

## 41

### Letter to Gijo-bo



I HAVE carefully reviewed your question about the Buddhist teachings. The blessing of the Lotus Sutra is a state of life that can only be understood between Buddhas. It is an inner enlightenment that even the wisdom of Shakyamuni's emanations throughout the ten directions may be no match for. That is why, as you well know, even the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai commented on the character *myo*, saying that it is defined as beyond ordinary comprehension.<sup>1</sup> As for this sutra, however, it is divided into various practices. These are the teachings that were known only by men such as T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, and Dengyo. The Great Teacher Dengyo in particular, even though he was the reincarnation of T'ien-t'ai, sent envoys to T'ang China on many occasions in an effort to resolve the doubts of others. So what is really important is that the teachings of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, of the hundred worlds and thousand factors, and of three thousand realms in a single moment of life are the essence of this sutra. These teachings are described in the work entitled *Great Concentration and Insight*.

Next, the teaching of the "Life Span" chapter is what I, Nichiren, personally depend on. Although T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo also understood it in a general way, they never put it into words or

proclaimed it. The same is true of Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu. The verse section of the chapter states, "... single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha, not hesitating even if it costs them their lives." As a result of this passage, I have revealed the Buddhahood in my own life. The reason is that it is this sutra passage that has enabled me to embody the Three Great Secret Laws, or the reality of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, that is found in the "Life Span" chapter. But keep this secret, keep it secret.

The Great Teacher of Mount Hiei [Dengyo] journeyed to China and received instruction on the point of this passage. "Single" of "single-mindedly" means the one pure way, and "mind" means all phenomena.<sup>2</sup> That is why the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, explaining the Chinese character for "mind," said that its four brush strokes represent the moon and three stars, and that this implies that the mind of the effect [of Buddhahood] is pure and clean.<sup>3</sup> I, Nichiren, say that "single" stands for *myo*, or mystic, "mind" for *ho*, or law, "desiring" for *ren*, or lotus, "see" for *ge*, or flower, and "Buddha" for *kyo*, or sutra. In propagating these five characters, practitioners should "not hesitate even if it costs them their lives."

"Single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha" may be read as follows:

single-mindedly observing the Buddha, concentrating one's mind on seeing the Buddha, and when looking at one's own mind, perceiving that it is the Buddha. Having attained the fruit of Buddhahood, the eternally inherent three bodies, I may surpass even T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo, and excel even Nagarjuna and Mahakashyapa. The Buddha wrote that one should become the master of one's mind rather than let one's mind master oneself.<sup>4</sup> This is what I

mean when I emphatically urge you to give up even your body, and never begrudge even your life for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Nichiren

The twenty-eighth day of the fifth month in the tenth year of Bun'ei (1273)

Reply to Gijo-bo



## Background

This letter was written at Ichinosawa on Sado Island in the fifth month, 1273, to Gijo-bo, who had been the Daishonin's senior at Seicho-ji temple in Awa Province. Nearly a month earlier, Nichiren Daishonin had written *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*, in which he had explained both the object of devotion in terms of the Law and the correct practice for attaining enlightenment in the Latter Day. This letter briefly restates the profound contents of *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*.

Nichiren Daishonin says that, of all the chapters of the Lotus Sutra, the "Life Span" chapter is particularly im-

portant to him. He quotes a passage, "... single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha . . .," and notes, "As a result of this passage, I have revealed the Buddhahood in my own life." He declares that in his capacity as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law he has realized and embodied Nam-myoho-renge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws, which is implied in the depths of the "Life Span" chapter.

This is one of the earliest references in his writings to the Three Great Secret Laws: the invocation (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo), the object of devotion (the Gohonzon), and the place of worship (the sanctuary).

## Notes

1. This statement is found in the introduction to *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

2. The "one pure way" refers to the

true aspect inherent in all phenomena.

3. Source unknown.

4. This statement is found in both the Nirvana Sutra and the Six Paramitas Sutra.