

Work Cited

The sections of this booklet quoted from the Lotus Sutra were originally translated by Burton Watson and come from the following book:

Watson, Burton (1993). The Lotus Sutra.
New York: Columbia University Press.

This is an excellent translation of the Lotus Sutra. We strongly recommend this translation for further reading of the Lotus Sutra.

The Lotus Sutra

The Expedient Means Chapter
and
The Life Span Chapter

Translated by: Burton Watson

udumbara – A type of plant said to bloom only once in three thousand years. Used in Buddhist literature to symbolize the rarity of encountering a Buddha.

voice-hearers – Shakyamuni Buddha's disciples. Those who listen to his preaching and strive to attain enlightenment. Also called voice-hearer disciples.

World Honored One – One of the ten epithets for a Buddha.

Shakyamuni" death. Meanwhile he dwells in the Tushita heaven.

Mandarava flower – Also called mandara flower. A kind of fragrant red flower that blooms in heaven.

nayuta – A numerical unit, defined differently in different texts but clearly indicating an extremely large number.

nirvana – The word, which means “blown out,” indicates the state in which one has escaped from the cycle of birth and death. In Mahayana Buddhism, it is taken to mean awakening to the true nature of phenomena, or the perfection of Buddha wisdom.

outflows – That which flows out ceaselessly from the six sense organs, that is illusions. Outflows is another term for earthly desires. Hence to be free of outflows is to be without illusions or desires.

paramita – One of the six paramitas. These were six practices required of Mahayana bodhisattvas in order to attain Buddhahood. The Sanskrit word paramita means “perfection” or “having reached the other shore,” that is, having crossed over from the shore of delusion to that of enlightenment. The six practices are: 1) almsgiving 2) keeping the precepts 3) forbearance 4) assiduousness 5) meditation and 6) wisdom.

pratyekabuddha – A “self-enlightened” being, one who has won an understanding of the truth through his or her own efforts but makes no effort to enlighten others.

saha world – Our present world, which is full of sufferings to be endured. The Sanskrit word saha means “endurance.”

samadhi – A state of intense concentration of the mind, which produces a sense of inner serenity.

Shariputra – One of Shakyamuni’s ten major disciples, known as foremost in wisdom. The third chapter of the Lotus Sutra predicts that he will become a Buddha named Flower Glow.

threefold world - The world of desire, the world of form, and the world of formlessness. The realms inhabited by unenlightened beings who transmigrate within the six paths. Beings in the world of desire are ruled by various desires. Those in the world of form have material form but no desires. Those in the world of formlessness are free from both desire and form.

Thus Come One – One of the ten epithets for a Buddha.

Three Treasures – The three things that all Buddhists are enjoined to serve and revere, namely, the Buddha, the Law or Dharma, and the Sangha or Order.

The ceremony of Gongyo

This is a “gongyo” book. Gongyo is a term that means “assiduous practice.” It refers to the recitation of the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters of the Lotus Sutra. As Nichiren Buddhists, we recite gongyo twice per day, once in the morning and once in the evening, and chant Namu-myoho-enge-kyo as an integral part of the ceremony of gongyo.

The correct performance of the ceremony:

Ring the bell. Chant Namu-myoho-enge-kyo three times. Ring the bell. Recite the “Expedient Means” chapter. Ring the bell. Recite the “Life Span” chapter. Ring the bell. Chant Namu-myoho-enge-kyo for as long as you desire. Ring the bell when you are finished chanting. Chant Namu-myoho-enge-kyo three times to conclude the ceremony.

If one desires, they may only chant Namu-myoho-enge-kyo rather than reciting sections of the Lotus Sutra. One can receive immense benefit from simply reciting Namu-myoho-enge-kyo. We strongly encourage that practitioners recite some portion of the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters in addition to reciting Namu-myoho-enge-kyo as part of their daily practice. However, we realize that people have varying time

constraints. Therefore, we have broken this book down into parts. In this way, one may recite some parts and not others, making the practice of gongyo more flexible.

The stronger your practice the greater the benefit you will receive. So, if you have enough time to recite the entire book, we encourage you to do so.

Part A begins on page 6. This is the opening and most profound section of the “Expedient Means” chapter.

Part B begins on page 8. This is the end of the “Expedient Means” chapter.

Part C begins on page 16. This is the prose section of the “Life Span” Chapter.

Part D begins on page 25. This is the verse section of the “Life Span” chapter.

Here are some suggested alternate forms of gongyo with increasing amounts of time required for each.

1. Just chant Namu-myoho-enge-kyo for as long as you want.
2. Recite part D only and chant Namu-myoho-enge-kyo afterward.
3. Recite part C only and chant Namu-myoho-

Glossary

annutara-samyak-sambodhi – Supreme perfect enlightenment, the enlightenment of a Buddha.

arhat – A “worthy,” one who has attained the highest stage of Hinayana enlightenment, the highest among the four kinds of shravakas or voice-hearers. Such a person has gained freedom from transmigration in the six paths of existence. The Lotus Sutra urges one to reject the goal of arhat and instead strive for the highest level of enlightenment, that of Buddhahood.

asamkhya – An ancient Indian numerical unit, indicating an uncountably large number.

asura – A class of contentious demons in Indian mythology who fight continually with the god Indra. In Buddhism, the asuras constitute one of the eight kinds of nonhuman beings who protect Buddhism.

avivartika – Term for the stage at which one is certain never to regress in religious practice, or for a person who has reached that stage.

bodhisattva – A being who aspires to attain Buddhahood and carries out various altruistic practices in order to achieve that goal. Compassion is the outstanding characteristic of the bodhisattva, who postpones his or her own entry into nirvana in order to assist others to gain enlightenment.

five desires – The desires that arise from the contact of the five sense organs, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body, with their respective objects. Sometimes the five desires are defined as the desire for wealth, sex, food and drink, fame, and sleep.

Holy Eagle Peak – Also called Gridhrakuta. A mountain northeast of the city of Rajagriha where Shakyamuni is said to have preached the Lotus Sutra and other teachings. The name is often translated in English as Vulture Peak, but because Kumarajiva in his Chinese translation of the Lotus Sutra calls it Eagle Peak, that translation has been adopted here.

kalpa – An extremely long period of time.

Law – In general the Buddha’s teachings. In Nichiren Daisoinin’s teaching, specifically, the Law of Namu-myoho-enge-kyo.

Maitreya – A bodhisattva, also called Ajita, who is mentioned in the seventeenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It is said that he will succeed Shakyamuni as the Buddha of the future and that he will appear in this world 5,670 million years after

He is like a skilled physician
who uses an expedient means
to cure his deranged sons.
Though in fact alive, he gives out word he is
dead,
yet no one can say he speaks falsely.
I am the father of this world,
saving those who suffer and are afflicted.
Because of the befuddlement of ordinary
people,
though I live, I give out word I have entered
extinction.
For if they see me constantly,
arrogance and selfishness arise in their minds.
Abandoning restraint, they give themselves up
to the five desires
and fall into the evil paths of existence.
Always I am aware of which living beings
practice the way, and which do not,
and in response to their needs for salvation
I preach various doctrines for them.
At all times I think to myself:
How can I cause living beings
to gain entry into the unsurpassed way
and quickly acquire the body of a Buddha?

renge-kyo afterward.

4. Recite parts A and D only and chant Namu-myoho-renge-kyo afterward.

5. Recite parts A, D and C only and chant Namu-myoho-renge-kyo afterward.

6. Recite parts A, B and C only (just the prose sections) and chant Namu-myoho-renge-kyo afterward.

**Myoho-Renge-Kyo
(Chapter 2) The Expedient Means Chapter**

At that time the World-Honored One calmly arose from his samadhi and addressed Shariputra, saying: “The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable. The door to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter. Not one of the voice-hearers or pratyekabuddhas is able to comprehend it.

“What is the reason for this? A Buddha has personally attended a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million, a countless number of Buddhas and has fully carried out an immeasurable number of religious practices. He has exerted himself bravely and vigorously, and his name is universally known. He has realized the Law that is profound and never known before, and preaches it in accordance with what is appropriate, yet his intention is difficult to understand.

“Shariputra, ever since I attained Buddhahood I have through various causes and various similes widely expounded my teachings and have used countless expedient means to guide living beings and cause them to renounce their attachments. Why is this? Because the Thus Come One is fully possessed of both expedient means and the paramita of wisdom.

“Shariputra, the wisdom of the Thus Come One is expansive and profound. He has immeasurable [mercy], unlimited [eloquence], power, fearlessness, concentration, emancipation, and samadhis, and has deeply entered the

constantly making many kinds of music. Mandarava blossoms rain down, scattering over the Buddha and the great assembly.

My pure land is not destroyed, yet the multitude see it as consumed in fire, with anxiety, fear and other sufferings filling it everywhere.

These living beings with their various offenses, through causes arising from their evil actions, spend asamkhya kalpas without hearing the name of the Three Treasures.

But those who practice meritorious ways, who are gentle, peaceful, honest and upright, all of them will see me here in person, preaching the Law.

At times for this multitude

I describe the Buddha’s life span as immeasurable, and to those who see the Buddha only after a long time

I explain how difficult it is to meet the Buddha. Such is the power of my wisdom that its sagacious beams shine without measure.

This life span of countless kalpas

I gained as the result of lengthy practice.

You who are possessed of wisdom, entertain no doubts on this point!

Cast them off, end them forever, for the Buddha’s words are true, not false.

means
at times I appear to be extinct, at other times
not,
and that if there are living beings in other
lands
who are reverent and sincere in their wish to
believe,
then among them too
I will preach the unsurpassed Law.
But you have not heard of this,
so you suppose that I enter extinction.
When I look at living beings
I see them drowned in a sea of suffering;
therefore I do not show myself,
causing them to thirst for me.
Then when their minds are filled with yearning,
at last I appear and preach the Law for them.
Such are my transcendental powers.
For asamkhya kalpas
constantly I have dwelled on Holy Eagle Peak
and in various other places.
When living beings witness the end of a kalpa
and all is consumed in a great fire,
this, my land, remains safe and tranquil,
constantly filled with heavenly and human
beings.
The halls and pavilions in its gardens and
groves
are adorned with various kinds of gems.
Jeweled trees abound in flowers and fruit
where living beings enjoy themselves at ease.
The gods strike heavenly drums,

boundless and awakened to the Law never before
attained.

“Shariputra, the Thus Come One knows
how to make various kinds of distinctions and to
expound the teachings skillfully. His words are
soft and gentle and can delight the hearts of the
assembly.

“Shariputra, to sum it up: the Buddha has
fully realized the Law that is limitless, boundless,
never attained before.

“But stop, Shariputra, I will say no more.
Why? Because what the Buddha has achieved is
the rarest and most difficult-to-understand Law.
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.”

At that time among the great assembly there were voice-hearers, arhats whose outflows had come to an end, Ajnata Kaundinya and the others, twelve hundred persons. And there were monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen who had conceived a desire to become voice-hearers or pratyekabuddhas. Each of these had this thought: Now for what reason does the World-Honored-One so earnestly praise expedient means and state that the Law attained by the Buddha is profound and difficult to understand, that it is very difficult to comprehend the meaning of the words he preaches, that not one of the voice-hearers or pratyekabuddhas can do so? If the Buddha preaches but one doctrine of emancipation, then we too should be able to attain this Law and reach the state of nirvana. We cannot follow the gist of what he is saying now.

At that time Shariputra understood the doubts that were in the minds of the four kinds of believers, and he himself had not fully comprehended. So he addressed the Buddha, saying, “World-Honored One, what causes and conditions led you to earnestly praise expedient means, the foremost device of the Buddhas, the profound, subtle and wonderful Law that is difficult to understand? From times past I have never heard this kind of preaching from the Buddha. Now the four kinds of believers all have doubts. We beg that the World-Honored One will expound this matter. For what reason does the World-Honored One earnestly praise this Law that is profound, subtle and wonderful, difficult to

Since I attained Buddhahood
the number of kalpas that have passed
is an immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten
thousands, millions, trillions, asamkhyas.
Constantly I have preached the Law, teaching,
converting countless millions of living beings,
causing them to enter the Buddha way,
all this for immeasurable kalpas.
In order to save living beings,
as an expedient means I appear to enter nirvana
but in truth I do not pass into extinction.
I am always here, preaching the Law.
I am always here,
but through my transcendental powers
I make it so that living beings in their
befuddlement
do not see me even when close by.
When the multitude see that I have passed into
extinction, far and wide they offer alms to my
relics.
All harbor thoughts of yearning
and in their minds thirst to gaze at me.
When living beings have become truly faithful,
honest and upright, gentle in intent,
single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha,
not hesitating even if it costs them their lives,
then I and the assembly of monks
appear together on Holy Eagle Peak.
At that time I tell the living beings
that I am always here, never entering
extinction,
but that because of the power of an expedient

“Good men, what is your opinion? Can anyone say that this skilled physician is guilty of lying?”

“No, World-Honored One.”

The Buddha said: “It is the same with me. It has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayuta and asamkhya kalpas since I attained Buddhahood. But for the sake of living beings I employ the power of expedient means and say that I am about to pass into extinction. In view of the circumstances, however, no one can say that I have been guilty of lies or falsehoods.”

understand?”

At that time the Buddha addressed Shariputra, saying, “Stop, stop! There is no need to speak further. If I speak of this matter, then the heavenly and human beings throughout the worlds will all be astonished and doubtful.”

Shariputra once more spoke to the Buddha, saying, “World-Honored One, we beg you to preach! We beg you to preach! What is the reason? Because this assembly of countless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of asamkhyas of living beings in the past have seen the Buddhas, their faculties are vigorous and acute and their wisdom is bright. If they hear the Buddha preach, they will be capable of reverent belief.”

The Buddha repeated, “Stop Shariputra! If I speak of this matter, the heavenly and human beings and asuras throughout the worlds will all be astonished and doubtful. The monks who are overbearingly arrogant will fall into a great pit.”

At that time Shariputra once more spoke to the Buddha, saying, “World-Honored One, we beg you to preach! We beg you to preach! In this assembly at present the persons like myself number in the hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions. In age after age we have already attended the Buddhas and received instruction. People of this kind are certain to be capable of reverent belief. Throughout the long night they will gain peace and rest and will enjoy many benefits.”

At that time the World-Honored One said

to Shariputra, “Three times you have stated your earnest request. How can I do other than preach? Now you must listen attentively and carefully ponder. For your sake I will now analyze and explain the matter.”

When he had spoken these words, there were some five thousand monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen in the assembly who immediately rose from their seats, bowed to the Buddha, and withdrew. What was the reason for this? These persons had roots of guilt that were deep and manifold, and in addition they were overbearingly arrogant. What they had not attained they supposed they had attained, what they had not understood they supposed they had understood. And because they had this failing, they did not remain where they were.

The World-Honored One was silent and did not try to detain them.

At this time the Buddha said to Shariputra, “Now this assembly of mine is free of branches and leaves, made up solely of the steadfast and truthful. Shariputra, it is well that these persons of overbearing arrogance have withdrawn. Now listen carefully and I will preach for you.”

Shariputra said, “So be it, World-Honored One. We are eager to listen!”

The Buddha said to Shariputra, “A wonderful Law such as this is preached by the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, at certain times. But like the blooming of the udumbara, such times come very seldom. Shariputra, you and the others must believe me. The words that the Buddhas

perceive it as good.

“The father thinks to himself: My poor children! Because of the poison in them, their minds are completely befuddled. Although they are happy to see me and ask me to cure them, they refuse to take this excellent medicine. I must now resort to some expedient means to induce them to take the medicine. So he says to them: ‘You should know that I am now old and worn out, and the time of my death has come. I will leave this good medicine here. You should take it and not worry that it will not cure you.’ Having given these instructions, he then goes off to another land, where he sends a messenger home to announce, ‘Your father is dead.’

“At that time the children, hearing that their father has deserted them and died, are filled with great grief and consternation and think to themselves: If our father were alive he would have pity on us and see that we are protected. But now he has abandoned us and died in some other country far away. We are shelterless orphans with no one to rely on!

“Constantly harboring such feelings of grief, they at last come to their senses and realize that the medicine is in fact excellent in color and fragrance and flavor, and so they take it and are healed of all the effects of the poison. The father, hearing that his children are all cured, immediately returns home and appears to them all once more.

“At that time the father returns to his home and finds that his children have drunk poison. Some are completely out of their minds, while others are not. Seeing their father from far off, all are overjoyed and kneel down and entreat him, saying: ‘How fine that you have returned safely. We were stupid and by mistake drank some poison. We beg you to cure us and let us live out our lives!’”

“The father, seeing his children suffering like this, follows various prescriptions. Gathering fine medicinal herbs that meet all the requirements of color, fragrance and flavor, he grinds, sifts and mixes them together. Giving a dose of these to his children, he tells them: ‘This is a highly effective medicine, meeting all the requirements of color, fragrance and flavor. Take it and you will quickly be relieved of your sufferings and will be free of all illness.’”

“Those children who have not lost their senses can see that this is good medicine, outstanding in both color and fragrance, so they take it immediately and are completely cured of their sickness. Those who are out of their minds are equally delighted to see their father return and beg him to cure their sickness, but when they are given the medicine, they refuse to take it. Why? Because the poison has penetrated deeply and their minds no longer function as before. So although the medicine is of excellent color and fragrance, they do not

preach are not empty or false.

“Shariputra, the Buddhas preach the Law in accordance with what is appropriate, but the meaning is difficult to understand. Why is this? Because we employ countless expedient means, discussing causes and conditions and using words of simile and parable to expound the teachings. This Law is not something that can be understood through pondering or analysis. Only those who are Buddhas can understand it. Why is this? Because the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, appear in the world for one great reason alone. Shariputra, what does it mean to say that the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, appear in the world for one great reason alone?”

“The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, wish to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings, to allow them to attain purity. That is why they appear in the world. They wish to show the Buddha wisdom to living beings, and therefore they appear in the world. They wish to cause living beings to awaken to the Buddha wisdom, and therefore they appear in the world. They wish to induce living beings to enter the path of Buddha wisdom, and therefore they appear in the world. Shariputra, this is the one great reason for which the Buddhas appear in the world.”

The Buddha said to Shariputra, “The Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, simply teach and convert the bodhisattvas. All the things they do are at all times done for this one purpose. They simply wish to show the Buddha wisdom to living beings and enlighten them to it.

“Shariputra, the Thus Come Ones have only a single Buddha vehicle which they employ in order to preach the Law to living beings. They do not have any other vehicle, a second one or a third one. Shariputra, the Law preached by all the Buddhas of the ten directions is the same as this.

“Shariputra, the Buddhas of the past used countless numbers of expedient means, various causes and conditions, and words of simile and parable in order to expound the doctrines for the sake of living beings. These doctrines are all for the sake of the one Buddha vehicle. These living beings, by listening to the doctrines of the Buddhas, are all eventually able to attain wisdom embracing all species.

“Shariputra, when the Buddhas of the future make their appearance in the world, they too will use countless numbers of expedient means, various causes and conditions, and words of simile and parable in order to expound the doctrines for the sake of living beings. These doctrines will all be for the sake of the one Buddha vehicle. And these living beings, by listening to the doctrines of the Buddhas, will all eventually be able to attain wisdom embracing all species.

“Shariputra, the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, who exist at present in the countless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, and millions of Buddha lands in the ten directions, benefit and bring peace and happiness to living beings in large measure. These Buddhas too use countless numbers of expedient means, various causes and conditions, and words of simile and

know that it is a rare thing to live at a time when one of the Buddhas appears in the world.’ Why does he do this? Because persons of shallow virtue may pass immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of kalpas with some of them chancing to see a Buddha and others never seeing one at all. For this reason I say to them: ‘Monks, the Thus Come One is hard to get to see.’ When living beings hear these words, they are certain to realize how difficult it is to encounter the Buddha. In their minds they will harbor a longing and will thirst to gaze upon the Buddha, and then they will work to plant good roots. Therefore the Thus Come One, though in truth he does not enter extinction, speaks of passing into extinction.

“Good men, the Buddhas and Thus Come Ones all preach a Law such as this. They act in order to save living beings, so what they do is true and not false.

“Suppose, for example, that there is a skilled physician who is wise and understanding and knows how to compound medicines to effectively cure all kinds of diseases. He has many sons, perhaps ten, twenty, or even a hundred. He goes off to some other land far away to see about a certain affair. After he has gone, the children drink some kind of poison that makes them distraught with pain and they fall writhing to the ground.

neglected.

“Thus, since I attained Buddhahood, an extremely long period of time has passed. My life span is an immeasurable number of asamkhya kalpas, and during that time I have constantly abided here without ever entering extinction. Good men, originally I practiced the bodhisattva way, and the life span that I acquired then has yet to come to an end but will last twice the number of years that have already passed. Now, however, although in fact I do not actually enter extinction, I announce that I am going to adopt the course of extinction. This is an expedient means which the Thus Come One uses to teach and convert living beings.

“Why do I do this? Because if the Buddha remains in the world for a long time, those persons with shallow virtue will fail to plant good roots but, living in poverty and lowliness, will become attached to the five desires and be caught in the net of deluded thoughts and imaginings. If they see that the Thus Come One is constantly in the world and never enters extinction, they will grow arrogant and selfish, or become discouraged and neglectful. They will fail to realize how difficult it is to encounter the Buddha and will not approach him with a respectful and reverent mind.

“Therefore as an expedient means the Thus Come One says: ‘Monks, you should

parable in order to expound the doctrines for the sake of living beings. These doctrines are all for the sake of the one Buddha vehicle. And these living beings, by listening to the doctrines of the Buddhas, are all eventually able to attain wisdom embracing all species.

“Shariputra, these Buddhas simply teach and convert the bodhisattvas. They do it because they wish to show the Buddha wisdom to living beings. They do it because they wish to use the Buddha wisdom to enlighten living beings. They do it because they wish to cause living beings to enter the path of Buddha wisdom.

“Shariputra, I too will now do the same. I know that living beings have various desires, attachments that are deeply implanted in their minds. Taking cognizance of this basic nature of theirs, I will therefore use various causes and conditions, words of simile and parable, and the power of expedient means and expound the Law for them. Shariputra, I do this so that all of them may attain the one Buddha vehicle and wisdom embracing all species.

“Shariputra, in the worlds of the ten directions, there are not two vehicles, much less three! Shariputra, the Buddhas appear in evil worlds of five impurities. These are the so-called impurity of the age, impurity of desire, impurity of living beings, impurity of view, and impurity of life span.

“Shariputra, when the age is impure and the times are chaotic, then the defilements of living beings are grave, they are greedy and jealous and

put down roots that are not good. Because of this, the Buddhas, utilizing the power of expedient means apply distinctions to the one Buddha vehicle and preach as though it were three.

“Shariputra, if any of my disciples should claim to be an arhat or a pratyekabuddha and yet does not heed or understand that the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, simply teach and convert the bodhisattvas then he is no disciple of mine, he is no arhat or pratyekabuddha.

“Again, Shariputra, if there should be monks or nuns who claim that they have already attained the status of arhat, that this is their last incarnation, that they have reached the final nirvana, and that therefore they have no further intention of seeking anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, then you should understand that such as these are all persons of overbearing arrogance. Why do I say this? Because if there are monks who have truly attained the status of arhat, then it would be unthinkable that they should fail to believe this Law. The only exception would be in a time after the Buddha had passed away, when there was no Buddha present in the world. Why is this? Because after the Buddha has passed away it will be difficult to find anyone who can embrace, recite, and understand the meaning of sutras such as this. But if persons at that time encounter another Buddha, then they will attain decisive understanding with regard to this Law.

“Shariputra, you and the others should with a single mind believe and accept the words of the Buddha. The words of the Buddhas, the Thus

sambodhi. But in truth the time since I attained Buddhahood is extremely long, as I have told you. It is simply that I use this expedient means to teach and convert living beings and cause them to enter the Buddha way. That is why I speak in this manner.

“Good men, the scriptures expounded by the Thus Come One are all for the purpose of saving and emancipating living beings. Sometimes I speak of myself, sometimes of others; sometimes I present myself, sometimes others; sometimes I show my own actions, sometimes those of others. All that I preach is true and not false.

“Why do I do this? The Thus Come One perceives the true aspect of the threefold world exactly as it is. There is no ebb or flow of birth and death, and there is no existing in this world and later entering extinction. It is neither substantial nor empty, neither consistent nor diverse. Nor is it what those who dwell in the threefold world perceive it to be. All such things the Thus Come One sees clearly and without error.

“Because living beings have different natures, different desires, different actions, and different ways of thinking and making distinctions, and because I want to enable them to put down good roots, I employ a variety of causes and conditions, similies, parables, and phrases and preach different doctrines. This, the Buddha’s work, I have never for a moment

nayuta asamkhya kalpas.

“Ever since then I have been constantly in this saha world, preaching the Law, teaching and converting. And elsewhere I have led and benefited living beings in hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas and asamkhyas of lands.

“Good men, during that time I have spoken about the Buddha Burning Torch and others, and described how they entered nirvana. All this I employed as an expedient means to make distinctions.

“Good men, if there are living beings who come to me, I employ my Buddha eye to observe their faith and to see if their other faculties are keen or dull, and then depending upon how receptive they are to salvation, I appear in different places and preach to them under different names, and describe the length of time during which my teachings will be effective. Sometimes when I make my appearance I say that I am about to enter nirvana, and also employ different expedient means to preach the subtle and wonderful Law, thus causing living beings to awaken joyful minds.

“Good men, the Thus Come One observes how among living beings there are those who delight in a little Law, meager in virtue and heavy with defilement. For such persons I describe how in my youth I left my household and attained anuttara-samyak-

Come Ones, are not empty or false. There is no other vehicle, there is only the one Buddha vehicle.”

**Myoho-Renge-Kyo
(Chapter 16) The Life Span of the Thus Come One**

At that time the Buddha spoke to the bodhisattvas and all the great assembly: “Good men, you must believe and understand the truthful words of the Thus Come One.” And again he said to the great assembly: “You must believe and understand the truthful words of the Thus Come One.” And once more he said to the great assembly: “you must believe and understand the truthful words of the Thus Come One.”

At that time the bodhisattvas and the great assembly, with Maitreya as their leader, pressed their palms together and addressed the Buddha, saying: “World -Honored One, we beg you to explain. We will believe and accept the Buddha’s words.” They spoke in this manner three times, and then said once more: “We beg you to explain it. We will believe and accept the Buddha’s words.”

At that time the World-Honored One, seeing that the bodhisattvas repeated their request three times and more, spoke to them, saying: “You must listen carefully and hear of the Thus Come One’s secret and his transcendental powers. In all the worlds the heavenly and human beings and asuras all believe that the present Shakyamuni Buddha, after leaving the palace of the Shakyas, seated himself in the place of practice not far from the city of Gaya and there attained anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. But good men, it has been

immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood.

“Suppose a person were to take five hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million nayuta asamkhya thousand-millionfold worlds and grind them to dust. Then, moving eastward, each time he passes five hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million nayuta asamkhya worlds he drops a particle of dust. He continues eastward in this way until he has finished dropping all the particles. Good men, what is your opinion? Can the total number of all these worlds be imagined or calculated?”

The bodhisattva Maitreya and the others said to the Buddha: “World-Honored One, these worlds are immeasurable, boundless - one cannot calculate their number, nor does the mind have the power to encompass them. Even all the voice-hearers and pratyekabuddhas with their wisdom free of outflows could not imagine or understand how many there are. Although we abide in the stage of avivartika, we cannot comprehend such a matter. World-Honored One, these worlds are immeasurable and boundless.”

At that time the Buddha said to the multitude of great bodhisattvas: “Good men, now I will state this to you clearly. Suppose all these worlds, whether they received a particle of dust or not, are once more reduced to dust. Let one particle represent one kalpa. The time that has passed since I attained Buddhahood surpasses this by a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million