

From Kumarajiva to Nichiren — Connected Through Myoho-Renge-Kyo
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Kumarajiva's life and accomplishments have had a deep impact not only on Indian and Chinese Buddhism, but on Japanese Buddhism as well, and provides Japanese Buddhist culture with a strong spiritual pillar.

Especially, Kumarajiva's translation of Myoho-Renge-Kyo, the Lotus Sutra, is widely regarded as a most excellent translation, which faithfully conveys the essence of Shakyamuni's enlightenment. In China, it became the central scripture for T'ien T'ai Buddhists, as well as the central scripture for Japanese Tendai Buddhists and Nichiren Buddhism in Japan. And in the twenty-first century, this lineage of wisdom from Kumarajiva to T'ien T'ai to Dengyo to Nichiren has been carried on and expanded on a global scale by the Soka Gakkai and Soka Gakkai International (SGI), which are also based on this sutra.

This paper consists of four sections. The first section analyses Kumarajiva's translation and offers three reasons why it is considered an excellent translation. The most significant feature is that this translation incorporates the concept of the Middle Way.

Secondly, by using the content of Nichiren's writings about Kumarajiva as a basis, I would like to make clear to what extent Nichiren borrows from Kumarajiva's philosophy.

In the third section, I would like to take up the deep significance of Kumarajiva's translation of the title of the sutra into "Myoho-Renge-Kyo" and the three great ideologies contained within this sutra. Those three being, 1) The concept that all living beings can attain enlightenment by realizing the Buddha nature that lies within all life, is a concept that promotes the dignity of all life. 2) The concept that the Buddha has practiced salvation since the distant past illustrates the eternal and infinite sublime Buddhist view of space-time, as well as gives perspective to the workings of the Buddha's practice of salvation within the context of the creative evolution of the universe. 3) The concept of the Bodhisattva Way illustrates specific ways of applying compassion and wisdom to save people from suffering.

The fourth section discusses how the Soka Gakkai and the SGI have developed the essential concepts within Kumarajiva's translation of Myoho-Renge-Kyo for the sake of world peace and happiness over its 80 year history, how it will open a new future for humanity, and concludes with a call for the forces of "good" to work together based on Kumarajiva's philosophy.