

**WORDS TO WIN BY
'AS INDESTRUCTIBLE AS A DIAMOND'
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From "The Izu Exile," The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 35–38.

Living beings like ourselves have dwelt in the sea of sufferings of birth and death since time without beginning. But they become votaries of the Lotus Sutra, and realize that their bodies and minds, which have existed since the beginningless past, are inherently endowed with the eternally unchanging nature; awaken to their mystic reality with their mystic wisdom; and attain the Buddha's body, which is as indestructible as a diamond. How then could they be different from that Buddha? (WND, 36)

Human beings are all essentially Buddhas and attain enlightenment just as they are, Nichiren Daishonin teaches. The "sea of sufferings" he mentions above is an early Buddhist metaphor for transmigration through the unenlightened states of life, which common mortals repeat in lifetime after lifetime. Human suffering, like the sea, has unfathomable depths and is difficult to navigate.

The sea of sufferings can be broadly interpreted as life based upon the nine worlds below Buddhahood (Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realization and Bodhisattva), for what these states have in common is that they are all transient. Any happiness based upon them is uncertain, subject to the ever-shifting currents of the sea. It is this effervescent nature, the lack of a solid foundation in both the pain and pleasures of life based upon the nine worlds, that Buddhism deems suffering.

In contrast to this type of suffering is what the Daishonin calls the unchanging nature innate within us. This differs from the other nine states in that when it is solidly established as the basis of life, it is absolute and invulnerable to the waves of changing circumstances.

With the world of Buddhahood, the 10th state, as one's base, one can move with perfect freedom through the ups and downs of the nine worlds, just as a big ship is strong enough to cross any waves. One can enjoy all the pains and pleasures of the nine worlds, seeing them for what they are, not becoming overly attached to transient phenomena. One can face the grief and contradictions of these states and, instead of being swept under by them, use them as fuel to advance.

In the depths of our lives, we develop an unshakable joy and confidence that exists independent of circumstances. We are able to turn all situations, whether rapturous or painful, into positive value. This is the state of life "as indestructible as a diamond" and the foundation of absolute, lasting happiness. This is the goal of Buddhist practice.

How do we attain this state of life? By becoming votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

A votary of the Lotus Sutra is anyone who embraces the Gohonzon with the same determination or intention as the Daishonin, devoting him- or herself to sharing it with others. At first, we may do so in order to try to practice correctly, but eventually we do it with the realization that it is the fundamental reason for our existence.

As we chant to the Gohonzon and teach others of its benefit, we gradually "realize that [our] bodies and minds, which have existed since the beginningless past, are inherently endowed with the eternally unchanging nature [of Buddhahood]." This is the true entity of life, or Myoho-enge-kyo, which while manifesting itself as the changing phenomena of

life's physical and spiritual aspects (waves) is itself eternal and unchanging (the sea). By chanting to the Gohonzon, our Buddha nature manifests from the depths of our lives, enabling us to emerge from the sea of sufferings and enjoy a state of life "as indestructible as a diamond."