

April Discussion Topic: Nam-myoho-renge-kyo - The Fundamental Law That Pervades the Universe and our Lives

According to Nichiren Buddhism, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the fundamental Law that pervades the entire universe and all life.

Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, viewed the sufferings of all people as his own and sought a way to resolve it. During this search, he awakened to the truth that the eternal, all-pervading Law of the universe existed within his own life. Through this profound insight, he became a Buddha, an “Awakened One.”

Nichiren Daishonin declared that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo - the Mystic Law - is the fundamental law of life that pervades the entire universe and is also present within our own lives. By chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we can bring forth our innate Buddha nature. We gain access to the deepest level of our lives - where our lives and the universe are one. He taught that chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the means by which every person can bring their life into harmony with the law of life. Through this, we can develop a life state of unshakeable happiness (Buddhahood) - filled with wisdom, courage, compassion and vitality - and overcome our daily challenges and difficulties

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo means ‘devotion to the Mystic Law of cause and effect’. It can also be described as bringing one’s life in rhythm with the universe. The individual words each carry multiple meanings. *Nam* comes from the Sanskrit word *namu*, and means to devote oneself - to choose this Law with body and mind, and to practice and embody it with one’s whole being.

Myoho literally means Mystic Law - the fundamental truth underlying the workings of the universe. ‘Mystic’ here means something deeper than our minds can fully comprehend.

Renge means lotus flower. The lotus blooms and produces seeds at the same time, symbolizing the simultaneity of cause and effect. Although the lotus grows in muddy water, it remains pure. This represents the blossoming of Buddhahood amid the challenges of daily life.

Kyo means ‘sutra’, but also ‘sound’ or ‘vibration’. It refers to the power of our voice, which is essential in our Buddhist practice. Through chanting, we bring this law to life within our own existence and influence both ourselves and our surroundings.

The law of cause and effect teaches that we are responsible for our own lives. We make causes and experience the effects. At the same time, we have the power to change our karma. SGI President Ikeda says: “Reciting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo aloud represents determination and our vow to dedicate our lives to the truth of Myoho-renge-kyo in thought, word and deed.” He describes gongyo and daimoku as a solemn ceremony in which our lives communicate with the universe. In Buddhism, this is called the ‘fusion of reality and wisdom’.

When we realize that our lives inherently possess Buddhahood, we can develop boundless inner strength and happiness. By challenging our difficulties with faith, we build a state of indestructible happiness.

- What does chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo mean to you personally?
- What changes have you experienced in your thoughts, feelings or actions?

- How does this practice help you to face challenges or achieve your goals?