

APRIL 28, 1253: THE FOUNDING OF NICHIREN BUDDHISM

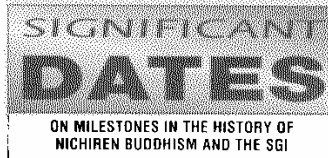
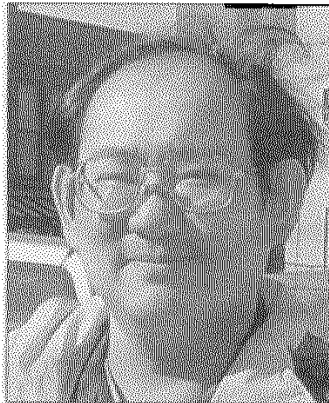
Living the Law – The Source of Great Fortune

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Through the practice of Buddhism, we each bring to the world something unique. We are daughter and son, mother and father, friend and co-worker, student and teacher, boss and employee. We function in myriad relationships where we live and work, where our actions have consequence and thus the way we live becomes all the more important. Having discovered the source of a happy life within ourselves, we are strongly motivated to enable others to uncover their inner treasure as well. How did this become possible?

Buddhism was revitalized 750 years ago through the life and courage of the Buddhist priest Nichiren Daishonin. From his youth until the age of 32, his search for truth focused on study and research of the Buddhist sutras and the fundamental tenets of the different schools of Buddhism in the Kamakura period. This was not simply an intellectual pursuit but a passionate struggle to directly confront and resolve the sufferings of life and death.

The Daishonin was grounded in the realities of his age. Confusion reigned due to the unusual calamities, natural and man-made, that plagued Japan and the competitive, power-hungry Buddhist sects that exploited the people. From a young age, already acutely aware of the sufferings and worries of the people, he prayed to become the wisest person in Japan. From his prayer and vow, he awakened to the essence of the universal life inherent in the lives of all people.



When his studies eventually brought him to Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra, he realized that it contained the beneficial medicine for humankind that he was seeking. He confirmed that the profound wisdom to which he had awakened in his youth was the Mystic Law implicit in the sutra.

Before an audience at Seicho-ji temple at noon on April 28, 1253, the Daishonin, now 32, introduced Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. He refuted the errors of the Pure Land and other schools of Buddhism that distorted Shakyamuni's true intent by denying the direct path to Buddhahood.

He also took this occasion to change his name from Rencho (lotus growth) to Nichiren (sun lotus) and explained, "My giving myself the name Nichiren derives from my own enlightenment regarding the Buddha vehicle" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 993).

His declaration of the Bud-

dhist teaching that enables all people to enter the path of Buddhahood signaled the beginning of a great human revolution — a revolution of the spirit to be carried out by awakened, ordinary people. He was fully prepared to face violence, false accusation, persecution and exile at the hands of arrogant priests and corrupt authority that the sutra predicts its true votary will definitely encounter.

The Daishonin was unique in that he lived the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Those who came before him, who had compiled and inherited the Lotus Sutra's teachings up to that time, were not able to make its truth accessible to all people. Culminating a lifetime of triumphant struggle against those who would deny and obstruct the immense power and dignity possessed by ordinary people, he inscribed the Gohonzon — the clear mirror that embodies the Mystic Law inherent in life. The Daishonin opened the direct path to Buddhahood for all people into the eternal future.

Buddhism at its root is about the Law that is the source of all life, and how all life possesses this Law — the Buddha nature. Buddhahood, or enlightenment, comes from our efforts to align ourselves with this Law and the creativity, growth and courage that we develop in the process. And it is the Daishonin's example of an ordinary person manifesting the life of absolute happiness through dauntless devotion to the Law that shows us the way for realizing a life of continuous growth and self-actualization. **WT**