

CHAPTER XII.

The Nichi-ren-shū, or Nichi-ren sect.

I. A history of the sect.

(a) The origin of the establishment of the sect.

Although *Sākya*muni's manners of teaching are numbered by thousands of myriads, such as the *Hīna-yāna* and the *Mahā-yāna*, temporary and true, apparent and hidden, subordinate and original, etc., yet his object is nothing but to lead living beings to the highest state of *Nirvāna* by the way of gradual teaching. Therefore, in the last period of his life, *Sākya*muni preached the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* (*Hoke-kyō*),¹ or 'Sūtra of the Lotus of the Good Law.' In this Sūtra, he compared all the Sūtras preached in the three periods past, present and future; and called the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* the best of all. This judgment was made by him according to the rules of preaching of all Buddhas past, present and future; so that even *Mañgusri* and *Kāsyapa* dared not say a word against it.

As *Sākya*muni's own preaching was in this order, all the Buddhist teachers in the later periods followed that order, through the Three Periods of the Law, viz., the Period of the Right Law (*Shō-bō*), of the Image Law (*Zō bō*), and of the Latter Day Law (*Mappō*). During the two thousand years of the first

¹ No. 134.

two periods, therefore, all the great teachers promulgated the Law, either the Hīna or the Mahā-yāna the temporary or the true, according to Śākyamuni's command. Now, the Period of the Latter Day of the Law came, when the original or primitive doctrine of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka was to be expounded. In 1252 A. D., when all the other sects had already been established, Nichiren, founder of the sect, began to promulgate the doctrine of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka only. He did so, following the rules of Śākyamuni's teaching, and explaining the doctrine taught by Śākyamuni himself. This excellent doctrine, giving benefits to the people of the present period, had never been known, during two thousand two hundred and twenty years since Śākyamuni entered Nirvāna. For Nichiren was most probably an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Visishtakāritra (Jō-gyō, lit. 'eminent conduct'), who had been a 'primitive convert' (Honke)² of Śākyamuni, and received special instruction from the latter, in the chapter on the Transcendent Power of the Tathāgata,³ amidst the so called 'Sky

² For this Bodhisattva, see the 15th and 21st chapters of the Ho-ke-kyō, i. e. Kumāragīva's Chinese translation, and also the 14th and 20th chapters of Kern's English version of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXI.

³ I. e. the 21st chapter of Kumāragīva's version, and the 20th of Kern's.

Assembly' at Mount Gridhrakūta. This Bodhisattva was born in Japan under the name of Nichi-ren, at the proper time for promulgating the doctrine, which had been transmitted to him from Sâkyamuni. Thus Nichi-ren first established this sect in Japan, expecting to make his doctrine known in the world at large, during the ten thousand years of the Period of the Latter Day of the Law.

The sect is, therefore, either called Hokke-shū or 'Saddharma-pundarika-sect,' after the title of the principal Sūtra, or Nichi-ren-shū, after the name of the founder. Though this sect adopts the Saddharma-pundarika as the principal Sūtra, like the Ten-dai sect, yet the substance of the doctrine is very different from the latter; so that it is also called Nichi-ren-hokke-shū, or Nichi-ren's Saddharma-pundarika sect.

The following are the principal Sūtras and commentaries of this sect:

1. Myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō (Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra),⁴ eight volumes, translated by Kumāragīva, under the Shin dynasty of the Yō family, 384-417 A. D.

2. Mu-ryō-gi-gyō (Amitārtha-sūtra),⁵ translated by Dharmagātayasas, under the Northern Sei dynasty, 479-502 A. D.

3. Kwan-fu-gen-kgō (Samantabhadra-dhyāna-sūtra),⁶ translated by Dharmamitra, under the Sō

⁴ No. 134. ⁵ No. 133. ⁶ No. 394.

dynasty, 420-479 A. D.

The second and third Sūtras are called the Introduction to and Conclusion of the first sūtra.

4. Chū-ho-ke-kyō, or 'Commentary on the Sadharma-pundarika-sūtra,' ten volumes, compiled by Nichi-ren.

5. Ku-ketsu, or 'Oral Decisions,' two volumes, containing the teaching of Nichi-ren, as recorded by his chief disciple Nichi-kō.

(b) The Line of Transimission of the Law.

In Nichi-ren's Sadharma-pundarika-sect, there are two lines of transmission of the Law, viz, internal and external. The external transmission is the line of the teachers in the three countries of India, China and Japan, who expounded the doctrine of the Sadharma-pundarika, namely: —

Sâkyamuni Buddha.	} India.
Bhaisagyarâga (Yaku-ō) Bodhisattva.	
Ten-dai Dai-shi (the 'great teacher').	China.
Den-gyō Dai-shi.	} Japan.
Nichi-ren Dai-bo-satsu (Bodhisattva Mahāsattva).	

The internal transmisson is the line of those who understood the truth of the 'original or primitive doctrine' (Hon-mon), contained within the Stûpa of Prabhûtaratna (Ta-hō-tō), according to the chapters on the Preacher (Hosshi-hon, i. e. the 10th chapter) and the Transcendent Power of the Tathâgata (Jin-

dzū-hon, i. e. Jin-riki hon, the 20th chapter of the Sanskrit text and the 21st of the Chinese version), namely: —

Sākyamani Buddha.

Visishtakāritra Bodhisattva (Jō-gyō Bosatsu).

Nichi-ren Dai-bo-satsu.

Though the outer form of the doctrine of this sect depends on that of the Ten-dai sect, the principle is absolutely in harmony with the principal Sūtra; so that the internal transmission is much more correct than the external one.

II. The Doctrine of the sect.

(a) An outline of the *Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra*.

The *Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra* contains the doctrine which is characterized by the term *Gon-jitsu-hon-jaku-kai-e*, i. e. 'open comprehension of temporary and true (doctrines), and that of original and subordinate (states of Buddha).' The 'temporary' (*Gon*) doctrine is that of all the Sūtras spoken by Buddha during the first forty years of his career, before he spoke the *Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra*, which alone contains the 'true' (*Jitsu*) doctrine. The 'original' (*Hon*) or primitive state of Buddha means the 'original enlightenment' (*Hon-gaku*) of the very remote time when Buddha was in his primitive stage (*Hon-ji*). The 'subordinate' (*Shaku*, lit. footprint) or secondary state of Buddha is the 'first enlightenment' (*Shi-kaku*) of Buddha's life-time in this world (*Sui-*

shaku). The 'open comprehension' (Kai-è) means to show the final truth, as the object of the appearance of Sâkyamuni in this world.

In the first place we shall explain the 'open comprehension of the temporary and true doctrines' (Gonjitsu-kai-e). When Sâkyamuni appeared in this world, there were three classes of beings concerning the power of their ununderstanding. The lowest class was called *Srâvakas* (Shō-mon) or 'hearers;' the middle, *Pratyekabuddhas* (En-gaku) or 'singly enlightened;' and the highest, *Bodhisattvas* (Bo-satsu) or 'beings of wisdom.' Buddha taught the *Srâvakas* to destroy passions, separate from transmigration, and attain to the state of Arhat (A-ra-kan). He instructed those who were capable of becoming *Pratyekabuddhas*, to attain to that state. The *Bodhisattvas* were taught to make the great vow and prayer to save all beings and become Buddhas like Sâkyamuni himself, when their meritorious actions had been completed. These three classes were called *Tri-yâna* (San-jō) or 'three vehicles,' the first two being the *Hîna-yâna* (Shō-jō) or 'small vehicle,' and the last, the *Mahâ-yâna* (Dai-jō) or 'great vehicle.' One who attained either to the state of Arhat or *Pratyekabuddha*, according to the *Hîna-yâna*, did not become Buddha of the *Mahâyâna*; and vice versâ. One person could not comprehend two ways at once. They were, therefore, taught to practise any of the three vehicles at their

pleasure. So, there were three distinct classes of people, who became the sages of as many vehicles. This is called the doctrine of temporary expedient.

Thus, during the first forty years, Buddha spoke several Sūtras, observing the distinctions of three vehicles. But in the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, he declared that all his speeches of the first forty years were expedients, and that there was only one vehicle (*Eka-yāna*) and not three. Farther he said: 'The *Śrāvakas* and *Pratyekabuddhas* are also the *Mahā-yāna* and able to become Buddhas. Even the *Ikkhantīs* (*Is-sen-dai*) or 'unfaithful men' and women are able to attain to Buddhahood. All living beings are possessed of the nature of Buddha; so that there is reason to believe that every one without exception can become enlightened. This is my true doctrine, which should not be doubted. However the temporary doctrine of expedients has been spoken by me for the purpose of leading men to the true path of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*. Therefore the temporary doctrine itself is true in some respects. The temporary doctrine is like the lotus flower, and the true doctrine is like the fruit or seeds of the lotus. The flower is truly the expedient for the fruit. The expedient and the truth are unseparable. No expedient exists without truth. No truth appears without expedient. They are almost one, though numbered two. This is called the Lotus of the Good Law.'

When Buddha spoke these words, the practisers of the three vehicles at once understood the truth of the one vehicle by the merits produced from their previous practice according to the temporary doctrine. So, even Devadatta and the daughter of the king of the Nâgas or serpents immediately ascended the throne of Buddha.

This is the form of preaching of the 'subordinate doctrine' (Shaku-mon) of the Saddharma-pundarika, in which the 'temporary' doctrine is explained to be expedient for showing the truth, and the three vehicles are looked upon as if they were only one.

In the second place, the 'open comprehension of the original and subordinate states of Buddha' (Honjaku-kai-e) is explained in the following way: —

The state of Buddha to which Sâkyamuni attained in this world through the eight stages of his life (Has-sō-jō-dō), is called Shi-jō-shō-gaku, or the 'first accomplishment of the perfect enlightenment.' The term is shortened into Shi-kaku, or the 'first enlightenment; and this is the subordinate Buddha (Shaku-butsu). The enlightenment of Sâkyamuni here was only to perceive that he himself had been the Buddha of original enlightenment, the lord of the Dharmadhātu (Hokkai, lit. 'element of law or existence'), since very remote times. All Buddhas of the ten regions of the three times, past, present and future, are in the same way. During the 'tem-

porary' teaching of the first forty years, Sâkyamuni spoke of himself as he first attained to Buddhahood in this world as it appeared to be so. But when he spoke the *Saddharma-pundarika*, he manifested his real state of 'original enlightenment,' as he was the Buddha of permanency and the lord of the whole universe. But no 'original enlightenment' is manifested unless the 'first enlightenment' has been attained here, just as the flowers and the moon of the former days can be understood only after we see those of to-day. Again we can know the Buddhas of the ten regions by seeing one Buddha only, and recognise that we ourselves are already Buddhas by hearing the state of other Buddhas. All Buddhas of the subordinate state are like the images of the moon reflected upon several waters, and only the Buddha of the original state is like the real moon in the sky. The 'subordinate' state is shown by the 'original' one, and vice versâ. Though they are different from each other, their virtue is one and the same. This is called the Lotus of the Good Law.

When Buddha preached this doctrine, the whole assembly of living beings of ten different worlds, who were present in the *Dai-ko-kū-e*, or 'Great Sky Assembly,' upon Mount *Gridhrakûta* (*Ryō-zen*), attained to the state of Buddha. This is the form of preaching of the 'original doctrine' (*Hon-mon*) of the *Saddharma-pundarika*.

In short, the character of the 'subordinate doctrine' (Shaku-mon) is to sum up all his speeches, and explain the original intention of his appearance in the world, which is to cause all men and women, whether good or bad, strong or weak in understanding, to join Buddhism. It is also to make the distinctions of several teachings even, and show the wisdom of the one vehicle of Buddha which is just and equal. But the character of the 'original doctrine' (Hon-mon) is to show the origin of all beings, and the real state of enlightenment of the Buddhas of the three times, past, present and future. It also explains that all laws are good and all beings are Buddhas.

The Bhagavat did not teach this excellent law of the original doctrine to the ordinary Bodhisattvas such as Mañgusri, Bhaishagyarâga (Yaku-ō) and others. How much less did he teach it to the inferior disciples? He carefully instructed in this doctrine the Bodhisattva Visishtakâritra (Jō-gyō) and some others who appeared on the earth. The place in which they were appointed to promulgate the law is this world Sahâ (Sha-ba) or Gambudvîpa; and the time is called either the Period of the Latter Day of the Law, the World of evil and corruption, or the Last 500 years. This is called the Special Instruction in the Original Doctrine of the Soddharma-pundarîka.

(b) The Three Great Secret Laws.

The important points of the doctrine of Nichi-ren's sect are called the Three Great Secret Laws or Doctrines, which include all rules of Buddhism. In the chapter on the Duration of the Life of the Tathâgata (Ju-ryō-hon) in the Saddharma-pundarika, Buddha spoke of the permanency of the three bodies of Buddha, namely, 1. Dharma-kāya (Hosshin) or the 'spiritual body,' 2. Sambhoga-kāya (Hō-shin) or the 'body of compensation,' and 3. Nirmāna-kāya (Ō-ge-shin) or the body capable of transformation. This doctrine is the essence of the Sūtra and the object of the appearance of Buddha in the world; so that it is taken to be the substance of the Three Great Secret Laws. In the Sūtra there occurs the term 'the Tathâgata's Secret Supernatural Power' (Nyo-rai-hi-mitsu-jin-dzū-shi-riki), whence the name of the Three Great Secret Laws.

The Three Laws are the Hon-zon, Dai-moku, and Kai-dan of the Hon-mon, i. e. the chief Object of Worship, the Title of the sūtra, and the Place for learning the Sīla or moral precepts, all of which belong to the Original Doctrine. The substance of these is contained in the title of the Sūtra which consists of the five Chinese characters, Myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō (Saddharma-pundarika-sūtra). We remember in our mind the chief object of worship, recite with our mouth the title of the Sūtra, and keep in our body the place of

Sīla, or simply moral precepts.

First, the chief object of worship (Hon-zon) of the Original Doctrine is the great *Mandala* of the ten different worlds, which is the body of Buddha, in whom the followers of the sect believe. This *Mandala* represents the original Buddha of very remote times. This Buddha's 'spiritual body' (Hosshin) consists of the five elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Wind, and Ether) of the Dharmadhātu of ten regions. The five Skandhas or collections (Form, Perception, Name, Conception, and Knowledge) of the Dharmadhātu of the ten regions form the nature of the 'body of compensation' (Hō-shin) of this Buddha. The six organs of sense of all beings of ten regions are the form of the 'body capable of transformation' (Ō-ge-shin) of this Buddha. The three actions (of Body, Speech, and thought) and the four dignified postures (of Going, Remaining, sitting, and Lying) of all beings are the actions of this Buddha. The wisdom and virtue of all sages and wise men of every region and the enlightenment of all Buddhas are the supernatural powers of this Buddha. All countries of every region are his dwelling-place. He is free from birth and death, even after passing through immeasurable Kalpas. He is the Buddha of permanency, without beginning and end. This Buddha is called *Sākya-muni* who truly accomplished his state of Buddha in very remote times (Ku-on-jitsu-jō), or the 'original

Buddha of three bodies that do nothing' (Mu-sa-san-jin-no-hon-butsu).

The ten worlds from the world of Buddhas down to that of hells, are all transformations of this original Buddha. The chief object of worship (Honzon) is the representation of this Buddha, so that the five characters of Myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō (Saddhama-pundarika-sūtra) are written down in the middle, around which the forms of the ten worlds are added to show the nature of the original Buddha.

Now Sākyamuni said of himself, in the chapter on the duration of the Tathāgata's life, that he was really this original Buddha. But not only was Sākyamuni so, but even we ourselves are the same. This is the way of meditating on the chief object of worship.

Secondly, the five characters Myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō form the title of the Sūtra, so that the name of Daimoku or 'title' is given to them. To these five characters, two more viz No-mu (Namas, or 'adoration') are added. Thus we repeat Na-mu-myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō (Namah Saddharmapundarikāya Sūtrāya), or 'adoration to the Sūtra of the Lotus of the Good Law.' This is to believe in the Good Law of the heart with the heart of the Good Law. The title of the Sūtra which consists of five characters, is the essence of the whole Sūtra as well as of the holy teaching of Buddha's whole life, the principle of all

things, the truth of eternity, and the secret importance of Buddha's original state and of the virtue of his enlightenment. It is quite beyond the reach of explanation and reasoning, except in so far as one may say that it is inexplicable and inconceivable. It is not understood even by the subordinate Buddhas and the highest Bodhisattvas. How much less can it be known by the inferior beings? It is simply to be believed in, and not to be understood at all. This is the title of the original doctrine.

Thirdly, the Kai-dan, or 'place for receiving instruction in *Sīla* or moral precepts,' of the original doctrine is explained as follows: To keep the *Sīla* is the most important matter of all the divisions of Buddha's doctrine, whether of the great or small vehicle of the true or of the temporary. Therefore there is in the original doctrine the first true *Sīla* which is held by Buddha permanently. The Kai-dan is the Bodhi-manda (Dō-jō) or 'place for the way,' where the ceremony to receive instruction in the *Sīla* is to be accomplished. The place is now mentioned instead of the law which is to be observed there.

The substance of this *Sīla* is the title of the five characters Myō-hō-ren-ge-kyō. One who believes in this title and observes it, is said to be the holder of the excellent *Sīla* of the original doctrine. The place where he keeps and holds it, is the Pure Land

of the Calm Light (Jak-kō-jō-do), i. e. the Kai-dan.

In short one should remember that his own body is the Original Buddha (Hon-zon), thought is the Good Law (Dai-moku), and the dwelling-place is the Pure Land of Constantly Calm Light (Kai-dan). Thus he should dwell in the Dharmadhātu, or 'spiritual state,' of his own thought.

Though the rules of practice of Buddhism are various, the three trainings (San-gaku) of the higher morality (Kai), thought (Jō) and learning (E) are the most important. By the higher morality one keeps off the bad conduct of his body; by the higher thought, he tranquilizes his mind; and by the higher learning, he becomes free from confusion and attains to enlightenment. There is no Buddhist sect which does not take these three trainings as the principle of their practice, though each sect possesses its own peculiar excellence.

So this sect is the same. The Three Great Secret Laws are the three trainings of the sect. The Kai-dan is of course the morality (Kai). The meditation or thought (Jō) is to believe in the chief object of worship (Hon-zon) and to meditate on the Good Law. The learning (E) is to repeat the title of the Sūtra (Dai-moku), which contains the wisdom of all Buddhas, and to show the excellence of the wisdom.

If one keeps these Three Secret Laws, the three

trainings are quickly accomplished, and immeasurable Samādhis (San-mai) or meditations and Pâramitâs (Ha-ra-mitsu) or perfections of practice are spontaneously completed. Therefore even a being of weak understanding can enter on the precious rank of the enlightened in his present life. Thus the doctrine of this sect is very deep and wonderful indeed.
