

## **BASIC BUDDHIST TERMS TO REMEMBER**

### **BODHISATTVAS OF THE EARTH**

Those who chant and propagate Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Emerging from the earth means to shatter one's shallowness and reveal one's true identity, and bodhisattva is one who dedicates his or her life to helping others.

### **BUDDHA**

"Enlightened One." One who perceives the true nature of all life and leads others to attain the same enlightenment. The Buddha nature exists in all beings and is characterized by the qualities of wisdom, courage, compassion and life force.

### **DAIMOKU**

Literally, *title*, it refers to the invocation or chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the title of the Lotus Sutra.

### **GOHONZON**

The fundamental object of devotion in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. It is the embodiment of the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, expressing in graphic form the life-state of Buddhahood, which all people inherently possess. *Go* means worthy of honor and *honzon* means object of fundamental respect.

### **GONGYO**

Literally, it means assiduous practice. In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, gongyo consists of reciting excerpts from the second and sixteenth chapters of the Lotus Sutra, chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and offering prayers.

### **KARMA**

Sanskrit word meaning action. The life tendency or destiny each individual creates through thoughts, words and deeds that exert an often unseen influence over one's future.

### **KOSEN-RUFU**

Literally, it means to widely declare and spread (Buddhism); to secure lasting peace and happiness for all humankind through the propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

### **LOTUS SUTRA**

The highest teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, it reveals that all people can attain enlightenment and declares that his former teachings should be regarded as preparatory. Reciting excerpts from the Lotus Sutra is part of SGI members' daily Buddhist practice.

### **NAM-MYOHO-RENGE-KYO**

The fundamental Law expounded in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, it expresses the true aspect of life. Chanting it allows people to directly tap their enlightened nature. Although the deepest meaning of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is revealed only through its practice, the literal meaning is: *Nam* (devotion), the action of practicing Buddhism; *myoho*

(Mystic Law), the essential law of the universe and its phenomenal manifestations; *renge* (lotus), the simultaneity of cause and effect; *kyo* (Buddha's teaching), all phenomena.

### **NICHIREN DAISHONIN (1222–82)**

The founder of the Buddhism upon which the SGI bases its activities. He inscribed the true object of devotion, the Gohonzon, for the observation of one's mind and established the invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the universal practice for attaining enlightenment. Daishonin is an honorific title that means great sage.

### **SHAKYAMUNI**

Also known as Siddhartha Gautama. Born in India (present day southern Nepal) about twenty-five hundred years ago, he is the first recorded Buddha and founder of Buddhism. For 50 years, he expounded various sutras (teachings) culminating in the Lotus Sutra, which he declared his ultimate teaching.

### **SOKA GAKKAI**

#### **INTERNATIONAL (SGI)**

The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a worldwide association with membership in 163 countries and territories. In the service of its members and of society at large, SGI centers its activities on human potentialities for individual happiness and for global peace and prosperity. The breadth and focus of its mission derive from the philosophy and practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. *Soka Gakkai* means value-creation society. The SGI-USA is a member-organization of the SGI.

### **TEN WORLDS**

Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Heaven (or Rapture), Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood. The Ten Worlds are also interpreted as states of life.

*Though no chapter of the Lotus Sutra is negligible, among the entire twenty-eight chapters, the "Expedient Means" chapter and the "Life Span" chapter are particularly outstanding. The remaining chapters are all in a sense the branches and leaves of these two chapters. Therefore, for your regular recitation, I recommend that you practice reading the prose sections of the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters.*

—The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 71