

**BACK TO THE BASICS
THE LOTUS SUTRA
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The original Buddhist teachings, which come from the teacher Shakyamuni, are of two kinds. On the one hand are the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. On the other is the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni's highest teaching.

Why is it the highest teaching? Unlike the provisional teachings, this sutra says that all people can attain enlightenment. "The heart of the Lotus Sutra is the revelation that one may attain the supreme enlightenment in one's present form," Nichiren Daishonin explains in "Reply to Hakiri Saburo," "without altering one's status as an ordinary person" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 410).

As a young Buddhist scholar, the Daishonin, searching for the truth of Buddhism, thoroughly studied all forms of Buddhism and became convinced of the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra. He then introduced the practice of the Lotus Sutra—the chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo (*Myoho-enge-kyo* being the title of the sutra as translated into Chinese)—so that everyone in the world could experience the benefits of this teaching.

"Everything has its essential point, and the heart of the Lotus Sutra is its title, or the daimoku, of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo," the Daishonin clarifies in "The One Essential Phrase." "Truly, if you chant this in the morning and evening, you are correctly reading the entire Lotus Sutra. Chanting daimoku twice is the same as reading the entire sutra twice, one hundred daimoku equal one hundred readings of the sutra, and one thousand daimoku, one thousand readings of the sutra. Thus, if you ceaselessly chant daimoku, you will be continually reading the Lotus Sutra" (WND, 923).

To chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is to affirm the truth of the Lotus Sutra, which is the truth of our lives: Enlightenment is within each of us. Enlightenment is found in the here and now. Enlightenment is found by us—no one can find it for us.

The Daishonin says in "The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life" that "Shakyamuni Buddha who attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago, the Lotus Sutra that leads all people to Buddhahood, and we ordinary human beings are in no way different or separate from one another" (WND, 216). The Lotus Sutra is the most accurate description of our lives anywhere. It is the core of Buddhism and at the core of our lives.