

BACK TO THE BASICS
THE MEANING OF NAM-MYOHO-RENGE-KYO
BY TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

In my last “Back to the Basics” (July 7 *World Tribune*, p. 2), I explained that we should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith in the significance of chanting it. I wrote that enjoying the effects of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is even more significant than knowing its literal meaning.

In this article, though, I will address each component of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo based on the initial part of the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings.” Here, Nichiren Daishonin sums up the quintessence of each component. He lectures: “*Nam* [means]...to devote one’s life. *Myo* indicates the nature of enlightenment, while *ho* indicates darkness or delusion. *Myoho*, the Mystic Law, indicates the oneness of delusion and enlightenment. *Renge* expresses the two principles of cause and effect. It also indicates the oneness of cause and effect. *Kyo* means the words, speech, sounds and voices of all living beings.... *Kyo* also signifies that life spans the three existences of past, present and future. All things are myoho, all things are renge, and all things are kyo” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708).

The profound, all-inclusive meaning of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo should be clear to us when we chant. In chanting it, we are saying that we will devote ourselves to the ultimate truth of life (the Law) and base ourselves upon the wisdom (Buddhahood) we tap thereby. We are promising to create value in daily life using the life-condition we tap through chanting. Through each daimoku, we are vowing to use our lives for our happiness and others’ welfare.

In essence, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo means that our lives are manifestations of the Mystic Law; our lives are ultimately precious. By chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we come to fully embody this. We affirm the universal in our lives.

As second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda once stated, we should chant to the point where we exhibit the “life of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” itself, to the point where we become one with the Gohonzon.