

The Lotus Sutra Experience

You are a Buddha not a Person



Robert Bourne

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by

Robert Bourne

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The Lotus Sutra Experience

The Lotus Sutra Overview by Burton Watson

To show no prejudice and with my deepest respect I have included the following overview interpretation written by Burton Watson for the Soka Gakkai SGI members. This overview is found contained in the Soka Gakkai Nichiren Buddhism dictionary. Burton Watson translated The Lotus Sutra and his book was one version I used to investigate and awaken to the mystical meaning of the Sutra. *Robert Bourne*

The Lotus Sutra is one of the most important and influential of all the sutras or sacred scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism, revered by almost all branches of the Mahayana teachings, and over many centuries the object of intense veneration among Buddhist believers throughout China, Korea, Japan, and other regions of eastern Asia.

We do not know where or when the Lotus Sutra was composed, or in what language. Probably it was initially formulated in a local Indian dialect and then later put into Sanskrit to lend it greater respectability. All we can say for certain about the date of its composition is that it was already in existence by 255 CE, when the first Chinese translation of it was made. It was translated into Chinese several times subsequently, but it is through the version done in 406 by the Central Asian scholar-monk Kumarajiva that it has become widely known and read in China and the other countries within the Chinese cultural sphere of influence. This version has been universally acknowledged as the most authoritative and felicitous in language, and it is from this version that the present English translation has been made.

In recent years several Sanskrit texts of the Lotus Sutra, titled Saddharma-pundarika Sutra (The Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law), have been discovered in Nepal, Central Asia, and Kashmir. Some appear to have been copied in the eleventh century or later, some as early as the fifth or sixth century. Though the newer Sanskrit versions in particular differ considerably in places from the Kumarajiva translation, being often more verbose in expression, fragments of one of the oldest versions extant offer clear proof of the accuracy of his translation. This suggests that the text Kumarajiva followed was early in date, and may in fact have been quite close to the original version.

The Lotus Sutra, as just mentioned, was at an early date translated into Chinese, as well as into Tibetan, and in later centuries into Xi Xia, Mongol, Manchu, Korean, and Japanese. In recent years several translations into English and other

European languages have appeared; now it is established as an important text of world literature.

Early Buddhism

Gautama, or Shakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, appears to have lived in India sometime around the sixth or fifth century bce. Though it is difficult to describe his doctrines in detail, Buddhologists customarily accept several formulas as representative of his teachings. Most famous of these are the so-called Four Noble Truths, which are referred to several times in the Lotus Sutra. These teach that (1) all existence in the saha world, the world in which we live at present, is marked by suffering; (2) that suffering is caused by craving; (3) that by doing away with craving one can gain release from suffering and reach a state of peace and enlightenment, often called nirvana; (4) that there is a method for achieving this goal, namely the discipline known as the eightfold path. This is a set of moral principles enjoining one to cultivate right views, right thinking, right speech, right action, right way of life, right endeavour, right mindfulness, and right meditation.

Another doctrine, also touched on in the Lotus Sutra, is that of the Twelve-Linked Chain of Causation, or dependent origination, which illustrates step by step the causal relationship between ignorance and suffering. The purpose of the doctrine, like that of the Four Noble Truths, is to wake one to the true nature of reality and help one to achieve emancipation from ignorance and suffering.

In order to pursue the kind of strenuous discipline needed to gain such release, it was thought all but imperative that one leave secular life and become a member of the Buddhist Order, which consisted of both monks and nuns. There, free from family entanglements and worldly concerns, one could devote oneself to a life of poverty, celibacy, and religious study and discipline, supported by the alms of the lay community. Lay believers could acquire religious merit by assisting the Order, observing the appropriate rules of moral conduct, and carrying out devotional practices such as paying obeisance at the stupas, or memorial towers, that housed the relics of the Buddha. But it was thought that they would have to wait until future existences before they could hope to gain full release from suffering.

Buddhism, it should be noted, took over from earlier Indian thought, the belief in karma. According to this belief, all one's moral actions, whether good or bad, produce definite effects in one's life, though such effects may take some time before manifesting themselves. According to the Indian view, living beings pass through an endless cycle of death and rebirth, and the ill effects of an evil action in one's life may not become evident until some future existence; but that they will appear

eventually is inescapable. Hence only by striving to do good in one's present existence can one hope to escape even greater suffering in a future life.

Buddhism vehemently denied that there is any individual soul or personal identity that passes over from one existence to the next—to suppose there is, is simply to open the way for further craving—but it did accept the idea of rebirth or transmigration, and taught that the circumstances or realm into which a being is reborn is determined by the good or bad acts done by that being in previous existences. This meant, among other things, that one did not necessarily have to struggle for release from suffering within a single lifetime, but could work at the goal of salvation step by step, performing good moral and devotional acts that would ensure one of rebirth in more favourable circumstances in the future, and in this way gradually raising one's level of spiritual attainment.

The tenets and practices of the religion I have described above are often referred to as Hinayana Buddhism. But Hinayana, which means 'lesser vehicle', is a derogatory term, applied to early Buddhism by a group within the religion that called itself Mahayana, or the 'great vehicle', and represented its doctrines as superior to and superseding those of earlier Buddhism. In keeping with the spirit of religious tolerance and mutual understanding that prevails in most quarters today, writers usually try to avoid use of the term 'Hinayana', instead referring to the earlier form of Buddhism as 'Theravada', or 'Teachings of the Elders', which is the name used by the branch of it that continues in existence today. This is the form of Buddhism that prevails at present in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos.

The Mahayana movement appears to have begun in India around the first or second century of the Common Era. In part it was probably a reaction against the great emphasis upon monastic life that marked earlier Buddhism and against the arid psychological and metaphysical speculations that characterise much of early Buddhist philosophy. It aimed to open up the religious life to a wider proportion of the population, to accord a more important role to lay believers, to give more appealing expression to the teachings and make them more readily accessible.

In earlier Buddhism the goal of religious striving had been to achieve the state of arhat, or 'worthy', one who has 'nothing more to learn' and has escaped rebirth in the lower realms of existence. Even to reach this state, however, it was believed, required many lifetimes of strenuous exertion. But Mahayana urged men and women to aim for nothing less than the achievement of the highest level of enlightenment, that of buddhahood. Enormous help in reaching this exalted goal, it was stressed, would come to them through figures known as bodhisattvas, beings who are dedicated not only to attaining enlightenment for themselves but, out of their immense compassion, to helping others to do likewise. Earlier Buddhism often

described Shakyamuni Buddha as a bodhisattva in his previous existences, when he was still advancing toward enlightenment. But in Mahayana texts such as the Lotus Sutra the bodhisattvas are pictured as unlimited in number, all-seeing and all-caring, capable of extending boundless aid and succour to those who call upon them in sincere faith. Indeed, this great emphasis upon the role of the bodhisattva is one of the main characteristics that distinguish Mahayana thought from that of earlier Buddhism.

At first the proponents of these new Mahayana beliefs seem in many cases to have lived side by side in the same monasteries as the adherents of the earlier teachings. But doctrinal clashes arose from time to time and the two groups eventually drew apart. The Mahayana doctrines appear to have dominated in northwestern India, where they spread into the lands of Central Asia and thence into China. As a result, Chinese Buddhism was from the first overwhelmingly Mahayana in character, and it was this Mahayana version of the faith that in time was introduced to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, where it continues in existence today.

The World of the Lotus Sutra

The Lotus Sutra depicts events that take place in a cosmic world of vast dimensions, a world in many ways reflecting traditional Indian views of the structure of the universe. For those who are not familiar with such views, it may be well to describe them here in brief. The world in which we live at present, it was believed, is made up of four continents ranged around a great central mountain, Mount Sumeru. We live in the continent located to the South, known as Jambudvīpa, or the 'continent of the jambu trees'. Outside of our present world there exist countless others spread out in all directions, some similarly made up of four continents, others realms presided over by various buddhas. All these worlds, like our own, are caught up in a never-ending cycle of formation, continuance, decline, and disintegration, a process that takes place over vast kalpas, or eons of time.

The ordinary beings living in our present world fall into six categories or occupy six realms of existence, arranged in hierarchical order in terms of their desirability. Lowest are the hell dwellers, beings who because of their evil actions in the past are compelled, for a time at least, to suffer in the various hells that exist beneath the earth, the most terrible of which is the Avichi hell, or the hell of incessant suffering. On a slightly higher level are the hungry ghosts or spirits, beings who are tormented by endless hunger and craving. Above this is the level of beasts, or beings of animal nature, and above that the realm of the asuras, demons who are pictured in Indian mythology as constantly engaged in angry warfare. These first three or four realms

represent the 'evil paths', the lowest, most painful and undesirable states of existence.

Above these is the fifth level, the realm of human beings, and the sixth, that of the heavenly beings or gods. The gods, though they lead far happier lives than the beings in the other realms, are doomed in time to die. Whatever the realm, all the beings in these six realms repeat the never-ending cycle of death and rebirth, moving up or down from one level to another depending upon the good or evil deeds they have committed, but never gaining release from the cycle.

To these six lower worlds or levels Mahayana Buddhism adds four more, the 'noble states', representative of the life of enlightenment. On the seventh level are the shravakas, or voice-hearers. This term, by which they are known in the Lotus Sutra, are originally referred simply to the Buddha's disciples, those who had entered the Buddhist Order and learned the doctrines and practices directly from him. In the Lotus it also refers to those monks and nuns who followed the teachings of early Buddhism, such as the Four Noble Truths, and strove to attain the state of arhat. Once they attained that state they ceased their endeavours, convinced that they had gained the highest goal possible for them.

Above these, on the eighth level, are the pratyekabuddhas, cause-awakened ones or self-enlightened ones, beings who have won an understanding of the truth through the Buddha's early teachings or through their own observations of nature, but who make no effort to assist others to reach enlightenment. On the ninth level are the bodhisattvas, already described above, who out of compassion concern themselves not only with their own entry into buddhahood, but also with alleviating the sufferings of others. On the tenth and highest level are the Buddhas, representing the state of Buddhahood. It is this level, according to Mahayana doctrine, that all living beings should seek to attain, and which, it insists, they can attain if they will not content themselves with lesser goals but have faith in the Buddha and his teachings as these are embodied in the sacred scriptures.

Before passing on to a discussion of the particular doctrines set forth in the Lotus Sutra, there is one more aspect of the Mahayana worldview that must be touched upon, difficult though it is to treat in the limited space that can be allotted here. This is the concept of emptiness or void (shunyata), which is so central to the whole Mahayana system of belief.

The concept, often described in English as 'non-dualism', is extremely hard for the mind to grasp or visualise, since the mind engages constantly in the making of distinctions and non-dualism represents the rejection or transcendence of all distinctions. The world perceived through the senses, the phenomenal world as we know it, was described in early Buddhism as 'empty' because it was taught that all

such phenomena arise from causes and conditions, are in a constant state of flux, and are destined to change and pass away in time. They are also held to be 'empty' in the sense that they have no inherent or permanent characteristics by which they can be described, changing as they do from instant to instant. But in Mahayana thought it became customary to emphasise not the negative but rather the positive aspects or import of the doctrine of emptiness. If all phenomena are characterised by the quality of emptiness, then emptiness must constitute the unchanging and abiding nature of existence, and therefore the absolute or unchanging world must be synonymous with the phenomenal one. Hence all mental and physical distinctions that we perceive or conceive of with our minds must be part of a single underlying unity. It is this concept of emptiness or non-duality that leads the Mahayana texts to assert that samsara, or the ordinary world of suffering and cyclical birth and death, is in the end identical with the world of nirvana, and that earthly desires are enlightenment.

The Principal Doctrines of the Lotus Sutra

The Kumarajiva translation of the Lotus Sutra as it exists at present is made up of twenty-eight chapters. Nearly all the chapters consist of a combination of prose and verse passages. Verse form was used to make it easier for the followers of the religion to memorise the teachings and retain them in mind, and the Gathas, or verse passages, were probably composed first. Later, as the sutra moved toward its final form, prose passages were added that incorporated the verse sections into a continuous narrative. In the present arrangement of the text, the verse sections usually repeat what has already been stated in a preceding prose passage.

Like nearly all sutras, the Lotus begins with the words "This is what I heard." These have traditionally been interpreted as having been spoken by the Buddha's close disciple Ananda, who was present at many of the Buddha's expositions of the Dharma, or doctrine. The speaker then proceeds to describe the occasion when, at Mount Gridhrakuta, or Eagle Peak, near the city of Rajagriha, the Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra.

In these opening sentences we are still in the world of historical reality or possibility, in a setting in the outskirts of the city of Rajagriha in northern India in which Gautama, or Shakyamuni, very probably did in fact propound his doctrines in the sixth or fifth century bce.

But as Ananda proceeds to describe the staggering number and variety of human, nonhuman, and heavenly beings who have gathered to listen to the Buddha's discourse, we realise that we have left the world of factual reality far

behind. This is the first point to keep in mind in reading the Lotus Sutra. Its setting, its vast assembly of listeners, its dramatic occurrences in the end belong to a realm that totally transcends our ordinary concepts of time, space, and possibility. Again and again we are told of events that took place countless, indescribable numbers of kalpas, or eons, in the past, or of beings or worlds that are as numerous as the sands of millions and billions of Ganges Rivers. Such 'numbers' are in fact no more than pseudo-numbers or non-numbers, intended to impress on us the impossibility of measuring the immeasurable. They are not meant to convey any statistical data but simply to boggle the mind and jar it loose from its conventional concepts of time and space. For in the realm of emptiness, time and space as we conceive them are meaningless; anywhere is the same as everywhere, and now, then, never, forever are all one.

After several astounding events that impress upon us the truly cosmic scale of the drama that is unfolding, the Buddha begins to preach. The first important point he wishes to convey is that there is only one vehicle or one path to salvation, that which leads to the goal of Buddhahood. Earlier in his preaching career, he had described three paths for the believer, what he calls the three vehicles. One was that of the shravaka, or voice-hearer, which leads to the realm of the arhat. Second was that of the pratyekabuddha, the being who gains enlightenment for himself alone, and the third was that of the bodhisattva. But now, the Buddha tells us, these lesser paths or goals are to be set aside and all beings are to aim for the single goal of Buddhahood, the one and only vehicle to true enlightenment, or what the Lotus Sutra calls supreme perfect enlightenment.

When asked why, if there is only the single vehicle or truth, the Buddha has earlier taught his followers the doctrine of the three vehicles, he replies that at that time they were not yet ready to comprehend or accept the highest truth. Therefore he had to employ what he terms an expedient means in order to lead them gradually along the road to greater understanding. He then illustrates his point through the famous parable of the burning house.

The first lesson the sutra wishes to teach, then, is that its doctrines, delivered by the Buddha some forty or more years after the start of his preaching career, which is how the Lotus depicts them, represent the highest level of truth, the summation of the Buddha's message, superseding his earlier pronouncements, which had only provisional validity.

In some Mahayana texts Shariputra and the other close disciples of the Buddha, who represent the 'lesser vehicle' outlook and path of endeavour, are held up to ridicule or portrayed as figures of fun. But the prevailing mood of the Lotus Sutra is one of compassion, and in it the voice-hearers are shown responding to the

Buddha's words with understanding and gratitude. In return, the Buddha bestows on each of them a prophecy of the attainment of buddhahood in a future existence, and in many cases reveals the type of buddha land each will preside over.

The mood of revelation and rejoicing continues in the chapters that follow as the Buddha names more persons who are assured of attaining buddhahood. The company of nuns who are attending the assembly, headed by the Buddha's aunt, Mahaprajapati, and his wife in his younger years, Yashodhara, at one point grow apprehensive because their names have not been mentioned, but the Buddha assures them that they too are included in his predictions of Buddhahood.

All these monks and nuns have been personal followers of Shakyamuni Buddha, diligent in religious practice and faultless in their observance of the rules of conduct, and it is hardly surprising to learn that their efforts are to be crowned with success. Truly surprising, however, is the prophecy set forth in chapter twelve concerning Devadatta, who gives his name to the chapter.

Devadatta is described in accounts of the life of Shakyamuni Buddha as a disciple and cousin of the Buddha who, though full of zeal at first, later grew envious of Shakyamuni, made several attempts on his life, and schemed to foment division in the Order. For these crimes, among the most heinous in the eyes of Buddhism, he was said to have fallen into hell alive. Yet in chapter twelve of the Lotus Sutra the Buddha reveals that in a past existence this epitome of evil was in fact a good friend and teacher of the Buddha, preaching the way of enlightenment for him, and that in an era to come, Devadatta will without fail become a Buddha himself. From this we learn that even the most depraved of persons can hope for salvation, and that in the realm of non-dualism good and evil are not the eternal and mutually exclusive opposites we had supposed them to be.

Chapter twelve relates another affair of equally astounding import. In it, the bodhisattva Manjushri describes how he has been preaching the Lotus Sutra at the palace of the dragon king at the bottom of the sea. The nagas, or dragons, it should be noted, are one of eight kinds of non-human beings who are believed to protect Buddhism. They were revered in early Indian folk religion and were taken over by Buddhism, whose scriptures often portray them as paying homage to the Buddha and seeking knowledge of his teachings.

Asked if there were any among his listeners who succeeded in gaining enlightenment, Manjushri mentions the daughter of the dragon king Sagara, a girl just turned eight, who was able to master all the teachings. The questioner expresses understandable skepticism, pointing out that even Shakyamuni himself required many eons of religious practice before he could achieve enlightenment.

The girl herself then appears and before the astonished assembly performs various acts that demonstrate she has in fact achieved the highest level of understanding and can “in an instant” attain Buddhahood. Earlier Buddhism had asserted that women are gravely hampered in their religious endeavours by “five obstacles,” one of which is the fact that they can never hope to attain Buddhahood. But all such assertions are here in the Lotus Sutra unequivocally thrust aside. The child is a dragon, a non-human being, she is of the female sex, and she has barely turned eight, yet she reaches the highest goal in the space of a moment. Once again the Lotus Sutra reveals that its revolutionary doctrines operate in a realm transcending all petty distinctions of sex or species, instant or eon.

These joyous revelations concerning the universal accessibility of Buddhahood, which occupy the middle chapters of the sutra, constitute the second important message of the work. The third is set forth in chapter sixteen. In chapter fifteen we are told how a vast multitude of bodhisattvas spring up from the earth in a miraculous manner in order that they may undertake the task of transmitting and protecting the teachings of the Buddha. When the Buddha is asked who these bodhisattvas are, he replies that they are persons whom he has taught and guided to enlightenment. His questioner quite naturally asks how Shakyamuni could possibly have taught and converted such immeasurable multitudes in the course of only forty years of preaching.

In chapter sixteen Shakyamuni reveals the answer to this riddle. The Buddha, he says, is an eternal being, ever present in the world, ever concerned for the salvation of all beings. He attained Buddhahood an incalculably distant time in the past, and has never ceased to abide in the world since then. He seems at times to pass away into nirvana, and at other times to make a new appearance in the world. But he does this only so that living beings will not take his presence for granted and be slack in their quest for enlightenment. His seeming disappearance is no more than an expedient means that he employs to encourage them in their efforts, one of many such expedients that he adopts in order to fit his teachings to the different natures and capacities of individual beings and ensure that those teachings will have relevance for all. From this we see that in the Lotus Sutra the Buddha, who had earlier been viewed as a historical personality, is now conceived as a being who transcends all boundaries of time and space, an ever-abiding principle of truth and compassion that exists everywhere and within all beings.

These then are the principal teachings of the Lotus Sutra, concepts that are basic to all Mahayana thought. In the Sutra they are often very beautifully and persuasively expounded, especially in the various parables for which the Lotus is famous. But one should not approach the Lotus expecting to find in it a methodical

exposition of a system of philosophy. Some of the principles traditionally thought to be most important in Buddhism are only touched upon in passing, as though one is expected to be acquainted with them already, while many of the more revolutionary doctrines are not presented in any orderly fashion or supported by careful or detailed arguments but rather thrust upon one with the suddenness of Divine revelation.

The text, with its long lists of personages, its astronomical numbers, its formulaic language and frequent repetitions, its vivid parables, is incantatory in effect, appealing not so much to the intellect as to the emotions. It may be noted that in the early centuries of Buddhism it was customary not to put the teachings into written form but to transmit them orally, the works being committed to memory as had been the practice in earlier Indian religion. This was thought to be the proper way, the respectful way to transmit them and ensure that they were not revealed to persons who were unqualified or unworthy to receive them. The formulaic language, the recapitulations in verse, the repetitions were all designed to assist the memory of the reciter, and these stylistic features were retained even after the scriptures had been put into written form.

Very early in the Sutra the Buddha warns us that the wisdom of the Buddhas is extremely profound and difficult to comprehend, and this warning is repeated frequently in later chapters. The Lotus Sutra tells us at times that the Lotus Sutra is about to be preached, at other times it says that the Lotus Sutra has already been preached with such-and-such results, and at still other times it gives instructions on just how the Lotus Sutra is to be preached or enumerates in detail the merits that accrue to one who pays due honour to the text. But readers may be forgiven if they come away from the work wondering just which of the chapters that make it up was meant to be the Lotus Sutra itself. One writer has in fact been led to describe the sutra as a text "about a discourse that is never delivered, . . . a lengthy preface without a book." This is no doubt because Mahayana Buddhism has always insisted that its highest truth can never in the end be expressed in words, since words immediately create the kind of distinctions that violate the unity of emptiness. All the Sutra can do, therefore, is to talk around it, leaving a hole in the middle where Truth can reside.

But of course in the view of religion there are other approaches to Truth rather than merely through words and intellectual discourse. The Sutra therefore exhorts the individual to approach the wisdom of the Buddhas through the avenue of faith and religious practice. The profound influence that the Lotus Sutra has exerted upon the cultural and religious life of the countries of eastern Asia is due as much to its function as a guide to devotional practice as to the actual ideas that it expounds. It

calls upon us to act out the Sutra with our bodies and minds rather than merely reading it, and in that way to enter into its meaning.

Much of the Lotus Sutra is taken up with injunctions to the believer to “accept and uphold, read, recite, copy, and teach” it to others, and with descriptions of the bountiful merits to be gained by such action, as well as warnings of the evil effects of speaking ill of the Sutra and those who uphold it. In addition, one is encouraged to make offerings to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, to the stupas, or memorial towers, and to the monastic Order. Flowers, incense, music, and chants of praise are the customary offerings cited in the Sutra, along with food, clothing, bedding, and other daily necessities in the case of members of the Order. Gold, silver, gems, and other valuables are also listed among the offerings, but lest this would seem to put the rich at an advantage, the Sutra early on emphasises that it is the spirit in which the offering is made rather than the article itself that is important. Even a tower of sand fashioned by children in play, if offered in the proper spirit, will be acceptable in the sight of the Buddha and bring reward, we are told. It may be noted that the animal sacrifices so central to the earlier Vedic religion were rejected by Buddhism as abhorrent. One chapter of the Lotus does in fact describe a bodhisattva who burned his own body as a form of sacrifice, but the passage is clearly meant to be taken metaphorically. Despite this fact, some believers of later times, in their eagerness to emulate the bodhisattva’s example, have interpreted it with tragic literalness.

Most famous and influential of the devotional chapters of the Lotus Sutra are those with which the work closes and that portray various bodhisattvas who can render particular aid and protection to the believer. Noteworthy among these is chapter twenty-five, which centres on a bodhisattva named Avalokitasvara, or Perceiver of the World’s Sounds, known in China as Guanyin and in Japan as Kannon. The chapter relates in very concrete terms the wonderful types of assistance that the bodhisattva can render to persons of all different social levels and walks of life, ranging from kings and high ministers to traveling merchants or criminals in chains. In order to make his teaching and aid most readily acceptable to all kinds of beings, the bodhisattva is prepared to take on thirty-three different forms, matching his form to that of the being who calls upon him, whether that being be man or woman, exalted or humble, human or nonhuman in nature. Through chapters such as these, which have been recited with fervour by countless devotees over the centuries, the Sutra has brought comfort and hope to all levels of society.

Because of its importance as an expression of basic Mahayana thought, its appeal as a devotional work, its dramatic scenes and memorable parables, the Lotus, as already emphasised, has exerted an incalculable influence upon the culture of East Asia. More commentaries have been written on it than on any other

Buddhist scripture. The great works of Chinese and Japanese literature such as *The Dream of the Red Chamber* and *The Tale of Genji* are deeply imbued with its ideas and imagery, and its scenes are among the most frequently depicted in the religious art of the area.

The Lotus is not so much an integral work as a collection of religious texts, an anthology of sermons, stories, and devotional manuals, some speaking with particular force to persons of one type or in one set of circumstances, some to those of another type or in other circumstances. This is no doubt one reason why it has had such broad and lasting appeal over the ages and has permeated so deeply into the cultures that have been exposed to it.

The present translation is offered in the hope that through it readers of English may come to appreciate something of the power and appeal of the Lotus Sutra, and that among its wealth of profound religious ideas and striking imagery they may find passages that speak compellingly to them as well.

Burton Watson

You are a Buddha not a Person!

An introduction about this profound statement

Is the Pope a Catholic? With such a question you could be wondering “Hello this is one of those jokes.” Is the Pope a Catholic? Everyone knows he is because he is the head of the Catholic Church! In truth the answer is “Yes he is. It is obvious, what a stupid question.”

Are you a Buddha? You would probably say, “Don’t be silly I am a person, what a stupid question.” The truth is that you are not a person because in reality you are a Buddha! The problem is that you just don’t know this Truth as it is being veiled from you by the mind’s misunderstanding and attachment to the person’s mind and body! There are three aspects which prevent you living from your True-Buddha-Self which are: an impure mind; a scattered mind; and your beliefs or illusions held in the mind regarding who and what you are. This is where the problem begins; in your own believing that you are just a person. “How can I be a Buddha? He was that Indian enlightened being I have read about. I am only John or Jackie Smith, etc.”

The time when I began writing this book was October 2012, a landmark time in history for the awakening of mankind. In 2013 it was the time when it was right to drop all dogma and austerities, a time to transform all religions into a direct spiritual experience to reveal their true mystical aspect. Today in 2022 it really is the time to merge with your own Buddha-God nature once and for all. Now is the time to dissolve the karmic personal soul-mind-body personality. The Lotus Sutra is one Sutra which has the power to do just this. You do not have to wait for some time in the future, you can do it now! In fact I will reveal that this mystical Sutra is not just for Buddhists, it is the foundation Truth underpinning all leading religions in the world. A simple proof that this sutra is not the ownership of any one particular religion is to ask a simple question “Was the Buddha a Buddhist or was Christ a Christian, etc?” Well, you have to agree the answer is no, the religious names came into society after their passing. The Buddha and Christ were awakened to their True-Buddha-God-Self to bring their teachings to mankind about the foundation core aspect of who and what we really are. Christ brought the spiritual path of loving devotion while the Buddha brought the spiritual path of enlightened wisdom, Truth. Both paths will awaken you to your True-Self-Buddha-God nature, especially when they come together.

Through embracing the Lotus Sutra I have had the privilege of being awakened through having a direct experience of the ‘Treasure Tower’ phenomenon as revealed in chapter eleven. This experience has left a knowingness within me that arises from

an indescribable emptiness. It is this x-factor which has enlightened this difficult to understand mystical text; it is this which has guided me in the writing of this book. To be able to share my understanding I had to overcome resistance from my karmic body of feelings of unworthiness and doubt, 'How dare I attempt such a task'. No matter how I tried to avoid writing this book my True-Self would not let me avoid doing so.

As previously mentioned, the first understanding to embrace is to realise that the Buddha nature eternally exists within you, and within all of life. There is a 'Oneness' to the manifest reality and the unseen nature of the Buddha. To experience this Oneness the self has to dissolve in its belief that it is a person. Many people think that their human life is inferior to a Divine being like the Buddha or Christ and that there is a separation between them and the Buddha-God. Many people believe they are not worthy or great like a Buddha or a Christ. These two enlightened beings came here to tell us that we *are* one with Buddha-God.

How did this message get lost? The idea that we are not one with Buddha-God is believed because deep within our unconscious mind we carry the belief that we are separate inferior beings. This idea has come about through many religious beliefs which over many lifetimes we have been hypnotised by, together with the belief we are just the body-mind. These ideas and concepts have collectively conditioned us to believe that we are separate inferior beings. This is not correct as there is a unity with the Buddha-God and all of life at all times.

It is the karmic mind entity, known as a person that creates a separate identity which is blocking the flow of the inherent unseen mystical Buddha-God nature to well up through us. (*The karmic entity I refer to is a person with a mind-soul, which is no more than a collection of life's conditionings that are believed in.*)

Buddhahood referred to in this book is also known as full Enlightenment; the supreme state of life in Buddhism, characterised by boundless wisdom and compassion. In this state one is awakened to the eternal and ultimate truth that is the reality of all things.

I recently saw an interview with his Holiness the Dalai Lama where he was promoting the idea of Oneness between all living beings on the planet. He was talking about going beyond division held between different religious beliefs, about going beyond the interests of separate nations and about the coming together of mankind; becoming one humanity on this earth. As I watched this man's passionate heart being revealed I immediately became one with him, feeling the immense compassion he holds for all living beings. I was deeply touched by what he shared, not in the words he said but in the unseen energy he was revealing when he was talking. He was revealing his Buddha nature using expedient means towards the

interviewer, causing great joy and blissful contentment in myself and I am sure in others who also watched this sharing, which was about food!

Once enlightenment is experienced, individuality still continues to exist but the consciousness that flows through that human being is now totally in the present moment and is known as the Buddha-God nature. Life for the first time is experienced 'As it Is' without adding the colour painted upon it by the mind and hence distorting it. When this consciousness is experienced, time differences such as the past and the future, cause and effect all manifest simultaneously; at the same time. The conditioned person no longer exists; it is just not there because there is no longer any separation, only Oneness exists, for after all, who was that person? Only conditioning, attachment, DNA ancestral programs, misconceptions and separation!

Today is the time for mankind, for the general population, to have this experience directly, not just limited to the Guru on the ashram. This book is written to share this Truth with you, especially if you have spiritualised 'the person' through practising some well proven method. You will need to drop all your beliefs for your full awakening to occur as most likely they are partial Truths or illusions! Take a lesson from the Muslim faith and surrender your ego to your inner Buddha True-Self.

The message in this book is to encourage you to let go and trust that you have done enough; the foundations have been planted from many lifetimes for your own enlightenment to occur. I am fully aware that if we don't drop our false notion of who and what we are, we will certainly consume our human race and environment through our self serving interests and greed. It will be the end of our race on planet earth that so many are now concerned about. Our opportunity has come and it appears that only when life becomes more dangerous that the kundalini rises up through the threat of extinction to assist us in our collective awakening.

When you embrace the Truth that you are one with Buddha-God you will see that it is you 'the person' who has been in the way of the opening of your own Lotus Flower of enlightenment. The Buddha-God is within you, right here where you are, right now. Let go of yourself, surrender what you think you know to allow 'Divine Grace' to dissolve this illusionary self you have created and awaken you to the truth lying silently within our one Divine heart. There is no special place to visit, no special person to meet, just a sort of surrender is required to the limited knowledge and identity to which we have become attached.

This awakening cannot happen in the Future! Being in the present moment requires the mind to stop thinking about and projecting into the future. A full explanation about why the True-self only exists in the present moment is the subject of another free download in the module in The Awakening Process called The Gentle Touch Practice. I would like to introduce this Truth to those who have not had a

realisation of the importance of this concept in the following short introduction. This is the most important element for your own Awakening to occur, therefore it is worth bringing it to your awareness. When you look at all spiritual practices, either devotional, prayer or a form of meditation in nature, you will see that their objective is to bring your mind to rest in the present moment. The present moment is the only place that the heart of God or Buddha-True-Self exists.

Being in the present moment requires the mind to stop thinking about the past and past experiences. How many of us are being driven emotionally by dead events that we are unable to accept and make peace with. You may say, "Oh it is all right for you to talk but I am still haunted by" When these old hurts knock at your door in your mind there is a simple way to stop the person you think you are from tormenting and torturing your life's experiences preventing you from living in the 'As it Is' present moment. The question to ask is a simple one and is also part of a solution "Is this happening now?" When you ask this question the answer will always be "No, only in my mind." This means it is imagined or purely psychological in nature. It is a dead memory which you only bring alive because you have fed this mind of yours with the food of Attention to your past unhappy life experiences. When you do this you bring the past experience alive again psychologically and emotionally, this causes you to relive it again and then feel bad; the negative cycle of self-destruction. Your Buddha True-Self nature will dissolve all past trauma as I can testify.

This very act proves the power that exists within your own life; you the person have become the creator of your own reality which in many situations is more suffering. However in this case it is a reality you do not want to recreate. It goes like this. You focus on suffering and traumatic events. Without realising it the inner Buddha-God is waiting to serve you by transforming your thoughts into direct experience. Your mind is creating using the light of your inner Buddha True-Self nature. What you think and believe becomes the experience you receive in daily life. How fortunate we are to have the creator of our being waiting to serve us in every moment of our existence!

There is a chapter in the Lotus Sutra which shares that at whatever level of consciousness you create your life from, including the grossest consciousness of hell to any partial enlightenment realm of consciousness, you will be met automatically by the Buddha. This revelation is contained in chapter twenty-four 'The Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound' who manifests through the body of another within the same consciousness that you are currently experiencing life from, providing Buddha Wisdom in every experience you will ever have! This chapter is revealing the compassion of the Buddha nature through the law of karma.

This is why once awakened to the Buddha you never feel lonely or alone, this is how I always feel, although there is no one there with whom I am in relationship! I remember in 1997 when visiting Bali on my own the local people use to inquire “Where is your wife?” “Where is your family?” When they discovered that I was on my own and was always happy they gave me the nick-name ‘Mr Happy All Alone’.

Yes, you have to resolve the past, come to understand it and see it with a higher awareness, a higher consciousness. When you do this the past experience which is unfinished within you will dissolve and no longer torment your life. How can you live in the present, in the now, if you are dwelling on the past? The interesting thing is that release from this suffering is very easy! Leave the past alone and also leave the future alone! Freedom, contentment, love and happiness is what we are all wanting and these beautiful qualities are waiting for you right now in the present.

The solution to obtaining this comes through recognising that there is something else already within you that has a higher awareness waiting to serve you, something with a higher consciousness. When you accept this aspect and bow in humility then a freedom, happiness, love and contentment will naturally arise within you; because it is already there! You just have to get out of the way.

Let us slow down a bit and go back to the opening sentence from a previous paragraph. The question to ask is a simple one and is a part solution “Is this happening now?” You have to come to realise that to ask this question there has to be another ‘You’ inside of ‘You’ to be able to ask it! Once you can recognise that this is possible you then come to ask “There must be two of me then?” There is a good way to identify which one is alive and which one is not real. The ‘I’ who is able to observe your personality computer mind which contains all the past experiences is real; the past experiences are not real as they are just a memory resonating in a certain consciousness; a ghost in the mind memory from the past. Let us turn the question around to prove this Truth. Can the past memory be aware of the ‘I’ in the present moment? No of course it can’t, try it and see. This will prove that it is not the ‘True You’ and that in reality it is just a past experience which is now dead, except you keep bringing it alive through putting your Attention on it, because of the emotional pain associated with that past traumatic event, triggered by the environment outside of you in some way; another person or social situation, etc.

Here comes that word again, Attention. This means you have to learn that what you put your Attention on will be drawn towards you because the mystical aspect within you follows your desires and thoughts and gives it energy, bringing it alive. Once you can see this you will have a massive understanding that you are empowering your mind which is creating your own reality by its own thinking. There

is a very good illustration about this in another book 'Who Am I?' or 'Be As You Are' from the Sri Ramana Maharshi Teachings.

My guidance to you for a quick transformation, and which was part of the solution in my own Awakening, was to put my attention upon my inner Buddha nature with a loving passionate devotion of everything in my environment. In other words seeing and loving everything as Buddha-God.

To sum up so far, you have to recognise who the real 'I' is and then a sort of surrendering of this identification with the mind as a person is required. This is where the problem lies. Surrender to what? The problem is fully explained in the Lotus Sutra wherein Shakyamuni Buddha teaches and explains that the mystic law is enlightenment and includes the whole of existence. Enlightenment can only be shared and understood between Buddhas; what a conundrum. If I am only a person, how on earth am I ever going to become enlightened if the Truth contained within all existences can only be shared between awakened enlightened Buddhas!

Herein lies the clue. Logic states that if in some way you the person are connected to the Divine Buddha-God nature, then as a person you must really be a Buddha, but somehow you have got lost or forgotten who and what you really are. To experience this then you must in some way wake up or 'Awaken'. This is just what mankind has forgotten to do, we have opted for the option that we are just a person and that in some way 'salvation is required to save our souls.' This model of concept is doomed to imprison us as unworthy beings at the mercy of some Omnipresent being outside of ourselves who is judging our every movement and thought. In a way this is correct but it has a negative connotation for it depowers you and does not reveal that this Supreme Being is serving and loving you from within your own human being! In fact you are really in Oneness with that Supreme Being!

I apologise if the message I wanted to share with you in a simple way will now turn into a long book with a lot of historical information. However I know that without providing a good background on what has sprung forth from this mystical text over the centuries, by just stating "You are a Buddha not a Person" just would not have been believed in. Yes, I have had this amazingly beautiful experience but that is not enough. We are one and as such I want to help you Awaken to this truth. If nothing else I have planted a seed in your mind to make you question or wonder about what is being presented; then it has been worth the effort I have made to communicate with you to encourage you in your own self enquiry. But hang on you don't have to believe me because this is the message from the Buddha and is the same from all enlightened masters. Maybe they have discovered something? This is what the message is in The Lotus Sutra.

So the story commences, as with any story, at the historical beginning. This requires an investigation from the perspective of where we are today after many years of being prepared by our spiritual masters. I will share a modern interpretation about this sacred Sutra that is reported to reveal the Truth about the existence of life.

This Sutra states that it is the highest Truth the Buddha voiced over and above all other teachings he provided for mankind; in fact it states to drop all other teachings and to embrace this one Sutra.

What does it really contain? How do you experience what the Buddha is talking about? Please be patient and follow all the threads including the historical practices that have manifested from those past and present who are and have been embracing this Sutra.

I will also illuminate from my direct experience what I have discovered to have been shared within the Lotus Sutra. I hope you enjoy this sharing.

A final note because we are all unique and have various different life experiences. Your own understanding of what is being shared will arise within you for your own realisation of the Truths presented. You will have your own unique Treasure Tower awakening with your own unique understanding of the Lotus Sutra.

Chant Nam Myoho Renge Kyo, the title of the Lotus Sutra, to bring forth from the core of your being your True-Self Buddha nature. Knowingness will then arise through your uniqueness to bring the realisation in the mind of Pure Awareness of what the Buddha taught. I encourage you to do this with loving passionate emotion.

Introduction to the Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Law

This mystical, transformational, supernatural, esoteric Sutra is now shared in a new modern easy to follow explanation for this modern age of mankind's Awakening. Use your own practice to focus your Attention and Intention upon the modern interpretation to help Your Awakening. This will help you transform your conditioned personality, enabling you to experience the inner qualities of your Buddha nature. These qualities are; True Self, Unshakable Happiness, Purity and Eternity.

I have included a background about the way the Lotus Sutra has been taught since it was revealed several thousand years ago in India by Shakyamuni Buddha. This background includes the interpretation from T'ien-t'ai also known as Chih-I (538-597) in China, leaving behind a thriving evolution of Tendai followers. A background is also provided about the interpretation on how to practice the Lotus Sutra as taught by Nichiren Daishonin (1222-1282), including how the modern Nichiren organisations practice the Sutra today (2022).

I personally have deep respect for all those who embrace this Sutra, irrespective of their chosen practice format. There is clear guidance in chapter twenty and chapter twenty-eight which supports this approach. It is my own personal experience of mystical awakening through the Lotus Sutra that I would like to share with you. This only occurred when I approached the Lotus Sutra in a new way, after chanting for many years with the Nichiren sect called NSUK.

The Buddha will manifest uniquely in each and every one of us because we are individual human beings and not clones, therefore a different teaching will be required for each one of us. This is why I have included the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings to confirm this Truth, which is the introductory Sutra to the Lotus Sutra. Only a Buddha can prescribe this individual teaching! Now I will share with you where you can find such a Buddha! The good news is that you do not have to travel far because the Buddha resides inside your Divine heart.

Learn from others by all means but always look inside your heart to see if it resonates. Ask the Buddha within your heart to awaken you. Chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo for Buddha wisdom and it will arise. One other thing I found of immense value to do after you have chanted is to enter into silence and then become aware and experience; pay quiet attention, resting in your Pure-Awareness-Buddha-True-Self, otherwise you will miss it and return to the thinking chattering aspect of the mind in its dualistic karmic nature.

To truly experience the mind of the Buddha we have to surrender completely as a separate person; this is the purpose of all practices, to transform the illusionary mind. The chanting will firstly stop the mind from chattering and then raise the consciousness to the Oneness of the Buddha nature; it is when this breakthrough occurs you know that you are existing in the freedom of your True-self, your Buddha mind. Now rest there, leave the mind alone and fully experience it. The more you rest in the silence the more transformation will occur to the karmic body; dissolving the attachments of the karmic mind.

When I chanted to discover the Truth contained within the Lotus Sutra I obtained two versions to establish that the interpretation of the Sutra had not been amended by a particular dogmatic influence. I was happy to say that although the two translations used slightly different terminology, they agreed with each other.

The Lotus Sutra had the style of presenting what it was saying up to three times, plus a version in verse form to illustrate what had just been stated. There is a question and answer style to the Sutra. For the sake of keeping the book to a reasonable size and at the advice of my editor, I have excluded the full repetitive translation of the Sutra. The full copy of this Sutra can be obtained from many sources if this interests you.

I have included various key point interpretations of Nichiren Shu Rev. Shokai Kanai's lectures on the Lotus Sutra. I have also included my own modern interpretation.

I found that the translation by itself is sometimes difficult to read in context, and the commentaries by themselves require a lot of back and forth with the Sutra, which can lead to total confusion as to what the Sutra is trying to say. Several chapters only make meaning when they are read in conjunction with each other as they are not complete in themselves.

I have taken the lecture notes of Rev. Kanai and integrated them as initial summaries. No changes aside from the occasional grammar and spelling alterations were made.

At the end of each chapter I have provided a simple direct meaning which can be meditated upon when chanting to invoke and awaken the Buddha Wisdom within you. This section is entitled '**Modern Interpretation**'.

At the end of the Lotus Sutra in the Resources chapter I have included a complete summary of 'Ichinen Sanzen' for your practice.

Finally at the very end you find an appendix which reveals an overview of the preparation practices the Buddha taught before revealing the full Truth in the Lotus Sutra. This has been included for your interest only to show you the basic elements the practices contain. The practices are not included as any guide on how to practice them. You could say these early teachings are Buddhism whereas The Lotus Sutra is Universal. Therefore my personal advice is, please don't practice these teachings because there is no need. Why? Because you can now embrace the direct knowledge that.....

You are a Buddha not a Person

The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings

I originally intended to include a full version of this Sutra, however, when others read this they found it too lengthy and repetitive. This caused what was being transmitted to become missed in amongst the volume of questions and praises. For this reason I have provided a modern concise version in order that the Buddha's guidance and teachings are more clearly presented.

I believe the 'Sutra of Innumerable Meanings' conveys the true spirit of what is to follow which contains a key wisdom teaching; it is acting as an introduction to the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra which follow.

The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings has been omitted in the translation of The Lotus Sutra by Burton Watson, which is why I always refer to two copies of the Sutra so as to be able to provide a comprehensive sharing in this book.

Below I have extracted the Sutra's key points which you will find agree with modern findings in quantum physics. As you read these extracts please be patient as some of the writing style is a direct translation from that time. To help you in places I have rearranged sentence structure in-line with the English language.

Chapter I - Virtues

Ananda, one of the Buddha's disciples, reported this teaching the Buddha gave to his disciples at the City of Royal Palaces on Mount Gridhrakuta to a great assembly, numbering in many thousands. These disciples had been directly taught by the Buddha over a period of forty years.

They had attained awakening states of consciousness and partial states of enlightenment, meditation, wisdom, emancipation, and the knowledge of emancipation. With tranquil minds, and through constantly being in contemplation, they were peaceful, indifferent, non-active, and free from desires. They were immune from any kind of delusion and distraction. Their minds were calm and clear, profound and infinite. Having obtained the great wisdom, they could penetrate all things, completely understand the reality of their nature and form, and could clearly discriminate existence and non-existence. All of their abilities were due to the teachings the Buddha had previously taught them.

These disciples had dedicated their lives to helping others gain freedom from the six paths and all the lower states of consciousness. They helped others to

awaken from attachment to their mind, thus causing them to gain freedom from the conditioned self, the illusionary concept that there is a person there. They would teach the Law of the Twelve Causes to plant seeds of goodness in others to prepare them for their Buddhahood. Through infinite great compassion, they relieved all from suffering. They became great leaders for living beings everywhere.

There were also ordinary people present, who were the Buddha's followers, comprising of men and women, rich and poor. They all went up to the Buddha, made obeisance at his feet, a hundred thousand times made procession around him, burned incense, and scattered flowers. After they variously worshiped, they retired and sat to one side.

The great Bodhisattvas present then praised the Buddha in great depth, acknowledging him as their enlightened teacher. They then thanked him for teaching **The Four Noble Truths, The Six Parameters, and the Twelve Causes**, according to the working of the minds of living beings. *(see Appendix for detailed explanations)*

Then the Bodhisattva-Mahasattva Great Adornment, with the eighty-thousand Bodhisattva-mahasattvas, finished praising the Buddha and all said in unison: "World honoured One, we, the assembly of the eighty-thousand Bodhisattvas, want to ask you about the Buddha's Law."

Chapter 2 – Preaching

The Buddha addressed the Bodhisattva Great Adornment and the eighty-thousand Bodhisattva: "Excellent! Excellent! Good sons, you know that this is the time. Ask me what you like. Before long, the Tathagata (*another name for an enlightened Buddha*) will enter parinirvana. After nirvana, no one shall have any doubt. I will now answer any question you wish to ask."

Thereupon the Bodhisattva Great Adornment, with the eighty-thousand Bodhisattvas, said to the Buddha in unison with one voice: "World-honoured One! If the Bodhisattva-mahasattvas want to accomplish Perfect Enlightenment quickly, what doctrine should they practice? What doctrine makes Bodhisattva-mahasattvas accomplish Perfect Enlightenment quickly?"

The Buddha said: "Good sons! There is one doctrine called the doctrine of Innumerable Meanings. If a Bodhisattva wants to learn and master the doctrine of Innumerable Meanings, he should observe that all laws were originally, will be, and are in themselves void in nature and form; they are neither great nor small, neither appearing nor disappearing, neither fixed nor movable, and neither advancing nor retreating; and they are non-dualistic, just emptiness.

However, all living beings discriminate existence falsely: it is this or it is that, and it is advantageous or it is disadvantageous; they entertain illusionary thoughts, making various negative karmas, and consequently remain trapped within the six realms of existence. This then causes them to suffer all manner of miseries, which they then cannot escape for many lifetimes.

Bodhisattva-mahasattvas, when you see this you should raise the mind of compassion, display great mercy desiring to relieve others of suffering, and should once again penetrate deeply into all laws.”

The Buddha then explains the workings of all phenomena

“According to the nature of a law, such a law emerges. According to the nature of a law, such a law settles. According to the nature of a law, such a law changes. According to the nature of a law, such a law vanishes. According to the nature of a law, such a negative law emerges. According to the nature of a law, such a good law emerges. Settling, changing, and vanishing are like this.

Bodhisattvas, through the meditation I have previously taught them have completely observed and known these four aspects from beginning to end. They should next observe that none of the laws settles down even for a moment, but all emerge and vanish anew every moment; observing that all laws emerge, settle, change, and vanish instantly.

After such observation, we see all manner of natural desires of living beings. As natural desires are innumerable, preaching is immeasurable, and as preaching is immeasurable, meanings are innumerable. The Innumerable Meanings originate from one law.

This one law is, namely, non-form. Such non-form is formless, and not form. Being not form and formless, it is called the real aspect of all things.

The mercy which Bodhisattva-mahasattvas display after stabilising themselves in such a real aspect is real and not vain. They excellently relieve living beings from sufferings. Having given relief from sufferings, they preach the Law again, and let all living beings obtain pleasure.

If a Bodhisattva practices the doctrine of the Innumerable Meanings like this, he will soon accomplish Perfect Enlightenment without fail.”

When the Buddha taught this doctrine his Bodhisattvas were surprised and confused as they thought the teachings the Buddha taught them over forty years

were complete in themselves. They asked the Buddha to confirm why he had not taught them this teaching before.

The Buddha replied that he had the capacity to see the natures of all living beings and as such presented them a teaching he knew they would accept. He did this to prepare them for this new doctrine. The Buddha knew that the natures and desires of all living beings were not equal. As their natures and desires were not equal, he preached the Law variously. He was using expedient means. Although he taught different teachings he included the teaching of Innumerable meanings in each one.

He maintained that what they had previously learned was required as a preparation to remove their illusions. This then provided them with a foundation state of higher consciousness for their enlightenment; they then had a capacity to accept a more directly to the point Truth. The preparation teachings were to remove illusionary attachments and develop meditation ability.

The Buddha's compassion and wisdom is beyond measure and as such he knew that if he revealed 'the simple truth teaching', his disciples would reject it, causing them to slander the mystic truth and then once again fall back into the six lower states of consciousness.

He then confirmed that they were now to practice the teaching of the Innumerable Meanings through which they would quickly obtain full enlightenment, as it was a higher teaching.

The previous teachings of the Four Noble Truths, The Twelve Causes and The Six Parameters require great effort and take a long time to perform, bringing about partial enlightenment. The main reason for their introduction was to prepare the way for Buddhahood by clearing illusions. The Bodhisattvas who practice these spiritual teachings also make good causes through the practice of compassion for all living beings; helping others to become free from suffering.

Throughout existence this is how Buddhas teach all living beings; according to the peoples' capacity. Once illusions have been cleared the human being experiences a higher state of consciousness, it is then that the teachings can be presented in a simpler more direct way, bringing about higher states of consciousness very quickly, leading onto the full enlightenment experience of the true self, the Buddha.

The following quote from the Sutra reveals the Buddha's expedient means and compassion for all living beings

"Good sons! When I rolled the Law-wheel of the Four Noble Truths for the five men, Ajnata-Kaundinya and the others, at the Deer Park in Varanasi after leaving the king of trees, I preached that the laws are naturally vacant, ceaselessly transformed, and instantly born and destroyed.

When I discoursed explaining the Twelve Causes and the Six Parameters for all the bhikshus and Bodhisattvas in various places during the middle period, I preached also that all laws are naturally vacant, ceaselessly transformed, and instantly born and destroyed.

Now in explaining the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, a Great-vehicle, at this time, I preach also that all laws are naturally vacant, ceaselessly transformed, and instantly born and destroyed.

Good sons! Therefore the preaching I taught you at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end are the same in expression but different from one another in meaning. As the meaning varies, the understanding of living beings varies. As the understanding varies, the attainment of the law, the merit, and the way also varies.

Bodhisattva-mahasattvas, if you want to accomplish supreme Buddhahood quickly, you should learn and master the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, such a profound and supreme Great-vehicle."

The Buddhas describe that their one Buddha body manifests within all physical bodies

"Good sons! For this reason, all the Buddhas, without a double tongue, answer widely all voices with one word; though having one body, reveal bodies innumerable and numberless as the sands of the Ganges of a hundred thousand myriad kotis nayutas; in each body, display various forms countless as the sands of some hundred thousand myriad kotis nayutas asamkhyeya Ganges, and in each form show shapes countless as the sands of some hundred thousand myriad kotis nayutas asamkhyeya Ganges.

Good sons! This is, namely, the incomprehensible and profound world of Buddhas. Men of the two vehicles cannot apprehend it, and even Bodhisattvas of the ten stages cannot attain it. Only a Buddha together with a Buddha can fathom it well."

Chapter 3 – Ten Merits

The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings has an extremely great Divine power and is unsurpassed in its worth. It makes all ordinary men accomplish the sacred merit, and makes them free from life and death forever. Thereupon this Sutra is called Innumerable Meanings. It enables all the living to sprout the innumerable ways of all the Bodhisattvas whilst they are still at the stage of a person, and causes them to gain great benefit. Therefore this Sutra is called inconceivable merit-power.

At that time the Bodhisattva-Mahasattva Great Adornment said to the Buddha again: "World-honoured One! Please explain the profound and inconceivable matter of this Sutra out of benevolence for all the people. From what place does this Sutra come? For what place does it leave? At what place does it stay? Why does this Sutra make people quickly accomplish Perfect Enlightenment, having such infinite merits and inconceivable powers?"

The Buddha replied. "This Sutra originally comes from the abode of all Buddhas, causes all the living beings to aspire to Buddhahood, and stays at the place where all the Bodhisattvas practice. Therefore this Sutra, having such infinite merits and inconceivable powers, makes people quickly accomplish supreme Buddhahood. If a living being can hear this Sutra, he will acquire a great benefit and if he practices it sincerely, he will quickly accomplish supreme Buddhahood without fail."

The Buddha taught that just upon a person hearing the Sutra is keeping the laws. If someone sincerely practices just this teaching they will obtain Buddhahood quickly. The truths contained in this teaching dissolve illusion, and it is illusionary concepts which cause suffering.

The first benefit of practicing the Sutra is that it transforms any negative state into a positive state. Through connecting with your formless True Self of the Buddha any lower state of consciousness is transformed, revealing its enlightened nature.

The Buddha gives many examples such as; "...makes the unawakened Bodhisattva aspire to Buddhahood, makes a merciless one raise the mind of mercy, makes a homicidal one raise the mind of great compassion, makes a jealous one raise the mind of joy, makes an attached one raise the mind of detachment, makes a miserly one raise the mind of donation, makes an arrogant one raise the mind of keeping the commandments, makes a distracted one raise the mind of meditation, makes an ignorant one raise the mind of wisdom, makes ones who lacks concern for saving others raise the mind of saving others, and makes one who suffers delusions raise the mind of detachment."

"Good sons! Secondly, the inconceivable merit-power of this Sutra is that if a living being can hear this Sutra only once he will penetrate into a hundred thousand kotis of meanings, and the law kept by him cannot be explained fully even in infinite kalpas. Why? It is because this Sutra has innumerable meanings."

The Buddha goes on to provide an explanation why this is the case. Once a person awakens to their True Self they become centred in their pure eternal unchanging consciousness. Up to that point all spiritual teachings are only guides, leading and preparing people for awakening. Because each person has a different capacity the teaching they require for their awakening should therefore be unique. It is only the Divine that exists equally inside all living beings and therefore it is the Divine that knows our uniqueness.

It is this the Buddha refers to when he states there are as many teachings as there are beings. Because each being is a potential Buddha, the human being in themselves is the unique teaching that is required for their transformation. This is why it states the teachings will have innumerable meanings. It is like the person is the lock and the Divine is the key with no two human beings having the same lock. The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings reveals this truth of the universal laws that equally apply to all of existence. It does not offer a practice or dogma, just Divine truths.

The Buddha said that the third benefit of practicing the Sutra is that your delusions, even though they exist, will become as if they do not exist; though you move between birth and death you will not experience fear, and you will raise the mind of compassion for all the living, and obtain the spirit of bravery to obey all the laws. This will naturally arise within you as you embrace this teaching.

"Good sons! Fourthly, the inconceivable merit-power of this Sutra is that you will obtain the spirit of bravery, and relieve others of suffering, even though you have not yet relieved yourself. You will become the attendant [of the Buddhas] together with all the Bodhisattvas, and all the Buddha-Tathagatas will always teach the Law to you.

"Good sons! Fifthly, the inconceivable merit-power of this Sutra is you will be filled with joy, though you cannot yet be delivered from all the faults of an ordinary person and are still wrapped in delusions."

"Good sons! Sixthly, the inconceivable merit-power of this Sutra is that, even if you still have illusions, by teaching others this Law you will be able to enable them to

gain freedom from the delusions of life and death, and enable them to overcome all sufferings. After others have heard this teaching, they will put it into practice, and attain the law, the merit, and the way, where there will be equality and no difference from the Buddha.”

"Good sons! Seventhly, the inconceivable merit-power of this Sutra is as follows: if good sons or good daughters, hearing this Sutra rejoice, believe, and raise the rare mind; keep, read, recite, copy, and expound it; practice it as it has been preached; aspire to Buddhahood; cause all the good roots to sprout; raise the mind of great compassion; and want to relieve all living beings of sufferings, the Six Parameters will be naturally present in them, though they cannot yet practice the Six Parameters. They will attain the assurance of the law of no birth in their bodies; life and death, and delusions will be instantly destroyed; and they will rise to the seventh stage of Bodhisattva.

Eighthly, the inconceivable merit-power of this Sutra is as follows: if practitioners of the Sutra get someone else to revere and believe in this Sutra exactly as if they saw the body of the Buddha, then the person they introduced will suddenly be moved to stir up faith in it.

In this way, those practitioners will attain the assurance of the law of no birth in their bodies by the merit of having been enlightened, having reached the upper stage. They will become the attendants [of the Buddhas], together with all the Bodhisattvas converting living beings quickly, purify Buddha-lands, and attain supreme Buddhahood before long.”

"Good sons! Ninthly, the inconceivable merit-power of this Sutra is that if you leap for joy; acquire the unprecedented; keep, read, recite, copy, and adore this Sutra; and explain its meaning indiscriminately and widely for living beings, you will instantly destroy the heavy barrier of bad causes resulting from previous karma and become purified, acquire great eloquence, gradually realising all parameters, and accomplishing all Samadhi's.

You will then spread your divided bodies in all the lands of ten directions, and relieve and emancipate entirely all living beings who suffer greatly in the twenty-five abodes.”

"Good sons! Tenthly, the inconceivable merit-power of this Sutra is that if you greatly rejoice; raise the rare mind; keep, read, recite, copy, and adore this Sutra on your own accord; practice it as it has been preached; also induce many monks and lay people to keep, read, recite, copy, adore, and expound this Sutra, and practice it

The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings

as the Law, you will obtain the innumerable realms of dharani (spiritual abilities) in your body because it is by the merciful and friendly instruction of you that other people attain the way and the merit through the power of the practice of this Sutra.”

The Lotus Sutra

The following chapters start with a 'Sutra Summary' which have kindly been shared by Rev. Shokai Kanai's lectures on the Lotus Sutra (using Senchu Murano's translation of the Lotus Sutra). I have at times made occasional reference notes plus an explanation of some terms. I trust that this is helpful to bring understanding to a time which was some three thousand years ago in India. Although the time has changed, the process of enlightenment has not. I have also had help from reading the translations of the Lotus Sutra by Burton Watson and Bunno Kato.

At the end of each Sutra summary I have provided a modern interpretation of the message contained in the chapter. Hopefully you will find this interesting in relation to bringing Buddha Wisdom to your own life.

Chapter 01 Introduction or Virtues

Sutra SUMMARY: In chapter one Shakyamuni Buddha is sitting in deep meditation at the top of Mt. Sacred Eagle in Rajgir, India. There were gathered gods, arhats (*term 1*), the rich and the poor, men and women, and also non-human beings such as deities in forms of beasts, birds, and fishes.

Suddenly the Buddha emitted a ray of light from the white curls between his eyebrows and illuminated the universe throughout the East quadrant. This means the Buddha is about to expound the Sutra of the Great Vehicle (Mahayana) called the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma (Law).

When the Buddha revealed the ray of light from this world one could see the living beings in the six paths (*term 2*) of existence in all of those other lands. One could likewise see the Buddhas present at that time in those other lands and could hear the Sutra teachings that those Buddhas were expounding. At the same time one could see the monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen who had carried out religious practices and attained the way. One could also see the Bodhisattvas and mahasattvas who, through various causes and conditions and various types of faith and understanding and in various forms and aspects were carrying out the way of the bodhisattva. And one could also see the Buddhas who had entered parinirvana, towers adorned with the seven treasures were erected for the Buddha relics.

Explanation of Terms

Term 1: Arhat (sho-mon): One who is free from all sufferings and illusions; those who have listened to the Buddha for over 40 years and improved themselves spiritually. They are now ready to take a step further and listen to the Lotus Sutra. Although they are awakened from illusions, they do not know how to lead others to the supreme teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

Term 2: Six Paths: This section refers to six of the ten worlds as described in the theory of Ichinen Sanzen by T'ien-t'ai . The Six Paths: The six realms or worlds in which unenlightened beings transmigrate (the transition from one state of being to another). From the lowest they are (1) Hell; intense suffering (2) Hunger: the realm of hungry spirits or greed; (3) Animality: beasts or ignorance; (4) Anger: asuras or egocentric power, perversion and arrogance; (5) Humanity: human-beings and Tranquillity; (6) Heaven: Heavenly beings or Rapture.

Term 3: The five desires describe the limitations of those trapped in the six paths in 2 above: The desires that arise from the contact of the five sense organs; eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body, with their respective objects (form, sound, smell, taste, and texture). Sometimes the five desires are defined as the desire for wealth, sex, food and drink, fame, and sleep.

Chapter 1 - Modern Interpretation

This introduction denotes that the Lotus Sutra is for all living beings, not only human beings, but also for animals, non-physical spiritual beings and plants. It symbolises equality and compassion. This means that the Buddha-God nature exists within all of existence. Human beings are all equally endowed as a Buddha and that animals and plants (our natural environment) also contain the Buddha nature. With this truth as the foundation teaching of the Sutra it is therefore possible for anyone to awaken to the Buddha-God within.

The Lotus Sutra emphasises the transcendental equality among differences, and the differences within equality. Everyone's potentiality of attaining Buddhahood is revealed in the teaching of equality. It is through understanding and accepting the differences between us that we realise that there are many different ways to lead people to Buddhahood.

Through Buddha's compassion and expedient means he first teaches Nirvana or Heaven as a motivation to make good causes for those people who are stuck in the cycle of birth, death, old age and suffering which has been brought about by their attachments to the five desires (*3 above*) within the six paths/worlds (*2 above*). He does this out of compassion, knowing that people's minds have become intoxicated with attachments and would reject the truth that they contain the Buddha. They would reject that once awakened they are in fact the Buddha-God being expressed through individuality and not personality.

The Buddha's compassion knows that through rejecting this truth a person would slander the Buddha-God bringing the consequences of suffering upon themselves, so he teaches Heaven/Nirvana as a salvation.

When you stop and think of this fact it is obvious that when trapped as a person you are going to suffer if you slander and reject that which created you and is keeping you alive. It is like trying to keep a balloon filled with helium gas in the air and denying that it is the gas that is keeping it airborne and then putting pin holes in the balloon to prove your own illusionary idea. The balloon will start deflating and then fall to the ground.

Through Buddha wisdom the Buddha uses expedient means to teach something called the three vehicles to those yearning for enlightenment. The three different teachings (vehicles) are presented to meet the soul consciousness of the person where they are. These teachings agree with the mind of the person and will prepare them for awakening to Buddhahood.

The three vehicles are: 1. Sravakahood (Sho-mon - Arhat) in which one understands Buddhism by listening, or one who understands Buddhism by reasoning. 2. Pratyekabuddhahood (En-gaku) in which one understands Buddhism by oneself or one who can apply Buddhism in daily life. 3. Bodhisattvas (Bo-satsu) in which one who seeks Enlightenment and also tries to help another to attain Buddhahood.

These three worlds plus the one world of Buddhahood making four worlds, when these four worlds are added to the six lower paths (worlds) together they make up a total of ten worlds. This is described in the theory of Ichinen Sanzen by T'ien-t'ai, known in China as Zhiyi. These four additional worlds have been renamed as: Learning, Realisation, Bodhisattva and Buddha.

'The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings' explained why the three vehicle teachings were taught. When you look at the ingredients of these teachings you will discover that they are contained today in all the practices seekers of enlightenment have always undertaken to reform their lower nature. Although great benefits are obtained from these teachings, including partial enlightenment, the Buddha reveals that even

these are not the 'one vehicle truth' for obtaining Buddhahood, and it is better to practice the teaching in the Sutra of innumerable meanings than the three vehicle spiritual preparation teachings.

The teaching of the 'Sutra of Innumerable Meanings' reveals that all of existence is essentially non-form or formless. From the formless all existence emerges, settles, changes and then vanishes instantly. The Buddha also states that there are two manifest effects in each moment one is True while the other in all their possibilities are false. This means that until the expression of life comes from your True-self all others, even the expression of partial enlightenment, create Karma keeping the experience of life in personhood and not Buddhahood. Because of this truth the Buddha teaches all living beings individually according to their capacity from within. This reveals that in the ever changing moment to moment of existence, life has innumerable meanings and innumerable teachings. This also explains why enlightenment is uniquely experienced according to individual karma or life conditioning.

This is true because the Buddha's one life manifests within the body of all lifeforms; hence the saying how the one becomes the many. When you realise that the Divine exists inside of you then you have no choice but to respect all living beings because they are the body of the Buddha.

On reflection the guidance I received from Osho about embracing all of life as if I was meeting God was true Buddha wisdom. It was this devotional practice which caused the connection and awakening to the ocean of eternal love. It was this love which flowed in through my crown chakra and filled my lower six chakras with an abundance of overflowing Divine Love.

When you look at any spiritual practice existing today you will discover that it contains some or a part of one of the Buddha's teachings. It is this which confirms that all teachings act only as a preparation for awakening and are no more than a combination of techniques and methods to spiritualise the person's mind causing a different form of attachment. The Buddha Oneness mind has not yet manifest.

Once again the Buddha says that these provisional teachings have been taught to prepare people to believe in Buddhahood. The difficulty people will have who are practicing these ways, are in letting go of their attachments to their various spiritual practices they have come to treasure so dearly. To awaken fully these need to be dropped and instead embrace the 'One Truth' the Buddha is about to reveal.

Key Points: The first principle for enlightenment is to believe the Truth that you contain the Buddha Nature. Enlightenment is obtained through direct experience

with the Buddha-God to produce your awakening transformation from a person into a Buddha.

Listen to your heart as the Buddha exists here and will guide you through life, leading you to the awakened state. There is no one set teaching that will awaken you but will only prepare you. Be mindful of this truth and then you will be able to let go of any spiritual practice you are attached to.

Every human being is an individual therefore they require a unique teaching to fit them exactly; this is why the only true teacher is the inner Buddha. This aspect is revealed in chapter twenty-four of the Lotus sutra.

Well-meaning individuals, spiritual teachers and priests may try to explain how to experience enlightenment but your enlightenment will naturally be a different experience.

The only one same Truth is the mystic law contained within everything equally. Once experienced a common sharing regarding the qualities of this experience is what is the same such as unshakable non-dependent bliss and happiness, inner contentment, peace with a natural love and compassion towards others. Without study knowingness (wisdom) arises in the moment from the formless True-Self Buddha into the mind of Pure Awareness.

I mention this fact as many people try to gain an experience which sounds amazing but are unable to repeat the experience they have read about and this is what causes doubt in them preventing their own unique Awakening to occur.

Chapter 02

Expedient Means or Tactfulness

Sutra SUMMARY: Shakyamuni Buddha emerged from his deep meditation and began expounding the profound and immeasurable wisdom of the Buddhas.

“Enough, Shariputra, there is no need to say more. Wherefore? [Because] the Law which the Buddha has perfected is the chief unprecedented Law, and difficult to understand. Only a Buddha together with a Buddha can fathom the Reality of All Existence, that is to say, all existence [has] such a form, such a nature, such an embodiment, such a potency, such a function, such a primary cause, such a secondary cause, such an effect, such a recompense, and such a complete fundamental whole.”

This excerpt reveals the basis of the T'ien-t'ai theory of the ten factors within the model of life's workings, Ichinen Sanzen. *(There is an in-depth detailed explanation about the ten factors and the ten worlds in the Resources chapter.)*

The teachings in this chapter can be summarised into four points:

1. All things we perceive within our five senses exist only temporarily. They are manifested in a thousand different ways. They are all equally important in mutual existence. However, they constantly change while existing harmoniously with each other throughout this universe. All is contained within the law of the Truth.
2. Therefore, all beings are manifestations of the Truth (the Buddha's Wisdom) and possess Buddha nature.
3. The Buddha appeared in the world to expound the Truth. The Buddhas have appeared in order for all beings to realise their Buddha nature, to practice the Bodhisattva's way and to eventually attain enlightenment.
4. Since people were not at first able to understand the Truth because of their closed mindedness due to their material life styles, the Buddha taught many different teachings according to their capacity, such as the doctrines for the people of Sravakahood (Shomon - Learning), Pratyekabuddhahood (Engaku - Realisation) and Bodhisattvas (Bosatsu). However, these are all expedient teachings which lead all beings to the Truth of the One Vehicle, the teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

Chapter 2 - Modern Interpretation

The Buddha reveals that all teachings only prepare a person; therefore enlightenment will happen through surrendering the person to the eternal Buddha-God. Doing this enables the limited self (person) to dissolve. 'You the person' cannot do this without the intervention of an enlightened consciousness entering your being.

A person undergoes a journey of awakening from the personal individual self identity (*within six lower paths/worlds where people form attachment from the pleasures of the five senses*) to entering the realm of the spiritual journey (*four noble paths/worlds*). Many ideas, beliefs and spiritual skills are learnt on this journey that lead to partial enlightenment. It is this spiritualised personal identification self that then becomes the biggest obstacle to transformation. This is what the Buddha is addressing when he refers to attachment to spiritual concepts.

The ten factors of life also reveal that the Buddha-God consists of the totality of existence; including the physical existence, the spiritual existence and the unfathomable core ultimate being. The three then become the one being. Therefore it is important to embrace everything as the Divine, as if you are meeting God-Buddha in whatever you encounter.

The second principle to accept is that, 'You, the personal identity' cannot do this without humility and acceptance that your knowledge, no matter how evolved you believe you are, will be limited and partially true. This allows a space to be created that invites the Buddha-God consciousness from within the Divine heart to enter and transform your consciousness. Try this as it will transform you.

Chapter 03

Simile and Parable

Sutra SUMMARY: Chapter 2 discussed every person's innate Buddha nature. Everyone who practices the Bodhisattva way will be able to attain Buddhahood. When the congregation heard this message of Shakyamuni Buddha, they were delighted to hear the teaching of the One Vehicle, which they had never heard before. The vehicle holders of shomon (*equivalent to 'Learning' 7th world in the 10 worlds*) and engaku (*self-taught – equivalent to 'Realisation' 8th world in the 10 worlds*) were so joyful that they began to dance because they had been previously taught that people of these two vehicles would not be able to attain Buddhahood.

In Chapter 3, however, Shariputra (*a bodhisattva which is the 9th world within the ten worlds*) is assured of his future Buddhahood (*the 10th world within the ten worlds or the one world containing the other nine worlds*) with the name of Flower-Light Buddha, if he continues to practice the One Buddha Vehicle.

Chapter 3 - Modern Interpretation

This chapter is restating the teachings in chapters one and two of the Lotus Sutra and the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings. This chapter teaches through a parable called 'Three Toy Carts and the Burning House'. This parable reveals that all spiritual practices are a means employed by the Buddha-God to help reform your life in order that you can obtain glimpses of the Divine or partial states of Bliss and heavenly paradises. As previously mentioned the hardest attachment to let go of, is the spiritual practice. It is attachment that prevents enlightenment. The person who is trapped within the six lower worlds will start to practice spirituality and then become attached to their practice. The final surrender is made in letting go of the treasured spiritual teachings that are helping to relieve suffering.

Many Sat Gurus today encourage 'no dogma' just to embrace the pure awareness which is the practice of witnessing all existence 'as it is'; to awaken to this inner consciousness and let go of the personality totally.

Chanting 'Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo', whilst being mindful of this teaching point, will create a space for the Buddha to enter and transform your provisional spiritual practices.

Key Points: Realise this truth and the Buddha-God will enter your being once you can feel the Divine presence. When there is no attachment to dogma, concepts and beliefs, there is the opportunity for Truth and Awakening.

Chapter 04

Belief and Understanding or Faith Discernment

Sutra SUMMARY: It is not enough to maintain a feeling of blind belief. Understanding helps faith, while belief and understanding develop into action.

The Four Great Shomons or hearers of the Law of Buddhism were overjoyed to hear the Dharma that they had never heard before and to see that Shariputra, one of their fellow Shomons, was assured of his own future Buddhahood with the name of Flower-Light Buddha in the preceding chapter. So they commented that it was just as if they had obtained innumerable treasures without seeking them. Then they revealed the parables of 'The Rich Man and His Poor Son.'

Chapter 4 - Modern Interpretation

This chapter is a consolidation of chapters 1, 2 and 3. Human beings are born into the world with amnesia, forgetting the Buddha-God within them; they get lost through the five senses and think they are the mind and a person forming illusionary attachments. They go on an adventure to explore the world, relying upon their own mind to live their lives through the trials and tribulations of their own experiences; causing temporary joy and suffering; shuttling around the six paths in response to what is happening.

The Buddha within knows this and uses expedient means by attracting us to various spiritual teachings to relieve suffering or find enlightenment. This allows us to mature through our own evolution until we dare to believe that we too are a Buddha. It is at this time that the Buddha-God endows the person with the Divine qualities of Buddhahood removing all karmic conditioning of limitation and falsehood.

At this time a true heartfelt 'going home' is experienced and the conditioned personality is dissolved. The chapter also refers to teaching others according to their mind's acceptance through introducing them to a leading spiritual teaching. As previously mentioned this stage employs the Buddha's expedient means to spiritualise the personality to prepare them for enlightenment. By doing this, glimpses of the Divine in the way of spiritual experiences will be experienced, cultivating faith in the Divine through self realisation; direct experience.

Key Points: The key to accelerate our evolution is to practice humility, believe in our Buddha nature, suspend our own limited thinking, maintaining Faith in the Buddha-God that when the time is right we will awaken through the supernatural power of the Buddha-God.

The second point contained in this chapter is that those who have obtained enlightenment teach others. The Buddha teaches us that we should also teach others 'spiritual understanding' employing the highest teaching that they will accept and that you are able to offer; teach to the best of your ability.

This aspect will transform your life condition to that of a Bodhisattva, a requirement to obtain the full state of Buddhahood enlightenment. In the state of bodhisattva you practice compassion for all other living beings to help relieve them of their suffering. You can obtain partial enlightenment through self realisation; however this is only partial enlightenment.

Chapter 05

The Parable of the Medicinal Herbs

Sutra SUMMARY: In the previous chapter, the Buddha revealed that understanding helps faith. Understanding and faith invites action. In this chapter, he reveals that faith becomes the way to keep the precepts. When faith and keeping precepts are firm, one will be able to attain the Buddha's wisdom. He relates a story of the same rain and different plants.

In 'The Parable of Medicinal Herbs' there are various trees including herbs growing in the thickets, forests, ravines and valleys. All these plants are different in size, name and form. They are covered with a dark cloud. Rain starts to fall. The small, middle and large roots, stems, branches, leaves on the trees, and grasses are watered. So are the tall and short trees. All the plants and trees received sufficient water to support their lives and grew differently according to their species. They went on to produce different flowers and fruits although they grew on the same ground and received the same water from the rain.

Chapter 5 - Modern Interpretation

This chapter teaches that the Buddha-God consciousness is provided to all of us equally, irrespective of any differences between us. We are normally not aware that daily life is perfectly enlightened 'As it is' transforming from moment to moment through the grace of the Divine. The Buddha-God is holding a presence that transforms and teaches us all the time. We are all in a process of spiritual transformation whether we practice any mindful spiritual practice or not.

I remember when the inner Sat Guru showed me the truth of 'The perfection of everything as it is'. I could see everyone in a spiritual practice with God, whether they knew it or not. Life is like a dance with the Divine at each moment of its expression. (The rain falls equally upon all the plants.)

Key Points: The secret to practicing this chapter is to become mindful of the Buddha's qualities and copy them, even if you fake it at first. The main qualities are to look upon all things as being universally equal, to have no mind to favour this or that, or to love one or hate another; to be without greed or attachment and without limitation.

The other consideration is accepting the differences between everyone as this is the perfect flowering of the Divine. Once the person has dissolved, the awakened one appears; with it arrive the qualities of Divine presence. When you have this

experience you will discover that these qualities naturally appear in the Buddhahood consciousness; then there is no need to practice them!

Chapter 06

Bestowal of Prophecy or Prediction

Sutra SUMMARY: The previous chapter ends with the words, "Study and practice it continuously, and you will become Buddhas." In this chapter, Shakyamuni Buddha gives assurance of future Buddhahood to four of his ten great disciples. The assurance is more like a provisional charter. The real certificate of Buddhahood will be given when they finish many courses of studies and practices. Although it is a temporary certificate, it is a great encouragement for the four disciples and for us.

"[You] my disciples of perfect powers, five hundred in number, all will receive their prediction to become Buddhas in the world to come."

Chapter 6 - Modern Interpretation

This chapter predicts that everyone embracing the teaching of the Lotus Sutra will obtain Buddhahood. The teaching point is to have faith and belief that you will awaken to your Buddhahood.

Chapter 07 ~ The Parable of the Phantom City or The Parable of the Magic City

Sutra SUMMARY: Chapter seven reveals that the teachings of the Lotus Sutra are always the same in any era; that all Buddhas attained enlightenment through the doctrines of the Lotus Sutra. However, a process is used to lead all living beings to the Lotus Sutra. This is referred to as the method of ho-ben, which in this chapter takes the form of a parable about a magic city.

A very long time ago, there was a Buddha called Great-Universal-Wisdom Tathagata. This Buddha had formerly been a king of a country and had sixteen princes. When their father attained Buddhahood, the sixteen sons also wished to become Buddhas and renounced their royal titles. Later, they all became Buddhas under the guidance of the Great-Universal-Wisdom-Excellence Buddha through the Lotus Sutra. Among them, the 13th prince became Amitâbha Buddha and the 16th was Shakyamuni Buddha. When the king became Great-Universally-Excelling-Wisdom Buddha, he preached the Four Noble Truths and the Twelve Causes of Causation.

However, these teachings are intended only for individual salvation and the doctrines are for people of the realms of shomon and engaku. They are not the teachings for Bodhisattvas. When a congregation was not ready to comprehend the Lotus Sutra, the Buddhas taught the lesser vehicle teachings as a method to lead them to the way of Mahayana. To illustrate this process, Shakyamuni Buddha revealed this chapter.

The Buddha is like the leader of the treasure hunt. He knows the bad road that comprises birth, death and illusion. Those who are satisfied with the magic city are the people of the shomon and engaku. Although they may think that they have reached enlightenment, they have not yet reached it. It is similar to their satisfaction with the magic city. Real Enlightenment is farther away and obtained by practicing the way of Bodhisattva.

This parable also teaches that we sometimes need expedients. Prayers for material satisfaction are necessary for some people, but the final goal is to reach the treasure land which signifies attaining Buddhahood.

Chapter seven of the Lotus Sutra is an introduction to Chapter 16 that reveals the existence of the Eternal Buddha. Although the physical body of Shakyamuni Buddha is dead in Nirvana, his teachings remain forever.

Chapter 7 - Modern Interpretation

The parable shows the first step of spiritual preparation for people of the six paths and those who attain partial enlightenment through spiritual practices. The magic city was created as a place for the 'person' to experience a peaceful mind and believe they had become enlightened. It reveals in this heavenly transcendental paradise that the person still has free will to enjoy their life as they so choose to do; just the same as an individual believing they are a person; a very good enticement to people who treasure their worldly and bodily desires!

The enlightenment of the Lotus Sutra in this chapter teaches us that only when the person has been dissolved into the Buddha nature will the real experience of life be expressed. The nature of the 'no-person life' is the awakening of the True-self 'The Buddha'.

Chapter 08

Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples

Sutra SUMMARY: Purna and the Five Hundred congregations were very pleased to hear the Buddha Shakyamuni's logical and consistent teachings, stories of his and his disciples' previous lives, parables and the assurance of future Buddhahood of these disciples. They felt like dancing with joy.

Upon seeing Purna's joyful reaction, the Buddha also taught how Purna had practiced and preached the Lotus Sutra to others during his previous lives. Then the Buddha gave assurance of future Buddhahood to Purna, Kaundinya Bhiksu and other Five Hundred arhats.

Meanwhile, the Five Hundred arhats rejoiced at the Buddha's assurance of their future Buddhahood and expressed their gratitude by telling a parable of "The Gem Fastened Inside the Garment."

"World-Honoured One, now we understand. In fact we are Bodhisattvas and have received a prophecy that we will attain anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. For this reason we are filled with great joy, having gained what we never had before."

Chapter 8 - Modern Interpretation

In this chapter The Buddha confirms that arhats will obtain enlightenment. The parable of 'The Rich Man and His Poor Son' illustrates how the Buddha-God created this cosmos, giving birth to all of life including human beings. This parable is about a gem that is sewn into a person's robe without them knowing it is there. They think they are poor and travel through life in poverty. Eventually they meet the Rich Man, (the Buddha) who reveals that they have the wealth of the universe within them, the gem hidden within them; this is their Buddhahood.

The teaching in the parable represents the truth that we are all born with Buddhahood contained within us (*the gem sewn into the garment*), although we are unaware of this truth, relying upon our own minds to live our life as a separate person with limited ability. To awaken to this truth allows the merging of the person and the Buddha nature to dissolve the conditioned illusionary self. It is at this point that life is fully realised, being experienced with Grace, Love, Compassion and Wisdom.

No other teaching point relates to this chapter. The important fact is to remember that until the person has had a direct merging experience with the Buddha-God, spiritual practices need to be carried out.

The Lotus Sutra Explained

The modern practice of the Lotus Sutra is to chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, the Sutra's title to manifest Buddha Wisdom. The Sutra teaches that when practicing the Lotus Sutra you will be able to see your own illusionary causes from your Buddha Wisdom.

Chapter 09

Prophecies Conferred on Learners and Adepts

SUMMARY: This chapter is a continuation of Chapter Eight. Here the Buddha assures Ananda, Rahula and the other 'hearers' or Shravakas, both those who had something more to learn and those who had nothing more to learn.

Chapter 9 - Modern Interpretation

From Chapters two through to Chapter nine in the Lotus Sutra it presents the disciples of Shakyamuni and tells them that they are assured of their future Buddhahood.

Chapter 10

The Teacher of the Law

Sutra SUMMARY: A teacher of the Dharma is any person who propagates the Buddha's teachings regardless if they are ordained or not. This chapter explains who the teacher of the Dharma is and what the teacher must do. Also this chapter tells that it is very important to support the teacher.

In the preceding chapters, Shakyamuni Buddha talks to shomon or 'hearers' like Shariputra and Maudgalyayana, but from this chapter, he talks to Bodhisattvas. The physical body of the Buddha will die. After his death, the teachers of the Dharma are necessary. They must practice compassion, gentleness, patience and equality to all living beings.

Chapter 10 - Modern Interpretation

The Sutra states: "The emptiness of all phenomena is the seat, and from that position one should expound the Law for them."

This means that the teacher of the Mystic Law will have to come to rest in the formless consciousness, being free from the conditioned personality; the karmic entity. A deeper understanding reveals that just by mechanically reciting the Lotus Sutra is not the same as teaching it. The true teacher of the Lotus Sutra therefore applies to any teacher in the world who has obtained the state of Buddhahood. It does not only apply to the practitioners or priests of the modern Nichiren organisations or to those who chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.

I am in no way dishonouring these excellent bodhisattva practitioners who may believe otherwise, but I am sharing that the true teacher of the Lotus Sutra will emanate the qualities of Buddhahood which are; Buddha wisdom, unbounded compassion, unshakable happiness, deep contentment, satisfied desire and they will reveal the True Self; the Buddha.

The Teacher of the Mystic Law cannot be obtained by position gained, bought or worked for, but only through direct experience. It is then that the natural emergence of the mystic law's protection will naturally manifest, exactly as the Sutra states.

Key Points: Expand your awareness to embrace all those enlightened teachers of the Mystic Law in the world today whenever you can see the qualities of Buddhahood directly manifesting, irrespective of their naming of what they are sharing.

Continue with this openness of mind and with your consistent practice of chanting 'Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo' until you also have a direct experience of your Buddhahood. Just like digging for water, at first the soil is dry, but little by little the soil becomes damp until one day the floodgates open and the ocean of enlightenment floods into your being. This experience is revealed in the next chapter 'Emergence of the Treasure Tower'.

Chapter 11 ~ The Emergence of the Treasure Tower Beholding the Previous Stupa

Sutra SUMMARY: Thereupon a stupa of the seven treasures sprung up from underground and hung in the sky before the Buddha. A loud voice of praise was heard from within the stupa, "Excellent, excellent, what you Shakyamuni Buddha have expounded is all true." Seeing these supernatural phenomena, the congregations were so surprised and wondered why these things occurred.

The Buddha explains that Many Treasure or Taho Buddha is in the stupa and the Buddha always appears when the Lotus Sutra is expounded, and he praises the truth of the teachings. Answering the wish of the congregation to see the Buddha in the stupa, Shakyamuni Buddha emitted a ray of light from the white curls between his eyebrows. The illumination caused the Buddhas of the worlds of the ten directions to summon them to Shakyamuni and Many Treasure Buddhas. At that moment, Shakyamuni Buddha purified the land and place.

Then the Buddha Shakyamuni ascends into the air to open the door of the stupa. Many Treasure Buddha (Taho Buddha) offered him half of his seat. Since the seat of the two Buddhas is too high for the congregation to see, Shakyamuni raises them up into the sky by his supernatural powers.

Then he says to them, "I shall soon enter into Nirvana. Is there anyone who is willing to expound the Lotus Sutra in this world after my extinction? I wish to hand it on to someone so that it can be perpetuated."

Chapter 11 - Modern Interpretation

I have personally experienced this chapter which explains what happens when The Lotus Sutra enlightenment occurs. We all will experience enlightenment in our own individual way; however there are some key common elements I wish to share. The treasure tower is the human body with the seven main chakras.

My own experience came after sending love to the Divine and after chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo for weeks whilst reading the two copies of the Lotus Sutra. I also surrendered any knowledge I thought I knew and embraced the concept of 'not knowing' what the Truth of existence was, or how it worked. I was sending love in a passionate way from my heart. It was the combination of this which must have been received by the Buddha-God consciousness, causing the following experience to occur.

Through my crown chakra an inflowing of love entered inside of me, this went all the way down the centre of my body until it rested in my base chakra. The flow of this love was enormous; it was like sitting underneath a Niagara Falls of love, such was the magnitude of the experience. What happened then can be compared to the rising up of the treasure tower in the sky. Very gently and slowly, like an egg timer fills with sand, the energy was rising within my body lifting my awareness up with it until it stopped at my third eye, in my inner mind.

I then came face to face with Taho Buddha or the 'inner Sat Guru'. It was as if I sat one side of my awareness and the inner Guru sat opposite me; we were witnessing each other. It is this same inner Guru that stayed with me for two years to show me life from this enlightened state of awareness. The whole of life became a golden perfection exactly as it was. What had changed? The inner dualistic perception of the person had been removed.

In this chapter others ask Shakyamuni to share this experience, to which he accommodated them by releasing a great white light from his third eye to lift them up to see the True inner Buddha (Taho Buddha). After my experience I wondered if I had just hypnotised myself and all of this was just a dream. To establish if this was true or not I invited some people to witness the energy that I was able to release so they could tell me what they experienced. Several people arrived at my flat and I proceeded to release the unconditional love presence. They were all transformed immediately and had an enlightening experience. One person experienced being wrapped in a blanket of healing which provided a deep healing experience for her. Another person was trembling as the energy ran through her body, I then asked her to lie down and relax into the energy, which she did and then she fully experienced an overwhelming love presence. Another person asked questions about enlightenment, which I now have discovered is the format that Satsang takes; thereupon an instant knowingness arose within me to enable a response from the inner Guru of Divine wisdom. In the presence of the inner Guru the person's mind was held still, so their mind could not go into asking or thinking another question. This Oneness of our minds happened until they had a self-realisation of the truth; the answer to their question.

From the one energy that was released it split itself into three Divine aspects; one was healing, another was love, and the other was Divine Wisdom Truth. It is from this direct experience that people will go on to teach others about the Lotus Sutra.

Once the experience occurs there is no longer any self-interest. The only thought or desire that remains is universal, which is to share the presence with as many people who wish to bathe in the beauty of Divine Unconditional Love. The

question of “Do you get tired in this state if others are taking from you?” is answered by “No, quite the opposite because there is no person there.” The more that others take the greater the joy is experienced. The source is boundless and infinite, this was also experienced.

This means that when the enlightenment is experienced a natural phenomenon occurs; this is about teaching and sharing the Truth with others. The only desire is to help as many beings to awaken out of their dream of being a person to their true identity which they are; the Buddha. This is the nature of the Lotus Sutra.

Key Points: The key point to embrace in this chapter is that the Lotus Sutra’s key wisdom teaching is that of ‘Equality’. This means the whole of existence contains the mystic law Buddha-God nature. Until you experience this truth, practice equal respect to the whole of existence as if they are the Buddha (see chapter 20).

People sometimes find this easy to do for nature and animals but have difficulties with other human beings. This is simply because the reflective nature of a person’s own karma (own causes) is being experienced (reflected back) through other living beings. This can be uncomfortable so the person then rejects others, finding harmony in nature and animals.

Chapter 12 ~ Devadatta

Sutra SUMMARY: There are two topics in this chapter. One is the Enlightenment by an evil-minded person, and the other is Enlightenment by a female.

Devadatta was a cousin of Shakyamuni Buddha. Their age must have been about the same. They both were very smart and talented, therefore they competed often on various occasions. It is said that they challenged each other to marry Yasodhara. As a result of the games, Shakyamuni won over Devadatta and married Yasodhara.

Devadatta was jealous of the Buddha's fame and position. He tried to take over the Buddha's Sangha. Once, he wounded the Buddha by pushing a huge rock off a cliff onto a trail where the Buddha was travelling. He also tried to murder Shakyamuni with an angry elephant. Devadatta disturbed the Buddha's Sangha by misguiding his disciples. Chapter 12 of the Lotus Sutra reveals the relationship between Shakyamuni and Devadatta. Although Devadatta is infamous as an evil person, he will attain Buddhahood in the future because he has been Shakyamuni's teacher in one of his previous existences.

The last half of this chapter shows the attainment of enlightenment by a female with an example of an eight year old daughter of Dragon-King. According to Hindu customs at the time in India, females were considered to be sinful. They believed that they could not enter the five superior existences:

1. A Brahman heavenly-king-Bonten
2. Heavenly-king-Sâkra
3. King Mara (king of devils)
4. A powerful holy king to rule the entire nation
5. A Buddha

However, breaking the tradition, the eight year old daughter of the Dragon-King proved the attaining of enlightenment by a woman with the Buddha's acceptance of her gem. Then she transformed herself into a boy and supernaturally performed the Bodhisattva practices required by tradition.

The enlightenment by the evil person and the woman are not surprising in the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. It teaches that all living beings: - male, female, young, old, human, non-human contain the Buddha nature and therefore are potential Buddhas.

Chapter 12 - Modern Interpretation

The key teaching point is again about non-discrimination. The mystic law is above all division and petty distinctions of sex or species. This relates to enlightenment being obtainable in the present moment by anyone.

The Lotus Sutra teaches that enlightenment does not require a time difference of past, present, and future to be taken into account, but just a shift in consciousness, referred to in the Lotus Sutra as the Buddha's supernatural powers.

Until Buddhahood is directly experienced, practice respect towards all living beings, irrespective of how they may behave, because they contain the Buddha-God nature.

Chapter 13

Encouragement for Keeping the Sutra or Exhortation to Hold Firm

Sutra SUMMARY: At the end of Chapter 11, Shakyamuni Buddha says: "I shall soon enter into Nirvana. Is there anyone who is willing to expound the Lotus Sutra in this world after my extinction? I wish to hand it on to someone, so that it can be perpetuated."

Chapter 13 is the response from Medicine-King Bodhisattva (Yaku-O Bosatsu) and twenty-thousand other Bodhisattvas who vowed to the Buddha that they would keep, read, recite and expound the Sutra. But they said they would do so in some other worlds rather than on this earth because the people of this world have many evils.

Meanwhile, the Buddha gave assurance of attaining Buddhahood to his step-mother and his wife.

At this time, there were eighty-billion nayuta of Bodhisattvas who made up their minds to expound the Sutra and vowed to endure any hardship and persecutions on the earth.

Chapter 13 - Modern Interpretation

There is nothing to add as the Buddha is listening to others offering to teach the Sutra after his death; they offer to teach the Sutra in other parts of the universe and others offer to reincarnate and teach it back on earth at a time when the people have lost their spiritual connection.

Chapter 14

Peaceful Practices or A Happy Life

Sutra SUMMARY: In the previous chapter, Medicine-King Bodhisattva and another twenty-thousand Bodhisattvas vowed to Buddha Shakyamuni that they would keep, read, recite and expound the Lotus Sutra. But they said they would do so in some other worlds rather than on this earth. They said this because the people of this world have many evils. Then, there were eighty-billion nayuta of Bodhisattvas who made up their minds to expound the Sutra and vowed to endure any physical hardship or persecution on the earth. Thus, the previous chapter 13 discusses the hardship from outside of the preacher and teachers of the Dharma. On the contrary, this chapter tends to emphasise the preachers' spiritual readiness. They should not seek after glory, vanity, selfish profit and so forth.

Socrates once said, "One who cannot defeat himself never can win others." Keeping his philosophy in the preachers' mind, they must practice the four kinds of peaceful practices: body, mouth, mind, and vows.

Chapter 14 - Modern Interpretation

In this chapter the Buddha continues to describe a list which reveals the type of people 'thou shall not associate with' in respect to how a bodhisattva, at that time, should live when teaching the law. Today this amounts to practically an alienation of a huge section of society and to do this would create a life living in austerity. This is what happened for the Bodhisattva of that time in India.

We are fortunate that we can avoid this type of advice today. This type of life is full of judgemental attitudes towards all other living beings. Creating attitudes of distinction between people according to their lifestyle and professions will cause personal suffering, as this is the complete opposite of the Sutra's teachings; equality amongst differences. This attitude will create arrogance, only serving to cause the Bodhisattva to plunge into the lower realms of existence, trapped again by personal illusion.

The Sutra also states that the Lotus Sutra can only be taught or shared by one who has had a direct experience of the awakening experience. As Shakyamuni states, 'The true reality can only be understood between Buddhas'. His guidance on how to teach is clear: "If you are asked difficult questions, you should not reply in terms of the Law of a Lesser Vehicle. You should explain things solely in terms of the Great Vehicle so that people will be able to acquire wisdom embracing all species." This is why it is important to continue chanting to become aware that you

are a Buddha not a person until you have had this awakening experience. This point also contradicts the earlier guidance of teaching others whatever they will accept.

Key Points: Today we are taught and know that enlightenment is to fully include all living beings, plants and animals being embraced in unconditional Oneness love. It is the attitude of unconditional love which reflects the nature of the mystic law; Buddha-God nature.

Chapter 15 ~ Emerging from the Earth or Springing Up Out of the Earth

Sutra BACKGROUND: At the end of Chapter 13 the Buddha says, "I shall soon enter into Nirvana. Is there anyone who is willing to expound the Lotus Sutra in this world after my extinction? I wish to hand it on to someone so that it can be perpetuated." In Chapter 14, there were eighty-billion nayuta of Bodhisattvas who made up their minds to expound the Sutra and vowed to endure any hardship or persecutions on the earth. However the Buddha has not responded to them.

As Chapter 15 begins, countless numbers of Bodhisattvas from the other worlds said that they would expound the Sutra in this Saha-world. But Shakyamuni Buddha surprised them by saying; "No. You don't need to do so, because there are already countless Bodhisattvas in this world. They are the ones who will expound this Sutra in this Saha-world." When he said it, the ground quaked and cracked, and countless Bodhisattvas appeared from underground. Among them, there were four leaders: Superior-Practice, Limitless-Practice, Pure-Practice and Steadily-Established-Practice Bodhisattvas.

According to Chih-i (T'ien-t'ai), the first fourteen chapters of the Sutra comprise the 'subordinate or temporary doctrine' because the Primal or Eternal Buddha is not yet revealed. The following fourteen chapters, from Chapter 15 to the end, are called the 'fundamental doctrine' because the Eternal Buddha is revealed in Chapter 16, 'Revelation of the [Eternal] Life of the Tathagata,' the essential and central teaching of this Sutra. In the present chapter, which is the introduction to the fundamental doctrine, the so-called originally converted Bodhisattvas appear as the chosen messengers who alone are able to preach this Sutra in the latter days to come.

Chapter 15 - Modern Interpretation

Chapter fifteen is an introduction to chapter sixteen therefore there is nothing to be said. Chapters thirteen, fourteen and fifteen can be linked together as a preparation to what is revealed in chapter sixteen. The Buddha had listened to offers from various people to teach the law after his extinction and at a time when the world had lost Buddha wisdom, where the people of our time are more interested in themselves than awakening to Buddhahood or having an interest in spirituality.

There is quite a lot of teaching guidance in these three chapters. It is pointless to take too much notice of them because they refer directly to the Bodhisattvas, etc.

of that age. Today we are living in a different age with different social beliefs, which is why with modern findings in quantum physics people are easily able to believe in 'the unified field' or the mystical emptiness of all phenomena. You could say that people today have cultivated sufficient arrogance to enable enlightenment to occur.

Chapter 16 ~ The Life Span of the Tathagata Revelation of the Eternal Life of the Tathagata

Sutra SUMMARY: In the preceding chapter, the countless number of Bodhisattvas appeared from underground. Bodhisattva Maitreya asked Shakyamuni how the Buddha could teach these countless people during the forty odd years after his enlightenment.

This chapter answers the question and explains the existence of an everlasting and immortal Buddha.

T'ien-t'ai writings: By 'secret' is meant that the one body of the Buddha is three bodies, and by 'mysterious' that the three bodies are in the one. Spiritually or supernaturally pervading power, or power of spiritual or supernatural pervasion, or ubiquity, is the function of the three bodies, or *trikaya*: the *dharmakaya* (truth-body or Law-body), the *sambhogakaya* (reward-body or bliss-body), and the *nirmanakaya* (mutation-body or response-body). *Dharmakaya* indicates the Buddhahood in its universality, *nirmanakaya* the Buddhahood embodied or personalised, and *sambhogakaya* the Buddhahood as spiritualised. The revelation of the *trikaya* in this form to this passage in chapter sixteen of the Lotus Sutra emphasises the unity of the trinity as constituting the only correct doctrine of the Buddha's person and reality.

Chapter 16 - Modern Interpretation

The revelation of the eternal life of the Buddha in this chapter is among the most essential of the Buddha's teachings. This chapter reveals the eternal life of the Buddha-God. To obtain enlightenment the person has to transform from a human being into their Divine self. The core being within all things remains in a hidden state from the six senses that people limit their lives to experiencing. Living in this way causes the individual to believe they are just a person, separate from others and they become attached to who they think they are from within their limited mind. In time, suffering will occur causing a yearning for release of unhappiness and the pain of separation from existence and the Divine.

The Buddha reveals how the core eternal nature within existence then appears in different forms of human beings offering different teachings by way of different religions and practices; all those which we can see in the world today. These leading teachings will be in accord with the people's mind so they will accept them. A preparation for the person's transformation then happens.

Finally once the people are gentle, peaceful, honest and upright the Buddha-God appears within to reveal the truth of who they are. Awakening through

connection in some way with the manifest Buddha-God then occurs. It is then that the person dissolves, disappears and transforms into a Buddha.

Key Points:

The Divine has an eternal nature from which manifest three Divine Bodies;

1. The Divine Wisdom Body
2. The Divine Bliss Body (non-dependent unshakable happiness)
3. The Physical Divine Body of Unconditional Love (body of action through compassion to relieve others of their suffering bringing enlightenment).

Enlightenment is eternally here and now where we are, not in some other place or time. The Divine is one with who you are right now, within the core of your true self; although until enlightenment occurs is in a transcendental state hidden from your awareness.

There is nothing to change except your consciousness and your attachment to ideas and spiritual beliefs, and then, just as the Buddha, you too will reveal the three enlightened bodies of the Divine/Buddha-God.

As a person you still have three bodies:-

1. The True Self Buddha in a hidden veiled state.
2. The spiritual reward body reflecting the causes you are making. It is this which creates the soul-mind resonating in the predominant consciousness of your life's experiences.
3. The physical body changing from lifetime to lifetime, providing the opportunity for transformation.

Chapter 17

Distinction in Benefits

Sutra SUMMARY: In the preceding chapter, the Original Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni was revealed for the first time. The eternity of life had not previously been revealed in other Sutras previously taught by Shakyamuni Buddha.

In the next three chapters, the Buddha explains, in detail, merits coming to those who believe in the Eternal Buddha and practice the teaching of the Eternal Buddha.

Chapter 17 - Modern Interpretation

This chapter defines the degrees of merit that all his immediate disciples had attained when the eternal life of the Buddha was revealed. The merit gained varied according to the difference in the listener's spiritual capacities. The Buddha goes on to share the merits gained by those who have not heard him teach this Sutra directly but who hear and practice it after his death. It reveals that they will also gain various benefits according to their ability and response.

Notes:

1. The enlightenment benefits gained through awakening depend upon the spiritual practices the person has previously carried out. The awakening is not dependent upon spiritual practices, as they only prepare for awakening, but upon faith and attention upon the Eternal Buddha-God 'eternity of life'; therefore the equality of equal opportunity for enlightenment exists within all living beings.

2. You are able to practice this Sutra without the tradition of monks, however if you practice humility and respect towards monks the benefits you gain will increase. The key teaching in this is to become inclusive and to practice as guided in chapter twenty 'The Bodhisattva Never Disparaging'; to have the Buddha wisdom to embrace all species because of the Oneness to life, all of existence is the Buddha-God.

Chapter 18 ~ The Benefits of Responding with Joy The Merits of Joyful Acceptance

Sutra SUMMARY: In this chapter, the Buddha revealed that the merits of a person who rejoices at hearing the teaching of the Lotus Sutra are unlimited. The first stage of benefit is the rejoicing that one experiences upon grasping the significance of the Sutra for the first time. The disciples who heard the Dharma directly from Buddha Shakyamuni might rejoice by dancing around. Their rejoicing developed into a strong belief in Buddha's teaching that was spread by word of mouth from one person to another. The merits of the fiftieth person who hears the Sutra and rejoices to accept the Sutra are much greater than the merits of a rich man giving his wealth to all beings and whatever else they wished for eighty years.

The moment of joy is decisive for one's faith. It has an immeasurable impact on all of one's future activities. This is the main point of this chapter.

Chapter 18 - Modern Interpretation

There is nothing to add to this chapter that was not mentioned in the introduction; this chapter along with Chapter 19 'Benefits of the Teacher of the Law' are expanded explanations of Chapter 17, 'Distinction in Benefits'.

All these chapters reveal how to obtain the greatest benefit through the behaviour and action you take. This action is no more than to become awakened first and then transform into enlightenment; once this has occurred then your being will help others do the same.

In my experience you cannot try and do this as some sort of practice or belief as it will become insincere. This will cause a type of split in your experience of the moment. At some level you will be creating resentments, judgements about others, etc., whilst maintaining a pretence of trying to be something that is not really happening. How many of us have encountered the well intended busy body who knows what is best for our life, we know they are full of ideas and concepts which they are projecting on everything and everybody they encounter. You will feel uncomfortable in their company because you know they are not being real. Be authentic.

The Buddha-God is the manifestation of all consciousness in existence. We can only be what we are, that is truth and that is enlightenment being expressed in a certain state of consciousness (innumerable meanings). The Buddha-God is contained within all things and teaches and leads everyone to a higher state of consciousness all the time. This means there is nothing for you to do because it is

automatically happening. Therefore the key to your freedom is to transform the person's consciousness, becoming free from the personality, and to reveal the individual you have been created to be as part of the whole of existence; one individual manifestation with the Buddha-God consciousness.

You have to become authentic in your experience of the moment, accepting what is, as it is! By keeping yourself based in truth, the Divine has the opportunity to transform you into a higher state of consciousness. It is the mind and its concepts which are holding you back, pinning you into the very place you want to escape from. This is where spiritual teachings become limiting and in fact, as I had discovered, can become your bondage.

When the Buddha golden nature in its loving compassionate presence flowed through my being there was no desire. My mind had stopped, my being was in the state of complete satisfaction of just being; the questioner had completely disappeared. My only desire was for others to drink from this nectar of the Buddha-God essence. There was only this one desire in the whole of my being; just to share this experience with others.

When this happened it was not as a result of some concept; it was a naturally arising by-product of the state of consciousness I was experiencing at that time. As a result of this direct experience I am able to share what happened with others.

Chapter 19 ~ Benefits of the Teacher of the Law or The Merits of the Preacher

Sutra SUMMARY: The teacher of the Dharma is not only a priest or a monk but also a layman who keeps, reads, recites, expounds or copies the Lotus Sutra. This chapter reveals that the teacher will have their five organs and mind purified. They will gain the eight hundred to twelve hundred merits of the body and mind.

Chapter 19 - Modern Interpretation

There is no further comment to make as this relates to creating the purification of the six sense organs which independently each have their own consciousness which will become transformed into higher states of consciousness. These different consciousnesses are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind.

This purification of the six sense organs cleansed by the practice of chanting the mantra Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo will lead to the Awakening stage of Enlightenment.

Chapter 20

The Bodhisattva Never Disparaging

CHAPTER SUMMARY: The previous chapter revealed that those who keep, read, recite, expound, or copy the Lotus Sutra will be able to obtain eight hundred merits of the eye, nose, and body and twelve hundred merits of the ear, tongue, and mind. Thus, we encourage doing the five practices (of keeping, reading, reciting, expounding, and copying the Lotus Sutra) for teachers of the Dharma. On the other hand, this chapter reveals the practice of bowing to others without performing the above five practices. Never-Despising Bodhisattva kept the practice of only bowing to the four kinds of devotees and praising them, saying, "I respect you deeply. I do not despise you because you will be able to practice the Way of Bodhisattvas and become Buddhas."

In actuality, Never-Despising Bodhisattva was Shakyamuni Buddha himself in his previous existence.

Chapter 20 - Modern Interpretation

Whoever you meet who practices any form of Buddha-God-Divine practice, such as priests, practitioners, Gurus and followers, etc., you can bow to them, being sincere and authentic, and say, "I deeply respect your life as you will obtain Enlightenment and become a Buddha".

Can you never speak ill of another, no matter how they differ from you? This was the only single-minded thought practice Bodhisattva Never Disparaging undertook. No matter what abusive response he received it was greeted by this practice which caused his enlightenment.

On the surface this appears a very simple practice to undertake, however it requires a person to have an enlightened understanding to undertake this state of mind.

From a deeper perspective you would have to embrace and know that the mystic law God-Buddha resides at the core of all living beings. This chapter also shows that all religions and spiritual teachings lead to Awakening and are therefore to be respected.

I remember the time when I was looking at everyone walking along the high street seeing through the eyes of the inner dweller (Divine wisdom residing in my third eye) to show me the God-Buddha in every person, no matter what their behaviour was displaying. This really does confirm that where there is life then God-Buddha also exists.

This also confirms that enlightenment is here and now not in some other Divine place free from the duality of life, where people are only behaving like angels. And I do love angels very much. Yes, our six senses need to become purified to be able to experience existence and daily life as a non-dual mystical oneness.

To expand upon this a little, duality here and now is only experienced as such, depending on the state of consciousness you are experiencing it from. Good and bad and all separation only exist in lower states of consciousness where the illusion of separation is experienced. Once higher states of consciousness are experienced the idea of separation for the very same experience becomes understood. Everything depends upon your consciousness.

Considering the principle of 'what you put your attention upon will manifest' in this practice of respect for all living beings equally, everything and everyone is God-Buddha. Put your attention upon the highest consciousness you can. This is one of the practices suggested by Osho which I was doing in a state of loving passion, along with chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo which attributed to opening the crown chakra. It was from this preparation that allowed the Buddha-God consciousness to flow down from the crown to the base chakra within my body.

There is also clear guidance in the previous chapters and in this chapter of The Lotus Sutra about not slandering those engaged in any spiritual practice of the mystic law, especially those who directly embrace The Lotus Sutra. *(Those who practice The Lotus Sutra I believe are those who embrace God-Buddha as the core being in all things and their manifestation of difference, not just the devotees of Buddhist sects.)*

The reason for this is simple, because if you do so you are slandering God-Buddha directly. When someone is drawn to a particular path or organisation it is perfect and to be accepted. All of life has a Mystical perfection no matter what consciousness it is expressing.

The importance of not slandering others accelerates your enlightenment process. Yes, there are differences in spiritual approaches and there are different spiritual rewards according to what you are practicing. These are all forms of the person reforming themselves to gain purification of the senses to enable freedom from their suffering; a preparation for awakening to Buddhahood. Beware of people who try and convince you of some reason to justify opposing the way others carry out their devotional practice.

The Divine at its core is unfathomable, untouchable and unknowable; truly mystical, providing mankind with innumerable teachings to lead us all to awakening.

Chapter 21

Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One

Sutra SUMMARY: This chapter is one of the three major chapters in the Lotus Sutra. The other two major chapters are Chapter 2 (Expedients) and Chapter 16 (The Life of the Tathagata). Nichiren Shu priests read these three chapters very often. The twenty-eight chapters of the Sutra are divided in half; the first half is called shakumon, which reveals the historical Shakyamuni Buddha, while the last half is called hon-mon, which reveals the eternal nature of the Shakyamuni Buddha. Therefore, the disciples that appeared in the first half are called 'the disciples in shakumon' while the disciples revealed in the last half are called 'the disciples in honmon.' In this chapter, Shakyamuni transmits this Sutra and assigns the disciples in honmon the missionary works after his death.

Chapter 21 - Modern Interpretation

In Chapter fifteen, the 'Appearance of Bodhisattvas from Underground,' the earth split open before Shakyamuni, and countless Bodhisattvas welled forth. In this chapter, these innumerable great Bodhisattvas vowed to expound the teaching of the Lotus Sutra on this earth after the Buddha's death. When the Buddha displays his supernatural power all beings in his presence obtain enlightenment.

Notes: There is an element of faith required for people who have not awakened to a higher consciousness, as they do not have the ability to see the Buddha. The Buddha-God will then at times reveal itself displaying supernatural powers for the sole purpose to cause the people to have joy, which in turn leads them to taking faith. This is a form of encouragement in the person's spiritual practice.

In the lower states of consciousness the Divine supernatural power manifests in a hidden form within the obvious seen cause and effect of ones own life's experiences. The person will just think it is another doing this or that to them, deferring responsibility for their own part within the experience they are having. The Divine will be hidden at the centre of all exchanges providing teaching which is uniquely appropriate to the people concerned. This is the workings of daily life; a spiritual school for the evolution of consciousness. When you are one with God this will be shown to you.

Once you obtain the stage of being awakened you will discover the Buddha-God nature is there all the time leading and guiding you, arising in the moment from the unknowable.

Once awakened the presence of the Buddha-God nature will transform your illusions as they arise within your daily life. These illusions have been created by misguided beliefs and karma stored within the soul/orb body. This releases you from suffering whilst holding you in love, contentment and joy.

It is at this stage of enlightenment that you are released from the mind and realise that you are not a person; at this stage of evolution there is 'no person' there, only 'The Buddha-God' manifesting through you from the unknowable!

Chapter 22

Entrustment or The Final Commission

Sutra SUMMARY: The twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra are divided in half; the first half is called shakumon, which reveals the historical Shakyamuni Buddha, while the last half is called hon-mon, which reveals the eternal nature of the Shakyamuni Buddha. Therefore, the disciples that appeared in the first half are called 'the disciples in shaku-mon' while the disciples revealed in the last half are called 'the disciples in hon-mon.'

In the previous chapter, Shakyamuni Buddha transmits the Lotus Sutra and assigns the disciples in hon-mon the missionary works after his death. In this chapter, the Buddha also transmits the Sutra and assigns to the disciples in shaku-mon the missionary works after the Buddha's death.

This chapter ends the logical explanations of the Lotus Sutra. We understand the Sutra logically, but it is hard for us to practice it in our daily lives. Therefore, the Buddha prepared another six chapters for us to practice the Dharma through the examples of previous lives of Bodhisattvas and explanations of protection of deities.

Chapter 22 - Modern Interpretation

In the chapter the Buddha states "In future ages if there are good men and good women who have faith in the wisdom of the Thus Come One, you should preach and expound the Lotus Sutra for them, so that others may hear and understand it. For in this way you can cause them to gain the Buddha wisdom. If there are living beings who do not believe or accept it, you should use some of the other profound doctrines of the Thus Come One to teach, benefit and bring joy to them. If you do all this, then you will have repaid the debt of gratitude that you owe to the Buddha."

The above instructions are quite clear and need no further explanation or interpretation. When sharing the Mystic law with others if they reject what you are offering to them, then teach them a leading practice to help their life evolve. Basically respect their choice for that is perfect. This chapter joins together the two teachings which were taught separately in previous chapters appearing to contradict each other. This shows that the Lotus Sutra chapters cannot be taken in isolation otherwise they may be incomplete.

The ultimate sharing is through your own life becoming radiant with the perfume of the Divine emanating from your aura. People will be aware of the presence of

The Lotus Sutra Explained

love, compassion and peaceful joy. It is this which teaches others, causing them to want the quality they experience in your presence.

Chapter 23

The Story of the Bodhisattva Medicine King

Sutra SUMMARY: In the previous chapter, we came to the end of the second stage of the Lotus Sutra. Chapters 23 through 28 are the final stage. In these chapters, Buddha Shakyamuni tries to stimulate us with stories of the previous lives of Bodhisattvas and how they devoted their lives for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. This chapter reveals the previous life of Medicine-King Bodhisattva. It is very interesting that another previous life of his under a different Buddha is also revealed in Chapter 27.

Chapter 23 - Modern Interpretation

This chapter repeatedly reveals that the Lotus Sutra is the king of all Sutras and consequently will bring the greatest benefit to those who teach and practice it over and above any other Sutra.

On a mystical level the Sutra also reveals how anyone embracing the true nature of existence, the infinite core being, will receive protection by the Buddha's supernatural powers.

Chapter 24

The Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound

Sutra SUMMARY: In the previous chapter, we learned that Medicine King Bodhisattva attained Samadhi and could transform himself into any other living being because of his hard practice in his previous lives. In this chapter, Wonderful-Voice Bodhisattva can change his body into thirty-four different forms while in the next chapter; World-Voice-Perceiver Bodhisattva can change his body into thirty-three different forms. It is very interesting that Wonderful-Voice Bodhisattva lives in a pure land in the East while World-Voice-Perceiver Bodhisattva lives in the pure land in the West. They came to this world of ours to save us.

Wonderful-Voice Bodhisattva came to greet Shakyamuni Buddha at Mount Sacred Eagle from the Bodhisattva's pure land in the East. How did he appear? He just meditated without moving, and then his body appeared in front of the Buddha in the Saha World in a matter of moments. How did he gain such a supernatural power? In his previous life, he offered one hundred thousand various kinds of music to Cloud-Thunder-Sound-King Buddha for twelve thousand years.

Chapter 24 - Modern Interpretation

The gist of the Sutra clearly conveys the meaning, so that the ordinary mind can understand what the Buddha is saying.

When we are seeing life from any consciousness other than Buddhahood we will only be able to see the physical and spiritual body of another. The true self universal wisdom aspect of the Buddha manifests itself in various different bodies and preaches this Sutra for the sake of living beings in various different places and remains hidden or unseen by all beings other than Buddhas.

The Sutra goes on to say how this supernatural unseen aspect manifests itself in every being equally and teaches according to the being's capacity. This manifestation is not limited to human beings but all beings physical and non-physical.

This statement reveals the supernatural wisdom law working within all living beings at all levels of consciousness. This means that there is an inner mystical enlightened teacher within all living beings providing Buddha Wisdom at all times whenever the mystic law is required to be taught.

The Sutra goes on to share that this bodhisattva uses his supernatural power to transform and reveal itself providing teaching according to what will bring salvation to each individual. If the form of a voice-hearer is what is needed to bring salvation, he

manifests himself in the form of a voice-hearer and proceeds to preach the Law. If the form of a pratyekabuddha will bring salvation, he manifests himself in the form of a pratyekabuddha and preaches the Law. If the form of a bodhisattva will bring salvation, he manifests a bodhisattva form and preaches the Law. If the form of a Buddha will bring salvation, he immediately manifests a Buddha form and preaches the Law. He therefore manifests himself in various different forms, depending upon what is appropriate for salvation. Finally if it is appropriate to enter extinction in order to bring salvation, he manifests himself as entering extinction.

Knowing this, although we are unaware that this is happening and are just playing in the world for our own amusement and personal goals and ambitions, it would be wise to cultivate a reverence towards this inner dweller, to offer humility and the surrender of one's own limited knowledge to gain a direct connection with this Divine aspect. How truly blessed we are to have the service of such an aspect of the Divine offering us salvation from our lower consciousness. This is where to 'Awaken' as the first step to enlightenment is so important; to declutch from the mind's grasp of your life-force and illusionary thinking.

Just by reading this section repeatedly and offering the way of Nam or Namō: I bow (I surrender the ego) I can feel the presence of this being, which just fills me with love and an automatic surrender to its magnificence.

I use the following mantra to open every Sacred Mantra concert or spiritually deepening event I hold. Considering the Buddha's wisdom in this chapter, this simple mantra can now bring to life new meaning within our hearts:

Ong Namō, Guru Dev Namō

Ong Namō: I bow to the subtle Divine wisdom.

Guru Dev Namō: To the teacher of wisdom, I subject myself in all respect.

Chapter 25

The Universal Gate of the Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds or The All-Sidedness of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World

SUMMARY: Chapter 25, which deals with the Kannon Bodhisattva, the Universal Gate of World-Voice-Perceiver Bodhisattva or Avalokiteshvara, is a part of the Lotus Sutra; however, there are countless number of faithful men and women who take this chapter as an independent Sutra regardless of whether they believe in the Lotus Sutra or not.

We can see a lot of statues of Kannon in Japan, China, Thailand and other Asian countries. They are enshrined not only inside the temples but also outside.

Chapter 25 - Modern Interpretation

The chapter reveals the aspect of Divine Compassion existing in all living beings equally. Again this aspect is portrayed as existing in a variety of different forms, and goes about among the lands saving living beings. We are advised, because this aspect exists in us listening to our problems and sufferings, that we should offer alms to Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds who dispels fear and brings love.

This aspect is endowed with transcendental powers and widely practices expedient means in relieving suffering. This is a universal Divine aspect so there is nowhere it does not exist. In many different kinds of unhappy circumstances, in all the lower realms of consciousness where the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death exist; all of these problems he bit by bit wipes out.

This aspect has immense compassion and pity on all living beings bringing light to darkness and removing misfortune from all who embrace it.

The Sutra states that to obtain these immediate blessings all we need to do is constantly look up in reverence. He can quell the wind and fire of misfortune and everywhere bring light to the world. Perceiver of the World's Sounds, pure sage to those in suffering, in danger of death, he can offer aid and support. The accumulated Blessings this bodhisattva has acquired are immeasurable; therefore you should bow your head to him!

To me this is amazing that within our very lives there is a saviour to bless us and relieve us of our suffering. Without judgement, to relieve us and protect us from the misfortune we experience because of our low consciousness. This aspect is Unconditional Love or the Divine Mother; this is our true eternal Mother.

Again we invoke these blessings through our prayers using Namō or as the Sutra states 'bow your head to him-her!'

It is no wonder so many practices have been created to pray to this Divine aspect. When you receive blessing from this aspect there is no requirement of understanding through Divine wisdom. The downside could be that after the miracle has occurred you have not changed the causes that created the problem in the first place. There is a suggestion that illusions will be eroded by embracing this aspect which also has a parallel to the function of Shiva.

Chapter 26

Dharani or Dharanis

Sutra SUMMARY: This chapter reveals the dharanis (the mystic syllables which sustain a chanter's religious life) of many deities. The deities are Medicine-King Bodhisattva, Brave-In-Giving Bodhisattva, Vaisravana Heavenly-King, World-Holding Heavenly-King and ten female devils together with Mother-Of-Devils and her children. The dharani-spells are uttered to protect the practitioners, teachers and expounders of the Lotus Sutra.

Chapter 26 - Modern Interpretation

There is nothing to add as this reveals mantras to evoke protective deities of the Divine.

Chapter 27

Former Affairs of King Wonderful Adornment

Sutra SUMMARY: This chapter reveals the story of two sons who converted their father and mother to the Buddha Dharma and the Lotus Sutra. It is very difficult to convert our spouses and immediate family members because they know everything about us, inside and out. Therefore, words may not be effective for them but our actions would be. The two children showed their supernatural powers (something others cannot do) to draw their father's attention.

Chapter 27 - Modern Interpretation

There is nothing further to be revealed which is not obvious. This story shows that people follow others more by example rather than trying to convince another through discussion; another person will want the qualities of love, compassion and happiness they see in you. When they see these qualities in you they also will want to have them.

This is why it is important to cultivate and 'Awaken' to the Divine Loving Presence as this is the most important first step to take. When you do this the Divine presence will be emanating from your aura without effort; this is the way to lead others to enlightenment.

This aspect is especially important to understand for those who within spiritual organisations have taken positions of leadership. If a person of leadership has taken the role to enjoy the power it brings to their shallow ego as they lord over others, then as an example to others they will become repellent, fearful and not attractive. It also goes without saying that others will also follow their bad example.

Chapter 28

Encouragements of the Bodhisattva Universally Worthy

Sutra SUMMARY: Universal-Sage Bodhisattva had been watching and listening to the Buddha Shakyamuni preaching the Lotus Sutra at Mount Sacred Eagle. He wanted to talk to the Buddha directly, so he came from his remote world in the East with his hundreds and thousands of Bodhisattvas and asked the Buddha how to obtain the teachings of the Lotus Sutra after his death. The Buddha told him that people need to do four things in order to obtain the Sutra in the latter eras. This chapter is like a review and conclusion of the Lotus Sutra.

Chapter 28 - Modern Interpretation

The Sutra reveals the four conditions which are recommended to carry out the practice of enlightenment of the Lotus Sutra Buddha wisdom.

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Universal Worthy: "If good men and good women will fulfil four conditions in the time after the Thus Come One has entered extinction, then they will be able to acquire this Lotus Sutra:

1. First, they must be protected and be kept in mind by the Buddhas.
2. Second, they must plant the roots of virtue.
3. Third, they must enter the stage where they are sure of reaching enlightenment.
4. Fourth, they must conceive a determination to save all living beings.

If good men and good women fulfil these four conditions, then after the Thus Come One has entered extinction they will be certain to acquire this Sutra."

The Bodhisattva gave twenty spells for the sake of those who practice the teachings of the Lotus Sutra: "Atandai, tanda-hatai, tanda-kusharei, tanda-shudarei, shudarei, shudadra-hachi, botsuda-hansennei,

The term 'spell' is associated with magic in our modern world however as you will see from the translation below they are not as we might think they are.

"Anyone who keeps, reads and recites this Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma (Law), memorises it correctly, studies it, practices it, and copies it, should be considered to see me, and hear this Sutra from my mouth. He should be considered to be making offerings to me. He should be considered to be praised by me with the word, Excellent!"

The Lotus Sutra Revelations

In various chapters it is revealed that all spiritual practices in the world have been created by the Buddha's expedient means in accordance with the people's capacity and as such there is a need to respect them all.

- To gain freedom from the six paths, salvation is taught by offering Heavenly rebirth or Nirvana.
- To prepare for Buddha enlightenment three spiritual practices are taught:-
 1. For those who were seeking to become voice-hearers (7th world of Learning) he responded by preaching the Law of The Four Noble Truths.
 2. For those seeking to become pratyekabuddhas (8th world of Realisation) he responded by preaching the Law of the Twelve-Linked Chain of Causation.
 3. For the Bodhisattvas (9th world of Bodhisattva), as a means to lead them to anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, (one world of Buddhahood) he responded by preaching the Law of The Six Parameters so they could eventually gain the Buddha wisdom.

The Buddha goes on to share that the only way full enlightenment is obtained is through a direct connection with 'The Eternity of Life' and that attachment to spiritual practices prevent this from happening. He then reveals the teachings in the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings.

- The Innumerable Meanings originate from one law which is formless (the eternal Buddha-God). As natural desires are innumerable, teaching is immeasurable, and as teaching is immeasurable, meanings are innumerable.
- All laws emerge and vanish anew every moment, they emerge, settle, change, and vanish instantly. All laws are naturally vacant, ceaselessly transformed, and instantly born and destroyed.

Finally the Buddha reveals The Lotus Sutra

In chapter two it was revealed: The true entity of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, inherent cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end.

In chapter sixteen it is revealed that the Buddha's life is eternal existing here and now.

In chapter twenty it is revealed that to have respect for all living beings especially those who practice any form of spiritual or devotional practice are to be respected in the knowing that they are being lead by the Buddha-God to awakening into a Buddha.

In chapter twenty-four it is revealed that The Divine Buddha Wisdom is within all living beings manifesting knowingly or unknowingly to lead us to awakening to our True-Self; the Buddha.

In chapter twenty-five it is revealed that the Divine Unconditional Love exists within all living beings waiting to remove all our suffering instantly; we only have to ask to receive a blessing from this Divine Mother aspect.

In chapter twenty-eight it reveals that people follow by example when seeing the Divine manifest through you. This means the key is to gain the awakened state so that the presence flows from your aura. When this occurs others will become attracted to you and want what you have.

On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime

If you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death you have endured since time without beginning and to attain without fail unsurpassed enlightenment in this lifetime, you must perceive the mystic truth that is originally inherent in all living beings. This truth is Myoho-Renge-Kyo. Chanting Myoho-Renge-Kyo will therefore enable you to grasp the mystic truth innate in all life.

The Lotus Sutra is the king of Sutras, true and correct in both word and principle. Its words are the ultimate reality, and this reality is the Mystic Law (*Myoho*). It is called the Mystic Law because it reveals the principle of the mutually inclusive relationship of a single moment of life and all phenomena. That is why this Sutra is the wisdom of all Buddhas.

Life at each moment encompasses the body and mind and the self and environment of all sentient beings in the Ten Worlds as well as all insentient beings in the three thousand realms, including plants, sky, earth, and even the minutest particles of dust. Life at each moment permeates the entire realm of phenomena and is revealed in all phenomena. To be awakened to this principle is itself the mutually inclusive relationship of life at each moment and all phenomena. Nevertheless, even though you chant and believe in Myoho-Renge-Kyo, if you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but an inferior teaching. 'Inferior teaching' means those other than this (Lotus) Sutra, which are all expedient and provisional. No expedient or provisional teaching leads directly to enlightenment, and without the direct path to enlightenment you cannot attain Buddhahood, even if you practice lifetime after lifetime for countless kalpas. Attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime is then impossible. Therefore when you chant Myoho and recite Renge you must summon up deep faith that Myoho-Renge-Kyo is your life itself.

You must never think that any of the eighty-thousand sacred teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha's lifetime or any of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions and three existences are outside yourself. Your practice of the Buddhist teachings will not relieve you of the sufferings of birth and death in the least unless you perceive the true nature of your life. If you seek enlightenment outside yourself, then your performing even ten thousand practices and ten thousand good deeds will be in vain. It is like the case of a poor man who spends night and day counting his neighbour's wealth but gains not even half a coin. That is why the T'ien-t'ai school's commentary states, "Unless one perceives the nature of one's life, one cannot eradicate one's grave offences." This passage implies that, unless one perceives

the nature of one's life, one's practice will become an endless, painful austerity. Therefore, such students of Buddhism are condemned as non-Buddhist. Great Concentration and Insight states that, although they study Buddhism, their views are no different from those of non-Buddhists.

Whether you chant the Buddha's name, recite the Sutra, or merely offer flowers and incense, all your virtuous acts will implant benefits and roots of goodness in your life. With this conviction you should strive in faith. The Vimalakirti Sutra states that, when one seeks the Buddha's emancipation in the minds of ordinary beings, one finds that ordinary beings are the entities of enlightenment, and that the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana. It also states that, if the minds of living beings are impure, their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land. There are not two lands, pure or impure in themselves. The difference lies solely in the good or evil of our minds.

It is the same with a Buddha and an ordinary being. When deluded, one is called an ordinary being, but when enlightened, one is called a Buddha. This is similar to a tarnished mirror that will shine like a jewel when polished. A mind now clouded by the illusions of the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but when polished, it is sure to become like a clear mirror, reflecting the essential nature of phenomena and the true aspect of reality. Arouse deep faith, and diligently polish your mirror day and night. How should you polish it? Only by chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.

What then does Myo signify? It is simply the mysterious nature of our life from moment to moment, which the mind cannot comprehend or words express. When we look into our own mind at any moment, we perceive neither colour nor form to verify that it exists. Yet we still cannot say it does not exist, for many differing thoughts continually occur. The mind cannot be considered either to exist or not to exist. Life is indeed an elusive reality that transcends both the words and concepts of existence and nonexistence. It is neither existence nor nonexistence, yet exhibits the qualities of both. It is the mystic entity of the Middle Way that is the ultimate reality. Myo is the name given to the mystic nature of life, and Ho, to its manifestations. Renge, which means lotus flower, is used to symbolise the wonder of this Law. If we understand that our life at this moment is Myo, then we will also understand that our life at other moments is the Mystic Law. This realisation is the mystic Kyo, or Sutra. The Lotus Sutra is the king of Sutras; the direct path to enlightenment, for it explains that the entity of our life, which manifests either good or evil at each moment, is in fact the entity of the Mystic Law.

If you chant Myoho-Renge-Kyo with deep faith in this principle, you are certain to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. That is why the Sutra states, "After I have

On Attaining Buddhahood

passed into extinction, (one) should accept and uphold this Sutra. Such a person assuredly and without doubt will attain the Buddha way.” Never doubt in the slightest.

Maintain your faith and attain Buddhahood in this lifetime,
Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo,
Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.

Respectfully, Nichiren

Background: This letter was written to Toki Jonin in 1255, two years after Nichiren Daishonin established his teaching of Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. At the time of this letter, the Daishonin was thirty-four years old and was living in Kamakura, the seat of the military government. Of all his writings from the mid 1250s, ‘On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime’ focuses most clearly on the tenets of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Reflections

‘On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime’

The letter Nichiren Daishonin had written was at a time before he had inscribed the Gohonzon. The guidance contained within the letter is most profound and is based upon the mystical truth contained within the Lotus Sutra. There is nothing more to learn than what is contained within this letter. This shows the Daishonin’s enlightened wisdom at that time. I believe the Gohonzon was created to prevent people after his death from distorting the teachings. He acted like the Buddha in providing a way to preserve the Lotus Sutra and the teaching of Ichinen Sanzen by T’ien-t’ai .

The priests that followed him understood that the people of the time were confused about what a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha looked like, so they recommended that they only embrace the Gohonzon. This was an act of compassion to prevent people embracing statues representing provisional teachings like Amida Buddha, where the teaching pointed to enlightenment in the western part of the universe in a pure land far away from this planet earth. This is where the concept of not embracing a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha has come from. Today we know what a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha looks like, or if not can easily gain help to discover what one is, therefore this priesthood guidance is no longer appropriate.

It is a personal choice, but the Gohonzon contains Shakyamuni Buddha so by embracing the Gohonzon you are embracing Shakyamuni Buddha automatically.

On the top line of the original Nichiren Gohonzon, see below, it represents Buddhahood and displays six lines consisting of the two Buddhas, Shakyamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha representing the Treasure Tower as explained in chapter eleven. Once awakening occurs then the four qualities of Buddhahood naturally arise. You will find these qualities in the additional four characters, two at the side of Shakyamuni Buddha and two at the side of Taho Buddha which are known as the four Bodhisattvas: Jyogyo representing Purity, Anryugyo representing Indestructible Happiness, Jogyo representing True Self and Muhengyo representing Eternity.

Mystical Gohonzon



The title of the Lotus Sutra 'The Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Law' translates as 'Myōhō Renge Kyō'. Just like a string of an instrument when being plucked, as I look at this Gohonzon all the characters are vibrating with aliveness! Try it.

I would like to thank Nichiren Shu for permission to display this Mystical Gohonzon, inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin. Nichiren disciples focus on this Mandala as they chant the mantra 'Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō' in the belief of connecting with their Buddha nature to achieving freedom from personal karmic suffering.

Resources

An interpretation of the Mystic Law Mantra for Attaining Buddha Wisdom

NAMU (NAM): Means devotion, to devote yourself and Myoho-Renge-Kyo is the title of the Lotus Sutra, which is said to contain all of the Buddhist teachings. So, in the act of chanting 'Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo', you devote yourself, fuse your life with the fundamental law of eternity, and in so doing immediately manifest your inherent Buddha nature.

MYOHO: Myo is the name given to the mystic nature of life, and Ho, to its manifestations. Myoho means mystic law, to open and reveal the true entity of life, the Buddha-nature in your life. This transforms your life condition to the Buddha Wisdom consciousness. "Myo" indicates the nature of enlightenment - Buddhahood. "Ho" therefore can either reveal illusion (the person) or enlightenment (the Buddha) depending upon the consciousness of the human-being. The Oneness of illusion (the person) and enlightenment (the Buddha) is called MYOHO or the mystic law.

"Myo is simply the mysterious nature of our life from moment to moment, which the mind cannot comprehend or words express. Life is indeed an elusive reality that transcends both the words and concepts of existence and nonexistence. It is neither existence nor nonexistence, yet exhibits the qualities of both. It is the mystic entity of the Middle Way that is the ultimate reality."

RENGE: Means the workings of the Buddha consciousness through the nine worlds in the wonderful law of creation that simultaneously, at the same time, possesses both cause and effect.

"Renge" means lotus flower representing the law of karma. The lotus flower contains seeds and flowers at the same time representing the similarity of cause and effect. Renge is used to symbolise the wonder of this Law.

KYO: Means teaching, the Buddha voice, sound or vibration. Sound never stops affecting everything else in the boundless universe, through the eternal flow of life, past, present and future. If we understand that our life at this moment is Myo, then we will also understand that our life at all other moments is the Mystic Law. This realisation is the mystic Kyo, or Sutra.

Ichinen Sanzen

The principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life

I would now like to share T'ien-t'ai's (538-597) theory of Ichinen Sanzen. This beautiful theoretical concept explains how life works and is expressed within the whole of existence.

With the new discoveries recently found in quantum physics what is interesting is that we are seeing the merging of mysticism with science. Quantum physics has discovered that one thought desire can manifest in three thousand possibilities.

Quantum physicists has discovered that although one probable outcome will manifest, the other possibilities are hidden within a state of potential manifestation. The total number of possible outcomes they can find is three thousand.

Could this be the Divine workings of existence as stated by T'ien-t'ai , or is it that man through believing this to be the truth has created the karmic world to work in this way?

Ichinen Sanzen Overview

The Ten Worlds: Hell, Hunger, Animality, Egocentric Arrogance, Humanity, Heaven, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood.

The Ten Factors: Appearance, Nature, Entity, Power, Influence, Internal Cause, Latent Effect, External Cause, Manifest Effect and Consistency from beginning to end.

The Three Realms of Existence: Self, Society and Environment.

The explanation that T'ien-t'ai revealed in his 'Great Concentration and Insight' is as follows: "Life at each moment is endowed with Ten Worlds. At the same time, each of the Ten Worlds is endowed with all the others, so that an entity of life actually possesses one hundred worlds. Each of these worlds in turn possesses thirty realms of existence. These are made up of the ten factors of life and the three realms of existence; self, society and environment.

The three thousand realms of existence are all possessed by a single entity of life. If there is no life, that is the end of the matter. But if there is the slightest bit of life, it contains all three thousand realms".

The Ten Worlds

The Ten Worlds are mutually inclusive or contained within each other. One is visible while the other nine worlds are hidden within it. This is why the possibility of one hundred worlds exists; this aspect works like a hologram.

The Divine Source in its essence, at its core, is Pure-awareness, but as it expresses itself into our lives, when it manifests into the world of cause and effect, duality, it expresses itself in different states of awareness. In fact the different states of awareness all exist in the same place at the same time. The only difference between them is in their consciousness function and their rate of vibration. This explains why truth is dependent upon consciousness and that manifested life has innumerable meanings.

1. **Hell:** Hell is a state lacking in freedom. When we are severely restricted, hell attracts a condition of extreme suffering, hopelessness, despair, frustration in which one is spurred by rage to destroy oneself or others as an attempt to break free from the feeling of being tortured.
2. **Hunger (Unsatisfied Desire):** In this state of awareness we are controlled by constant cravings for objects or certain experiences; such as wealth, fame, sex, pleasure, etc. Someone in this state of greed has relentless craving and the inability to become personally satisfied even when their desire is achieved.
3. **Animality:** In this state we are like an animal, driven by survival instincts and lack any restraining virtues such as sense or reason, morality or any thought about the results of our action. People in this state only observe the law of the jungle. They have no awareness of the law of cause and effect or Karma. They are at the beck and call of those they consider superior, while they dominate those weaker than themselves.
4. **Anger (egocentric arrogance):** In this life condition you would be dominated by a selfish ego, competitiveness, arrogance and the need to be superior in all things.
5. **Humanity or Tranquillity:** In this calm state you can use reason to control your instinctive desires, so that the more truly humane qualities such as love and benevolence can emerge. People in this state of humanity

exercise sound judgement, distinguish right from wrong and in general behave in a humane fashion. However, it is a sensitive state and you can easily fall into apathy. Furthermore, you can easily find yourself in hell if it is disrupted.

6. **Heaven or Rapture:** The pleasure you feel when your desires are fulfilled. Think of the immense joy that you experience when you have satisfied yourself by obtaining something that you have desired for a long time, or when long-term suffering has finally been relieved.

As our desires are satisfied we become overjoyed and rapturous, we become heady and blind, failing to see the pitfalls and traps that lie ahead; we then fall back into a state of hell.

Unlike the true happiness of Buddhahood this state of heaven is only temporary and disappears with the passage of time or through even the slightest change to personal circumstances.

The Six Paths, Worlds or Life Conditions

The first six paths, from hell to heaven, are called the six lower life conditions in Buddhism, or the six lower worlds. All of them have one thing in common: they are brought about through either fulfilling or acting out various desires and impulses. Their appearance or disappearance is therefore controlled by external circumstances.

Buddhism points out that most people spend their lives shuttling back and forth among these six lower worlds without ever realising that they are completely at the mercy of their reactions to their environment. In effect they are purely responding to life. Any happiness or satisfaction that we may experience in these states is entirely governed by circumstances and is therefore only temporary.

So when we are trapped in the six lower life conditions we fail to realise this, instead basing our entire happiness, indeed the whole of our identity, on external factors that are by definition beyond our control. People in these conditions tend to view life as fatalistic, haphazard and have a tendency to feel powerless in respect of their own life's circumstances.

However, when you recognise that everything experienced in the six lower life conditions is impermanent, a recognition occurs that prompts you to begin a search for lasting truth and happiness.

The Four Noble Worlds

Unlike the six lower paths or life conditions which reflect our passive reactions to our environmental circumstances, the following four life conditions are obtained only through deliberate and continued efforts on our own behalf.

7. Learning: In this condition you would seek to learn some skill, some lasting truth or self-reformation through the teachings of others. This life condition is one that requires you to dedicate yourself to create a better life to improve yourself through learning from ideas, concepts, knowledge and experiences of other people.

8. Realization: This life condition is similar to that of learning except here we seek the truth not through other people's teachings, although they may be of assistance, but through our own direct perception. The emphasis here is on our own creative nature and spiritual awakening as a result of intuitively perceiving something. Anyone can refine him or herself, develop intuitive wisdom if they make effort and discipline themselves.

The worlds of Learning and Realisation are closely related, but they also have a negative aspect that is whilst experiencing these states people can easily become self-centred and arrogant, thinking they have nothing else to learn.

9. Bodhisattva: In this state you not only aspire for enlightenment for yourself, but also devote yourself to relieving the suffering of others through compassionate, altruistic actions. This consciousness can have the negative aspect of self-sacrifice. It is this which can lead to the individual disrespecting their own life and developing a condescending attitude towards others.

10. Buddhahood: The 'Oneness' state of indestructible happiness, True-self, purity and eternity. This life condition contains Buddha Wisdom having infinite compassion and unconditional love to direct your life towards benevolent goals.

In this condition your life continues in perfect harmony with the rhythms of the universe and exists from the infinite past to the eternal future. This life condition is your birthright. Buddhahood balances, integrates and transforms the workings of the previous nine worlds from a state of illusion into a condition of enlightenment.

The Ten Factors of Life

The second chapter of the Lotus Sutra reveals the ten factors of life: “The true entity of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, external cause, latent effect, manifest effect and their consistency from beginning to end”.

1. **Appearance:** (Physical realm, colour form and behaviour)
2. **Nature:** (Spiritual realm, inherent disposition, soul-orb, individuality, reward body of causes made, Bliss body)
3. **Entity:** (The Buddha nature, True-self)
4. **Power:** (Life’s inherent capacity to take action)
5. **Influence:** (The impact upon others)

The Workings of Cause and Effect – Karma

Factors 6 to 9 explain the workings of Karma revealing our relationship to others. They describe how the actions of the self cause us to shift from one of the ten worlds to another.

6. **Cause:** (contains latent effect at the same time)
7. **Relation or External Cause:** (the potential for change)
8. **Latent Effect:** (residing in our karmic soul-orb body)
9. **Manifest Effect:** (becomes the internal cause with its latent effect, creating the karmic memory)

This proves that we create our own reality and therefore the state of the world is the result of our collective creation. This can also be known as our collective Karma; the manifest effect of all our causes and effects resonating in their predominantly charged world.

You will now see that there is a relationship with the ten worlds and the law of cause and effect. The outcome of the planet is dependent upon the collective life condition of everyone on the earth.

All social systems, villages, towns, cities and countries will reflect their predominant world or life condition. They will all manifest the first five factors and

interact with others individually or collectively through the law of karma, factors six to nine.

One important consideration to embrace is that cause and effect exists at the same time! To many the mind that resonates in the lower consciousness worlds is unable to understand this concept because it measures everything in a linear way, through division and separation. “You did this to me and as a result I had this experience.”

In reality no duality exists. The internal cause contains the latent effect. They are vibrating together and manifest into existence like a seed flowering when the external relationship is right to enable it to grow and burst open, revealing what was hidden within the seed.

The four factors of cause and effect, the workings of karma, can be considered as follows:

- The sum total of our life’s experiences is contained within our soul-karmic-mind.
- Every life moment has been experienced from a certain consciousness; one of the ten worlds.
- Each past experience therefore has been charged with a certain vibrational frequency.
- The past experience came into existence as the result of a relationship; an external cause.
- The external cause or relationship was attracted by the internal cause.
- The result of the internal cause and the external cause coming together created the outcome or manifest effect.
- The manifest effect was already dormant within the soul-karmic-mind as the latent effect.
- The opportunity for change is therefore consciousness dependent; this proves life is not fated.
- Fate is the result of no change in consciousness and explains repeated patterns of behaviour due to residing in the lower worlds and only reacting to the external cause; the external relationship of life.
- The mystical reality of enlightenment is based upon inner change. When you change on the inside the outside naturally changes. This means everything is dependent upon your life condition. Raise your life condition to a higher consciousness and you change the latent cause and latent effect within your soul-karmic-mind before it has come into contact with the external cause. The manifest effect eventually then becomes enlightenment.

The Oneness of Life

The above nine factors are equally endowed within all things. 'Their consistency from beginning to end' is the final factor representing the totality of all the others.

10. Their consistency from beginning to end: (All factors exist as wholeness)

This can be seen as the Oneness of the three aspects of: spiritual nature, material appearance and entity. This factor is the integrating factor that unites the other nine in every moment of life. In other words, where there is one factor all other factors must exist.

T'ien-t'ai in his Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra wrote: "Appearance exists only in what is material; nature exists only in what is spiritual. Entity, power, influence and relation in principle combine both material and the spiritual. Internal cause and latent effect are purely spiritual; manifest effect exists in what is material".

Finally the last factor, 'consistency from beginning to end', in integrating all the others, demonstrates that both beginning and end are inseparable, revealing Oneness. The first three factors combine as entity, or beginning. The following six factors act as the functions of all phenomena, or end.

The Three Realms of Existence

1. SELF: The realm of the individual
2. SOCIETY: The realm of all living beings (sentient beings)
3. NATURE: The environment (non-sentient life)

The Separate Self

Our consciousness of the 'Self', until enlightenment, forms the framework whereby we support our dualistic world-view of life. Our perceived division of the Universe into two parts 'self' and 'others', or internal and external arises from our consciousness of 'Self'. This consciousness also gives rise to other dualities: for example, the duality of the mind and the body (in which we regard our mind as being our True-self whereas the body is not).

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Life at each moment encompasses both body and spirit and both self and the environment of all sentient beings in every condition of life, as well as non-sentient beings – plants, sky, stars and earth, on down to the

most minute particles of dust. Life at each moment permeates the Universe and is revealed in all phenomena.”

The Oneness of Self and Society

The reality is that we need others to live. The reality that we all experience life as individuals is easily understood, however the true reality is that we are one-being in relationship with each other; one family on earth. What we do to others is reflected back to us through the law of cause and effect. When we deliberately hurt another we only hurt ourselves.

As the ten factors reveal, we require relationships to manifest our life's experiences. Without others we would not be able to experience the ten worlds. Most importantly it is other people who enable us to reveal our true identity beyond our apparent separation; that of the Buddha.

The Oneness of Life and the Environment

It is a common human failing to always blame our sufferings on things outside ourselves, other people or circumstances beyond our control, rather than to make the effort to look for the causes within ourselves. However, if we take the Oneness of life as a principle and base our lives on this perception, we see that the fundamental cause of all our trials and tribulations lies in ourselves and not the environment.

This principle of Oneness explains how individuals can positively influence their environments through inner change or through changing their consciousness. This is because the individual has the potential to manifest any of the ten worlds; when an individual changes in consciousness this is then reflected within the environment. Once understood, this concept becomes very empowering in terms of your ability to bring about change and create value in life and the natural environment; all you have to do is change your own consciousness!

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “T'ien-t'ai states that if the minds of the people are impure, their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land. There are not two lands, pure and impure in themselves. The difference lies solely in the positive or negative condition of our minds.”

All non sentient phenomena are environment and the sentient beings are life. Environment is like the shadow and life the body. Without the body there can be no shadow. Similarly, without life, environment cannot exist, even though life is supported by its environment.

Appendix

The Buddha's Early Leading Teachings

A preparation for enlightenment

Quote from The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings

When the Buddha taught the Sutra of innumerable meanings his Bodhisattvas were surprised and confused as they thought the teachings the Buddha taught them over forty years were complete in themselves. They asked the Buddha to confirm why he had not taught them this teaching before.

The Buddha replied that he had the capacity to see the natures of all living beings and as such presented them a teaching he knew they would accept. He did this to prepare them for this new doctrine. The Buddha knew that the natures and desires of all living beings were not equal. As their natures and desires were not equal, he preached the Law variously. He was using expedient means. Although he taught different teachings he included the teaching of Innumerable meanings in each one.

He maintained that what they had previously learned was required as a preparation to remove their illusions. This then provided them with a foundation state of higher consciousness for their enlightenment; they then had a capacity to accept a more directly to the point Truth. The preparation teachings were to remove illusionary attachments and develop meditation ability. In the Indian culture this is format the Vedanta takes. Yogic practices are introduced to prepare the mind for the eventual awakening that they are really Brahma and not a mind-body person.

The Buddha's compassion and wisdom is beyond measure and as such he knew that if he revealed 'the simple truth teaching' his disciples would reject it, causing them to slander the mystic truth and then once again fall back into the six lower states of consciousness.

He then confirmed that they were now to practice the teaching of the Innumerable Meanings through which they would quickly obtain full enlightenment, as it was a higher teaching.

The early Buddhist teachings; The Four Noble Truths, The Twelve Causes and The Six Parameters require great effort and take a long time to perform, bringing about partial enlightenment. The main reason for their introduction was to prepare the way for Buddhahood by clearing illusions. The Bodhisattvas who practice these spiritual teachings also make good causes through the practice of compassion for all living beings; helping others to become free from suffering.

Throughout existence this is how Buddhas teach all living beings; according to the peoples' capacity. Once illusions have been cleared the human-being experiences a higher state of consciousness, it is only then that the teachings can be presented in a simpler more direct way, bringing about higher states of consciousness very quickly, leading onto the full enlightenment experience of the True-self, the Buddha.

The following quote from the Sutra reveals the Buddha's expedient means and compassion for all living beings.

"Good sons! When I rolled the Law-wheel of the Four Noble Truths for the five men, Ajnata-Kaundinya and the others, at the Deer Park in Varanasi after leaving the king of trees, I preached that the laws are naturally vacant, ceaselessly transformed, and instantly born and destroyed.

When I discoursed explaining the Twelve Causes and the Six Parameters for all the bhikshus and Bodhisattvas in various places during the middle period, I preached also that all laws are naturally vacant, ceaselessly transformed, and instantly born and destroyed.

Now in explaining the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, a Great-vehicle, at this time, I preach also that all laws are naturally vacant, ceaselessly transformed, and instantly born and destroyed.

Good sons! Therefore the preaching I taught you at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end are the same in expression but different from one another in meaning. As the meaning varies, the understanding of living beings varies. As the understanding varies, the attainment of the law, the merit, and the way also varies.

Bodhisattva-mahasattvas, if you want to accomplish supreme Buddhahood quickly, you should learn and master the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, such a profound and supreme Great-vehicle."

Below is a basic outline of the earlier teaching taught to prepare practitioners for Buddhahood.

Law of the Twelve Causes

This law, also called The Doctrine of the Twelve-Link Chain of Dependent Origination, teaches that all phenomena in this world constantly change, appearing and disappearing, and that all changes are based on an established rule. Though all things change, this rule is immutable. We know it as the “Law of the Twelve Causes” because we divide the rule into twelve stages. However, it is easier for us to understand this law by limiting it to man than by trying to apply it to all phenomena.

The Buddha preached the “Law of the Twelve Causes” in detail to Ananda in the Dirgha-agama (Long Discourses) Sutra. This law rules the growth of the human body as well as the changes in people's mind. The former is called the ‘outer causation’ and the latter the ‘inner causation’. It explains the process through which a human being is born, grows, ages, and dies in light of the three temporal states of existence, the past, present, and future. In connection with this, it shows how people's minds change and the fundamental method of purifying and of removing illusions from them.

The first link in the chain is:

- 1) Ignorance, which gives rise to
- 2) Action (also, volition or karmic action)
- 3) Action causes consciousness, or the function to discern
- 4) Consciousness causes name and form, or spiritual and material objects of discernment
- 5) Name and form cause the six sense organs
- 6) The six sense organs cause contact
- 7) Contact causes sensation
- 8) Sensation causes desire
- 9) Desire causes attachment
- 10) Attachment causes existence
- 11) Existence causes birth; and
- 12) Birth causes ageing and death

Dependent Origination: The Twelve Links Explained

The twelve links in the Law of Dependent Origination provide an insight into the chain of existence.

It is because of the mystery of birth, old age and death that Buddhas arise in the world. There is no realm of existence in which these realities do not exist, and it is the sole purpose of the Buddha's enlightenment to penetrate into their root causes. Perhaps the most profound part of the Buddha's teaching is the description of how this wheel of life, death and rebirth continues rolling on. The insight into all the links of the chain of existence is expressed in what is called the Law of Dependent Origination.

There are twelve links in this Law of Dependent Origination. The first two have to do with causes in the last life which condition birth in this one. The first of these links is ignorance. Ignorance means not knowing the truth, not understanding the Dharma, ignorance of the Four Noble Truths.

Volitional activity is conditioned by ignorance; because we don't understand the truth, we are involved in all kinds of actions. And the karmic force of these actions conditions the third link in the chain. Because we do not perceive things clearly, because we do not perceive the fact of suffering and its cause and the way out, that force of ignorance conditions the next link in the chain: volitional actions of body, speech, and mind motivated by wholesome or unwholesome mental factors.

The third link is rebirth consciousness; that is, the first moment of consciousness in this life. Because ignorance conditioned the energy of karmic activity in our last life, rebirth consciousness arises at the moment of conception. Volition or intention is like the seed; rebirth consciousness, like the sprouting of that seed – a cause and – effect conditioned relationship. Because of ignorance there were all kinds of actions, all kinds of karmic formations. And because of karmic formations arises rebirth consciousness, the beginning of this life. Because of the first moment of consciousness in this life arises the whole mind-body phenomena, all the elements of matter, all the factors of mind. Finally, because of the mind-body phenomena arising, the sense spheres develop. This is during development of the embryo, before birth.

Rebirth consciousness at the moment of conception conditions the arising of mind-body phenomena. Because of that arise all the six spheres of the senses, the five physical senses and the mind, which in turn conditions the arising of contact, contact between the sense organ and its appropriate object: the eye and colour, the

car and sound, nose and smell, tongue and taste, body and sensation, mind and thoughts or ideas. Contact involves the coming together of an object through its appropriate sense door and the consciousness of either seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, or thinking.

Conditioned by the senses, contact comes into being. Because of the contact between the eye and colour, the ear and sound, and the other senses and their objects, there arises feeling. Feeling means the quality of pleasantness, unpleasantness, or neither pleasantness nor unpleasantness involved in every mind moment, in every moment of contact. Whether it is contact through the five physical sense doors or through the mind, feeling is always present, and is called, therefore, a common mental factor. Conditioned by contact, there arises feeling; that is, the quality of pleasantness, unpleasantness or neutrality.

Because of feeling arises craving. Craving means desiring, hankering after objects. What is it that we desire? We desire pleasant sights and sounds, pleasant tastes and smells, pleasant touch sensations and thoughts, or we desire to get rid of unpleasant objects. Desire arises because of feelings. We start hankering after, or wishing to avoid, these six different objects in the world. Feeling conditions desire. Desire conditions grasping. Because we have a desire for the objects of the six senses, mind included, we grasp, we latch on to, we become attached.

Grasping is conditioned by desire. Because of grasping, again we get involved in karmic formations, repeating the kinds of volitions which, in our past life, produced the rebirth consciousness of this life.

Feeling conditions desire, desire conditions grasping, and grasping conditions the continual actions of becoming, creating the energy which is the seed for rebirth consciousness in the next life. Because of these karmic actions resulting from grasping, again there is birth.

Because there is birth, there is disease, there is sorrow. There is decay, pain, suffering, and death. And so the wheel goes on and on, an impersonal chain of causality.

The Buddha's problem, and the problem of us all, is to discover the way out of this cycle of conditioning. It is said that on the night of his enlightenment he worked backward through the Law of Dependent Origination, seeking the place of release. Why is there old age, disease and death? Because of birth. Why is there birth? Because of all the actions of becoming, all the volitional activities motivated by greed, hatred and delusion. Why are we involved in these kinds of activities? Because of grasping. Why is there grasping? Because of desire in the mind. Why is there desire? Because of feeling, because the quality of pleasantness or

unpleasantness arises. Why is there feeling? Because of contact. Why is there contact? Because of the sense-spheres and the whole mind-body phenomena.

But there's nothing we can do now about being a mind-body process. That is conditioned by past ignorance and having taken birth. So there is no way to avoid contact. There's no possible way of closing off all the sense organs even if that were desirable. If there's contact, there's no way of preventing feeling from arising. Because of contact, feeling will be there. It's a common factor of mind. But, it is right at this point that the chain can be broken.

Understanding the Law of Dependent Origination, how because of one thing something else arises, we can begin to break the chain of conditioning. When pleasant things arise, we don't cling. When unpleasant things arise, we don't condemn. And when neutral things arise, we're not forgetful. The Buddha said that the way of forgetfulness is the way of death. And that the way of wisdom and awareness is the path to the deathless. We are free to break this chain, to free ourselves from conditioned reactions. It takes a powerful mindfulness in every moment not to allow feelings to generate desire.

When there's ignorance in the mind, feeling conditions desire. If there's something pleasant, we want it; something unpleasant, we desire to get rid of it. But if instead of ignorance in the mind there is wisdom and awareness, then we experience feeling but don't compulsively or habitually grasp or push away. If the feelings are pleasant, we experience them mindfully without clinging. If unpleasant, we experience them mindfully without condemning. No longer do feelings condition desire; instead, there is mindfulness, detachment, letting go. When there is no desire, there's no grasping; without grasping, there's no volitional activity of becoming. If we are not generating that tenancy, there's no rebirth, no disease, no old age, no death. We become free. No longer driven on by ignorance and desire, the whole mass of suffering is brought to an end.

Every moment of awareness is a hammer stroke on this chain of conditioning. Striking it with the force of wisdom and awareness, the chain gets weaker and weaker until it breaks. What we are doing here is penetrating into the truth of the Law of Dependent Origination, and freeing our minds from it.

The Four Noble Truths

The Four Noble Truths is a fundamental doctrine of Buddhism clarifying the cause of suffering and the way of emancipation. The Four Noble Truths are the truth of suffering, the truth of the origin of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, and the truth of the path to the cessation of suffering. Shakyamuni is said to have expounded the Four Noble Truths at Deer Park in Vārānasī, India, during his first sermon after attaining enlightenment.

- 1) All existence is suffering
- 2) Suffering is caused by selfish craving
- 3) The eradication of selfish craving brings about the cessation of suffering and enables one to attain nirvana
- 4) There is a path by which this eradication can be achieved, namely, the discipline of the eightfold path.

The Eightfold Path

In the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths, the truth of the path to the cessation of suffering is regarded as the discipline of the Eightfold Path. An early teaching of Buddhism setting forth the principles for attaining emancipation:

- 1) Right views, or correct views of the Buddha's teaching;
- 2) Right thinking, which includes right thought, right intent, and right aspiration;
- 3) Right speech, or avoidance of falsehood, slander, abuse, and idle talk;
- 4) Right action, or abstaining from all wrong deeds such as taking life and stealing;
- 5) Right way of life, or living while purifying one's thoughts, words, and deeds;
- 6) Right endeavour, to overcome evil in one's own life and make an uninterrupted progress in pursuing the way of truth;
- 7) Right mindfulness, which means always aspiring for the truth and keeping its pursuit in mind; and
- 8) Right meditation.

The Six Parameters or Perfections

The six parameters are the six practices required of Mahayana bodhisattvas in order to attain Buddhahood. The Sanskrit word *pāramitā* is interpreted as “perfection” or “having reached the opposite shore,” i.e., to cross from the shore of delusion to the shore of enlightenment.

- 1) Almsgiving, which includes material almsgiving, almsgiving of the Law, and almsgiving of fearlessness (meaning to remove fear and give relief)
- 2) Keeping the precepts
- 3) Forbearance or to bear up patiently and continue one's Buddhist practice under all opposition and hardships
- 4) Assiduousness to practice the other five *pāramitās* ceaselessly, with utmost physical and spiritual effort
- 5) Meditation to focus the mind and contemplate the truth with a tranquil mind
- 6) The obtaining of wisdom which enables one to perceive the true nature of all things

Perfections (Six and Ten)

The perfections are the virtues that are fully developed by a bodhisattva (Buddha-in-training) to become a Buddha. All Buddhist traditions acknowledge that the perfections are practiced through multiple lifetimes extending over aeons of time for the purpose of achieving full Buddhahood for the welfare of beings. The lists of perfections varied according to the genre of literature in which they appeared. The practices that constitute the varied lists of perfections and how the perfections are conceived differ not only between groups but also between scholarly authors. The *pāramitās* appear in Buddhist literature as a group of perfections in varying lists, but the lists are notoriously unfixed, with six and ten perfections being the most common amount.

The Theravada tradition recognises ten, although only eight perfections are listed in the Buddhāpadāna and seven in the Cariyāpiṭak.

The ten perfections in the Theravada tradition are:

- (1) Generosity
- (2) Morality
- (3) Renunciation
- (4) Insight
- (5) Energy
- (6) Patience
- (7) Truthfulness
- (8) Resolution
- (9) Loving-kindness
- (10) Equanimity

A set of six perfections became common among some genres of mainstream Buddhist literature and developed into a standard list in a number of Mahayana sutras.

The six are:

- (1) Generosity
- (2) Morality
- (3) Patience
- (4) Vigor
- (5) Concentration
- (6) Wisdom

This list was expanded to complement the ten stages traversed by a bodhisattva in the course leading to full buddhahood. The additional perfections are :

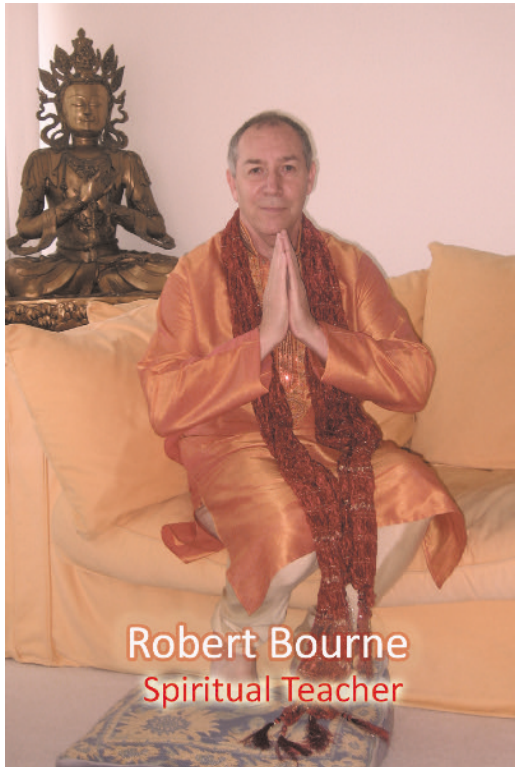
- (7) Skill-in-means
- (8) Resolution
- (9) Strength
- (10) Knowledge

The manner in which the perfections have been understood in different Buddhist cultures, such as in Tibet or Southeast Asia, is dependent on the Buddhist literature that is accessible or acceptable to the particular culture and the interpretive attention given to that literature.

About the Author

Robert Bourne

Robert Bourne now retired (was) a Spiritual Teacher, Reiki Master, Sports Psychologist, Musician, Author, and a multimedia spiritual course creator. He began his career in sports psychology, hypnosis and NLP gaining an honours degree for his thesis on Auto-suggestion in 1986.



Robert's life's purpose is to offer teachings and energy experiences to bring about a change in higher consciousness for the individual. The creation of value is always the first consideration when creating interactive courses. The vision is to assist in creating a new self-awakened age wherein society becomes a loving spiritual experience for the whole of mankind.

Robert was the founder of Reiki-party International, which was a friendship organisation uniting like-minded people. The spiritual organisation flowered in the spirit of Unconditional Love, whereby individuals who wished to could unite with like minded friends with the view of helping and supporting each other on their spiritual

journey.

Reiki-party quickly evolved into a less structured organisation promoting the expanded spiritual process 'New Awakening'. This new spiritual holistic process is the compassionate flowering of the True-self heart chakra within Spiritual Awakening. New Awakening offers love, healing and friendship, providing guidance for individuals who wish to hold spiritual practice groups to express the joy of Life.

Because of the understanding that total freedom for the individual's personal expression of the Divine experience is embraced, no specific structure has been created as to how to hold events or support meetings. New Awakening supports individuals in the form of providing a free download of all the courses in 'The Awakening Process'.

The events up to and after True-Self Realisation

After coming to a point in my life when I had to admit I had not fully had the experience that Christ or the Buddha had obtained I rolled up my Gohonzon to seek Enlightenment as a direct experience. It was then that I also experienced my enlightenment through reading the two copies of the sacred text of The Lotus Sutra side by side whilst continuously chanting the mantra of 'Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo'. I also added two changes in thinking about my spiritual approach. These were: 'Everything I think I know now is limited, therefore the person Robert has to say I know nothing is really true. What I think I know are truths have been based upon the limitations of my own dualistic mind, plus the teachings which I have been taught by others'. When I did this it was sincere not an idea I had heard about but a form of desperation in my emotions. The other concept was 'to embrace everything, the totality of existence as if it was God.' I threw myself into a passionate love affair with the whole of existence, people, objects and the environment, as if I was meeting God. I continually gave what love I could muster from my heart and after some time of doing this, by return quite unexpectedly, I received as a direct experience a fountain of Blissful unending flow of Divine Love. The tantric guidance 'Love everything as if it is God' came from Osho.

My final experience, as described in Chapter 11 of the Lotus Sutra 'The Emergence of The Treasure Tower,' was obtained through rolling up my Gohonzon, admitting I knew nothing, and requesting to the Mystic Law I wanted the same direct experience that Buddha and Christ had had. I then started reading the two copies of the Lotus Sutra because they had been translated from different sources, and chanting continuously Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo whilst I was doing so.

The Lotus Sutra is the Buddha's ultimate teaching. Practicing this Sutra (a detached wisdom practice) together with an (attached) Unconditional Love approach to all phenomena, will transform the soul's karmic entity into the Golden Body of the Buddha. This activates the two inner Divine aspects as described in chapter 24 and 25 of the Lotus Sutra.

I now wish to share the hidden truth which this Sutra offers in a simple way to help anyone from the novice to the hardened chanter, 'to Get it'. This is the fast track to awakening to your own inner Buddha within you as a direct experience.

What I wish to share may be shocking to those many beautiful beings whom I deeply treasure within my heart; those who have been embracing the Lotus Sutra in the form of one of the modern day practices. I maintain the perfection of all manifestations of Divinity or the Buddha-God nature; therefore all life forms are perfection as they are within the totality of this dualistic karmic world. I believe that

all who currently chant 'Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo' are assisting in the transformation of the planet's predominant life condition; acting like the engine house of a steam ship upon a turbulent river. This is a tremendous Bodhisattva role benefiting all life forms on the earth today.

My sharing could be a tremendous help in directly experiencing the Buddha within very quickly. Ever since the experience of the Treasure Tower Enlightenment I have been able to see the equality of all life forms in a golden perfection. The Buddha presence that flowed through my body had a transformational effect to all who experienced it. The inner 'Sat Guru' or Taho Buddha informed me, through the medium of knowingness, that I was not to share the Divine presence in a direct way, as a channeling of pure aura loving presence, as it was too powerful for the minds and bodies of the people who came into contact with it to experience. I was shown that the Buddha-God consciousness was within all things and therefore daily life was in fact the spiritual reality whereby the Buddha-God nature was the teacher at the very centre of all life activities. It was coming from within, not from without as an external cause. In chapter sixteen of the Lotus Sutra the Buddha's entity of his life reveals why he remains hidden although still close by.

Knowing this made me realise that it was the person 'I' that had to stop being the 'spiritual teacher' because Buddha-God was doing everything. I only use that reference for the sake of others. The influence and effect I was having upon others had to change in a new way.

The enormous love presence that flowed through me was able to help others in the form of bringing them love, healing and wisdom, yet I was told by the inner dweller Taho Buddha that I had to stop revealing the source because it was too strong. You could imagine that this understanding caused a total confusion in me, having had this experience to then having to hide it within myself. The remains of the karmic 'I' also became depressed with this understanding knowing 'Robert the personality' had become redundant. I (the person) thought, 'Well OK, if people are not able to experience this immense love because it transforms them without choice, just like the sun would melt an ice cube, then I had better become a Guru on an ashram, with warning signs on the outside stating, "Danger, enter if you wish to lose your mind and experience the tremendous love which you really are". This was not to be the case because once again the inner Taho Buddha informed me, "No, you have done this before in previous lives and others are now acting out this role."

For two years the inner Taho Buddha lived inside of me illuminating all of life, showing me how to live in this world without revealing the Presence. I really enjoyed this time as my mind was without desire. In fact how could I desire anything more than what I was experiencing - no questions, inner relaxation and complete

contentment, seeing the perfection of all life in its golden life condition of divinity. Was I happy? I was nothing else, desire-less, silent, in love; unshakable happiness was all I had become.

Several years passed and just tending to my daily life existence I spent time resting in the presence, only to act when moved to. One day out of nowhere I was directed to study and reform the teachings of Reiki Healing. My role was to reintroduce the true reason why the founder of Reiki healing in the West, Dr Usui became enlightened; yes it was from the meditation upon the Lotus Sutra. The 'I' Robert got carried away as layers of karmic debris came to the surface as to what to do with this revelation. Yes, the spiritual teacher re-emerged only to discover later that this was only a part of the puzzle that I had been guided to unfold.

I came to learn that Dr Usui, the founder of Reiki Healing in Japan had his own enlightenment through meditations upon the Lotus Sutra. I also discovered that he was a lay Tendai priest. The process he used in Japan was based upon Tendai Buddhism wherein Reiki Healing was taught together with giving wisdom teaching attainments on the ten worlds. When Reiki Healing was introduced in the West the wisdom teachings had been removed. One of my roles was to reintroduce the Buddhist teachings back into Western Reiki Healing and to release the attunement process free of charge on my YouTube channel. The Reiki Healing Master Teacher manual I have written now contains a full teaching on Ichinen Sanzen. The Reiki First degree manual has an updated history of Dr Usui's life revealing the truth of his practice of the Lotus Sutra, replacing the story that he was a Christian missionary as the Western version had stated. In no way did I set out to do this, it just emerged within me by the power of the mystic law of Myoho.

The next Divinely orchestrated task I was given occurred when I had a sudden knowingness emerge when attending a retreat with Mooji in 2011. This knowingness was to create a Vedic Sacred Mantra Bhakti Yoga CD. After I had completed this task I realised that this Sat Guru practice is for individuals who are attracted by this type of Vedic Truths to help them with their awakening process. The mantras in the practice are not to be listened to, but instead are to be sung and chanted with. The CD was created in gratitude and a tribute to all Sat Gurus, past and present, such as Mooji. Again I did not set out to do this as it just emerged within me from the mystic law of Myoho.

The Reiki teachings and the Bhakti Yoga loving devotional practice of worshipping the inner Divine are both practices to prepare the individual for Awakening.

The time is October 2012 when again resting in the presence I was moved so strongly to write this sharing about the Lotus Sutra, something I had grave

reservations in doing. From writing this book I can see the connection the Lotus Sutra has within the various different religions and spiritual practices that exist today. The Truth revealed in the Lotus Sutra is actually non-denominational and is contained within them all.

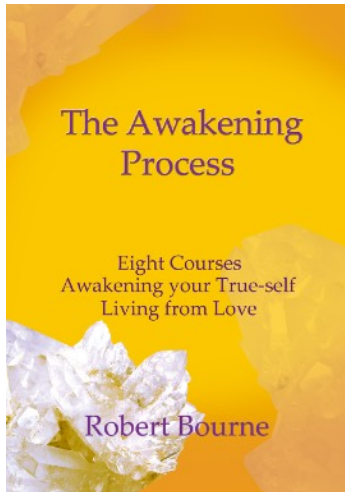
The final mystical task emerged within me in 2014. This was to create a modern teaching about 'Who and What we really are,' a teaching that resonates with today's evolution and is not associated with any past religious practice. This guidance for mankind again came without thinking, but this time it arrived into my life in a new way. I was being woken up totally refreshed after just a few hours sleep to a room filled with golden light. I felt amazing, my mind was not thinking but just resting in Pure Awareness consciousness. Then, just like a software download occurs on a computer, out of the nothingness of non-form my thinking mind was receiving a set of Divine Truths. This experience happened every night until I had captured everything and realised that I had to write a new book called 'The Divine Message About You.'

These modern teachings do not have any connection to a past religion or spiritual practice and are being shared in a directly to the point collection of Truths. 'The Divine Message About You' is now included in the 'Gentle Touch Practice'. It can also be downloaded within 'The Awakening Process' a free book containing all eight spiritual modules from my website. I believe this directly to the point modern approach has manifested to assist the youth of today with their awakening.

The new practice called 'Gentle Touch' reflects my original desire to fully experience the state of consciousness that Buddha and Christ had experienced as it contains both; Truth, Pure Awareness and the Presence of Unconditional Love. All of these elements are a requirement for True-self awakening.

I am not presenting this information to influence or take you away from your path or current practice as there is no need as I know your current practice is perfect for your uniqueness; it is just a sharing about what has happened in my life and my profound relationship with the Lotus Sutra.

About the Author



Since my retirement to help others with their awakening I have released all of my books, spiritual practices, Reiki Healing training courses and personal development courses Free of Charge.

If you are interested to read other books I have written or to discover more, then please visit my website and download 'The Awakening Process' and read to your hearts content. You may find something that will support your own spiritual journey.

The book 'The Awakening Process'
is a FREE download from
www.naturallyyou.co.uk

Personal Experiences and Support

Who and What you really are!

“All things will be enlightened in your presence; all pathways will be illuminated by your presence”. This statement just entered my mind without thinking; it was a sudden inspiration. The statement refers to what happens when the Buddha-God consciousness (*and variations in name thereof*) enters the human being; it is just like switching on the light in a dark room. When the full Buddha-God nature enters your being, a transformation of your mind and soul’s total experience will occur. All your relationship connections to others will transform into unconditional love and all your illusionary beliefs will be transformed into enlightened Truth.

This experience shows that you can now stop trying to bring about happiness through trying to change 'the person' that so many of us are trying to do; but it is your consciousness that needs to change. When you change your consciousness to the highest Buddha-God consciousness you will experience unshakable happiness, blissful joy, compassion for others and most importantly you will feel love for yourself together with unconditional love towards others. There is no effort required to experience this as these qualities naturally accompany this state of consciousness. The good news is that you already have this Buddha-God inside of you right now, it is just that the mind is in the way, blocking you from experiencing this beautiful natural state of being.

When I talk about the full Buddha-God nature I say this because there are two aspects which bring about full enlightenment; one of these aspects is Divine Buddha Wisdom the inner Guru-dweller Taho Buddha and the other aspect is the eternal ocean of God’s Unconditional Love; the Christ consciousness, the inexhaustible compassion commonly known as the Divine Mother, which is the natural aura of True-Self Presence.

To relieve suffering brought about from our own limited consciousness an inner blessing can easily be received by this ‘Divine Mother’ aspect without having to change our illusionary minds. Embracing this aspect on its own brings about a ‘heavenly supported Awakening’ through pure compassionate unconditional love and healing.

The full merging with Buddha-God requires the dissolving of illusion, misconceptions held in the karmic mind soul body; this is achieved through the Buddha Wisdom, awakening of the inner-dweller Taho Buddha, which replaces personal interpretation and limited illusionary beliefs and concepts. Both of these aspects are revealed in chapters twenty-four and twenty-five of the Lotus Sutra.

If you wish to experience your enlightened life your first very big step is in believing that: 'The Buddha-God' is within you, and not outside of you.

The inner indescribable non-form invisible core of all existence, consciousness, bliss, love, compassion, acceptance of 'All as it Is,' joy, happiness, eternal, non-changing, luminous, existence; I refer to these aspects collectively as the 'Buddha-God'. I mention this because you may have formed another relationship with the name you have given and that is perfectly okay to relate using that name; because, in truth no name can describe this core mystical aspect that is in Oneness with all existence.

There are however commonly agreed qualities and expressions from those enlightened beings who have experienced it. The Buddha brought the Truth of the Eastern Mystical teachings about enlightenment that is commonly known as Wisdom. Christ brought about the active enlightened transformational element of Divine Love and it is this element, experienced as Presence, which has the ability to return us back to the Oneness of our inner God. The knowledge to the 'Truth' of the non-form just one God was also awakened to by Abraham; who is at the foundation of the three main Western Religions; Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Love brings grace to the hard 'Truth' enlightened to by Abraham. The Truth is now softened by the Love of God; together, Truth and Love complete the whole picture.

Because of the disagreements between the different main western approaches individuals can get locked into the separate aspects they embrace. This can cause disputes about the Truth of practice and relationship with God and human life. This approach is looking at life from the personal mind residing in limited consciousness attaching itself to a particular practice and belief. This attachment reveals only part of the Truth, instead of seeing the whole picture from the mind of God or Pure-Awareness.

A Message for Christians Muslims and Jews

It is very, very difficult for me to share this message with you because the emotion I experience is overwhelming as I am filled with God's love.

A few years ago I was guided to gain an overview understanding of what the foundation of the main religions in the West are and why there is so much conflict between the various ways of embracing God. This prepared me for a direct experience I had which brought a message of Truth to all who believe in the Oneness and love of God and this is what I am sharing with you today.

God rose up into my heart and I was filled with an overwhelming love. A knowingness was in my mind without thinking. As I looked out into the world I saw

God's plan. My heart overflowing with love and great joy I could not hold back the tears which gently rolled down my cheeks as I felt the love God has for all Christians Muslims and Jews. In that moment I was one with God.

I will never forget this beautiful privileged experience which I wish to now share directly with you. I am your messenger and this is the message.

The karma of different races and communities have brought about these various teachings by the manifestation of three key individuals, Abraham, Jesus and Mohamed. The Divine has created these three different forms of worship as a preparation for full enlightenment because they are all true parts of the one Truth. This is also what has happened in Buddhism and Hinduism but with different Spiritual Masters and Gurus. According to the unique cultures different leading teachings have emerged to prepare mankind for a collective awakening.

The time will come when the various parts will be understood as different aspects of the same one Truth. All three parts practiced in the West are required to bring about full enlightenment for the human race. The three key aspects are Truth and Love experienced through personal surrender of one's limited egoic identity. Can you identify the different Religious approaches in these three qualities? Merge them together and we have world peace on earth. Therefore an acceptance and respect of all Religious differences is initially required before awakening can occur.

The message I have been given for those in the West is that the second coming many in the Western religions are waiting for is already here! The personal mind of the human-being thinks in terms of separation, i.e., me and the other etc, however in truth all is already in Oneness. Once enlightened to this Oneness then all is seen and understood as God manifesting as different forms.

Therefore it is only natural when we look at our Religious historical roots to see there was always an enlightened human-being who was enlightened to God whose mission it has been to help mankind with their spiritual relationship; according to their unique culture. This preparation of the various different forms of devotional practice and surrender to God has over the years created a maturity within mankind's souls to occur. This maturity enables the individual to awaken to the Oneness of God and the person when the time is right; and that time is right now, here now on earth! The second coming therefore is waiting for you, it will not be in the form of another human-being, as your conditioned mind believes, but it will be found within the soul body of every Jew, Muslim, Christian and of all other denominations thereof. The 'Truth' will always set you free and this is the new message I bring to you.

When you change your belief to this understanding your very own practice will awaken you to the God inside your heart. You will see or know with direct experience your Masters; Jesus, Abraham, Moses and Mohamed etc, as they are

alive within your very own soul body waiting to awaken you to your **Ascension**.

(**Ascension** in its basic **spiritual** or mystical sense can be thought of as the highest state of a human-being. It is the expansion of awareness. It involves the realisation of being ONE with the Creator and all of creation).

Various Eastern Teachings are a Preparation for Awakening

There is a relevance in mentioning the various Western Religions because there is a parallel situation to the various different Buddhist and Eastern practices. The Lotus Sutra is not just a Buddhist teaching but reveals where all spiritual practices and religions spring from and why they manifested within different cultures in accordance to the capacity and minds of the people; they are all leading and preparing individuals for their final awakening to who they really are.

It is important to share to all Buddhists why there are so many different Buddhist teachings and practices throughout the world. Being attracted to one of these forms today occurs because of the uniqueness or karmic disposition of the individual. Once again I have to mention that I have the greatest of respect for all the various different ways of practice and accept all Religious forms of expression.

I will reveal why the Buddha taught various different practices as it has a very important relationship to Enlightenment. All these pathways are different and are all correct because they are a preparation and karmic transformational device created by the expedient means of the Buddha to bring about the eventual ending of the journey; the awakening into the mystical Being-ness, the Buddhahood which you already are.

Let us take you back to the time of the Buddha where in India it already had its enlightenment teachings, shared by the Rishi Masters, with the creation of various different yogic practices which were designed to prepare the practitioners for the awakening of the True-self; Brahma, the source of the Vedanta. The Buddha, as we know, went on a journey throughout India to seek enlightenment and as he met the various spiritual groups joined them in seeking his own enlightenment. He went on to master the teachings and in many cases then become their leader. After a period of time, to his followers dismay, he then renounced the practice and continued his search for enlightenment elsewhere.

In the introductory chapter to the Lotus Sutra, 'The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings' the Buddha explained why he taught the various leading spiritual

practices, as you will have discovered in more detail in that chapter. I have included a small extract below to remind you, showing that all Buddhist Teachings practiced today were taught only as a preparation for Enlightenment, although the simple 'Truth' was included in each of the various different teachings. The Lotus Sutra in a mystical format revealed the Buddha's Truth and direct pathway to Buddhahood. The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings told us in an understandable language this Truth.

Quote from the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings - Chapter 1

"The great Bodhisattvas present then praised the Buddha in great depth, acknowledging him as their enlightened teacher. They then thanked him for teaching **The Four Noble Truths, The Six Parameters, and the Twelve Causes**, according to the working of the minds of living beings."

Then the Bodhisattva-Mahasattva Great Adornment, with the eighty-thousand Bodhisattva-mahasattvas, finished praising the Buddha and all said in unison: "World honoured One, we, the assembly of the eighty-thousand Bodhisattvas, want to ask you about the Buddha's Law."

The reason the Buddha taught the popular known Buddhist teachings of the Four Noble Truths with the Eightfold Path, The Six Parameters and The Twelve Causes was for the simple reason of preparing the mind of the practitioner to be able to accept the simple Truth that they were already enlightened. However their True-self was being hidden by their karmic body containing their minds' beliefs of the various Yogic Buddhist practices they were engaged with. The Buddha had immense compassion for them knowing that if he taught this enlightened Truth earlier they would reject it. Rejecting the Truth would be slandering the mystic law, resulting in the individual follower to fall into a lower realm of consciousness as a consequence.

Today my message is the same for all Buddhists, Hindus and all associated Religions as I have already shared previously for all Christians, Jews and Muslims; You Have Been Prepared. Stop and change your mind's perception and live in not-knowing. Look within and you will discover that the Truth is there about who and what you really are. Your Religious masters are waiting on the inside to awaken you. This means you don't have to change your faith or Religion to awaken; what is now required is just a change of knowledge as to What and Who you really are.

The mission of Sri Ramana Maharshi who lived as recently to our current time (1989-1950) realised the True-self to share with us this very Truth. Because of his great sacrifice he has left the pathway open for us to complete our final realisation of Who and What we really are. He shared with us that there is no longer any requirement for us to become an ascetic and renounce life because we are meant to live our daily lives from our True-self and not the misidentification of believing we are a separate person. The other misidentification he clearly revealed is that we are not the body. He taught us that when the mind turns inwards resting in the Divine heart free from its attachments awakening to the Pure-Awareness-Self occurs, (*The Buddha-God awakening and realisation*).

Personal Experiences - Visiting Past Life Teachings

I would like to share a few experiences that have surprised me, which have emerged throughout my spiritual journey. These experiences are relevant to being able to share this message with you and have helped enable me to provide a modern interpretation of The Lotus Sutra. They relate to how I can now say that I practice every Religion but am now one with that which was before all.

I am aware of going around the wheel of incarnation many times, living in various different countries mostly in the East in a monastic or priesthood role. This is not my imagination or some sort of dream fantasy but as a result of confirmation being given to me by other priests of different denominations around the world. They all have confirmed that I am known to them, part of their family and have encouraged me to return home again to their particular practice.

The only leader I have met who knew I had another role in this incarnation was that of the Krishna organisation in India. *The story in more detail is mentioned in another free book 'Love and Relationships' one of the eight modules in 'The Awakening Process'*. When I said I had better become a Krishna devotee and retake my initiation with the Krishna movement, he replied that there was no need as another path was my way in this life.

The priest I met in Thailand said I belonged to their tradition and offered me to return home to them by providing accommodation in a beautiful part of central Thailand for me to live. In this situation I knew their teachings were within me, however I also knew that there was no need to do it again as I had other things to do in this life but at that time knew not what that was.

The Hindu faith in Bali welcomed me to attend their village ceremonies, not normally open to non Hindus. I had tremendous love for them with a sense of going home but again I knew I had to move on.

A healing group in London were having visions for months about a man who was going to arrive at their group. They revealed, so they believed, that the man to arrive was a disciple of Jesus; my mystical arrival fulfilled their prophesy as mentioned in more detail in my biography in 'The Awakening Process'. This is not my statement as I make no such claim about this but is what others have said and feel they know about my life.

The Nichiren priest who looked after me on my visit to Japan was surprised at the way I acted and said we were like brothers and the practice of the Lotus Sutra was carried through within me from past lifetimes.

My karmic relationship with Makiguchi's Education for Creative Living was revealed when I visited the junior Soka School in Osaka Japan and meet with all the heads of the Soka School system. At that meeting I was invited to visit the senior high school and received the offer to teach English in the Soka senior high school. After gaining my TEFL teaching qualification one year later the offer was withdrawn. This lead me to realise that in this life I had another mission to fulfil. I am grateful for this rejection as it lead me to gain my Awakening experience, so everything has been perfect.

I would now like to share the location on the planet where the great enlightened teachers and spiritual masters of the past are now existing. This will explain why have they not incarnated into another body to carry on their mission in helping mankind. I was shown this in my Treasure Tower awakening experience.

To illustrate this point I will firstly share another personal experience to bring about a new understanding of the multi-dimension in which we are all living. My meeting was with a Yoga teacher of the Sri Swami Satchidananda method. It caused such Bliss to spontaneously manifest that she was unable to function through the ecstatic joy she was experiencing. She was personally trained by Sri Swami Satchidananda and shared with me her experience of being at a special ceremony held by the request of Sri Swami Satchidananda after his passing. He had left instruction for those disciples who were close to him to come together after he had left his body. At the ceremony the whole group was lifted into a beautiful state of grace. I instantly knew, through Swami within the Oneness heart within me, what had happened. The message I had to share with her was that he had split himself into many and incarnated holographically into each disciple at the ceremony to assist with their teaching of Yoga and for their personal enlightenment.

I mention this experience because the message is the same, no matter what practice you are involved with, "Your enlightened masters are all now residing spiritually on the inside of you waiting to help you awaken to the Oneness of existence".

This is where the person's mind becomes confused because the location where the past spiritual masters reside now is in a mystical spiritual realm and they will not become another physical person. At this time using your own spiritual practice or faith there has never been an easier time for your Awakening to discover what and who you truly are!

After the Buddha had taught the various spiritual groups new leading practices he then went on to teach the Lotus Sutra. His incarnated role in India therefore was as a reformer as he brought the Indian spiritual practices of his time back to the one Truth as originally taught by the Rishi Masters. He also states in the Lotus Sutra he is always here in this world. You will not find him in any of the Buddhist temples but you will find him within in the Oneness Divine heart inside the temple of your body.

My own conditioning is based in a western Christian upbringing with a Buddhist spiritual practice 1987-2005 up until awakening occurred. It is important to mention that a fusion of Love and Truth occurred to me bringing together the Western and Eastern models of Spiritual and Religious practices. I therefore ask you again to bear with my terminology of using the term Buddha-God when describing that which you really are and not a person.

Today I really have no words to describe what that is, there is only an inner silence which has no form but I experience it and know it is alive with the Oneness of all that is, my mind is not-thinking residing in Pure Awareness, the Divine heart is overflowing through my lower six chakras with love and compassion for all living beings.

Attending an SGI Meeting after my Awakening Experience

Nam Myoho Renge Kyo is the title of The Lotus Sutra the Buddha's ultimate teaching.

The month was August 2022 when I was reintroduced to the practice of chanting this mantra by a wonderful young woman named Sarah. As I had not attended a discussion meeting for many years I was excited to attend.

I was warmly greeted by Andy at his flat and by all the members who were gathered there. I was very happy to be there as it felt like going home to my real family. We all chanted Nam Myoho Renge Kyo for half an hour followed by Gongyo, the recitation of the second and sixteenth chapters of The Lotus Sutra with a discussion meeting to follow.

After the meeting Sarah was keen to know how my experience had been and it is this that I wish to share.

I was left with a golden light in my mind, again my natural no thinking state of mind. I was very present and my actions (behaviour) were spontaneous; a direct expression in the moment in relation to those around me without the interference of karmic connection. Just a natural joy of life. In the week that followed my relationship with children became interesting as they instantly enjoyed the playfulness that occurred between us. Adults were more controlled when we met but happily opened up to my presence as it appeared to be safe to chat with me.

I would describe this experience as the illumination of the mind in a Golden light revealing the action of my True-Self being expressed through my body in the present moment. It is a mystical state of life beyond the thinking mind's understanding.

Guidance for those Chanting Nam Myoho Renge Kyo

For those who practice the chanting of Nam Myoho Renge Kyo what I see happening is that the Buddha nature or Golden Light of your True-self is brought into the egoic mind. This has the effect of transforming the attachments that exist in a state of lower consciousness and illusion within the karmic storehouse of your mind-body-person. The transformation or illumination that occurs has the effect of expanding and revealing internal causes to manifest in your daily life. It brings to you in an expanded way others that become the mirror of your internal causes. As Nichiren said; "How do you polish the mirror of the mind? By chanting the mystic law of Nam Myoho Renge Kyo."

What you will then experience is that relationships with others, the external cause or quantum entanglements, will transform as these tendencies will become quite obvious because you will fully experience them. Either two things will then happen. If the other person or situation resists change, which is quite likely, then you will set free from that connection. The other possible outcome is that if there is no resistance within the other person a new connection will be formed based upon your Buddha Nature - Buddahood.

To avoid emotional and mental suffering be mindful of what is happening and have the attitude of gratitude in being able to see the outcomes of your chanting. When you approach your life without resistance by accepting the transformation that is occurring, even through at that time you may not have awareness of the benefit you are experiencing, you will avoid the pain and suffering that resistance will bring you. In time you will come to totally understand what has happened.

Thank You - Thank You - Thank You

Nam Myoho Renge Kyo