

Minwa-Fu Hokekyo Dowa Volume 30

The Eternal Buddha's Messenger (The Last Volume)

by Rev. Kōge Matsumoto

Nichiren Dai'Shonin Is The Great Leader for Peace of Mind

(Just as a Mother Gives Milk to Her Baby)

Chapter 1

Dear Nichiren Dai'Shonin

At last it is time to conclude the *Lotus Sutra* for Children. I feel sorrow at parting from the writing of this series. But I cannot help it, because if it starts, it must come to an end!

It has taken eight years before we introduce the great leader for peace of mind. These years were needed for me to introduce Nichiren Dai'Shonin, the great leader, and for you to develop a peaceful mind in this defiled world.

A) Looking up at the sky and Sorrowfully Praying for Changes

Nichiren Dai'Shonin was the person most worthy to be the great leader in the *Mappo* Era and the Eternal Buddha's messenger.

Looking up at the ozone layer that covers the earth's atmosphere, it is like the Buddha's compassionate robe. Nichiren Dai'Shonin was saddened and wondered, "Why are these people's minds so dried up and contaminated like the mud?" He prayed and asked, "How can I lead their minds to be more moist and peaceful?" As if he were throwing his body deep into the Buddha's chest, Nichiren threw his body to the ground and cried.

It is an attitude similar to your mother's when you were sick. She worried about you as a suffering baby. She tried very hard to make you drink milk and regain strength. Nichiren Dai'Shonin gave us the wonderful medicine that is like a mother's breast milk. He wished suffering people to have peaceful minds as soon as possible. Even if one has a very defiled mind, if one takes the wonderful medicine obediently, one will surely have a peaceful mind. The defiled mind will change to a compassionate and rejoicing mind. The sadness will change to rejoicing upon hearing the Dharma. The sufferings will become an opportunity to overcome an ordeal.

Just like a mother gives milk to her baby, Nichiren Dai'Shonin appeared on this earth as Eternal Buddha's messenger in the era of the *Mappo*.

B) As the Buddha Predicted

Nichiren Dai'Shonin was the first original disciple of the Eternal Buddha. He was born in the far-eastern country called Japan. At the command of the Eternal Buddha Japan would have a strong relationship with the righteous Dharma in the beginning of the most defiled period called the *Mappo* Era. He intended to save the people with the Sacred Title of the *Lotus Sutra* called the O'Daimoku.

Therefore, as predicted in the sutra, he must have been the real practitioner of the *Lotus Sutra* in the *Mappo* Era. That meant he would have to



face various persecutions as revealed in Chapter Ten of the *Lotus Sutra*. “Many people will hate him with jealousy even in My lifetime. Needless to say, more people will do so after My extinction.” Nichiren Dai’Shonin endured all kinds of persecutions and accomplished his task while undergoing many ordeals as the most trusted disciple of the Eternal Original Buddha.

“To accomplish this task was My Original Vow!” Nichiren Dai’Shonin had a firm determination as the superior leader among the Great Bodhisattvas from underground. He encouraged his followers, “It is hard to chant the Sacred Title of the sutra if you were not the Bodhisattvas from underground!”

Therefore, every one of you should have pride that you are one of the Bodhisattvas from underground. There is no greater happiness than this pride.

Chapter 2

Birth of the Eternal Buddha’s Messenger

Nichiren Dai’Shonin was born in 1222. Many great, historical changes in Japan occurred around the period of his birth. The biggest change was a civil war called ‘Jokyu no ran’ that happened one year ago before his birth. Three ex-emperors were exiled to three different isolated places by Kamakura military samurai when the imperial army was defeated in Kyoto. From that time, the Hojo Regents in Kamakura took complete control over Japan. It was as if a servant chased away his master, a child took control of his parents, or the bad overthrew the good. It was a period of “the lower dominating the upper.” It was a period when many unbelievable things happened, so all people in Japan were living in unease every day.

Besides that, it was the beginning of the *Mappo* Era in Buddhism. Extraordinary phenomenon like ill-omened shooting stars appeared in the heavens and earthquakes on the ground occurred all over Japan. The people were in turmoil month after month and year after year.

During such an unstable time, Nichiren Dai’Shonin was born. His father’s name was Shigetada Jiro Nukina. His mother, Umegiku, was a beautiful and beloved woman. It was

said that the people who saw her became gentle and peaceful, so everyone loved and respected her. They also respected Shigetada and depended on him for various matters.

A) Deeper Bonds than Love

Shigetada set a high value on his wife, and Umegiku appreciated her husband's thoughtfulness. Their new baby was named 'Zen-nichi-marō (Good-sun-boy). He grew strong with their love. It was a wonder that Zen-nichi-marō was born the day after Sakya-muni Buddha's death on February 16th, although there were a number of years in between. But there must be some fatal causal relationship between the master and the disciple.

His birth was accompanied by a few miracles that seemed to prove the birth of the Practitioner of the *Lotus Sutra* in the *Mappo* Era. Although it was the middle of winter, a legend said a spring of clear water suddenly gushed forth in the corner of the garden, and many white lotuses blossomed in the cold waters of the bay, signaling the birth of a great man. As it says in Chapter 15 of the *Lotus Sutra*, "Be not influenced by environment. Lo, the lotus blossom, never to be soiled by the muddy waters whence it grows." These miracles were good omens, so the ocean side was named, "Lotus Flower Bay," and it is a "no fishing" area even today.



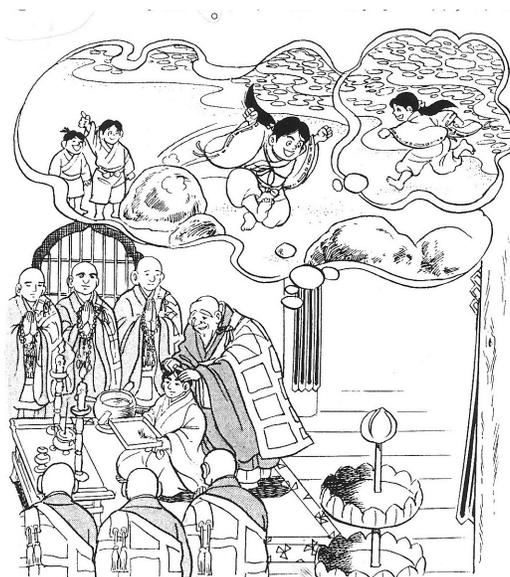
B) Having Sympathy toward All People

The heavenly deities might have displayed these happy omens because the newborn baby was considered to be the lovely first disciple of the Eternal Buddha and the messenger to expound the *Lotus Sutra* to save the people in the *Mappo* Era.

At the assembly in the sky of the *Lotus Sutra*, Deity Tensho Daijin and Hachiman Great Bodhisattva of Japan had vowed to protect the practitioner of the sutra in front of Sakya-muni and Many-Treasures Buddhas sitting side by side in the Treasure Stupa. So, those deities and the Bodhisattvas must have been glad to see the birth of the baby. It was said that the original residence of Tensho Daijin was in the same district where Nichiren Dai'Shonin was born. Nichiren Dai'Shonin felt strong pride about this in his later years.

Therefore, he encouraged us to have self-confidence and pride.

Zen-nichi-marō breathed in the fresh air of the Pacific Ocean deep into his lungs and played by running on the beach and jumping from rock to rock at the ocean side. Watching various fish, insects and animals, he wondered why the weak were always victimized by the strong, how he could bring peace to all living beings, how could he make better lives for everyone, and how could he save the suffering people.



C) Start Learning

Zen-nichi-marō was now 12* years old. He was very obedient to his parents and a dutiful son, gentle to everyone and intelligent. Since he liked to learn a lot, his father decided to take him to Kiyosumi Temple that belonged to the Tendai Sect at that time.

(*12 years old - In this book, the author follows the traditional Japanese way of counting age. In this way of counting, a baby started by being one year old at birth and added one year on New Year's Day. So, everybody got one year older on New Year's Day in Japan.)

Looking at the boy, Do-zen-bo accepted him as his disciple and gave him a new name, 'Yaku-o-marō (Medicine-King Kid). Yaku-o-marō was gentle and thoughtful not only to his parents but to everyone. At first, he had just thought of becoming a useful person by learning, reading and writing, so he followed his father and entered the temple.

He had no intention of practicing Buddhism or becoming a priest but just studying to become a helpful person for others. It seemed to be in his blood to be inquisitive, as he tried as hard as he could to learn and practice. He soon mastered what he had learned, one thing after another. His intentions seem to be matched to the Way of the Bodhisattva, to learning and practicing not only for himself but also to help others within his ability. Eventually he was going to awaken his original vow to be born in this life. It was to practice the Way of the Bodhisattva.

Chapter 3

Kindling Charcoal to Make a Fire

At the age of sixteen Yaku-o-marō had a strong desire to seek Buddhism, so he asked his master, Dozen-bo to hold a special ceremony for him to become a monk and renounced the world. Thus, he officially became a Buddha's disciple named 'Ren-cho' or 'Lotus Eternity.' Here, a dignified young monk was born.

Rencho asked many questions to his master. However, the young monk could not get the right answers from his master. Do-zen-bo said, "Buddhism does not provide a way to get answers from someone. Facing the Buddha directly, you must learn and practice by yourself."

Thus, Rencho continued to seek his own answers. He intensified his studies and read all the materials in the library of the temple. These further studies, however, only added to his confusion.

A) Made a Vow

With his master's advice, Rencho realized that reading a large number of books and asking many questions to other people would not get answers to his questions. He would have to believe in the existence of the Buddha and the divinities, so he might receive supreme wisdom directly from them.

Finally, in despair, he entered the sanctuary of the temple's guardian deity. There, in the silence and shadows of the sacred hall, he knelt before the image of Kokuzo Bodhisattva,

Wisdom Deity, and prayed for blessing and for guidance. He requested, “Make me the wisest man in Japan! Let me know my original vow!”

The more he meditated, the more questions that were harder and harder came forth from his mind.

The Buddha said everyone was His child. Then why did the people behave so differently and focus on only doing their own stuff? There were ten Buddhist denominations in Kamakura, so which sect practiced the real teachings of the Buddha?”

B) The “E’N” of the Spiritual Blood Relationship

For twenty-one days, he prayed and fasted in front of the statue of Wisdom Deity. He offered his vow that he would study all the sectarian doctrines until he understood the Buddha’s truth.

In the early morning on the twenty-first day, he said he received “The Treasured Gem” – a gift of knowledge. That morning his friends found Rencho on the ground, laying unconscious, his robes and the nearby bamboo-grasses splattered with blood that he had vomited as a result of his great strain. That bamboo still grows in the back of the temple today. So, we are able to think of Rencho at that moment.

The reborn Rencho was not the same student monk. Because of the spiritual blood relationship between Sakyamuni Buddha and Supreme-Practice Bodhisattva, the inner-self of Nichiren, little by little, began in sprout within Rencho.

Having gained this knowledge, Rencho decided that there was little more he could learn at Kiyosumi. He had exhausted all the materials available to him there.



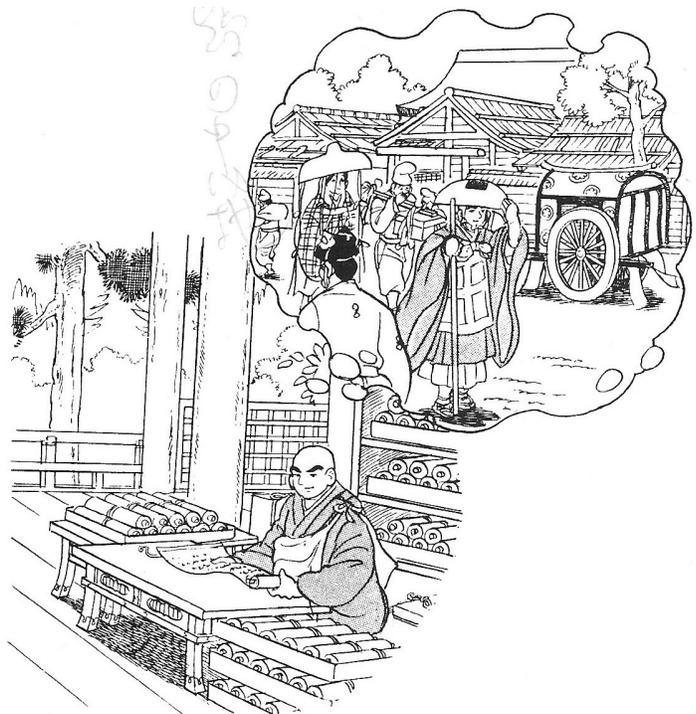
C) Quest for the Truth

Rencho had nothing more to learn at Kiyosumi. Out of sheer necessity, he asked his master, "Thank you very much for your kindness to me so I could dedicate myself to studying all the books at this temple until today. But I would like to continue studying further. There were six denominations brought from China in the Nara Era in the seventh century. Two more sects, Tendai and Shingon, were brought in the early the ninth century. Zen and Jodo sects were added in the tenth century. These ten denominations from China all insisted their doctrine was number one among all Buddhist schools. I must find out the true teaching of Sakyamuni Buddha. If there is one, why does the government not practice it and lead the people of Japan to the right way instead of allowing all the suffering that occurs. I wish to study all the doctrines, find out with my own eyes and practice the true teaching of the Buddha."

Dozenbo had no way to refuse his request; therefore, at the age of sixteen, Rencho was granted a leave of absence from the temple.

Five years in Kamakura quickly passed, and Rencho was already 21 years old. What he had found was that none of the ten denominations practiced the true enlightenment of the Buddha. The Tendai Sect that Kiyosumi Temple belonged seemed to be the closest to the truth. He began to long for the peace and silence of his childhood temple. He felt he must go home to study the deeper doctrines of the Tendai Sect and its founder, T'ien-t'ai Chih-i.

Master Dozenbo was of course overjoyed at the young priest's return. Rencho reported what he had learned and found out in Kamakura to the Deity of Wisdom (Kokuzo Bodhisattva) and to his master. The master now heard the young priest's new request - permission for another leave-of-absence, this time to study at the famous temples in Kyoto and Nara.



D) To Reveal the Truth

“What is the real teaching of Sakyamuni Buddha? What did Sakyamuni Buddha leave for the people in the *Mappo* Era? I want to make clear these questions. Please let me study at Mt. Hiei!” Rencho asked if his life depended on it.

As Dozenbo listened to the words of the confident young man, a belief grew in him that here might be the person most qualified to be succeed him as a master of Kiyosumi Temple. Thus, he again proudly and joyfully gave permission so his great hope would be answered.

During the next twelve years he called himself, “A disciple of T’ien-t’ai Chih-i and studied all doctrines of the schools in Kyoto and Nara, that were the 84,000 teachings of the Buddha and the great number of volumes of *the Three Great Transcription Chih-i’s. He read all of them thoroughly three times.

*(*The Three Great Transcription Chih-i’s: Hokke Genji is the lectures on the Lotus Sutra to an emperor of China. Maka-Shikan talks about the methods of practices to observe one’s mind, and Hokke Monqu explains the meanings of words in the Lotus Sutra.)*

It is said that it takes five years for a scholar today to read the 84,000 teachings of the Buddha once. But Rencho took only five years to read them through three times. Beside that he read the great volumes of the lectures, commentaries and explanations on the *Lotus Sutra* that Saicho brought from Mt. T’ien-t’ai.

The wisest person in the nation had special skills to memorize and to read at high speed. It is said that he memorized all of them.

E) The Four Masters in the Three Countries

Sakyamuni Buddha in India was the founder of Buddhism and His teachings were propagated in China. For Master T’ien-t’ai Chih-i the *Lotus Sutra* was the most important sutra among all the other sutras and he honored it the most. Master Dengyo Saicho of Japan studied in China and mastered the *Lotus Sutra* at Mt. T’ien-t’ai. He had transmitted the sutra to Saint Nichiren, the real practitioner of the sutra in the *Mappo* Era.

This is the historical spiritual blood transmission of the *Lotus Sutra*. In Chapter Two of the *Lotus Sutra* it said that the Dharma that the Buddha had attained was understood by

the Buddhas only. None of these masters in China and Japan had understood the deep relationships among them. They did what they were supposed to do in order to accomplish their fates to expound the *Lotus Sutra*. So, Rencho had not yet realized his original mission as the Buddha's disciple yet.

Chapter 4

It Is Time Now!

Rencho had no intention to start a new denomination at first. He just worried about his country and the people. He wondered how to save these people's sufferings which was just like a mother who always worried about her children even when they were older.

During his twelve year study on Mt. Hiei and the surrounding areas, he thought the Tendai Sect was keeping and practicing the *Lotus Sutra*. But he could not accept it. It was like white rice mixed with pebbles of the same size and same color, because the Tendai priests recited and studied the *Lotus Sutra* but chanted the nembutsu, the name of Amida Buddha. Other denominations were like food samples in a showcase. They looked fresh and nice in color, but you could not eat them. Some schools enshrined the statues of other Buddhas instead of Sakyamuni Buddha. Even if they enshrined the statue of the historical Sakyamuni Buddha it was not the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha who was the Lord, the Master, and the Parent. All of them did not understand the concept of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha that was revealed in Chapter 16 of the *Lotus Sutra*.



A) Leave Things to Their Own Course (Should I Tell or not?)

How can you neglect your big boss, master and parents? All Buddhas were born from the mouth or the Dharma of the Eternal Buddha. That Eternal Buddha appeared on this earth with a physical body. He renounced the world and attained Buddhahood. If Sakyamuni Buddha did not appear, all other Buddhas would not be revealed and would not be known to exist. None of the Buddhas existed on this Saha-world except Sakyamuni Buddha.

Rencho realized this fact. But he still wondered whether he should tell others or not. He knew now, "It is the *Lotus Sutra* that reveals the real Enlightenment of Sakyamuni Buddha. The *Lotus Sutra* is the Right Dharma! The Sacred Title of the sutra, O'Daimoku, is the spirit of the *Lotus Sutra*!" But Rencho still wondered for a while, "Should I tell others or not?"

Finally, he made a big decision, "I must save the suffering people in the *Mappo* Era even if it will cost my life!" The time of his first chanting of the O'Daimoku and proclamation of his refreshed faith was approaching. In fact, it was just time for him to follow the Buddha's will. It was the one and only way for the people to take the good medicine of the O'Daimoku!"

Thus, after a twelve-year interval, Rencho returned to Kiyosumi to tell the people what Sakyamuni Buddha's real enlightenment was and what the Buddha left for the people in the *Mappo* Era.

B) The Birth of the O'Daimoku

Now it is time to open the curtain of a new stage, the Birth of the O'Daimoku.

Soon after returning from Mt Hiei, Rencho secluded himself again in the hall that enshrined the statue of Kokuzo Bodhisattva and recited the *Lotus Sutra* over and over again.

His master, fellow priests, monks and lay people were enthusiastically waiting to hear what he would say!

It was early morning on April 28, 1253; he was 32 years old. His mind was very clear and firmly determined. He rose to his feet and made his way upward to a high peak where the forest of Asashi-ga-mori and the Pacific Ocean spread before him in the sheltering, voiceless darkness.

As the first rays of the morning sun brushed across the horizon, Rencho stood, facing eastward, his hands clasped in gassho, his face aglow with the truth. The world was silent as though it held its breath in patient expectation. And then the silence shattered as a resounding chanting echoed from the young priest's lips: "Na-mu-myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo! "Na-mu-myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo! ..."
The words thundered and resounded through the clear, mountain air.

He uttered, "I shall change my name to 'Nichi-ren' or 'Sun-Lotus.' I shall devote my life to the *Lotus Sutra* as the general leader of the Teacher of the Dharma in the *Mappo* Era, the messenger of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha!"



April 28, 1253! It was the birth of the O'Daimoku!"

C) Readiness for any Persecution

The Teacher of the Dharma who has the great mission to expound the *Lotus Sutra* in the *Mappo* Era has to endure persecutions such as being hit with sticks, tiles and stones as revealed in the sutra. The sutra also clearly predicted that he would face hardships like arson, being chased away from his home, and other life threatening attacks. But the sutra also guaranteed protections for him by the deities of the *Lotus Sutra*. It was the Eternal Buddha's promise.

Therefore, Nichiren was not worried but he had to have a firm determination to spread the O'Daimoku. He had no doubts about the sutra at all. Thus, he was able to say, "Nobody has ever chanted the Sacred Title of the *Lotus Sutra* during the last 2225 years. I now chant 'Namu Myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo, Namu Myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo' loudly without saving my voice."

Thus, he started his new life as the practitioner of the *Lotus Sutra* in the *Mappo* Era. It was at a time full of turmoil.

D) The First Sermon (The Stage Curtain Is Now Open!)

Master Dozenbo, other fellow priests and monks and lay people waited for Nichiren's first word.

When he sat on the seat of the Dharma he declared, "I changed my name to Nichiren! I have carefully studied all the Buddha Dharma scriptures available." He talked about what he studied at Mt. Hiei. Some of the congregation put their hands together and listened to him attentively with tears in their eyes. However, the majority of the congregation started to get angry or confused about what Nichiren talked about. This was especially true of Kagenobu Tojo, ruling Lord of Kominato, who was livid in his anger at the criticism of the Pure Land Sect and screamed out orders for Nichiren's immediate execution by trying to pull out his sword and kill him.



Master Dozenbo was saddened and shaken by his former student's heretical outburst. But feeling sorry for the younger priest, he called Gijo and Joken, two senior disciples of the temple, and instructed them to temporarily hide Nichiren and lead him through a hidden forest path on the back side of the temple down to a small mountain temple called 'Renge-ji' or 'Lotus Flower Temple'.

After a short rest at the temple, Nichiren visited his parents for the first time after his long, twenty-year absence. He explained to his father and mother:

"The only way to make people happy and peaceful in the world is to have people believe in the right teaching of Sakyamuni Buddha, respect and devote the Buddha's eternal life, and take this wonderful medicine that is to chant 'Namu Myo-ho Ren-ge kyo.' I wish

to make all people of this country take this compassionate wonderful medicine given by the Eternal Buddha so that the people will be happy, and the nation will be peaceful with the right Buddha Dharma. It is just like the milk a mother gives to her baby. Thus, Nichiren Dai'Shonin talked to his parents.

E) Only to His Parents

Everyone! You and your parents are in a deep fated relationship. So, you had better talk to them with much detail as possible in order not to make them worry. They will understand if you explain in detail because you have a soul relationship with them from the original world in the long past. You will understand, and they will understand. Therefore, Nichiren Dai'Shonin talked to his parents about everything from the bottom of his heart.

Fearing for his safety, his aged parents asked him to give up his dangerous mission. But he refused. As they listened to what their son had to say, his mother and father were touched by the truthfulness of his words, and thus, they became his first converts.

Nichiren Dai'Shonin gave them the Buddha Names, 'Myo-nichi' or 'Wonderful-Sun' to his father and 'Myo-Ren' or 'Wonderful-Lotus' to his mother and shared his new name 'Nichi-Ren.'

On the first day of his mission to restore the Buddha's truth, Nichiren proclaimed his religion to the rising sun, preached his first sermon at the sun's height and made his first converts at the sun's setting. Under cover of darkness and under the threat of death, Nichiren Dai'Shonin fled to safety, to Kamakura, beyond the angry hands which sought to destroy him. I wonder how he felt about so many things that happened on his first day of propagation.

At any event, Nichiren Dai'Shonin had no doubt about Sakyamuni Buddha's golden words. In the light of the *Lotus Sutra*, it was hard to propagate the truth in the *Mappo* Era. It was the first day for him as the practitioner of the *Lotus Sutra*. He despaired that he might not be able to see his parents again.



Chapter 5

At the streets in Kamakura

Nichiren Dai'Shonin was now 32 years old. As soon as he arrived at Kamakura, the capital of the military government, he denounced with strong determination the practitioners of the Dharma in the *Mappo* Era: "Those who believe in Nembutsu sects, those who recite the name of Amida Buddha and particularly those who follow the fashion of committing suicide to hasten their journey to the Pure Land, will go to Avici, the Hell of Eternal Punishment. Those who believe in Zen are devils. Those who believe in Shingon will ruin the nation, and those who believe in Ritsu are traitors." Holding a *juzu* rosary in his left hand and a volume of the *Lotus Sutra* in his right hand, he declared this in the main street and lesser side streets.

These four denouncements were warnings to the priests of all denominations to realize the true teaching of Sakyamuni Buddha. Nichiren was compassionate toward any lay men and women who opened their eyes to the true teaching of the Buddha just as a mother gives food to her children. He wished them to have peaceful minds.

The above four denouncements were *shaku-buku*, or criticizing the wrongness of others to awaken the truth for the priests, but *sho-ju* was to not scold but rather to give the wonderful medicine for the lay people. He said that *shaku-buku* and *sho-ju* depended on the time and the person.

If people had an obedient mind, believed in the existence of the Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha having the virtue of the Lord, the Master, and the Parent and chanted the O'Dai-moku, they would be able to obtain peaceful minds and live happily.

Nichiren Dai'Shonin said in *Kangyo Hachiman-sho*, "I have devoted myself to nothing but encouraging all people in Japan to recite the daimoku, the seven character title of the *Lotus Sutra*. This is exactly like the compassion of a mother trying to breast feed her baby." And he also said, "Sakyamuni Buddha preached in the *Nirvana Sutra*, 'Various sufferings of all the people will all be borne by the Tathagata alone.' Likewise, I now declare, "All people in Japan falling into hell will be borne by Nichiren alone."

How great Nichiren Dai'Shonin's compassion was! Why did most people not understand him?

A) The Original Followers of the Eternal Buddha's Disciples

“It is a shame to be praised by an unintelligent person,” were famous words of Nichiren Dai’Shonin. He meant that he was ashamed to be praised by an arrogant person. Both Sakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Dai’Shonin did not like arrogant people. Be careful not to be arrogant!

One day a priest from Mt. Hiei called on him at Kamakura and requested to become a disciple of Nichiren Dai’Shonin. He was one year older than Nichiren Dai’Shonin, just like Sariputra, one of Buddha Sakyamuni’s disciples when he had joined the Buddha’s Sangha.

This priest had studied together with Rencho at Mt. Hiei. He was so impressed by Rencho who had insisted on bringing Mt. Hiei back to the time of Master Dengyo Saicho, who had founded the Buddhist Center in Japan in the early ninth century. Hiei had been the pure mountain of the Buddhist Center that followed the great doctrine of the One Buddha Vehicle of the *Lotus Sutra* when Saicho founded it and for some years after the founder’s death.

What Rencho said was indelibly impressed on that visiting priest’s mind even after Rencho left the mountain. He also heard Rencho, who had now changed his name to Nichiren, was propagating the *Lotus Sutra* on the streets of Kamakura. “Let me help you with something!” said that priest.

Nichiren Dai’Shonin was so glad and gave a Buddha-name, Nis’ho Shonin, to him. Nichiren Dai’Shonin recalled the sentence in Chapter 10 of the *Lotus Sutra* where the Buddha says, “For a teacher of this sutra after My extinction, I will manifest the four kinds of devotees and dispatch them to him. So that they may make offerings to him, and that they may lead many living beings, collecting them to hear the Dharma from him.”

One year later after Nissho Shonin joined the propagation, Nissho’s nephew, Nichiro Shonin became the second disciple of Nichiren Dai’Shonin. This young disciple would play an important part in the restoration of the true teachings in years to come. Little by little



more lay people adored the saint for his virtue and knowledge of the true teaching of Sa-kyamuni Buddha.

They were Jonin Toki, Munenaka and Munenaga Brothers of Ikegami, Kingo Shijo, Jo-myō Ota, Kyoshin Soya, Sanenaga Hakii, Hyōue Nanjo, Yoshitaka Kudo, etc. They were samurais who worked for the Kamakura feudal Government. They were devoted to their master, Nichiren Dai'Shonin.

B) It Was the *Mappo* Era.

A number of these converts began to follow the true belief, but then a disaster such as no one could have imagined struck the city of Kamakura and the nation, almost destroying it.

The once busy and colorful streets of the military capital were filled with the stench of the dead and the dying. Nichiren Dai'Shonin himself described the scene: "Cows and horses are dying on the roadside, and so are men. Skeletons are scattered on the streets, for there is no one to bury them. The smell of these dead bodies of human beings and animals were beyond expression."

It was a custom to change the name of the year when disasters happened, so the eighth year of Kencho (1256) was changed to Kogen in October, to Shogen in the following year, then to Bunno (1261) because of strong storms and wide floods on the land, and a lot of shooting stars in the sky. Famines and epidemics had occurred and spread all over the land of Japan during these four years. The people were filled with terror and panic.

Nichiren Dai'Shonin's eyes filled with tears and chanted the O'Daimoku and prayed with his great compassion on the streets. Some changes happened: some people tried to be saved from these sufferings. Some of them thought if they died, they had better chant the sacred title of the sutra and die together with this saint. The O'Daimoku brought back the courage to live for these suffering people.



When a person started to chant it, others followed one after another. They felt safe and had peaceful minds. More and more people began to chant the O'Daimoku.

C) A Priest Tried to Sacrifice Himself with these Suffering People

Kyonin-bo was a priest who tried to sacrifice his life because many priests and monks could not help these suffering people. He repented his wrong thought and joined as Nichiren's follower. He supported his new master at the cost of his life.

During the Komatsu Bara (Pine Forest) persecution that occurred later that year, he tried to protect Nichiren Dai'Shonin and was killed during the ambush. The same happened to Yoshitaka Kudo, who rushed to protect Nichiren Dai'Shonin. He also died at the ambush site.

As Nichiren Dai'Shonin embraced the dying Yoshitaka, he said to his master at his death bed, "My wife is pregnant, if a boy is born, please make him your disciple." Nichiren Dai'Shonin gave a Buddha-name to Yoshitaka, 'Nichi-ryu.' Since the newborn baby was a boy, the saint named him 'Nichi-gyoku." He kept his death-bed promise with Yoshitaka Kudo. A temple was built for them later that year.

Nichiren appointed Kyonin-bo as the founder, Nichi-ryu as the second generation successor, and Nichi-gyoku as the third generation successor of the temple.

Nichiren Dai'Shonin, as he viewed the disaster and the suffering of the people, was filled with anguish and pity. He decided that something more must be done. Therefore, in January of 1258, he secluded himself in the library of Jissoji Temple in order to research the various Buddhist prophecies concerning those disasters which befell a people when they turned away from the true religion and followed after superstition.

D) The Original Causes of the Disasters

Jisso-ji Temple was located at Iwamoto in Fuji City, Shizuoka Prefecture. It belonged to the Tendai Sect at that time. The temple was famous for a library stocked with all of Sakya-muni Buddha's sutras.

Nichiren Dai'Shonin read, studied, and thought without eating for over a month. He almost lost his life. Luckily Nichiro Shonin who worried about his master found him starving

and near death. He was about 16 or 17 years old at that time. Nichiro and Nichigen, a recent disciple, served their master together for about two years when *Rissho Ankoku Ron* was finally completed in July 1260. It was an official document to protest the Kamakura Government.

Chapter 6

Submit *Rissho Ankoku Ron*, “Establish the Right Law and save Our Country”

As the original disciple of the Eternal Buddha and a patriotic man of Japan, Nichiren Dai’Shonin wrote: “The worst thing for us is the downfall of our country.” The constant disasters – the earthquakes, the typhoons, tidal waves, the famine and disease – were indications to him that if something were not done to end these calamities and to avert similar disasters in the future, the nation’s downfall was soon to come.

Nichiren Dai’Shonin protested against the government authorities. “You should promptly discard your false faith and take up the true and sole teaching of the *Lotus Sutra* at once!” It was his heartfelt direct appeal to bring peace and happiness to the country as the messenger dispatched by Sakyamuni Buddha to save the people and the nation.

He had no worldly desires at all. He did not wish to have any status, money or land for a temple. To save the people and Japan was his sole wish as a messenger and an Original Buddha’s disciple.

A) The Shogunate Response

The real life of the practitioner of the *Lotus Sutra* in the *Mappo* Era began when he submitted *Rissho Ankoku Ron* to the Kamakura Government. Before he turned it in to the government, some people threw tile pieces, stones or sticks against him when Nichiren criticized other denominations in the streets. He continued to say repeatedly, “Change your faith to the One and Only Truth in the universe revealed by the



Eternal Buddha Sakyamuni and recite, 'Namu Myo-ho Ren-ge Kyo!' Then you shall be saved from sufferings, and you will have peaceful minds!"

At first, there was no response on the part of the government. Nichiren Dai'Shonin spoke to the passing crowds of the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha. In a strong and earnest voice, he called upon the people to put aside the lies of evil priests and to save the country by returning to the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra*.

However, after the government authorities read the essay, many officers and the public started to cowardly attack him in various ways.

B) Persecution at Matsuba-ga-yatsu Pine Wood

On August 27, 1260 one month after he submitted the appeal, the mob and government officers set fire to the hermitage where Nichiren dwelled. An inferno blaze of orange flames clutched at the night sky. However, in the confusion and disorder of the attack, , Nichiren Dai'Shonin had once more escaped. According to a legend, it was a white monkey, miraculously appearing in front of the chanting priest who led him to safety by grabbing his robe. The fire was set just a few seconds after he left the hut.



The mob realized Nichiren had escaped from the fire but were glad to burn his dwelling to the ground. They were happy to chase away the noisy street preacher. None of them thought he would come back to Kamakura again.

As he had done after his escape from Mt. Kiyosumi, Nichiren Dai'Shonin fled to the outer provinces, to Wakamiya in Northern Chiba Prefecture. The local daimyo, Lord Jonin Toki, invited Nichiren Dai'Shonin to give a 100-day lecture on the *Lotus Sutra*, so other samurai and lay men and women would be able to listen to his words. Nichiren Dai'Shonin bided his time there before returning to Kamakura.

C) The Exile to Izu Peninsula

The mob who set fire to his hermitage and other Nembutsu followers were shocked to hear the street-preacher's condemnation of their beliefs, and the leaders of the Nembutsu Sect were driven into a rage. They caused turmoil here and there by themselves. Presenting themselves before the Kamakura Shogunate, they demanded that Nichiren be punished, that he be silenced once and for all.

Accepting the claims of the powerful priests in Kamakura, and with no further investigation or trial, the government issued orders for the immediate arrest of Nichiren on the charge of "disturbing the peace."

On May 12, 1261, he was sentenced to banishment to Ito Village on Izu Peninsula (Shizuoka Prefecture).

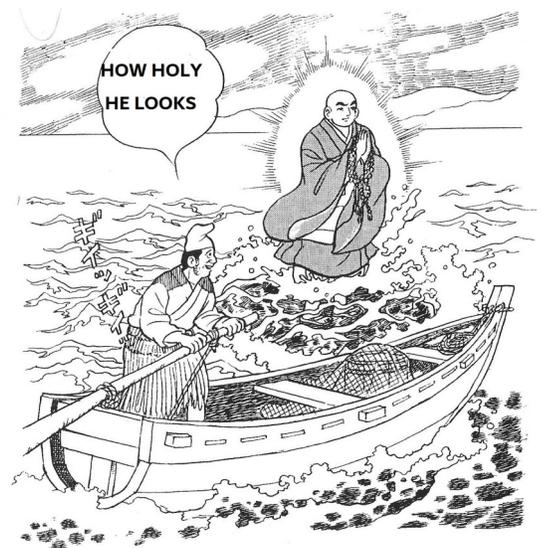
Nichiren was placed aboard a government paddle boat at Yuigahama near Kamakura. It took a few hours to reach Ito Village. In the late afternoon of that same day, the boat reached Mana-ita (or "Butcher's Block") Reef, a tiny spur of rock which jugged above the ocean waves. Some distance from shore, the reef at low tide was above the surface of the ocean water. At high tide, however, the relentless ocean waves rose to cover the barren rock completely. And it was here, at the approach of the incoming tide, that the saint was left alone and unprotected. It must have been their scheme to kill him with the high waves.

It was a very desparate act to leave him in such a situation even though the sutra teaches, "I (the Buddha) will manifest the four kinds of devotees and dispatch them to him (the Teacher of the Dharma)."

D) The Manifestation, Yasaburo Funamori

As the incoming tide rose higher and higher on the isolated point of Mana-ita Reef, there was nothing Nichiren could do except chant louder, like the roar of a lion, "Namu Myo-ho Ren-ge Kyo! Namu Myo-ho Ren-ge Kyo!"

Returning from a day at sea, Yasaburo Funamori had suddenly caught sight of the doomed figure stranded



atop the slippery reef, the rising waters already lapping around his feet. Maneuvering his fishing boat carefully through the underwater hazards of the now-submerged rock, the brave old man approached the stranded priest and, just in time, drew him out of a watery death.

“How holy he looks! I have never seen such a divine looking priest! It must be a big mistake that the officers dumped him on the reef to die.” He thought, “Even if the government official would blame and charge me for helping this criminal and kill me, I would not regret it!”

Don't you think the power of the *Lotus Sutra* is really awesome? Nichiren Dai'Shonin was chased away from his mother temple, his hermitage was set on fire, and he was placed on a reef and left to die. At every critical moment when he was about to lose his life, a manifestation appeared every time and saved the saint as the Buddha had promised.

That promise is the real golden words of Sakyamuni Buddha as long as he or she practices as the sutra teaches.

E) Hatred Changes to Adoration

Yasaburo and his wife felt deep sorrow for the condemned priest, and they led him to the warmth and safety of a small grotto near the beach. The old couple brought food and water to him during the secrecy of the night. The people of Ito had, of course, heard of this fanatical priest who was reviled by the powerful rulers in Kamakura. The village people eventually knew the existence of Nichiren there. They avoided associating with such a lawless criminal and hated him at first. But a few days passed, and a few months passed, and they began to adore the exiled priest for his virtues.

Even Lord Ito's loyal retainers heard of Nichiren and asked him to pray for their sick lord to recover. Nichiren offered a prayer to the Buddha at the sick lord's bedside, and in a few days, to everyone's surprise, the lord had regained his health. In gratitude, Lord Ito made a gift to the saint – a small but beautiful statue of Sakyamuni Buddha.

Learning of their lord's recovery, the villagers changed their attitude toward Nichiren Dai'Shonin. They listened to his teaching of the Right Law. Some of them practiced chanting the Sacred Title of the *Lotus Sutra*. Almost all villagers in Ito were converted to the faith of the sutra and chanted the O'Daimoku.

This report came as a disappointment to the authorities of the Kamakura Government and they wondered what to do about him. Tokiyori Hojo, the former dictator of the government and the priestly ruler, had been especially heartfelt in his interest in the logic of the *Rissho Ankoku Ron* that revealed the predictions of a civil war and a foreign invasion.

When Nichiren Dai'Shonin presented *Rissho Ankoku Ron*, it was addressed to Tokiyori. Although he had given up his official position to become a priest, he still retained the reins of power; so Nichiren Dai'Shonin hoped that the priestly ruler would see the logic in the arguments of the proposal document. Therefore, when Tokiyori died, Nichiren Dai'Shonin said, "It was a great loss for me, too."

During his exile at Ito on Izu Peninsula for less than two years, Nichiren Dai'Shonin wrote *Shi-on-sho* or *The Four Gratuities to Be Returned*. In this essay he emphasized showing gratitude toward 1) all living beings, 2) the parents, 3) the ruler of the country and, 4) the Three Treasures (the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha). He also wrote *Kyoki Jikoku-Sho* or *Treatise on the Teaching, Capacity, Time and Country*. He stated that one who wished to spread the *Lotus Sutra* should understand the content of the teachings, the capacity of the people and whether they could understand the teachings or not, the time to teach it, the place to teach at, and the sequence of the sutra in comparison to all other sutras.

On February 22, 1263, the pardon was received at Ito. Nichiren Dai'Shonin immediately began preparing for his return to Kamakura.

E) Resuscitation of His Mother

When Nichiren Dai'Shonin returned to the military capital, ten years had already passed since he had turned in *Rissho Ankoku Ron* to the government. He decided to visit his father's cemetery and his aged mother in his mother-land in Awa, Kominato, Chiba Prefecture. Although he was able to endure many persecutions to prove the truthfulness of the *Lotus Sutra*, when he thought about his parents, he felt heartbroken.

Upon arriving at his home, a sobbing neighbor told him, "Your mother has passed away just now! She was looking forward to seeing you so much!"

Nichiren Dai'Shonin believed in the *Lotus Sutra* and trusted it deeply. "Nothing is impos-

sible for the real Practitioner of the *Lotus Sutra*.” He made a special remedy, wrote it on a piece of paper, burned it, soaked it into a pure water, and put it into her mouth. The dutiful son gently spoke the words of the sutra which his mother had dearly loved to hear. The breath whispered once more in her body, the light returned to her eyes, and, under her son’s gentle care, her health was soon restored.



Once in a while a miracle happens for ordinary people. But for Nichiren Dai’Shonin it was the law of cause, condition and effect. In a later year, Nikko Shonin, the third disciple of Nichiren Dai’Shonin, sent a letter to his master in Minobu to pray for the recovery of sickly Tokimitsu Ueno. Nichiro Shonin, the second disciple, wrote a letter for their master. The letter told Nikko, “Please recall the time Nichiren Dai’Shonin revived his mother’s life. You were there, weren’t you? We were so impressed. Prayers of the practitioner of the *Lotus Sutra* will be answered for sure.” He enclosed a special remedy Nichiren Dai’Shonin made.

Tokimitsu Ueno received the remedy from Nikko Shonin. He recovered from sickness. He served Nikko Shonin for 50 years even after Nichiren Dai’Shonin’s death. Tokimitsu extended his life until he was 90 years old.

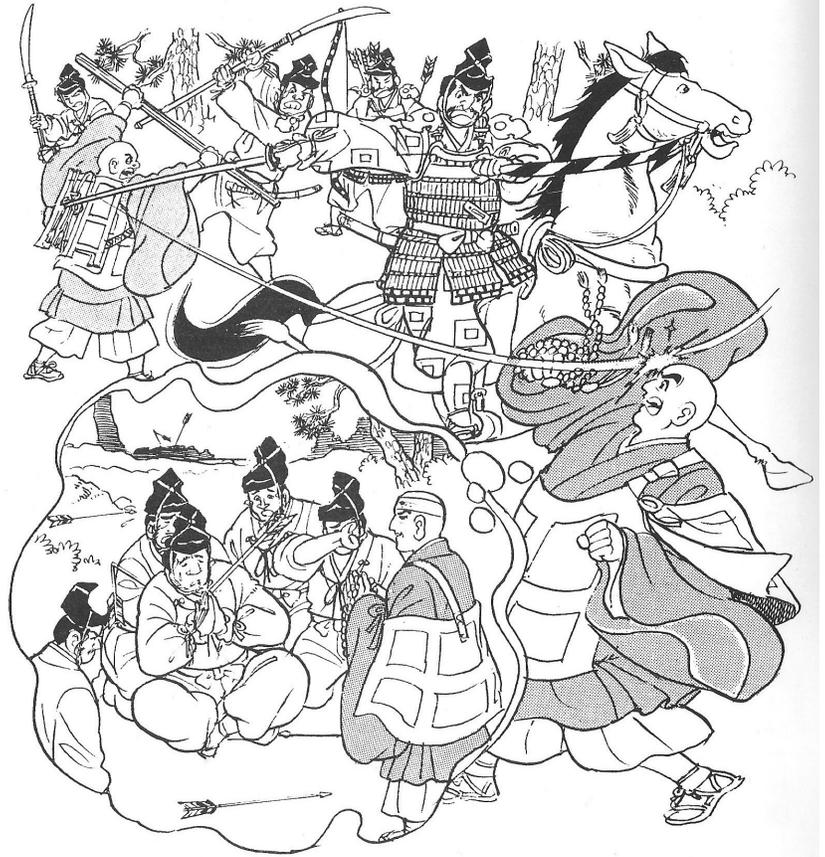
By the way, it was the first time Nichiren’s mother saw her son since he was chased away from his mother temple. At that time, her son was alone, but her mother was so happy to see him return with his disciples and several followers. Nun Myoren, Nichiren’s mother, prayed for her son every day and extended her life for another four years.

G) The Ko-Matsu-Bara Ambush

While Nichiren Dai’Shonin stayed at home, he visited his master at the temple and also visited neighborhood followers in that area. It was the evening of November 11, 1264 on the way back from Yoshitaka Kudo, Lord of Amatsu, Chiba Prefecture. Nichiren Dai’Shonin was with ten retainers. Night was already drawing near as the small group entered Ko-matsu-bara or Pine Forest, a dense thicket of trees. Suddenly from the darkness, a troop of

well-armed men fell upon the defense-less priest and retainers. Lord Kagenobu had finally discovered Nichiren's whereabouts. Kagenobu gave a menacing cry, lifted his flashing sword above his head and dashed forward to carry out his execution.

Nichiren Dai'Shonin stood motionless in the path of the oncoming horse, his face was calm; his hand holding his juzu rosary, his arms extended. The horse suddenly reared in fright, its hooves frantically pawing the air, and Lord Kagenobu fell from his saddle. Striking his head on a rock, he lost consciousness, but the samurai cut the forehead of the defenseless Nichiren. This incident is called the Komatsu-bara Ambush.



On November 11th every year, all Nichiren-shu temples place a piece of white and red silk cotton on the head of the statue of Nichiren Dai'Shonin. It represents a village woman who gave cotton from her sleeve to stop the bleeding from Nichiren's forehead.

Chapter 7

The Greatest Persecution

Nichiren Dai'Shonin always wished to have a public debate on which sutra revealed the real enlightenment of Sakyamuni Buddha. None of the highly recognized priests in Kamakura wanted to do it.

In the year 1271 a terrible famine occurred. For many long months, the country sweltered and burned beneath the sun's fierce rays. Tokimitsu Hojo, the shogunate leader,

called on Priest Ryokan, the foremost known priest, who belonged to the Ritsu Sect that kept most strictly to Buddhist precepts to pray for rain.

Nichiren Dai'Shonin offered a proposal: "If you succeed in bringing rain within seven days, I will become your disciple. But if you fail to bring rain in that time, you must follow me." Ryokan accepted the challenge. After four days, 120 more priests were added to the ritual, but still no rain fell. On the seventh day the sky remained cloudless. Ryokan had failed. Ryokan requested a seven day extension. Of course, Nichiren accepted and said, "If the rain does not fall within the next seven days, you will become my disciple, so I will tell you the way of the rainfall." Ryokan failed again. Nichiren Dai'Shonin waited for the public debate.

Instead of the debate on the Dharma, Ryokan and other powerful priests submitted a false document to the shogunate saying that Nichiren collected bows and arrows and all manner of weapons, inviting rebels and outlaws to gather at his hut. It was true that more and more people gathered at Nichiren Dai'Shonin's hermitage to listen to the true Dharma. Among them there were many samurai followers who always carried their own swords but none had bows and arrows.

Believing the charges, the shogunate ordered an immediate investigation under the direction of Yoritsuna. He could not find any bows and arrows at the residence of Nichiren. But the next day he brought hundreds of armed men who surged into Matsuba-gayatsu where Nichiren Dai'Shonin was lecturing to his disciples and followers.

He cried out, "Behold, the Pillar of Japan is now falling!" The scrolls of the sutra were torn from his hands and trampled on the ground, except for the fifth scroll. It was with this volume that a monk named Shoubo hit Nichiren on his face and head as if he were crazy.

Recalling the incident later, Nichiren Dai'Shonin wrote: "I was beaten by Shoubo with the fifth scroll of the *Lotus Sutra*. In that scroll it says that the keeper of this sutra will be beaten. How wonderful it was that the prophecy of the Buddha has come true! I knew that Shoubo showed me that the prophecy of the sutra was true. He really is my teacher in this respect. How can I forget his kindness? If I become a Buddha, it will be entirely owing to his favor." Sakyamuni Buddha also said in an earlier basic sutra: "When someone warns you, calm yourself down and appreciate him!"

Everyone! Practice it! Suppose someone advises you. Do not be arrogant. Ask the Buddha and Nichiren Dai'Shonin whether you are right or not. Think it over again. If you are still right, trust yourself and have a strong determination to follow righteousness.

A) Make Known to Hachiman Bodhisattva

Nichiren Dai'Shonin had a firm determination as the Eternal Buddha's messenger and the rebirth of Superior-Practice Bodhisattva from underground. He accepted everything as an ordeal and was able to endure all hardships.

Therefore, he was able to complain even to a god. On the night of September 12, 1271, Nichiren Dai'Shonin was placed astride a saddleless horse like a common criminal, and was paraded through the streets of Kamakura. As they neared the gate of the Hachiman Shrine, he ordered the guards to stop. Nichiren wanted to say a few words to the god Hachiman.

He shouted in a loud voice: "Hachiman Daibosatsu! Are you really a god? Now I, Nichiren, am the greatest practitioner of the *Lotus Sutra* in Japan. There is no fault in me, but I am proclaiming the Truth, simply in order to save all the people of the country. When Buddha Sakyamuni expounded the *Lotus Sutra*, all the Buddhas including the gods and saints of the ten directions of the universe came together and were present in the congregation. Each of you took an oath to protect all practitioners of the *Lotus Sutra*. Be quick in fulfilling that vow! I am going to be beheaded this night."

Midnight had already come when the procession finally reached Tatsu-no-kuchi, the execution ground. Yoritsuna sat in the official witness chair. Behind him lit by flickering torchlight stood the executioner and the armed guards. All was in readiness. The executioner lifted his sword, but the sword never fell!

Suddenly a ball of light as bright as the moon, flew from the southeast to the northwest, and all people became visible. The executioner grew dizzy and fell to the ground as his sword was shattered in three pieces. The plot, the execution,



failed. The protection of the deities in the sutra came to reality!

The authorities decided to lodge Nichiren in the home of Rokuro Honma, a government official whose territory included Sado Island. In the back yard of Honma a star-like object descended onto a tree branch and changed into the figure of an angel which denoted the protection of deities revealed in the *Lotus Sutra*.

B) Sado Exile and Abutsu-Bo

Sado is an isolated island several miles off the northwestern coast of the main island of Japan.

On Nov. 1, 1271 winter was already approaching: snow already covered the barren earth when Nichiren arrived at a shelter. He was given a small, abandoned Buddhist shrine called 'Tsukahara Sanmai-do' in the midst of a lonely cemetery.

Nichiren Dai'Shonin was already 50 years old. After his revived mother's death, it was the time of her seventh annual memorial year. Her soul must have been together with her son day and night. Her son, Nichiren, was also thinking of her and offered a prayer for her and for his father every day. To prove it, Nichiren Dai'Shonin always carried the hair of his departed mother with him until his death. Therefore, he was able to endure the severe cold together with her soul.

The boards of the shrine's roof were warped and cracked so that the wild sea winds shrieked ceaselessly through the open spaces. Snow drifted into the hut. At this abandoned place, Nichiren Dai'Shonin had a visitor at night. Learning of Nichiren's arrival on the island, Abutsubo, strong in the faith of Amida, plotted to kill the banished priest. But being a samurai, he decided to question his intended victim first. Nichiren Dai'Shonin greeted him with a *juzu* rosary in his hand and asked the intruder with full of compassion: "Do you believe 'The lower overpowering the upper?'"

Abutsubo used to be an escort guard for Emperor Juntoku in Kyoto. He and his wife had chosen to



serve the former emperor on the exiled island one year before Nichiren Dai'Shonin's birth. Even after the emperor's death, this loyal samurai became a lay priest and prayed at the emperor's tomb with the nembutsu every day.

His new master explained, "The emperor is the highest and the most honored one for all Japanese. Yet. his servants, the Kamakura Government samurais, overpowered him and exiled three ex-emperors. The Eternal Sakyamuni Buddha is the highest among all Buddhas. Yet, the people of Japan threw away the statues of Sakyamuni Buddha and honored Amida Buddha. This is the easiest meaning of 'The lower overpowering the upper!'"

C) Protected by Manifested People

As he listened, the doubts, and the murderous plot vanished from Abutsubo's mind and he became a disciple of the *Lotus Sutra*. Throughout the remainder of the winter, he and his wife secretly supplied the priest with food, clothing, and firewood. It was just as he had served his former master, Ex-Emperor Juntoku.

If Abutsubo in Sado and Yasaburo Funamori in Ito had not existed, what would have happened to Nichiren Dai'Shonin? Only the Buddha knows! We do not need to worry. Everything that happened was necessary!

Nichiren Dai'Shonin was able to pass the first winter with support from his mother's love spiritually and manifested people like the Abutsubo couple. Soon other converts learned of the priest and joined the sangha on Sado Island just as when Nichiren was exiled to Ito.

D) Sado Is the Tranquil Light Buddha Land

Soon after arriving at Tsukahara, Nichiren Dai'Shonin began to write a lengthy treatise called '*Kaimoku Sho*' or '*Open Your Eyes*' for all his followers to read in *kanji* and *hiragana*. It was his last will that the *Lotus Sutra* was the very teaching needed for the salvation of people in the *Mappo* Era. He finished it in February of the next year.

The following year, on April 26, 1273, he wrote '*Kanjin Honzon-sho*' or '*A Treatise Revealing the Spiritual Contemplation and the Most Venerable One*' in *kanji* characters and

addressed it only to Jonin Toki and to his disciples who were all educated well enough to read Chinese books.

A few months later, Nichiren Dai'Shonin revealed the unique graphic *Mandala Go'Honzon* or the Most Venerable One to be worshiped in the Nichiren Sect. It is the *Go'Honzon* that all Nichiren Shu temples and members enshrine in their homes.

It was said that once a person was exiled on Sado Island, no one, not even the Emperor could issue a pardon. But for Nichiren Dai'Shonin it was the most important part of his life as the Practitioner of the *Lotus Sutra* in the *Mappo* Era. It was here that Nichiren Dai'Shonin revealed the Doctrine of the Three Great Secret Dharmas that had never been revealed by anyone before.

The Three Great Secret Dharmas are:

1. The Honzon of the Original Gate: The Mandala Gohonzon symbolizes the assembly of the *Lotus Sutra* in the sky.
2. The Daimoku of the Original Gate: It is to chant aloud the Sacred Title of the *Lotus Sutra*. The O'Daimoku is the wonderful medicine that brings forth the tranquil light of the Buddha-Land anywhere: an ocean, a battle field, a lay person's home, a temple and even a place where there is a great fire that never burns down. It is the land of bliss any time and any place we chant the O'Daimoku.
3. The Protected Area of the Original Gate: It is the area full of the Buddhas, the gods, the deities and the peaceful Buddha-Land. Chapter 16 of the *Lotus Sutra* says, "In reality this world of mine is peaceful. It is filled with gods and men."

Therefore, when we face toward the Mandala Go'Honzon and recite the O'Daimoku, we are always together with the Buddhas and the great Bodhisattvas and deities. We are protected. We are peaceful and happy always – that is the eternal Buddha-Land.

Chapter 8

Pardon and Entering Mt. Minobu

Nichiren Dai'Shonin who revealed these guiding principles for our lives was pardoned and left Sado Island on March 13, 1274 after staying three calendar years and returned to Kamakura with a slight hope to change the faith of the Kamakura Government.

There is an ancient Chinese adage which says: "If you admonish them three times and they hear not, then leave." He tried to convert the Kamakura Government but failed. Having warned the government three times* and realizing his attempts to save the country from destruction were useless, Nichiren Dai'Shonin left Kamakura and entered Mt. Minobu at the invitation of Lord Sanenaga Hakii on May 17, 1274. He must have had a special purpose to stay on the mountain and stop his public appearances.

*(*The Three times were 1. July 1260 when Nichiren presented Rissho Ankoku Ron. 2. September 1271 when Shoubo hit Nichiren's head with the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra. 3. April 1274 when Nichiren was called back to Kamakura and asked when Mongolia was going to attack Japan.)*

He never tried to admonish the government again. His propagation of the *Lotus Sutra* was aimed at educating the people who would follow after the extinction of the saint. He had already looked through the future ten thousand years into the *Mappo* Era.

His aim for education was (1) to increase the number of people who practiced the *Lotus Sutra* and would take the wonderful medicine increasing from one to ten, to a hundred, to thousands and to all people around the world, (2) to let them realize what was important in their lives and chant the O'Daimoku as many times as possible, so that they would adore Sakyamuni Buddha and the *Lotus Sutra* and (3) to raise disciples who could lead the people to the true teaching of the Buddha in the *Mappo* Era. Moreover, he wished to erect a stupa of Sakyamuni Buddha both physically and spiritually, so that Mt.



Minobu would be greater than Mt. Sacred Eagle in India. It would become the center of faith in the Eternal Buddha and *the Lotus Sutra* for people around the world in the *Mappo* Era.

These were all responsibilities for the leader of the Great Bodhisattvas from underground. These were the hidden reasons he came and stayed on Mt. Minobu.

A) The Great Leader in the *Mappo* Era

It was the great compassion of Nichiren Dai'Shonin who wrote as many letters as possible that impressed his followers' minds.

He might have thought to brush up on the five kinds of practice as the Teacher of the Dharma in the quiet and solemn hermitage on Mt. Minobu.

Frankly speaking we do not know for sure why he came to Minobu.

Many practitioners of the *Lotus Sutra*, when they approach the end of missionary work in this life, usually wish to refresh themselves with keeping, reading, memorizing, understanding, expounding and copying the *Lotus Sutra*, so they will finally meet the Buddha after their death.

Thus, Nichiren Dai'Shonin made a deep acquaintance with Minobu with the protection of various deities and gods in the sutra and spent nine years there.

During these nine years many things happened. For example:

1) At Komuro near Mt. Minobu, he had to compete with Zenchi Hoin the priest who lost his supernatural power of the Dharma. Zenchi Hoin brought some sweets to Nichiren. When he gave the sweets to an approaching dog, the dog instantly died after eating it.

2) One day Nichiren Dai'Shonin held a special memorial service for the hungry spirit of a man who fished with cormorants (a type of bird) at a river and prayed his soul would attain Buddhahood.

3) Deity Shichimen appeared in the form of a beautiful woman before the saint while he was giving a message to his followers. A wondering congregation asked him who she was. Then she showed her real figure as a dragon after receiving a few drops of water from a flower vase. She promised to protect Mt. Minobu forever and flew away to Mt. Shichimen.



4) Abutsubo visited Nichiren Dai'Shonin from Sado Island three times from ages 87 to 91. He crossed the Sea of Japan, climbed high mountain passes and walked through dangerous trails and villages on foot. Then, after his death, his son brought his father's ashes to Minobu to bury.

5) The Kuon-ji Temple, the Grand Central Temple of Nichiren-Shu, was dedicated on November 24, 1281. He named it "Kuon-ji" or "Eternal Temple." This temple has been grand central for all Nichiren Buddhists even today.

Thus, Nichiren Dai'Shonin accomplished all the tasks of the original disciple of the Eternal Buddha.

B) Compassionate Tears Dried Out

Nichiren Dai'Shonin warned the Government three times about the foreign invasion of Japan. No one paid attention to the prophet Nichiren. It became reality.

On October 5, 1274, the Mongol Emperor, Kublai Khan, dispatched a great armada of 39,000 Mongol, Chinese, and Korean warriors, in 900 warships, and landed on the Japanese coastal islands of Iki and Tsushima. Many islanders were killed. They advanced to Hakata, Kyushu, invaded the city and set a fire there to burn down the Hachiman Shrine. By evening all the warriors returned to their ships.

On the night of October 20, the famous divine wind storm attacked the sleeping ships and destroyed them, sinking them in the ocean. Five years later they came back to Hakata

with more warships and warriors. But Japan was saved by the same Typhoon divine wind. Nichiren Dai'Shonin offered a special *kito* blessing against these invasions at Minobu. It is said that the gods responded to the expounder of the *Lotus Sutra* in the *Mappo* Era.

At first Nichiren Dai'Shonin thought that he could not stop the foreign invasions even if Japan was invaded and destroyed because of the defiled world of "the lower dominating the upper" and for not practicing righteousness. But to return the favors he had received since his birth, Nichiren Dai'Shonin prayed for the defeat of the invaders.

Another sad happening was called the "Atsuta Persecution." Four lay men were executed on crosses with arrows because of their belief in the *Lotus Sutra* and Nichiren. They continued to chant the O'Daimoku until their death. Nichiren Dai'Shonin praised their strong faith and prayed for them with bloody tears.

C) Nichiren Dai'Shonin was Getting Old

On Mt. Minobu, Nichiren Dai'Shonin felt the approach of his own final peace. He was 61 years old, and the aging priest had grown weary and sick. With the recommendation of Lord Hakii, he left on the back of a horse Lord Hakii provided and headed to the Hitachi hot springs to obtain some slight relief.

On the way to the hot springs the saint and his entourage rested at the estate of the Ikegami Brothers in Tokyo. Although he was in critical condition, he sent a thank-you letter to Lord Hakii regarding the horse he had ridden for 11 days. He could not complete the journey to Hitachi but stayed in bed.

Chapter 9

The Eternal Great Leader

A) The Six Senior Disciples and the Propagation in Kyoto and Overseas

On October 8, 1282, Nichiren Dai'Shonin appointed six senior disciples. They were Nissho Shonin, Nichiro Shonin, Nikko Shonin, Niko Shonin, Niccho Shonin and Nichiji Shonin. At the end he called the youngest disciple, thirteen year old Kyoichi-maro to his bed side and gave him the particular task of converting the Imperial family in Kyoto.

Kyoichi-maro was named Nichizo Shonin later. After the 13th year memorial service for Nichiren Dai'Shonin, he went to Kyoto, the former capital of Japan, and accomplished his master's wish.

Nichiji Shonin, after the seventh-year memorial service, carved a statue of Nichiren Dai'Shonin and donated it to Ikegami Honmonji Temple. Later, all by himself, he went to China to propagate the sutra and O'Daimoku there. He was the first overseas missionary.

Recently his ashes and relics were found at Senge, China. They are proof that the O'Daimoku was spread to China over 700 years ago.

B) Two Teeth

On October 10th, Nichiren Dai'Shonin pulled two teeth by himself, gave them to Nissho Shonin and said, "Please consider these teeth are me, Nichiren!" And he prayed for happiness for all people.

On the 11th and 12th, many lay followers gathered at Ikegami to adore their master's virtue.

On the evening of the 12th, he lectured *Rissho Ankoku Ron* at his death bed. Nichiren Dai'Shonin's life began with that treatise and ended with it. After a short rest, he recited the *Lotus Sutra* and "Namu Myo-ho Ren-ge Kyo" quietly together with all his disciples and followers.

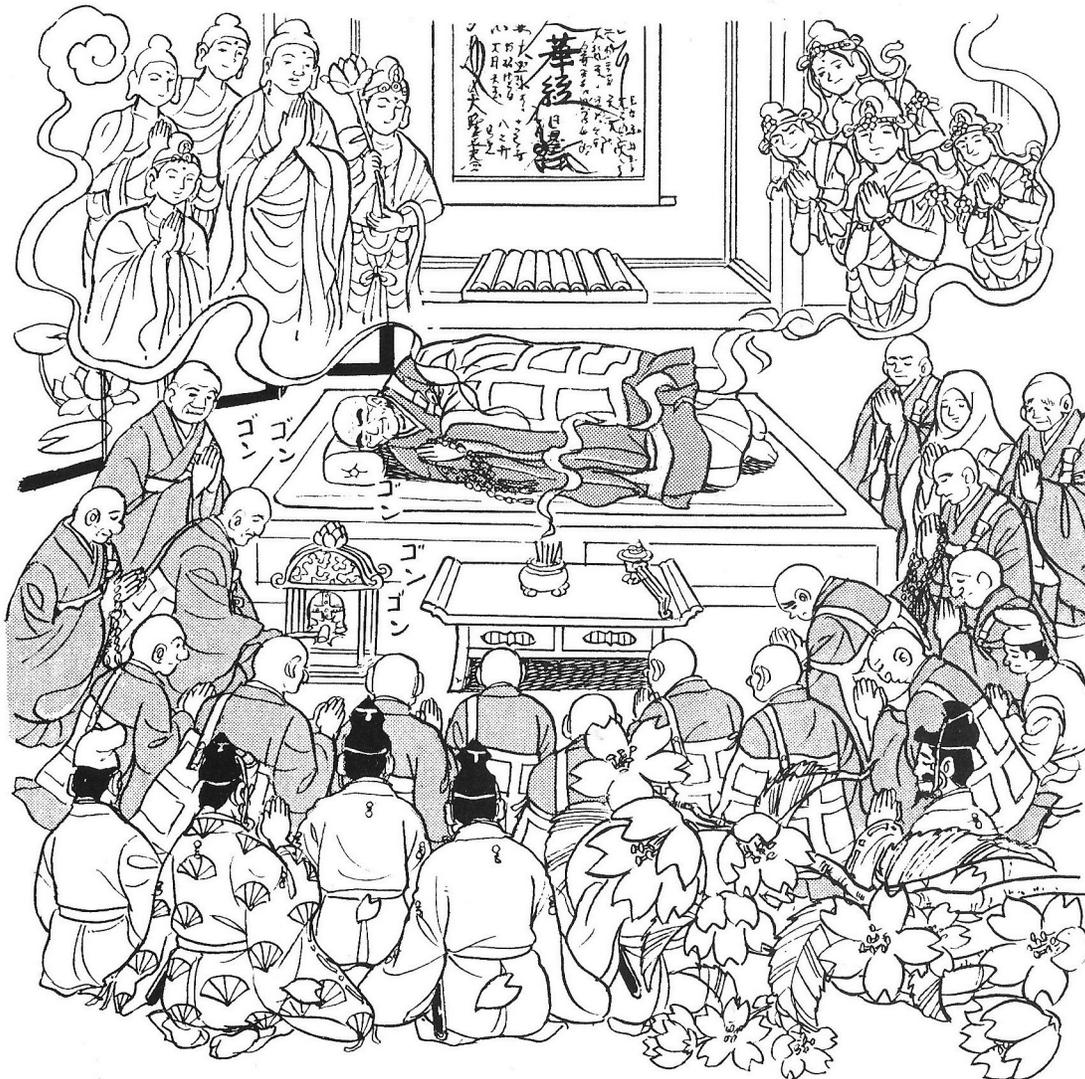
C) Passing Away of the Eternal Great Leader

How many hours had passed since he started the chanting? Silence prevailed. At that time the earth quaked six ways and cherry blossoms bloomed. Everyone there was surprised.

It was the final moment of his death.

At 8 a.m., on October 13th Nissho Shonin hit a bell continuously to tell of the death of the Eternal Great Leader in the *Mappo* Era. Nichiren Dai'Shonin was born with beautiful lotus flowers and died with beautiful cherry blossoms.

Following his will, his ashes were buried at Minobu next to those of Abutsumo and Lord Toki's mother.



D) The Museum Purifies Our Minds

Today, the Nichiren Dai'Shonin's museum is always filled with people around the world.

Everyone!

Please do not forget that you are a Buddha's child

Who has the same mission as Nichiren Dai'Shonin.

Many famous people like Kenji Miyazawa, Rohan Koda,
Kaishu Katsu, Chogyu Takayama took the wonderful remedy
And prayed for peace.

The wonderful medicine was given to each one of us
to take every day!

Let us pray for World Peace!

Nichiren Dai'Shonin was everyone's great leader for the
Peace of our minds.

