

Buddhist Terms in Chapter 21 of the Lotus Sutra

Namah Sakyamunaya Buddha 南無釈迦牟尼佛(p.293, L.29): This is the same as saying, “I put my faith in Sakyamuni Buddha.” “*Namah*” or “*Namas*” mean to pay respect, to revere, or devotion, adoration to and etc. Commonly it is used with regard to the Buddhas or three treasures (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha). In Nichiren Buddhism, we put our faith in the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma or *Myoho-Renge-kyo* in Japanese; therefore, we chant, “Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.” When we chant it, we vow to follow the wonderful dharma. We become oneness with the Wonderful Dharma; thus, we are harmonized with universal laws and become happy.

Superior-Practice Bodhisattva 上行菩薩 (p.294, L.8): Sakyamuni Buddha chose the Bodhisattvas from Underground that was headed by Superior-Practice. It is to them that the Buddha transmits the Lotus Sutra after his death. Nichiren Daishonin compared his position to that of Superior-Practice Bodhisattva. When he was exiled to Sado Island after nearly missing his execution at Tatsu-no-Kuchi, he believed that he was the rebirth of Superior-Practice Bodhisattva. He discussed this in his essay, *Shoho Jisso Sho*: “I, Nichiren, a man born in the Age of Degeneration, have nearly achieved the task of pioneering the propagation of the Wonderful Law (*Myo-ho*), the task assigned to the Bodhisattva Superior-Practice. . . . I, Nichiren, am the one who takes the lead of the Bodhisattvas from Underground. Then may I not be one of them? And if I am one of them, why may not all my disciples and followers be their kinsmen? . . . If you are one in faith with Nichiren, you too are one of the Bodhisattvas from Underground.

The Bodhisattvas from Underground are the first disciples when the Eternal Buddha attained Enlightenment in unimaginable past. They all have the thirty-two marks as the same with the Buddhas. These Bodhisattvas from Underground headed by the Superior-Practice appear only in Chapter 15, 16, and 21 among 50 years propagation by Sakyamuni Buddha. However, when you read the Lotus Sutra again and again, you will see a relationship between him and Nichiren. Without Nichiren or rebirth of Superior-Practice Bodhisattva, the Lotus Sutra will not be expounded today.

Wheel of the Dharma 法輪(p.294, L.28): This word is used to describe the teachings of the Buddha, because they crush all evil in their path, and are in ceaseless motions. Even though the wheels are turning, the hub is always in the same place denotes the truth is not changed.