



# **Crossing to the Other Shore Aboard the Great Ship of the Lotus Sutra**

This Higan pamphlet was created using AI tools that drew solely from the writings of Nichiren Shonin.

becomes pure and white, and their body becomes as light as a goose feather and as soft as cotton. They are met instantly by Śākyamuni Buddha, Many Treasures Buddha, and the Buddhas of the ten directions, who seat them on their palms, pat their heads, and embrace them with infinite affection—as if welcoming a rising moon or blossoms that have just burst into bloom.

Even if separated by the temporary veil of death, you can meet your loved ones readily by using the Lotus Sutra as your guide. Even if the sun and moon should fall to the ground, or the tides cease to ebb and flow, a mother or father who chants ***Namu Myōhō-enge-kyō*** will never fail to be reunited with their beloved child at the Pure Land of Eagle Peak.

As you observe Higan, let your faith be like the ceaseless flow of water—steadily and quietly moving forward without ever regressing. Let the sound of the Odaimoku rise from your home as the ultimate offering to your ancestors, confident that its vibrations reach the ears of your departed loved ones at the eternal assembly of Eagle Peak. Trusting in the Great Ship of the Wonderful Dharma, continue your practice with courage and devotion, knowing that you are securely cradled in the compassionate mind of the Eternal Buddha, bound for the radiant shore of Tranquil Light.

That Pure Land is not physically removed from your current life. Nichiren Shōnin provides the comforting assurance that although you may physically reside in this impure, troubled world, when you chant the Odaimoku your heart resides in the Pure Land of Eagle Peak with the Eternal Śākyamuni. Nichiren writes that though the moon is forty thousand yojanas high in the heavens, its reflection appears instantly in a pond on Earth. In the exact same manner, when you establish faith in the Lotus Sutra, your heart immediately dwells on Eagle Peak. Even Mount Minobu itself, where Nichiren chanted the sutra day and night, is realized as the very embodiment of this pure land—a place of the cluster of blessings where the Buddhas and bodhisattvas dwell.

For those who grieve the loss of parents, children, or spouses, Higan brings a message of profound, indestructible hope. If you nurture the same seeds of **Myōhō-rence-kyō** in your heart, you are guaranteed to be reborn together in the same land of **Myōhō-rence-kyō**. Nichiren Shōnin writes with tender compassion:

*"The seeds of one kind of plant are all the same; they are different from the seeds of other plants. If all of you nurture the same seeds of Myoho-rence-kyo in your hearts, then you all will be reborn together in the same land... When you are reunited there face to face, how great your joy will be!"*

When faithful practitioners of the Lotus Sutra pass from this world, their transition is not one of fear or heavy darkness. At the hour of death, their countenance

The season of Higan arrives as a gentle reminder of the fleeting nature of this world. When the spring or autumn equinox balances day and night in perfect equilibrium, the mind naturally turns to the profound transitions of life.

In this world, the cherry blossoms that scatter in the wind will bloom again when spring returns, and the fallen autumn leaves will once more decorate the hills in their season. Yet, human lives pass with a fragile impermanence. When a beloved companion departs, never to return in this form, the heart of an ordinary person is inevitably filled with grief and longing.

Higan, meaning "the other shore," is the time to contemplate how one might cross from shigan—this shore of birth, death, and relentless suffering—to the distant shore of perfect peace, enlightenment, and eternity. It is a sacred occasion to remember departed ancestors and to anchor your own life in the ultimate, unchanging reality of the Wonderful Dharma.

For countless eons, people have wandered through the turbulent sea of the sufferings of birth and death. In seeking liberation, many have turned to the provisional, pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, hoping to find a way across. Yet Nichiren Shōnin warns that these earlier, expedient doctrines are like rafts or small boats. While a small raft may suffice to transport a traveler from one location to another along the shallow waters of a single shore, it is entirely incapable of weathering the terrifying waves of the great ocean of birth and death.

To place faith in provisional practices—such as the Nembutsu of the Pure Land school—is to board a fragile vessel that must inevitably capsize when confronted with the immense weight of human karma and the spiritual darkness of the Latter Day of the Dharma. Relying on such teachings leaves practitioners stranded on this shore of suffering, unable to reach the Pure Land.

To safely cross the boundless ocean of suffering, you require a vessel of absolute strength and safety. Nichiren teaches that the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, acting as a shipbuilder of infinitely profound wisdom, has constructed such a vessel: ***the Great Ship of Myōhō-renge-kyō***.

This magnificent craft was built by honestly discarding the provisional teachings and utilizing only the sturdy, unyielding timber of the supreme truth. Driven by the spikes of the one true teaching, it is rigged with the immense sails of the "three thousand realms in a single moment of life" and supported by the towering mast of the Middle Way. Propelled by the fair wind of "the true aspect of all phenomena," this great ship surges ahead, effortlessly carrying all those who gain entrance through faith alone.

On this spiritual voyage, the Eternal Śākyamuni Buddha himself stands at the helm, Many Treasures Buddha secures the mooring rope, and the four great Bodhisattvas of the Earth row in perfect, joyful harmony. It is a vessel designed specifically for the ordinary, spiritually burdened people of this defiled era.

To board this great ship, no arduous or complex practices are required. Your single, supreme act of navigation is the chanting of the Odaimoku: ***Namu Myōhō-renge-kyō***. The Great Teacher Miao-lo emphasized this truth, writing:

*"Even a single phrase cherished deep in one's heart will without fail help one reach the opposite shore. To ponder one phrase and practice it is to exercise navigation."*

When you raise your voice to chant ***Namu Myōhō-renge-kyō*** with pure faith, the distinction between your mind and the Buddha's mind collapses.

Chanting is not a passive recitation, but the active turning of the rudder. It possesses the wondrous power to change poison into medicine, instantly transforming the three paths of earthly desires, negative karma, and suffering into the three virtues of the Dharma body, wisdom, and absolute emancipation. Through this vocal practice, the ordinary, distracted mind is aligned with the cosmic enlightened reality, and the ship of the Wonderful Dharma carries you swiftly toward the opposite shore.

In the Nichiren Shū tradition, "the other shore" is not a distant, abstract paradise located in a separate direction, nor is it a cold, silent realm of non-existence. Rather, the supreme destination is the Pure Land of Eagle Peak (*Ryōjusen*), where the Eternal Śākyamuni Buddha resides and expounds the Wonderful Dharma.