lotus flower grows and blooms in a muddy pond, and yet it remains flawless and free from impurities.

Kyo literally means sutra. It is the vibration of our voice. Kyo is the interconnectedness of all phenomena, and how our prayer or the sound of our chanting can affect people and situations out of our immediate sphere.

When we are first introduced to Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, it can be hard to believe that chanting this phrase over and over can have any impact on our life. It is only by actually trying it out that we will be able to see the result. President Ikeda clarifies: “Our health, courage, wisdom, joy, desire to improve, self-discipline and so on, could all be said to depend on our life-force. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo enables us to bring forth limitless life-force. Those who base themselves on chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo are therefore never deadlocked.”¹

1. We can overcome any problem in life by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Have you experienced this?
2. How do you experience your Buddha nature when you chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo?

¹ Daisaku Ikeda, *The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace* (Eternal Ganges Press, 2015) Vol. 1, p. 65.