

Winning in Life: Big As the Universe

By JEFF FARR

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Last summer at the 1st California Young Men's Division Training Meeting, the guys in my cabin joked around so much I almost didn't sleep. For awhile they were even chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in English, which, honestly, sounded hilarious. "I devote myself to the law of cause and effect through sound; I devote myself to the law of cause and effect through sound; I devote myself to the law of cause and effect through sound," etc. Well, the Buddhist gods didn't throw any lightning bolts at us and we all had a good laugh, but it got me to thinking. This literal translation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which every "*shakubuku* meeting" veteran can recite in his or her sleep, doesn't express the full flavor, the full meaning, of our chant.

For one thing, each of the Chinese characters that make up Nam-myoho-renge-kyo can have many different definitions. Nichiren Daishonin teaches that *myo*, which we often define as "Mystic Law," also means "to revive." *Kyo*, which we often explain as "sound," can mean "action." And so on.

"We can actually explain Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in an infinite number of ways, not only one way," clarifies Ted Morino, SGI-USA Study Department chief.

In one sense, Nichiren Daishonin's Goshō is comprised of just that — an infinite number of ways of explaining Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Mr. Morino emphasizes, though, that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is a single law; according to Buddhism, the one law of the universe. When combined, the characters that make up the phrase Nam-myoho-renge-kyo take on this bigger meaning. As the Daishonin sets forth in "The True Entity of Life," "All life in the universe is clearly Myoho-renge-kyo" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 89).

If all life is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, it follows that our individual lives are part of this law, too. "Each person is an entity of the Mystic Law," SGI President Ikeda explains. "Each person is worthy of respect by virtue of his or her humanity." This is Buddhism's unique view of humanity: Each of us is an essential part of the universe. We are each like a piece in the jigsaw puzzle of life. And if even one piece is missing, the puzzle will not be complete.

When we're telling friends about Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, however, we don't have to get uptight about giving them an awesome definition of it. The best way to share Buddhism, after all, is just to make life-to-life connections with our friends. "We can say, 'I have been chanting this and it's great, so why don't you try it?'" Mr. Morino says. "Sharing this Buddhism with others takes more than study, more than theory. It takes our compassion, our conviction. Ultimately, sharing this Buddhism is not just explaining it. Rather, it's a life-to-life thing."

Once President Ikeda asked his mentor, President Toda, if when we share Buddhism with others we aren't sharing it with ourselves, too. President Toda answered that sharing Buddhism means to determine "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the sum and essence of my being!" When we feel this way, it becomes much easier, much more natural, to share Buddhism life to life.

Getting to the point where we can say "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is my life!" is a process of getting to know ourselves and the universe in which we live. Since Nam-myoho-renge-kyo means our lives are as big as the universe, this process can be nothing short of a big adventure.

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Title: Big As the Universe

Subject: World Tribune 06/27/97 n.3145 p.9 WT970627p09

Author: Jeff Farr

Keywords: Basics Concepts Life Nam-myoho-renge-kyo Practice Prayer Study Terms Tribune Universe
Winning World