

**SGI-UK Study Department
Introductory Study Programme**

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo

NOTES

Aims of the meeting

We hope that everyone attending the many meetings that will be taking place around the country will grasp the following:

- The importance of having ones own experiences of the power of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, rather than a theoretical understanding
- To really convey a sense of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the Law of Life (the eternal, universal principles of myo, ho, renge and kyo that the notes talk about)
- To begin to understand that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo has a historical, doctrinal source in the Lotus Sutra and is its essence as well as its title.

Other Materials

Please encourage the participants to start using the Goshō to find answers to questions on Buddhism. Two very accessible letters on this topic are *On Attaining Buddhahood* [WND p 3] and *Happiness in this World* [WND p 681], and President Ikeda's lectures in *Learning from the Goshō: the Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin* include clear explanations of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. You may also like to recommend the following parts of the Goshō:

In *On Repaying Debts of Gratitude* the Daishonin explains how Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is not just the title of the Lotus Sutra, but it includes all the profound meaning or heart of the text [WND p 731].

In *The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra* Nichiren Daishonin is asked whether we benefit from chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo even though we don't understand what it means [WND p 141]. See also *The One Essential Phrase* [WND p 923].

In *The Entity of the Mystic Law* the Daishonin is asked whether ignorant people can become Buddhas. The letter gives a lengthy explanation of *renge* and the answer is that 'anyone who practises this Law will obtain both the cause and effect of Buddhahood simultaneously' [WND pp 419-422].

In *Earthly Desires are Enlightenment* Nichiren Daishonin explains that although chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo may seem limited it is actually what enables all living beings to attain Buddhahood [WND p 317].

In *Letter to Niike* Nichiren Daishonin uses the metaphor of the liquid of a bird's egg turning into a bird to explain how an ordinary person chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo becomes a Buddha [WND p 1031].

In *A Sage and an Unenlightened Man* the Daishonin uses the metaphor of a caged bird which attracts other birds around it when it sings. He likens this to us chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and the Buddha nature of all living things being summoned around us [WND p 131]. See also *Those Initially Aspiring to the Way* [WND p 887].

The Buddha in Daily Life by Richard Causton (Rider Press), between pages 96 and 222 has plenty to read about Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Also, here are some excerpts from President Ikeda, taken from *Faith into Action*, and you may well have your own favourites to add to these:

Originally, every person's life is a brilliantly shining mirror. Differences become apparent depending on whether one polishes this mirror. A polished mirror is the Buddha's life, whereas a tarnished mirror is that of a common mortal. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo polishes our lives [p116].

Everything becomes a source of value, everything is brought to life, when we base ourselves on daimoku. The Daishonin teaches that *myo* in Nam-myoho-renge-kyo means 'to revive, to return to life.' Nam-myoho-renge-kyo rejuvenates all knowledge; it revitalizes our daily lives [p118].

Gongyo (reciting sections from the Lotus Sutra) and daimoku (chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo) might be compared to the food that sustains our lives. Chanting daimoku corresponds to the main dish and doing gongyo to the side dishes. Like the main and side dishes of a meal, the two are complimentary, and we need both to derive maximum joy from our practice. By taking such balanced 'meals' every morning and evening, you can activate your inherent Buddha nature and eventually establish that as your fundamental state of life [p115].

What is the purpose of faith? It is so that each of us can become truly happy and enable others to become happy. Faith is the driving force that lets us apply what we gain from our studies to truly serving people [p109].

People who have strong faith are fearless; they can overcome anything. There is no obstacle or adversity that they cannot surmount. In the very depths of their lives, no matter what happens, they lead lives of 'the greatest of all joys' [p110].

As far as the fundamental teachings of Buddhism are concerned, I hope that, regarding them as absolutely correct, you will first and foremost strive to put them into practice. I urge you to do so, because this is the shortest route to understanding the essence of Buddhism in the depths of your life [p150].