

The Wonderful Means of Surmounting Obstacles



IF we examine the essential and the theoretical teachings of the Lotus Sutra, we see that the theoretical teaching maintains, as [did the teachings that came] before, that the Buddha first attained enlightenment during his present lifetime; therefore, obstacles still beset the teaching. The essential teaching has freed itself from such impediments. However, compared with the

five characters of the daimoku, it is a doctrine unsuited to the capacity of the people of the Latter Day of the Law. The wonderful means of truly putting an end to the physical and spiritual obstacles of all living beings is none other than Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Nichiren

Reply to Shijo Kingo



Background

While the year that this letter was written is not known with certainty, it is thought to date from around the third year of Kenji (1277). It was addressed to Shijo Kingo.

The Daishonin states that, because the theoretical teaching (first half) of the Lotus Sutra does not reveal the eternity of Buddhahood, and since the view of life it offers is, therefore, a shallow one, it is lacking in the power to help people overcome obstacles and

impediments arising from life's fundamental darkness. Although the essential teaching (latter half) surpasses these limitations by explaining that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago, it is still unable to help people of the Latter Day of the Law, who lack the capacity to benefit from this teaching. Only the five characters of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo can lead them to Buddhahood.