

The Mahayana

The Mahayana as it is referred to several times in the various Lotus Sutra translations is actually a development of scholar monks whose life dedication to the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha was to accomplish, as instructed by Shakyamuni, to propagate the meaning and essence of the teachings rather than the vernacular and words of a bygone time. In Shakyamuni's view, the people of a given era would grow in capacity and language to understand the teachings more profoundly over time and cultures. This then was the imperative to teach in the language of the people and the era one is teaching within.

Nichiren certainly looked upon the Lotus Sutra in particular, the collection of Sutras compiled by the Indian scholar monk **Kumarajiva** as the actual teachings therefore of Shakyamuni, if only further elucidated by centuries of scholarship and the transitions of the three periods of the **Former** (Right Dharma according to the people's capacity), **Middle** (Semblance Dharma according to the people's inability to accept the Dharma), and the **Latter** age (Degenerate ages of the Dharma due to the people's lack of investment in the teaching and lapsing into formalism and cults of personality).

The misunderstanding of this critical point is often the subject of controversies and attacks from practitioners of earlier teachings to claim superiority over the Lotus. Nichiren battles these erroneous views in person and in many writings (i.e. "**Errors in Eight Schools**"). However the misinformation continues to propagate to this day. The controversy continues the myth of the "**Three Vehicles**" as though the **Mahayana** were a completely separate "**Fourth Vehicle**" teaching rather than a development of scholarship proscribed by Shakyamuni himself for the full awakening of Buddhahood as a contemporary experience in one's actual lifetime. For a bit more on this, see the section below on the **Bodhisattva of the Lotus Sutra**.

Sifu, Sylvain Chamberlain