Nichiren Shoshu

Basics of Practice



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CHAPTER 1

Nichiren Shoshu

Shakyamuni, the historical founder of Buddhism who lived in India three thousand years ago, predicted in the Great Collection Sutra (*Daijuku* Sutra) that the world would enter an age of strife and discord two thousand years after his death, an age when philosophy and religion would be disordered and confused. At that time the Buddhism taught by Shakyamuni would lose its effectiveness to save the people. He called this age *Mappo,* or the Latter Day of the Law, when, as the Great Collection Sutra stated, "the Pure Law would become obscured and lost."

However, Shakyamuni made an additional prediction in the Lotus Sutra. He predicted the appearance of True Buddhism for the age of *Mappo* that would replace the Buddhism of Shakyamuni, and that the Original (True) Buddha, the fundamental master of all Buddhas, would appear in the world to teach this True Buddhism.

Why should Shakyamuni's Buddhism lose its effectiveness? Why would the appearance of a new Buddhism be necessary? The reason is that although *Mappo* is an age when the material aspects of civilization are much more highly advanced than when Shakyamuni lived, it is also an age when the hearts of the people have become corrupt. Shakyamuni's Buddhism has no power to help them. Regarding this, the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, stated:

> Medicine differs according to the illness. Ordinary medicine will help a slight ailment, but for grave illness, elixir should be used.
>
> (MW, *Vol. 3, p. 55;* Gosho, *p. 690)*

This is a metaphor for the principle that in the age of *Mappo*, when the world is filled with evil and Shakyamuni's Buddhism has lost its validity, a Buddhism that teaches the ultimate truth will appear for the sake of this time period.

The validity of Shakyamuni's prediction was proven by the appearance of Nichiren Daishonin, the Original Buddha, and by His establishment of the Buddhism of the Three Great Secret Laws *(Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo),* the teaching to save all humanity in *Mappo*. The Daishonin states:

> Now in the Latter Day of the Law, neither the Lotus Sutra nor the other sutras lead to enlightenment; only Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo can do so. And this is not merely my own opinion. Shakyamuni, Taho, and all the other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions as well as the innumerable Bodhisattvas of the Earth have so determined . . . . A lamp will be useless after the sun rises. How can dewdrops be beneficial once the rain falls?
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 3, p. 266;* Gosho, *p. 1219)*

The True Buddhism of the Original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, the teaching of the ultimate truth, was established on April 28, 1253. Today, other forms of Buddhism and other teachings are of no more use than the light of the moon or candles in the middle of the day. They have no validity for this time period.

This means that Nichiren Daishonin is the only person that we, the people in the age of *Mappo,* revere as the Buddha. For us, the Daishonin's Buddhism truly corresponds to the sun. It is the only teaching with the power to illuminate the darkness of *Mappo.*

The Dai-Gohonzon of the True High Sanctuary, inscribed on October 12, 1279, is the foundation and source of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. With this essential Gohonzon as the object of faith, it is possible for all people of *Mappo* to attain enlightenment.

The Buddhism established by Nichiren Daishonin was inherited in its entirety by the Second High Priest, Nikko Shonin, and then

passed on by Nikko Shonin to the Third High Priest, Nichimoku Shonin. It was correctly transmitted without a single deviation, like a perfect transfer of water from one vessel into another. No matter how superior a teaching may be, it will inevitably die out if there is no successor in the world to inherit and transmit it. The immeasurably profound Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin has been transmitted without interruption, passing from the Daishonin to Nikko Shonin, and then to Nichimoku Shonin and each successive High Priest, generation after generation, down to the present High Priest.

This explanation has been only a simple outline. However, it indicates how all humanity in the age of *Mappo* can attain enlightenment. The Three Treasures for the Age of *Mappo* are now complete. They are the Original Buddha Nichiren Daishonin (Treasure of the Buddha), the Dai-Gohonzon established by the Daishonin in 1279 (Treasure of the Law), and Nikko Shonin, the successor to the Living Essence of the Law (Treasure of the Priest, which also includes the successive generations of High Priests of Nichiren Shoshu who have inherited Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism).

There is only one religious body that partakes of the orthodox, legitimate flow of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, and reveres the True Buddha, Law, and Priesthood. This is Nichiren Shoshu with its Head Temple, Taisekiji, at the foot of Mt. Fuji in Japan.



CHAPTER 2

The Purpose of Faith

ATTAINING BUDDHAHOOD IN THIS LIFETIME

For those who have recently joined Nichiren Shoshu and are taking their first steps in faith, it is most important to have a clear understanding of the purpose of faith.

The following analogy may serve to illustrate. Suppose there are two people reading the same book. One person strives to learn all the words and grammar in the book, while the other makes efforts to grasp the author's intent. Clearly, what the two will gain from reading will be quite different. Even in reading a single page of a book, there is a tremendous difference in the result gained by each type of reader. Inevitably, the first won't gain the significance, while the other's effort can open up a whole new world.

Our approach in faith is even more important. The more we can awaken to the purpose of faith, the clearer the approach necessary to achieve that purpose will become, as will the correct attitude in faith.

The most important point to keep in mind is that the practice of True Buddhism is a lifelong journey. Nichiren Daishonin teaches us that to begin is easy but to continue is difficult; however, attaining enlightenment lies in continuing faith.

So what is the purpose of faith in Nichiren Shoshu? To put it simply, there are two ultimate purposes for taking faith in this Buddhism. One is to realize an absolutely unshakable state of happiness in which there is boundless joy in being alive (attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime). The other is to realize an ideal society in

which people can enjoy happy lives together based on True Buddhism (Kosen-rufu).

"Attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime" does not mean changing your human form. Nor does it mean becoming a Buddha when you die, a mistaken view commonly held in other Buddhist denominations. Rather, it means achieving, in this lifetime and in our present form, the greatest potential life condition contained within the depths of our lives through sincere faith in and practice to the Gohonzon.

This highest life condition is called "The Buddha," "Buddhahood," or "the Buddha nature." Another name for it is "Myoho-Renge-Kyo."

Buddhahood is a mighty force that manifests a solution to every kind of suffering. It is a source of energy which manifests in our daily lives and propels each of us into a brilliant, truly joyful and fulfilled existence in the present moment. Striving in faith, we aim to establish an absolutely indestructible life condition of spiritual strength, wisdom and peace grounded in the world of Buddhahood.

Of course, situations in which an ill person becomes healthy, an unhappy family finds harmony, or poverty changes to financial security are necessary conditions for a happy life. However, if these conditions are examined closely, they can all be seen to be relative, partial forms of happiness in comparison to an inner condition based on Buddhahood. In many cases, relative happiness is manifested only temporarily or partially.

However, within the reality of our daily lives, we are often embroiled in so many kinds of hardships that we cannot keep track of them all. Though we are able to make money, we may suffer with family discord, or even if we are healthy we may have unhappy children.

Uncovering and revealing the world of Buddhahood is the fundamental source for attacking the root cause of suffering in human life, and for resolving every possible form of distress. This is the absolute happiness each and every person in the world is longing for in the depths of his or her heart.

Just as a single drop of water is included within a great ocean, a person who has established an absolutely happy life condition through embracing True Buddhism will definitely be able to resolve

flaws in his or her character, and overcome sickness, poverty, or family problems.

Thus, it is important for us to have unshakable faith and tenaciously seek the attainment of Buddhahood in this lifetime, without being swayed by external circumstances. With strong faith, we need not be joyful one moment and depressed the next because of the ups and downs of life. Even small prayers will be answered without fail.

ACHIEVING KOSEN-RUFU

The second important purpose of faith is Kosen-rufu, which means to ceaselessly and correctly protect Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and widely propagate it throughout the entire world in order to rid the world of misery. This will create unshakable happiness for all people and build a truly peaceful society.

From the very start, Buddhism has taught its followers to be merciful and to pursue their own happiness together with concern and compassion for others.

Nichiren Daishonin risked His life for peace in society and the happiness of humanity, and offered Himself wholly for the sake of Kosen-rufu. His successors, the Second High Priest Nikko Shonin, the Third High Priest Nichimoku Shonin, and each of the successive High Priests, have all fervently exerted themselves for the realization of Kosen-rufu.

Those who make this admirable spirit a deep part of themselves and thereby dedicate themselves for the sake of Kosen-rufu are embracing the true spirit of Nichiren Shoshu believers.

Thus, the purpose of faith in Nichiren Shoshu is to gain true happiness by attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime and to widely teach and propagate Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the whole world in order to lead others to happiness.

FAITH, PRACTICE, AND STUDY

In order to gain the great benefits of True Buddhism, faith must always be accompanied by practice. Usually, when a person wants to express thanks to another it is a common social practice to make

some gesture (saying, "Thank you," giving a gift, etc.) to express that sentiment. If a person feels grateful but makes no expression of gratitude, that gratitude is not conveyed to the other person. It could be argued that the person feels no true appreciation.

Faith is like this. If a person believes in Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, this resolution in faith should reveal itself physically, in the form of action.

Practice inevitably accompanies faith. This means that the will to believe in and have respect for the Gohonzon is expressed as practice. Practice is chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo (Daimoku), and reciting a portion of the Lotus Sutra (Gongyo). The deep desire to seek the truth of Buddhism is expressed as the study of doctrine. Nichiren Daishonin states:

> Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism . . . . Both practice and study arise from faith.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p. 95,* Gosho, *p. 668)*

The Daishonin teaches that we must work diligently in our Buddhist practice and our study of doctrine. Our practice is something that emerges from the determination of our faith. Our faith and practice are kept on track by study. Nothing valuable results in our daily lives unless we act. The truth is that if we don't translate something into practice, we won't reap the rewards from it, and our understanding won't progress. Not only that, when putting something into practice, it is often the case that when we don't do it according to the correct method, our efforts are wasted, and we gain nothing.



As believers of Nichiren Shoshu, it is important for us to correctly practice Buddhism together under the leadership of a correct teacher and with encouragement

from experienced believers. It is important that we walk the path of Buddhist practice together. As we gain actual proof of the great fortune of the Gohonzon and an understanding of the doctrine, our faith will deepen without fail.

PROTECTION FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Without the tremendous benefit of True Buddhism, it would be impossible to achieve Buddhahood in this lifetime or to achieve Kosen-rufu. Therefore, we steadfastly protect the True Law. This also results in great benefit for ourselves, since resolutely protecting True Buddhism means that in actuality we are protecting the Buddhahood within our own lives.

"Protecting True Buddhism"—that is, protecting the True Law—has two aspects: protecting the True Law from within and protecting the True Law from without. "Protecting from within" means that the True Law is being protected from within the priesthood. The High Priest possesses the True Teachings which are handed down from one High Priest to the next. Under the direct leadership of the High Priest, the priests study and teach the profound doctrines of the True Law. "Protecting from without" means to protect the True Law externally. This is the role of lay believers. In all aspects of our daily lives we maintain faith in the True Law and spread the influence of the True Law far and wide through our *shakubuku* (propagation) efforts. At the same time, we work for the prosperity of the True Law by making sincere offerings to the Gohonzon and by influencing society in various ways.

The protection of the True Law into the distant future begins with this protection from within and without. Shakyamuni defined the relationship between these two in the Nirvana Sutra, by stating:

> Within, there are disciples who understand the immeasurably deep doctrine. Without, there are pure minded lay believers. Thus is Buddhism perpetuated into eternity.
>
> (Gosho, *p.790)*

This means that the True Law and correct doctrine would be lost if there were no priests. It is also true that if there were a priesthood but no lay believers, there would be no one to protect the temples and spread the True Teaching throughout society.

It is intrinsically impossible for Buddhism to take a form in which there are only lay believers or only priests. Thus the importance of the priesthood and laity being firmly united together to protect the True Law from within and without, each with its own mission and role, cannot be overemphasized.

Accordingly, the fundamental spirit of the believers of Nichiren Shoshu is to protect the direct flow of the Daishonin's orthodox Buddhism under the direction of the priesthood.

There is great virtue in revering the High Priest, who possesses the Heritage of the Law, and in respecting the priests under the High Priest, who learn the profound heart of the True Law from him. Merit also accrues from protecting the Head Temple and the local Nichiren Shoshu temples in harmonious unity between the priesthood and the laity. We should embed this realization within our hearts and never lose sight of it. No matter how much the times have changed, this has been the basis for the conduct of Nichiren Shoshu lay believers for over 750 years.



CHAPTER 3

Gongyo: The Source of Fortune

The first thing a new believer learns from his or her sponsor is how to do Gongyo. This is because Gongyo and *Shodai* (chanting Daimoku) to the Gohonzon are the most basic, important practices in faith. In Nichiren Shoshu, faith and the practice of Gongyo are inseparable.

Even though the new believer is always told that Gongyo is a powerful, important practice, many people find that they soon lose the self-motivation to do Gongyo. This may happen for a variety of reasons. Some people find it troublesome to do Gongyo every day, and others feel embarrassed when people see them doing Gongyo.

On the other hand, people who have been doing Gongyo for many years may slip into doing it automatically, out of force of habit. They may forget to take Gongyo seriously, and have a half-hearted attitude when sitting in front of the Gohonzon.

However, when Gongyo is done earnestly every day, it is a powerful engine for building a happy life. When we do this practice thoroughly and earnestly, we receive actual proof of the fortune of embracing the Gohonzon. Our hearts are filled with boundless joy, and we realize that having faith in the Gohonzon is a wonderful, unsurpassed treasure. Therefore, we should continuously renew our determination to practice Gongyo thoroughly and sincerely every day.

RECOGNITION THAT THE GOHONZON IS THE LIFE OF THE DAISHONIN

Gongyo is a magnificent, solemn ceremony and is the source of profound merit. In a famous passage from the Gosho, the Daishonin declares:

> I, Nichiren, inscribed the Gohonzon by infusing my life into it with sumi ink.
>
> (Gosho, *p. 685; for reference, see also* MW, *Vol. 1, p. 120)*

As these words of the Daishonin show, the Gohonzon is the actual entity of the life of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. Faith in the Gohonzon means to believe that the Gohonzon is the life of the Daishonin. Therefore, we should prepare ourselves for each and every Gongyo with the understanding that it is a direct audience with the True Buddha. This fundamental attitude towards the ceremony of Gongyo should be reflected in one's appearance, posture, voice, and concentration.

ATTIRE

When we appear before people we deeply respect or when we attend an important event, we take these occasions seriously and dress appropriately. In the same manner, when we perform Gongyo, we should dress neatly for this ceremony with the True Buddha. Doing Gongyo in disheveled clothes or in sleeping attire shows disrespect to the Gohonzon.

POSTURE

The Gosho teaches that when performing formalities in front of the Gohonzon, our minds should be composed and we should perform every action with the correct solemnity. This means that when doing Gongyo, it is of prime importance to sit up straight. The palms of the hands should be placed together, with the fingers extended and

straight. The hands should be placed naturally in front of the chest (not in front of the face), so that the hands angle slightly outward.

CONCENTRATION ON THE GOHONZON

When facing the Gohonzon, our eyes should be fully open. We should steadily gaze at the character *Myo,* the third Chinese character from the top in the main inscription down the center of the Gohonzon. If you have difficulty recognizing it, look at the very first Chinese character on page one of *The Liturgy of Nichiren Shoshu.* This is the very same character *Myo.* A passage in the *Juki* chapter of the Lotus Sutra reads:

> Single-mindedly, with hands together in reverence, they respectfully gazed up at the World-Honored One, without lowering their eyes even for a moment.
>
> *(*Kaiketsu, *p. 232)*



Therefore, it is inappropriate to close your eyes or look around restlessly when doing Gongyo. As the Sixty-seventh High Priest Nikken Shonin stated in his guidance:

> The most vital thing is to chant Daimoku with the correct posture, reverently looking at the Gohonzon with your eyes wide open. If your eyes wander here and there, or your body is crooked, or you hold your hands in a slipshod manner, that is proof that you are already losing the spirit of Buddhist practice.
>
> *(*Dai-Nichiren, *No. 459)*

PRONUNCIATION

When reciting the Sutra, we should try to pronounce the words clearly, with a powerful (not necessarily loud) voice, using the Sutra Book as much as needed in order to recite the words accurately. Daimoku should also be offered in a clear, resonant voice at a comfortable pitch. We should not chant Daimoku so rapidly that the syllables are pronounced indistinctly.

Nichiko Shonin, the Fifty-ninth High Priest, gave the following instructions about how we should chant Daimoku:

> The Daimoku that we chant must be performed attentively and diligently. When chanting, we should not have trivial thoughts in our minds. The speed should not be too fast and our pronunciation should not be slurred. We must maintain a medium pitch and chant calmly, resolutely and steadily. There is no established number of Daimoku that we must chant. The amount depends on individual circumstances . . . . When we chant, the entire body should feel a tremendous surge of joy. We must persevere until we become totally one with the Gohonzon.
>
> *(*Nichiren Shoshu Koyo, *p. 134)*

A STRONG, STEADY PRACTICE DAY BY DAY

People who persevere in a solid practice of Gongyo find that their lives become fuller and that their work or studies proceed successfully and smoothly. This process is similar to practicing music or a martial art, through which the art gradually becomes part of the self through the accumulation of many years of practice.

Thus, the Daishonin teaches the importance of a continuous, steady practice:

> To accept is easy; to continue is difficult. But Buddhahood lies in continuing faith.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p. 127;* Gosho, *p. 775)*

It is important to fight the lazy nature which can interfere with our consistent practice of Gongyo. This will enable us to acquire the life condition of *sokushin jobutsu* (attaining Buddhahood in one's present form).

In order to continue the practice of Gongyo throughout our lives, we make Gongyo part of our regular daily schedules. However, this does not mean to do Gongyo merely from force of habit. We should never forget to make earnestness the basis of our practice, as expressed in a passage from the *Juryo* (Sixteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which we recite during every prayer of Gongyo:

> *Isshin yokken butsu. Fuji shaku shinmyo.* (Single-mindedly yearning to see the Buddha, they do not hesitate to give even their lives.)
>
> *(*Kaiketsu, *p. 439)*

Finally, the guidance of Sixty-seventh High Priest Nikken Shonin states:

> I would like you to recognize the great importance of Gongyo. Morning and Evening Gongyo are the foundation

for your faith and study for the day. And in the midst of chanting Daimoku with your eyes firmly fixed on the Gohonzon, without quite realizing how it happens, the actual reality of the Gohonzon and yourself truly become one. That is reaching what is called *kyochi myogo* (fusion of reality and wisdom).

(Dai-Nichiren, *No. 427)*



CHAPTER 4

How to Do Gongyo

Gongyo consists of a series of prayers. Recite all five prayers in the morning. In the evening, recite the second, third and fifth prayers only. For convenience, the sutra book is divided into four sections:

A: Excerpt from the Hoben chapter, p. 1–4 in the "Liturgy of Nichiren Shoshu."

B: *Chogyo* or prose section of the *Juryo* chapter, p. 5–22.

C: *Jigage* or verse section of the *Juryo* chapter, p. 22–31.

D: Silent Prayers, p. 32–37.

THE ORDER OF RECITATION

First Prayer

Face the Gohonzon, chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo three times (Daimoku Sansho), bowing in reverence to the Three Treasures of True Buddhism (the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin; the True Law, Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo; and the Priest, i.e., Nikko Shonin, Nichimoku Shonin, and each of the successive High Priests). Face east, chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo three times, bow, and recite part A. The portion of part A from *"Sho-i sho-ho"* to *"nyo ze honmak-ku-kyo to"* is always repeated three times. Bow after the third recitation.

Recite the title of the Juryo chapter (first two lines of part B), omit the remainder of part B and recite part C, bowing at the end of part C. Chant three prolonged Daimoku (*Hiki*-Daimoku, which is pronounced: Namu-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, i.e., chant Namu, breathe, chant Myoho-Renge-Kyo, Namu, breathe, chant Myoho-Renge-Kyo, Namu, breathe, chant Myoho-Renge-Kyo). Bow, chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo three times and while bowing, offer the first Silent Prayer. (The bell is not rung during the first prayer.)

Second Prayer

Face the Gohonzon, ring the bell seven times. Recite part A, sound the bell three times. Recite parts B, C, chant three prolonged Daimoku and bow. Sound the bell five times, chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo three times, bow and offer the second Silent Prayer. This is the only time that the whole sutra is recited straight through. (The places indicated for bowing in the first prayer are the same for all five prayers. The number of times the bell should be struck is always the same as indicated above, except as indicated in the fifth prayer.)

Third Prayer

Sound bell, recite part A. Sound bell, recite the first two lines of part B, omit the remainder of B and recite part C. Chant three prolonged Daimoku, sound the bell, chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo three times, and offer the third Silent Prayer.

Fourth Prayer

Sound bell, recite part A. Sound bell, recite the first two lines of part B, omit the remainder of B and recite part C. Chant three prolonged Daimoku, sound the bell, chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo three times, and offer the fourth Silent Prayer.



Fifth Prayer

Sound bell, recite part A. Sound bell, recite the first two lines of part B, omit the remainder of B and recite part C. Then, strike the bell seven times while beginning the chanting of Daimoku (Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo). To end the recitation of Daimoku, strike the bell with each syllable of the last Myoho-Renge-Kyo and bow. Chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo three more times, and while bowed, offer the fifth Silent Prayer. Strike the bell continuously during the first part of the fifth Silent Prayer. Then, after observing the last part of the fifth Silent Prayer, sound the bell and conclude Gongyo by chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo three times and bowing.

DOING GONGYO WITH TWO OR MORE PEOPLE

When Gongyo is done together with other people, one person leads while the others harmonize their voices with him or her. If everyone follows the speed of the leader, and chants at a moderate volume, the rhythm will be easy to follow. During the recitation of the Sutra, the leader recites the titles of the *Hoben-pon* and *Juryo-hon*, then all join in unison in the recitation. The Daimoku Sansho during the silent prayers is chanted by the leader alone.

When *Hiki*-Daimoku is recited during Gongyo, the first Nam-mu is chanted by the leader alone, followed by everyone chanting in unison. The first Daimoku Sansho to start Gongyo, and the final one to finish Gongyo are chanted by everyone.

CHANTING DAIMOKU *(SHODAI)* APART FROM GONGYO

There may be times during the day when you want to chant extra Daimoku apart from Morning or Evening Gongyo. In this case the following is recommended:

1. Chant Daimoku Sansho, ring the bell seven times and recite part A. Then, ring the bell three times and recite the title of the *Juryo-hon* and part C.

2. At the end of part C, ring the bell seven times and start chanting Daimoku. Chant as much as you wish, then ring the bell five times as you finish.

3. Observe the Second, Third, last part of the Fourth and last part of the Fifth Silent prayers, one after the other, chanting Daimoku Sansho at the appropriate intervals as shown in your sutra book. Then, ring the bell three times and recite a final Daimoku Sansho.

Fifty-ninth High Priest, Nichiko Shonin, stated the following on the practice of Shodai:

> The Daimoku that we chant must be performed attentively and diligently. When chanting, we should not have trivial thoughts in our minds. The speed should not be too fast and our pronunciation should not be slurred. We must maintain a medium pitch and chant calmly, resolutely and steadily. There is no established number of Daimoku that we must chant. The amount depends on individual circumstances . . . . When we chant, the entire body should feel a tremendous surge of joy. We must persevere until we become totally one with the Gohonzon."
>
> *(Nichiren Shoshu Koyo, p.134)*

THE MEMORIAL BOOK *(KAKOCHO)*

In Nichiren Shoshu, we perform the practice of *Eko*, the transference of merit. We transfer the benefit of our Daimoku to our deceased loved ones each day during Gongyo, and believers may obtain a special memorial book to use during the Fifth Silent prayer. The book is set up so that we can offer memorials of gratitude during Gongyo each day. All Nichiren Shoshu Temples have a Memorial Book at the altar. Smaller versions are inscribed for lay believers by the Chief Priest of the local temple. It is recommended that all believers have a memorial book. It is placed to



the left side of the offering table in front of the Butsudan

Recorded in the Memorial Book are the anniversaries of the deaths of Nichiren Daishonin and all of the successive High Priests, acknowledgment of the religious persecutions the Daishonin endured, and the anniversaries of the deaths of our own deceased relatives and friends.

Each page of the Memorial Book is numbered to correspond to a day of the month. For example, the page numbered 20 corresponds to the twentieth day of each month of the year. Just before beginning evening Gongyo, turn the page to the one numbered for the next day and observe those memorials during the Fifth Silent Prayer. Repeat those memorials at morning Gongyo on the numbered day.

Families who have a Memorial Book should offer the memorial section of the Fifth Prayer in the following manner. After ending Shodai, and chanting Daimoku Sansho, while continuously striking the bell:

1. Silently offer your deep gratitude for the Daishonin and the successive High Priests as they are noted in the Memorial Book.
2. Silently offer your gratitude for the religious persecutions the Daishonin endured as they are noted in the Memorial Book.
3. Silently offer prayers in memory of and gratitude for the lives of the deceased as they are noted in the Memorial Book including those whose names have been inscribed at your request by the Chief Priest.
4. Then, offer the first part of the Fifth Silent prayer in your Sutra book, and offer prayers for any other deceased relatives and friends.
5. Offer the last part of the Fifth Silent prayer and finish Gongyo by ringing the bell three times and chanting Daimoku Sansho.

To obtain a Memorial Book, request an application from your local temple. This application has a place to write the names of one's deceased family and friends. The Chief Priest inscribes the requested names in the book. When a new name needs to be added, the book should be given to the Chief Priest to make the inscription. Please check with your local temple staff regarding appropriate Gokuyo.



CHAPTER 5

The Five Prayers of Gongyo

THE PRIMARY PRACTICE AND THE SUPPLEMENTARY PRACTICE

Reciting the *Hoben* and *Juryo* chapters of the Lotus Sutra reveals and supports the great merit of offering the Daimoku

During Morning and Evening Gongyo, we recite the *Hoben* (Second) and the *Juryo* (Sixteenth) chapters of the Lotus Sutra and chant the Daimoku (Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo). Offering the Daimoku is called the primary practice, while recitation of the *Hoben* and *Juryo* chapters is called the supplementary practice.

The merit we gain from strongly and consistently performing the primary practice of chanting the Daimoku is immeasurable and infinite. The fortune we accumulate is so great that its magnitude is beyond the capacity of common mortals to fathom.

WHY WE RECITE THE *HOBEN* AND *JURYO* CHAPTERS

Why, out of all the chapters of the Lotus Sutra, do we recite these particular chapters? The Daishonin tells us the reason in His Gosho, *Recitation of the* Hoben *and* Jury*o Chapters:*

> Even though none of the chapters of the Lotus Sutra is negligible, out of all the twenty-eight chapters, the *Hoben* and *Juryo* chapters are particularly superior and praiseworthy. The remaining chapters are all like the branches

> and leaves [of these two chapters]. Therefore, for your regular practice, you should learn and recite the prose sections of the *Hoben* and *Juryo* chapters.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 6, p.10,* Gosho, *p. 303)*

The *Hoben* chapter is the core of the Shakumon (Theoretical) Teaching of the Lotus Sutra, and the *Juryo* chapter is the core of the Honmon (Essential) Teaching. Nichiren Daishonin Himself recited these chapters daily. Using metaphors from everyday life, Twenty-sixth High Priest Nichikan Shonin explained how the recitation of these two chapters functions as a supplementary practice:

> The supplementary practice is the recitation of both the *Hoben* and *Juryo* chapters. This practice manifests the exceedingly deep merit of the primary practice, as lye aids clear water or salt and vinegar augment the flavor of rice or noodles. This is why it is called the supplementary practice.
>
> *(*Toryu Gyoji Sho, *"On The Ceremonies of This Sect,"* Seiten, *p. 922)*

Thus, the recitation of the sutra functions to augment the merit of chanting the Daimoku, which is the primary practice.

THE FIVE PRAYERS OF GONGYO_HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Articles of Procedure After Nikko, the document bestowed on Third High Priest, Nichimoku Shonin, expressing the will of Nikko Shonin, includes the passage:

> You, Nichimoku, must govern and maintain Taisekiji, including the Mido and grave site, perform Gongyo, and wait for Kosen-rufu.
>
> *(*Seiten, *p. 519)*

In *On The Ceremonies of This Sect,* Nichikan Shonin stated:

> For more than four hundred years since its founding, the formalities and teachings of this temple have been kept

> exactly the same as those of Nichiren Daishonin. Therefore, Morning and Evening Gongyo include only the two [*Hoben* and *Juryo*] chapters.
>
> *(*Seiten, *p. 948)*

These passages show that since the days of Nichiren Daishonin, the practice of Gongyo has consisted of the recitation of the *Hoben* and *Juryo* chapters of the Lotus Sutra and the chanting of the Daimoku. This, the foundation of practice in Nichiren Shoshu, was transmitted to Second High Priest Nikko Shonin and has been maintained correctly ever since.

Various temple buildings were constructed after Second High Priest Nikko Shonin founded Taisekiji, starting with the Daibo and Mutsubo, followed by the Hondo, Mieido, and Tendo (a hall dedicated to the *Shoten Zenjin*). In the early days of Taisekiji, Gongyo was performed by moving from one temple building to another in turn and performing one prayer at each. Eventually, this was changed, and all five prayers were performed in the Kyakuden (Reception Hall), as in the *Ushitora* Gongyo of today.

Fifty-ninth High Priest Nichiko Shonin explained that the details of our present way of doing Gongyo are based on the instruction of Ninth High Priest Nichiu Shonin. These details include: the division of Gongyo into five prayers in the morning and three prayers in the evening; the recitation of the *Hoben* chapter only up through the *Junyoze* portion; and the distinction between recitation of the entire *Juryo* chapter and recitation of just the *Jigage* portion.

FIRST PRAYER

The innate protective functions and powers of the universe are called the *Shoten Zenjin.* The *Shoten Zenjin* are nourished by Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo and function through the power of Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. In the first prayer, facing the east, we offer our Daimoku to the *Shoten Zenjin,* with central focus on *Dainittenno* (the powers and functions exhibited by the sun), and pray that their protective functions may thereby increase.

The *Shoten Zenjin* Protect Those Who Correctly Practice and Uphold The Lotus Sutra

The *Anrakugyo* (14th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra states that the *Shoten Zenjin* will protect those who teach the Lotus Sutra to others, and in the *Dharani* (26th) chapter, the *Shoten Zenjin* vow to Shakyamuni that they will always protect votaries of the Lotus Sutra. In the *Kito-sho Gosho* ("On Prayer"), the Daishonin explains that they must keep this vow because they themselves are able to attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra. In a famous passage from that Gosho, the Daishonin promises that the *Shoten Zenjin* will always uphold this vow:

> . . . even if the ebbing and flowing of the tides were to halt, or even if the sun were to rise in the west, the prayer of a votary of the Lotus Sutra would never fail to be answered . . . . Even if a votary of the Lotus Sutra is insincere, even if his wisdom is on the level of a fool, even if his body is impure and even if he does not possess virtue from keeping the precepts, if he chants Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, [the *Shoten Zenjin*] will never fail to protect him.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 630)*

The Doctrine of the Ascent of the *Shoten Zenjin* to the Heavens

The Daishonin teaches that when the country is filled with slander against the Lotus Sutra, the *Shoten Zenjin* will be starved for the flavor of *Myoho* and will return to the heavens. The country will then be invaded by demons and various disasters will occur. The Gosho, *On Securing the Peace of The Land Through The Propagation of True Buddhism (Rissho Ankoku Ron)* states:

> The people of today all turn their backs upon what is right; to a man, they give their allegiance to evil. That is the reason why the benevolent deities have abandoned the

> nation, why sages leave and do not return; and in their stead come devils and demons, disasters and calamities that arise one after the other.
>
> (MW, *Vol. 2, p. 5–6;* Gosho, *p. 234)*

Still, even if slander of the Law throughout the entire country causes the *Shoten Zenjin* to abandon the nation, they will still protect a votary of the Lotus Sutra. The Daishonin explains this in the *Niike Gosho:*

> However, now that I am spreading the Lotus Sutra as the Buddha's envoy, everyone from ruler to the lowliest subject has become a slanderer. So far, Hachiman has done everything possible to prevent hostility to the Lotus Sutra from developing among our people . . . but now in fear of breaking the pledge he made at Eagle Peak, he has razed his shrines and ascended to heaven. Even so, should there be a votary of the Lotus Sutra who would give his life for it, Hachiman will watch over him.
>
> (MW, *Vol. 1, p. 258;* Gosho, *pp. 1459–1460)*

Wherever they may be, the believers who protect the True Law and propagate the Daishonin's teachings correctly will definitely be protected by the *Shoten Zenjin.*

The *Shoten Zenjin* are Part of the Functions of the Power of the True Buddha

In His *Exegesis on the Ho'on Sho,* Twenty-sixth High Priest Nichikan Shonin explains:

> The Buddhas of the ten directions and the three existences, as well as the gods of heaven and earth, Bonten, Taishaku, Nitten, and Gatten, all return to their original enlightened state, and become part of the life of the One Buddha of Intrinsically Perfect Wisdom.
>
> (Mondan, *p. 395)*

In other words, the *Shoten Zenjin* are transient manifestations of the True Buddha of Intrinsically Perfect Wisdom. Thus, one of the doctrines of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is that the *Shoten Zenjin* are actually part of the functions of the power of the True Buddha. The Daishonin indicates this in the "Letter to Ko-no-ama Gozen," where He gives the tender guidance:

> Whenever you yearn for me, Nichiren, look toward the sun which rises in the morning and the moon which appears in the evening. I will invariably be reflected in the sun and the moon.
>
> (MW, *Vol. 4, p. 143;* Gosho, *p. 740)*

Nichiu Shonin explained that part of the meaning of the first prayer of Morning Gongyo is that we face the sun as it rises in the east each morning to express reverence for the forms in which the Buddha of Intrinsically Perfect Wisdom, who appeared in Mappo as Nichiren Daishonin, unceasingly bestows benefit throughout the three existences.

SECOND AND THIRD PRAYERS

The second and third prayers are the heart of Gongyo. In the second and third prayers, we offer our appreciation to the Three Treasures of True Buddhism, the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood.

In the second prayer we praise the tremendous, limitless beneficial powers of the Dai-Gohonzon, pray that Its benefits may ever more widely prevail, and offer our deepest gratitude. At the same time, we promise to dedicate our entire lives to the Dai-Gohonzon (as expressed by the word *Namu*).

In the third prayer, we offer gratitude in repayment of the debt we owe to the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin; to His successor, the Second High Priest, Nikko Shonin, to whom the Daishonin transferred the entirety of His Buddhism; to the Third High Priest, Nichimoku Shonin; and to all the successive high priests, who have

correctly transmitted the Daishonin's Buddhism without the slightest change through the present day.

The Three Treasures

The Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood are said to be the three elements that constitute Buddhism. This is because Buddhism can only exist with a Buddha who teaches the Law to the people, the Law (teachings) taught by the Buddha, and the priests who believe and practice the teachings of the Buddha, and who propagate and transmit them. To revere and make offerings to the Three Treasures of Buddhism is fundamental to faith as a Buddhist. The Daishonin says in the *Letter to Niike:*

> If one truly understands Buddhism, he should show this in his respect for the Priesthood, reverence for the Law and offerings to the Buddha.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p. 260;* Gosho, *p. 1461)*

The Three Treasures in Nichiren Shoshu

Buddhism, in general, defines the Three Treasures differently in accordance with the time. For example, there are the "Three Treasures while The Buddha is present in the world" and the "Three Treasures as perpetuated in the world after the Buddha's passing." Also, each of the various sects of Buddhism has its own definition of the Three Treasures.

What are the Three Treasures in Nichiren Shoshu; that is, the Three Treasures for today, the time of *Mappo*? Nichikan Shonin, the Twenty-sixth High Priest, gave a clear answer to this question in His work *On the Ceremonies of This Sect:*

> In *Mappo,* one should believe in the Three Treasures of the Sowing of the Essential (Honmon) Teachings concealed within the depths of the *Juryo* chapter.
>
> *(*Seiten, *p. 949)*

The Three Treasures of the Sowing concealed within the depths of the *Juryo* chapter are the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood of *Kuon Ganjo.* That is, the Treasure of the Buddha of *Kuon Ganjo* is the Buddha of Intrinsically Perfect Wisdom, who appeared in *Mappo* as Nichiren Daishonin. The Treasure of the Law of *Kuon Ganjo* is Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, the Inner Realization of the Buddha of Intrinsically Perfect Wisdom, embodied as the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of the Honmon (Essential) Teaching. The Treasure of the Priesthood of *Kuon Ganjo* is the Great Master of Propagation of the Honmon (Essential) Teaching, Byakuren Ajari Nikko Shonin.

Furthermore, the successive high priests from Nichimoku Shonin onward have transmitted the Heritage of the Law of the Daishonin's Buddhism. Thus, the Treasure of the Priesthood extends to the successive High Priests, and we offer our appreciation to them.

The Three Treasures as One Entity

The Three Treasures are of course explained as being three separate entities: the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood. However, within the teachings of True Buddhism, the Three Treasures are revealed as ultimately being one entity. To explain, Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, the Treasure of the Law of *Kuon Ganjo,* is the eternal, immutable Original Law of the simultaneity of cause and effect that spans the three existences. This Law is revealed due to the existence of the True Buddha, who is eternally enlightened to that Law. The True Buddha is interrelated with the Original Law. It is not possible to separate the Law and the Buddha.

If there were no Priesthood, it would not be possible for the Law to be transmitted to future ages and propagated in the world. The Priesthood can only have the mission to protect and pass on Buddhism because of the existence of the Buddha and the Law. The Daishonin makes all of this abundantly clear in the *Four Debts of Gratitude* (*Shi'on Sho):*

> Concerning the debt owed to the Law, the Law is the teacher of all Buddhas. It is because of the Law that the Buddhas are worthy of respect. Therefore, one who wishes

> to repay his debt to the Buddha must first repay the debt he owes to the Law. As for the debt owed to the Priesthood, both the Treasure of the Buddha and the Treasure of the Law are invariably perpetuated by priests. To illustrate, without firewood, there can be no fire, and if there is no earth, plants cannot grow. Likewise, even though Buddhism existed, without the priests who studied it and passed it on, it would never have been transmitted throughout the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days into the Latter Day of the Law. Therefore the *Daijuku* Sutra states, "Suppose that, in the fifth five-hundred-year period, there should be someone who harasses unlearned monks without precepts by accusing them of some offense. You should know that this person is extinguishing the great torch of Buddhism." Difficult to recompense indeed is the debt we owe to the Priesthood! Thus it is imperative that one repay one's debt of gratitude to the Three Treasures.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 5, p. 10–11;* Gosho, *p. 268)*

That the Three Treasures are one entity is also indicated by this passage in the *Shingon Kenmon* Gosho:

> In fact, slander of the Law means slander of the Buddha and slander of the Priesthood. This is because the Three Treasures are one entity.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 608)*

The Three Treasures exist in this world, and because of this, our prayers to eradicate our bad karma can be realized. We should perform the second and third silent prayers with an awareness of how difficult it is to fully repay the debt of gratitude we owe to the Three Treasures of True Buddhism.

FOURTH PRAYER

In the fourth prayer, we first pray for the attainment of the Daishonin's great aspiration, the propagation of the True Law through-

out the entire world (Kosen-rufu), and for the true world peace that would arise from it. Next, we acknowledge our slanders against the True Law in our past and present lives, and pray to eradicate those slanders, that is, to eradicate the inherent cause that hinders our aspiration for enlightenment and our Buddhist practice. Then we offer prayers to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime, as well as prayers for other personal considerations.

The way to realize both the prayer for Kosen-rufu and one's personal prayers is by accepting and carrying out the will and heart of the True Buddha of the Three Treasures of Sowing. In other words, the key is to bring forth a great desire for Kosen-rufu and to diligently strive in practice for oneself and in teaching others about the Daishonin's Buddhism. This is the only practice that will enable us to repay our debt of gratitude to the Buddha, the Law and the Priesthood. When we fulfill this practice, our prayers can be fulfilled.

Personal Prayers and Eradication of Hindrances Due to Past and Present Slanders

Even though we all share the same faith, as individuals we pray to the Gohonzon about different things because of differences in our current circumstances and backgrounds and differences in the paths we walk as human beings. The fundamental source of these differences is our individual karma from past lifetimes. The negative karma we have accumulated through slandering the Law in past lives is particularly significant because it is the dominant cause of unhappiness and suffering in the present. As Nichiren Daishonin says in the *Kaimoku Sho* ("Opening of the Eyes"):

> Likewise, the *Shinjikan* Sutra states: "If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present."
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 2, pp. 197-198;* Gosho, *p. 571)*

Through honest self-reflection, we begin to understand that in order to fulfill our desires we must eradicate the negative karma accumulated in past lives due to slander of the Law.

How can we eradicate past slander of the Law? The answer is to strive seriously in our faith in the True Law, which we have had the great fortune to meet in this lifetime. We must also teach True Buddhism to others. This, of course, is the practice of shakubuku and is directly related to the prayer for Kosen-rufu.

We who believe in the Daishonin's Buddhism should not have the short-sighted attitude that faith means only praying about our immediate problems and having our own desires fulfilled. We can eradicate our past slanders and fulfill our desires by correctly carrying out faith based on our gratitude for having encountered True Buddhism, which is so hard to meet. This brings forth a great desire to introduce, encourage, and lead many people to Buddhism. The fundamental spirit of the fourth prayer lies in the second and third prayers, in which we pray to repay our debt of gratitude to the Three Treasures of Buddhism.

FIFTH PRAYER

In the Fifth prayer, we pray that our ancestors and deceased relatives, all deceased Nichiren Shoshu believers, and all others who have died may receive the merit of our offering of Daimoku and attain Buddhahood. Finally, to conclude Gongyo, we pray that the benefits of the Dai-Gohonzon extend to the farthest reaches of the universe, so that we and all existence may together attain Buddhahood.

Why Do Memorial Prayers Benefit the Deceased?

In Morning and Evening Gongyo, we offer memorial prayers for the deceased. Of course, the practice of praying for the deceased is not limited to Buddhists; as human beings, it is only natural to pray for deceased ancestors, relatives, and others with whom we have close connections.

Prayers for the deceased should be performed according to the formalities of Nichiren Shoshu; that is, according to the teachings of the Daishonin's Buddhism. When prayers for the deceased are performed according to the teachings of incorrect religions, even though the intention is to help the deceased, those prayers actually result in suffering for both the deceased and the people who perform them. Let's take a look at the deeper religious and philosophical bases of our prayers for the deceased.

Transfer of Merit

The Buddhist term for benefiting the deceased is *eko*. This is a translation of the Sanskrit word *parinama*. The original meaning of *parinama* was "conversion." In relation to prayers for the deceased, *eko* refers to the act of "transferring the merit one gains from performing virtuous acts and giving it to others." A rough English equivalent of *eko* in this sense is "transfer of merit."

The deceased cannot practice Buddhism. This is why those who are living must accumulate merit through their Buddhist practice on behalf of the deceased and transfer that merit to them.

In its fundamental meaning, however, "transfer of merit" is not limited to prayers performed for the deceased. We should transfer merit to living parents, friends, and acquaintances, all other people and all living beings. That merit will then return to us. This is the fundamental significance of *eko.*

The *Maka Shikan* explains this through the following metaphor. If someone blows a bugle, the sound he or she makes, though small, will resound far away. In the same way, if one transfers merit to all living beings (through the correct object of worship), that limited merit will expand outward, turn around, and return. The resulting benefit will be very significant.

Nichiren Daishonin teaches:

> There are three ways of discharging one's filial piety. Giving one's parents clothing and food is the lowest level of

> filial devotion. Not deviating from the intent of one's father and mother is the intermediate level of filial devotion. Transferring merit to one's parents is the supreme level of filial devotion. Since it is the supreme filial devotion to direct one's merit to parents who are living, how much more praiseworthy it is to do so for parents who are deceased!
>
> (Shintei Gosho, *Vol. 1, p. 69)*

In the same Gosho, the Daishonin teaches that the deceased person receives one-seventh of the benefit of the transfer of merit; the remainder returns to the person transferring the merit.

Prayer for the Enlightenment of All Existence

We end Gongyo with the prayer that the merit we have just cultivated through Gongyo will be shared by all existence throughout the universe so that we, as well as others, can return to the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light (the life-condition of Buddhahood).

The practice of offering prayers for the enlightenment of all existence has its foundation in a passage in the Seventh *(Kejoyu)* chapter of the Lotus Sutra which states, "Our aspiration is to spread this merit universally to all, so that we, together with all living beings, may attain the Buddha Way."

Enlightenment for oneself alone is not the aim of the Lotus Sutra. According to the principle of the oneness of self and others, the reason each individual is able to exist at the present moment is due to the many influences of others. We are able to exist only because of connections to others: to parents and ancestors, teachers, friends, neighbors, society, the nation and the environment. In fact, we owe our existence to everything, both the tangible and the intangible. One who is awakened to this feels gratitude for all living beings, and to all existence.

CHAPTER 6

The Gohonzon

IMPORTANCE OF THE CORRECT OBJECT OF WORSHIP

Honzon is a shortened form of the term *"Konpon Songyo"* (*Konpon:* the basis; *Songyo:* honorable respect). It signifies the object of worship in which one takes faith and reveres as the basis of one's life.

Generally speaking, each religion has an object of worship in which its teachings, guidelines, and doctrines are embodied. Religions differ because their objects of worship are based on different concepts.

In Buddhism, faith is based on the mystic principle of a mutual interaction between the living beings (believers) and the object of worship. Faith is an act of worshipping the *honzon* as the basis of one's belief and object of respect. This then causes the believer to directly receive the teachings presented in that object of worship.

Taking faith in an object of worship is not just based upon emotion, logic, or empirical thinking. Accepting faith gives rise to the effort to unify oneself with the object of worship. Regardless of the degree of superiority or inferiority of the teachings, an object of worship becomes necessary to unite those teachings deeply and directly with the believer's own life.

One's happiness or unhappiness is decided conclusively by the object of worship in which one believes. If one worships an incorrect object, one's life condition declines, causing suffering and eventual stagnation. The most important thing is to choose the correct object of worship.

Many people think all religions are good, saying "Faith moves mountains." But the crucial point is what to base that faith upon. There is a great difference, for example, between worshipping a so-called transcendental being and the teachings of a worldly philosopher. If we make a mistake in the choice of our object of worship, it will result in undesirable effects. Therefore, in the Gosho, the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin tells us to "choose the most superior object of worship." (*Gosho,* p.1275).

The correct religion that will truly benefit the people is the one that holds the supreme, true object of worship.

THE THREE VIRTUES AND THE ONENESS OF THE PERSON AND THE LAW

The Dai-Gohonzon that Nichiren Daishonin inscribed in the form of a mandala is the life of the True Buddha Himself, possessing the Three Virtues of Sovereign, Teacher and Parent.

1. The Sovereign, with absolute power, works to protect all the people.
2. The Teacher instructs and guides all people so they may attain enlightenment, the state of absolute happiness.
3. The Parent manifests the compassion and mercy to nurture and support all living beings.

The Gosho states:

> The Buddha is the lord of those in the worlds of Humanity *(Nin)* and Heaven *(Ten),* the parent of all the people, and the teacher who enlightens them. A parent with lowly virtues lacks the virtues of a Lord. Lords are to be feared unless they possess the compassion of parents. Even if some are both parent and lord they are not necessarily teachers. All Buddhas who are respected are lords but since they did not appear in this world, they are not teachers.
>
> (Gosho, *p. 628).*

The Gohonzon possesses all Three Virtues, and is the only True Object of Worship that can save all people from the sufferings of birth and death. It is important for us to be attentive to our attitude and posture in front of the Gohonzon. We must recite the Sutra and chant Daimoku with sincere devotion. Then, enlightenment is possible, bringing the Buddha nature embodied in the Gohonzon and one's own nature into oneness.

The Gohonzon is the manifestation of the oneness of the Person and the Law. Even though the most superior Law exists in the universe, it is impossible to prove its existence without the Person (Buddha) who is enlightened to it. On the other hand, if a Buddha did not possess the enlightened wisdom to realize the Mystic Law he would be only a common mortal. Nichiren Daishonin is the only one who is eternally enlightened to the True Law which can lead everyone to Buddhahood. He inscribed His enlightened life in the form of the Great Mandala, the Dai-Gohonzon. The Dai-Gohonzon embodies Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo of actual *ichinen sanzen* (the Law) and the eternally enlightened life of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin (the Person) which are, together, the entity of the oneness of the Person and the Law *(ninpo ikka).*

Nichiren Daishonin states in the Gosho:

> This Law embodies *ichinen sanzen,* the life of the Buddha; even the most intelligent scholar in the world cannot comprehend the Law.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 523).*

Even if we don't understand the whole concept of the Law, it is, in fact, the life of the Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. We must face the Gohonzon as if we were facing the living Nichiren Daishonin. Through various experiences and study of the True Teaching, we will become convinced that the Gohonzon is the living Buddha.

HOW TO SET UP YOUR NICHIREN SHOSHU ALTAR

Offerings to and Care of the Gohonzon

Our basic spirit toward the Gohonzon should be one of great respect. If we have the fundamental attitude that the Gohonzon is the living Buddha, endowed with the Three Virtues of Sovereign, Teacher and Parent, then we will always treat the Gohonzon with the greatest respect.

The Gosho, "On Attaining Buddhahood" states:

> Whether you chant the Buddha's name, recite the sutra, or merely offer flowers and incense, all your virtuous acts will implant benefits and good fortune in your life. With this conviction you should put your faith into practice.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p. 4;* Gosho, *p. 46)*

To recite Gongyo and to chant Daimoku to the Gohonzon are the basic practices of this Buddhism. You do Gongyo to perfect your life. It should not be done out of a sense of formality. An attitude of appreciation and gratitude is most appropriate.

It is important to understand that the Gohonzon is loaned to you by the Head Temple. When you receive the Gohonzon at the Nichiren Shoshu Temple, open a brand new sutra book and hold it above eye level. The Priest will place the Gohonzon on it. The Gohonzon is rolled up in a special envelope. When you return to your seat, carefully cover the envelope with the Gohonzon inside with a *fukusa* (scarf).

The Gohonzon embodies the very life of Nichiren Daishonin; hence it should be treated with the utmost respect and sincerity. Until the Gohonzon is enshrined, pay close attention not to harm or damage it. It should not be unwrapped until it is enshrined in your home by an experienced member (preferably two). The enshrinement ceremony should take place as soon as possible.

For newer members, when changing residence, do not handle the Gohonzon alone. Always have an experienced member assist

you until you have learned the proper procedure for the enshrinement ceremony.

When deciding where to place your altar, the most important thing is to consider the most suitable place for the Gohonzon. The Gohonzon is endowed with the Three Virtues of Parent, Teacher, and Sovereign which will lead you to absolute happiness; therefore, it should be treated with the utmost respect and sincerity. Even in a one-room apartment, it should be placed in the best possible area.

You should use a proper altar made specifically for that purpose, called a Butsudan. It should be sturdy, clean, and secure. If the Butsudan has no doors, a cloth can be draped across the front, which then can be opened and closed.



The Gohonzon should not be placed too high or too low. When you sit or kneel in front of your Butsudan, the bottom of the Gohonzon should be slightly above eye level. Never place things on top of the Butsudan, have shelves surrounding it, or pictures and other articles on the wall with the Butsudan.

There is no substitute for the Gohonzon. Therefore, doing these things should be

based on your sincere faith and not out of formality. The Gohonzon is supreme and your actions in the handling and care of the Gohonzon should reflect that understanding and your sincere faith.

At the front of the Butsudan should be a space to place the offerings. The offering closest to the front of the Butsudan is water in a water cup. Place fresh water in a cup in front of the Gohonzon first thing in the morning before anyone uses water in the house. First run the faucet to flush out the still water so that you can offer the Gohonzon clean, cool water. Leave the water for the remainder of the day and then remove the cup and empty out the water before Evening Gongyo. You have a choice of putting the empty cup away until the morning when you offer water for that day, or you can place the empty cup at the front of the Butsudan. If you have a water cup with a lid, the lid should always be removed when the cup is offered to the Gohonzon with water in it. If, after emptying the cup before Evening Gongyo, you replace the empty cup in front of the Butsudan, it should be covered with the lid.

As you face the Butsudan, on the right, place a candle holder with a white candle; on the left, place evergreens in a vase; and in the middle, place the incense burner. These three items together are called *mitsugusoku* (three accessories). This is an extremely important formality *(Kegi)* in the practice of this Buddhism. Sometimes *gogusoku* (five accessories) are used: incense burner in the center, a pair of candles, one on either side, and two vases with evergreens placed to the outside of each candlestick.

Incense, candles and evergreens, each have a significant meaning in Buddhism.

Incense represents the Property of the Law or the essential property of the Buddha's life. This is the truth to which the Buddha is enlightened.

Candles represent the Property of Wisdom or the spiritual property of the Buddha's life. This enables the Buddha to see the truth.

Evergreens represent the physical property of the Buddha's life, the Property of Compassionate Action.

The incense, candles and evergreens should be placed in a straight line. There is special significance to this. In Nichiren Shoshu, we revere the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin as the True Buddha who possesses the Three Enlightened Properties and whose Three Enlightened Properties comprise His single being. This profound concept teaches, in very simple terms, that the Property of the Law (signified by the incense), the Property of Wisdom (signified by the candles), and the Property of Action (signified by the evergreens) are inseparable and totally integrated as the life of the True Buddha. Incense is made from fragrant wood like shikimi, an evergreen. Therefore, the flame from the candles and the shikimi (evergreen) come together and as a result you get smoke from the incense. The Property of Wisdom (candles) and the Property of Action (shikimi) combined are the Property of the Buddha (incense). The candles, evergreens, and incense are in a straight line, to demonstrate that significance in front of the Gohonzon.



In society, we often use cut flowers to express love or respect, or for decoration. They are beautiful to look at, but flowers die in a few days. From the standpoint of Buddhism, cut flowers are improper offerings to the Buddha because of their ephemeral nature. Evergreens, on the other hand, will last a long time if you change the water in the vase(s) every day.

We usually burn three sticks of incense, but if too much smoke is produced we may use fewer. The three sticks of incense represent the Three Treasures—the Treasure of the Buddha, Treasure of the Law, and the Treasure of the Priesthood. The Treasure of the Buddha is Nichiren Daishonin. The Treasure of the Law is the Dai-Gohonzon. The Treasure of the Priesthood is Nikko Shonin and the successive High Priests.

When we use incense sticks for secular purposes, we usually burn them in an upright position. In Nichiren Shoshu they are laid down. The significance behind this is that when the incense is standing upright, the ashes fall and scatter. The scattered ashes signify a scattered mind. When the incense is laid down, the ashes do not scatter. It also purifies the area in front of the altar and is an offering to the Gohonzon.

The Gohonzon embodies the life of Nichiren Daishonin and the altar is the Buddha's home. The area where the Gohonzon is enshrined is always kept clean. When cleaning the Butsudan area, or Butsudan accessories, an evergreen leaf or a piece of white paper should be kept between your lips as a gesture of respect. Take care to use a clean cloth or duster.

If you eat rice, you may offer it to the Gohonzon. Do not place uncooked rice on the altar. This, unlike water, should not be left all day. After the rice is cooked, the first portion should be offered to the Gohonzon. Ring the bell three times and, observe this silent prayer:

> "I offer deepest gratitude to the Three Treasures of the Buddhism of Sowing. Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo." *(Namu geshu sampo goho on shatoku Gokuyo no tame. Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.)*

Chant Daimoku three times, then remove the rice. Ringing the bell three times signifies appreciation for the Three Treasures.

You may also offer other kinds of food to the Gohonzon. Food offerings, if possible, should be placed in front of the Gohonzon in the space between the water cup and the lined up incense, candles and evergreens. All food offerings must be vegetarian, and traditionally we avoid offering odoriferous foods such as onions, or garlic. When making offerings to the Gohonzon, ring the bell three times and chant Daimoku three times.

These are the basic offerings to the Gohonzon. The most important thing to understand is that the Gohonzon is the living Buddha.

The doors of the Butsudan should be opened when chanting. Otherwise they should be kept closed in order to protect the Gohonzon. In the event of a fire or natural disaster, protect the Gohonzon first.

Lastly, when entering or leaving a home where there is a Gohonzon, always do Daimoku Sansho (chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo three times), offering a greeting to the Gohonzon.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENSHRINING THE GOHONZON

Please do not open the envelope and unroll the Gohonzon after the *Gojukai* ceremony. You should wrap the envelope with a clean cloth or scarf *(fukusa)* and safely place it in a case or bag you brought for that purpose. When you carry the Gohonzon in a case or bag, please be careful to protect it from being buffeted about. Keep the Gohonzon in the envelope it came in until it is ready to be properly enshrined by your sponsor.

The ceremony to welcome the Gohonzon into your home signifies gaining the source to lead the most fulfilled life, founded upon faith. It is an important and solemn ceremony in which you receive into your home the most noble and dignified True Buddha who will correctly guide your life. What follows are the important things to remember for the Gohonzon enshrinement ceremony and the handling and care of the Gohonzon.

Preparation

The Gohonzon should be enshrined in the most respectable room of the house. If you have a multi-story or split level home, you can enshrine it on any level as long as the location is respectful. The important thing, however, is to consider the most suitable place for the Gohonzon. Places with heavy foot traffic that stirs up dust or those too near distracting noises should be avoided. It is a good idea to discuss this with your sponsor.

Before the Gohonzon enshrinement ceremony, again with your sponsor's advice, you must prepare a Buddhist altar *(butsudan)* and various Buddhist accessories *(butsugu)* such as an incense burner, vase(s) for evergreens, candle holder(s), a water cup, a bell and bell striker. Buddhist accessories should include either the three-piece set of one incense burner, one vase and one candle holder *(mitsugusoku);* or the five-piece set of one incense burner, two vases and two candle holders *(gogusoku).* The room should be cleaned beforehand.

Ideally, a Buddhist altar is positioned so that the Gohonzon is facing south. This, however, is only a suggestion; if the floor plan or the arrangement of the room does not allow you to place the altar in this fashion, you can be flexible. In some cases the altar may be on the west wall, and you would have to turn your back to the Gohonzon when reciting the first prayer in Morning Gongyo. To avoid turning your back completely to the Gohonzon in such instances, you should turn slightly off line from the Gohonzon during the first prayer. If the altar is on the east wall and you cannot do the first prayer without directly facing the Gohonzon, again you should seat yourself slightly off line.

Ceremony

After all the necessary preparations are made, you can proceed with the enshrinement ceremony itself. The leader should wash his or her hands in advance. First everyone should start chanting Daimoku.

The leader then places an evergreen leaf or a piece of white paper between his or her lips. Next, the leader should take away any accessories that may interfere with enshrinement and put them on a separate table.

While those in attendance chant Daimoku, the leader unwraps the cloth and very carefully removes the Gohonzon from the envelope.

If the Gohonzon is hanging too high in the butsudan, then the attached long string can be used to tie a loop from which to hang it. Then, while holding the bottom wood dowel, the leader unrolls the Gohonzon very slowly, letting the weight of the wood help it unroll naturally.

The Gohonzon should be handled very gently with the utmost care and with the lightest touch. Even the rolled Gohonzon can be wrinkled if it is handled too roughly. Even though it may take more time to do the enshrinement, please handle the Gohonzon carefully. You can touch the brown frame part of the Gohonzon if necessary, but please never touch the white part of the Gohonzon with the inscription of the Chinese characters. Also, never breathe on the Gohonzon. After it is enshrined, you may notice that the bottom of the Gohonzon curls upward. In most cases this is nothing to be concerned about. In time, it will straighten out on its own from the weight of the wood. However, if the curl is too high, you may very gently roll the bottom wooden dowel up the back of the bottom of the Gohonzon and roll it back down to reduce the curl. Be very careful not to roll it up to the white part with the inscription of the Chinese characters.

Generally speaking, the Gohonzon should be higher than eye level. If the Gohonzon hangs too high, you can adjust the level by using the string. You can also adjust the height of the altar. If you wish to adjust the height of the altar, however, you are encouraged to do so in advance. Please do not move the altar once the Gohonzon is enshrined. Also, please avoid enshrining the Gohonzon so low that you would be looking down at it while chanting.

After the enshrinement is completed, the leader bows deeply to the Gohonzon with palms together in reverence, then places the Buddhist accessories in their proper positions. Sufficient distance should be maintained between the Gohonzon and the Buddhist accessories to avoid any damage to the Gohonzon in the event of an accident.

Next, the leader and all participants begin the recitation of the sutra. The *Hoben* and *Juryo* chapters (Parts A, B, and C) are recited once, followed by Daimoku. After concluding the chanting of Daimoku, the following silent prayers are read: the second, the third, and the second portions of both the fourth and fifth prayers. In the second part of the fourth prayer, it is recommended that you pray to deepen your faith, to expiate negative karma created by the slander of the Law, that each successive generation of your family will be able to carry on the practice of faith in the Mystic Law eternally, for the peace and prosperity of your family, and for the achievement of world peace through the propagation of True Buddhism. After reading the silent prayers, the ceremony will be concluded by chanting Daimoku three times. In order to avoid splattering wax, please use a candle snuffer to extinguish the candles instead of blowing them out or fanning them with the hand. In most cases it is best not to conduct either Morning or Evening Gongyo during the enshrinement. This is a separate, solemn ceremony.

Since the Gohonzon is made of wood and paper, after many years it may become discolored or otherwise marred. We must, however, try to prevent this as best we can. We must make every effort to keep the Gohonzon in good condition for as long as possible. For example, we should be careful not to splash wax or water on the Gohonzon. We should never handle the Gohonzon unnecessarily. We should also exercise precautions to prevent any accidents caused by children or pets. The Gohonzon should not be exposed to direct sunlight. As mentioned earlier, unless you are conducting Gongyo or chanting Daimoku, the doors of the altar should be closed to protect the Gohonzon.

The Gohonzon is the very life of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. Please treat it with the deepest reverence and respect. Never photograph the Gohonzon or allow it to be videotaped. If you have any question about the care of the Gohonzon, please do not hesitate to call your local Nichiren Shoshu Temple. If your Gohonzon is accidentally damaged, or if you would like to have the dust cleaned off the Gohonzon, please contact the Chief Priest of your local Temple.



CHAPTER 7

The Prayer Beads *(Juzu)*

Nichikan Shonin (1655–1726), the Twenty-sixth High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu wrote in his treatise, "The Three Robes of This School" *(Toke Sanne Sho)*:

> The prayer beads are the Buddhist implement which helps common mortals advance in their Buddhist practice.
>
> *(*Seiten, *p. 970)*

The *Mokugenji* Sutra states:

> A king named Haruri once spoke these words in sorrow to the Buddha: "In recent years, famine and pestilence have plagued my small country. All the people are distressed. I am always worrying about this. We are in a painful position. The storehouse of the Law is too profound and extensive to practice. Please teach me the main point of the Law." The Buddha replied: "King, if you want to eliminate earthly desires, make a circular string of 108 wooden beads. Hold them always to yourself. Recite 'Nam Buddha-Nam Dharma-Nam Sangha'; Count one bead with each recitation."
>
> *(Ibid.)*

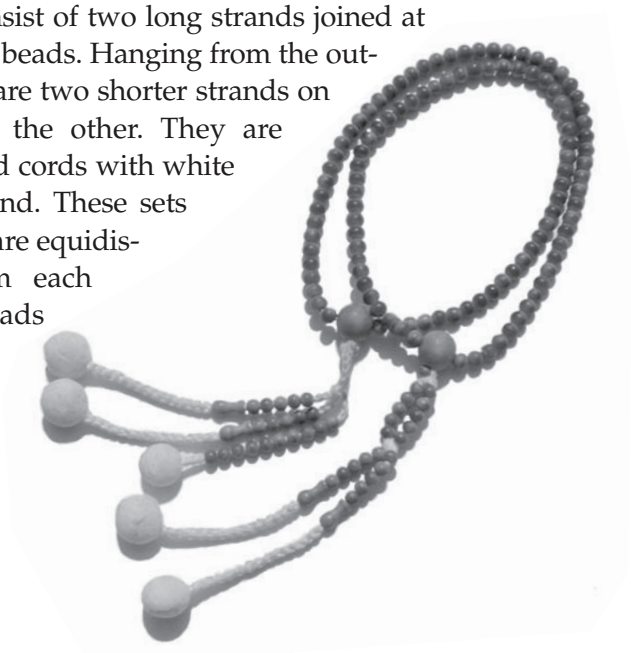
This is the origin of the prayer beads. As this sutra indicates, the Buddha advised the king to hold a string of beads. We follow this tradition when worshipping the Three Treasures, or when counting the number of recitations of the Daimoku.

Nichikan Shonin further stated:

> A circle of beads manifests the mystic principle. Miao-lo stated in his writing *The Annotations on the Great Concentration and Insight:* "There is no lack in the mystic principle." Therefore, we use a circle of beads that compares to the mystic principle. The basic number of beads is 108, which is said to represent the number of earthly desires possessed by common mortals.
>
> *(*Seiten, *p. 971)*

In Nichiren Shoshu, "Nam Buddha" is Nichiren Daishonin, "Nam Dharma" is the Dai-Gohonzon, and "Nam Sangha" is Nikko Shonin and the successive High Priests. These are the Three Treasures.

Our prayer beads consist of two long strands joined at either end with two large beads. Hanging from the outside of these large beads are two shorter strands on one side, and three on the other. They are strung with white braided cords with white pompom tassels at the end. These sets of two and three strands are equidistant and opposite from each other. The two large beads are called the father and mother beads. Both of them represent the Buddha.



When we use the beads, we twist them over once, forming a figure eight. The end of the figure eight with the three strands is placed over the middle finger of the right hand, and the end with the two strands, over the middle finger of the left. The short strands lie on the outside of the hands which are placed together with palms and fingers touching.

Between the father and mother beads are 108 of a smaller size. As mentioned, these represent earthly desires. You will also find four still smaller beads. They are opposite each other, two being seven beads away from the end with two strands, and the other two are fourteen beads beyond the first two.

These four small beads represent the four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth—Jogyo, Muhengyo, Jyogyo, and Anryugyo—and also indicate the four virtues of the Buddha's life. These are eternity, happiness, true self, and purity. Directly under the father bead, which is at the end with two tassels, is a smaller bead. This represents the essential nature of the Law, the eternal, absolute truth.

The strands which hang from the outside of the middle fingers represent *ichinen sanzen.* The two strands of ten beads each which hang from the left signify the ten worlds and their mutual possession. Of the three strands which hang on the right side, the two strands with five beads each together signify the ten factors.

Because of their profound significance, you should treat your prayer beads with respect, just as you would the Buddha. To understand the meaning of the beads is to begin to understand the profundity of Buddhism, the correct practice, and the reason for expressing gratitude to the Three Great Secret Laws and the Three Treasures.

Nichiren Shoshu prayer beads *(juzu)* can be obtained from the accessories stores at the Head Temple, at your local Temple, or at various independent stores that sell Nichiren Shoshu accessories. Before they are sold, juzu are purified in front of the Temple Gohonzon by a Nichiren Shoshu priest. This is called the eye-opening ceremony. If you purchase your beads from a store outside a Nichiren

Shoshu Temple, ask if the eye-opening ceremony was performed on the beads. If not, then take them to the Temple for the ceremony before using them. Also keep in mind that many heretical Buddhist sects also use some form of prayer beads. Only Nichiren Shoshu prayer beads, as described above, can be used in our practice to the Gohonzon.

THE DOCUMENTARY SIGNIFICANCE OF JOINING THE HANDS IN PRAYER

The Lotus Sutra contains various descriptions of people in the life condition of Learning and those in the state of Bodhisattva. Bodhisattva Fukyo, for example, joined his hands in reverent worship as he prayed to the inherent Buddha nature of everyone he encountered. Some phrases from the Lotus Sutra include the following: "In facing the Buddha, we must join our hands in prayer." "It is imperative to join our hands in prayer of whole-hearted determination." "We must show our reverence through our hands joined in prayer as we hear about the path with which we are endowed." "We must extend greetings by respectfully joining our hands in prayer." This practice is frequently mentioned in the Lotus Sutra.

A passage from Nichiren Daishonin's "Oral Teachings" states:

> Joining our hands in prayer is an alternative expression for the Lotus Sutra . . . . The two characters for joining the hands in prayer are contained in all phenomena. The entities of hell and hunger, respectively, and all the laws of the three-thousand worlds in their present condition join their hands in prayer and face the Buddha.
>
> (Gosho, *p. 1734)*

When we, the common mortals of the nine worlds, join our hands in prayer with sincere determination in faith and face the Gohonzon, we become entities that manifest the principles of the "mutual possession of the ten worlds," (*jikkai goku*) the "actual

three-thousand realms contained in a single life-moment," (*ichinen sanzen*) and the "attainment of Buddhahood in our present form" (*sokushin jobutsu*); thus, joining our hands in prayer arouses a feeling of faith.

> Joining our hands in prayer is immediately synonymous with understanding our life.
>
> *(Ibid.)*

When we pray and devote ourselves to the Gohonzon with humility, we demonstrate the principle: "Buddhahood is inherent within the nine worlds." Our existence, as we join our hands in prayer, facing the Buddha and chanting Daimoku, is the very manifestation of enlightenment.

THE SYMBOLISM OF JOINING THE HANDS IN PRAYER

Based on the principles discussed above, Nichiren Shoshu describes the meaning of joining our hands in prayer in the following way: Our whole-hearted faith is represented by the eight petals of the lotus flower. This is also called the "lotus of the heart" or the "white lotus" and it depicts our Buddha nature. In joining our hands in prayer, the eight petals are represented by our eight fingers, and the remaining two thumbs symbolize the father and the mother or the principles of "reality and wisdom" and "practicing for spiritual stability and wisdom." It has been said that the ten digits portray the concept of three-thousand realms inherent in the ten worlds, and joining the fingers and palms signifies the mutual possession of the ten worlds. Bringing the joined hands in front of the chest represents the white lotus of our hearts (our faith).

THE ACTUAL PRACTICE OF JOINING OUR HANDS IN PRAYER

We have discussed the significance of joining our hands in prayer. Most important, however, is whether or not we position them correctly when we perform our Morning and Evening Gongyo and

chant Daimoku. Many people begin with the correct posture but gradually lose their form. When the tension wanes, their fingertips start to bend and the hands separate. Others increase the tension in their hands too much and push their arms outward. Still others let their hands gradually fall below the chest. The correct form is sitting up straight and chanting from the diaphragm.

Our eyes should be set on the character *Myo* on the Gohonzon. This enables us to achieve the actual three-thousand realms in a single life moment and become the Buddha of the entity of the Mystic Law. Thus, we must be conscientious on a daily basis to maintain a correct posture in our practice.



CHAPTER 8

Study

The reason we joined Nichiren Shoshu was to establish unshakable happiness in our lives. However, as Nichiren Daishonin stated, "To accept is easy; to continue is difficult." (*MW,* Vol. 1, p. 127, *Gosho,* p. 775)

It is nearly impossible for us to continue faith throughout life when we know little about the doctrines of True Buddhism.

It is essential for us to study the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, enabling us to understand the reasons to continue practicing. We can resolve doubts, overcome laziness, and strengthen our practice through study, so that when we face obstacles and want to stop, we will be able to bolster our faith.

Also, we will steadily learn correct faith without dogmatism or an egotistical point of view and gain the knowledge necessary for shakubuku and propagation of the True Teachings. We can gradually deepen our conviction in True Buddhism and carry out faith throughout our life. Therefore, study is a necessary support and supplement to faith.

Faith without study results in a shallow, blind faith, an incorrect attitude, and the failure to continue practicing when one is met by some difficulty. Nichiren Daishonin stated:

> Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study.
> Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p. 95,* Gosho, *p.668).*

READING THE GOSHO

Study means learning the doctrines of Nichiren Shoshu. Teachings of other sects do not have the transmission of the True Law and do not convey the Daishonin's true intention. The basis for the study of Nichiren Shoshu is Nichiren Daishonin's Gosho.

The *Gosho,* the writings of the Daishonin, reveal the truth of the Daishonin's Buddhism, the superiority and inferiority or the shallowness and depth of all religions, and the correct attitude in faith. By using the Gosho as the source, we are able to directly study the teachings of the Daishonin.

While reading the Gosho, it is important to remember that profound meanings are hidden in them. There are great distinctions between the contents of the Daishonin's teaching before and after the Sado Exile. In His teachings before Sado, for example, there is not the slightest mention of the Three Great Secret Laws. Learning important background information such as this will further help us in our study of True Buddhism.

There are many points of profound significance underlying the Daishonin's Gosho. Each Gosho may reveal different depths of the teaching that is being imparted according to the relative strength of each recipient's faith. For example, the Twenty-sixth High Priest, Nichikan Shonin, taught that although there is only one name for Shakyamuni, there is actually a distinction among six "kinds" of Shakyamuni in the Daishonin's Gosho. Thus, we study the Gosho based on the interpretations and explanations of the successive High Priests in order to learn the true meanings of the passages.

The importance of this point can be shown through the famous parable in which two blind men touched the body of an elephant for the first time. The one who grabbed the elephant's nose had thought that it was a tube-like animal, whereas the one who touched its belly believed it to be like a wall.

The Daishonin stated, "It is impossible to understand the intention of the Lotus Sutra without the face-to-face transmission of this

Buddhism" (*Gosho,* p. 92). Only through the explanations given by the successive High Priests, who have handed down the heart of the Daishonin's profound and deep Buddhism, can we understand the true intention of the Daishonin as shown in the Gosho. We must embrace this lineage deeply in our hearts and study correctly, basing our reading of the Gosho on faith in the Master and Disciple relationship.

ATTITUDE IN STUDY

Given our busy daily lives, we would be unlikely to pursue our Buddhist studies without an enthusiastic and determined attitude. We can make use of every available opportunity to open the Gosho and read it.

Understanding deepens when a person studies based on faith. This makes Buddhist study different from any other learning. A person who studies Buddhism without faith cannot easily grasp the great depth of the Buddha's teachings. However, the faith mentioned here has nothing in common with blind or fanatic faith where one is expected to never have doubts. It is extremely important to thoroughly inquire about any of our doubts. In this way, we follow the teachings that are reasonable, have supporting proof, and overcome our doubts at the same time. Such an attitude is the meaning of "correct faith."



This teaching is based on the idea that "Buddhism is

reason" (*MW,* Vol. 3, p. 238; *Gosho,* p. 1179) and it regards actual proof very highly. As the Gosho states: "Nothing is more certain than actual proof" (*MW,* Vol. 4, p. 121; *Gosho,* p. 1106). If we study with faith, we can clear away any doubts and be able to master the profound teachings. We study with enthusiasm and with the spirit of yearning to grasp the truth, with constant questions like "Why?" or "How can I understand this?"

Finally, in our study of the Gosho, we do not concentrate only on the theoretical meanings of various Buddhist concepts. Underlying these concepts is the great, powerful conviction of the founder, the Daishonin. The truth of Buddhism is unfathomable by the wisdom of a common mortal. If we ignore these aspects, we are merely engaging in an intellectual exercise. Correct study is the compass and backbone of our faith.



CHAPTER 9

Provisional Religions

Before we encountered True Buddhism, we may never have considered the importance of choosing the correct religion, and we probably had never believed that this choice would have a crucial influence on our happiness or unhappiness in life. Fortunately, however, through Nichiren Daishonin's great teachings we are learning about truth and falsehood in religion, and realize that the root cause of all unhappiness in the world lies in provisional religions. For example, when you lose your way, you can find out where you are by consulting an accurate map. Likewise, you can only determine the truth or falsehood of all religious teachings through the one True Teaching. As explained earlier, faith is the mystic principle of a mutual interaction between living beings (the believers) and the enlightened life of the Buddha (the object of worship), and so it forms the basis of the believer's life. We must therefore distinguish between superior and inferior, true and false, and shallow and deep teachings in order to avoid following a futile path.

People often maintain that since the objectives of all religions are the same, it does not matter which one you believe in, since "however you choose to climb Mt. Fuji, you will still reach the same summit." However, even if you begin with the intention of ascending to the summit, if you use an inaccurate map and set off from the wrong point or use the wrong climbing techniques, then far from reaching the summit, you will surely meet with disaster. In

addition, all the people who trust you as their guide and follow you will meet with disaster in the same way. Similarly, no matter how much you intend to exert yourself in your faith to become happy, if you believe in a provisional religion, or continue blindly believing the words of a religious teacher who expounds mistaken teachings, you will certainly reach a dead-end in your life and become immersed in confusion and suffering.

Although all religions claim that their own teachings are the highest, it is impossible for there to be so many "supreme teachings." Shakyamuni Buddha explained in the Lotus Sutra:

> There is only one vehicle of the Law, not two or three.
>
> (Kaiketsu, *p. 110).*

Religions which do not explain this truth are only partial teachings. In reality, only a religion which judges strictly and fairly between superior and inferior, true and false, and shallow and deep, and is established on this basis, can be called the one supreme and correct teaching.

WHY IS NICHIREN SHOSHU THE CORRECT FAITH?

From His limitless wisdom as the Original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin expounded the doctrine of the Fivefold Comparison and made it the basis for judging all teachings. The Buddhism of the Three Great Secret Laws[1], based on these strict criteria, is the supreme teaching. What follows is an explanation in general terms of the reasons why the Buddhism of the Three Great Secret Laws is the one true teaching, and why all other religions are provisional.

COMPARING BUDDHISM WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

Among the numerous religions in the world, Buddhism is superior because at the root of Buddhism lies the strict law of cause and effect. Teachings other than Buddhism do not clarify this law and are based on a completely different world view.

We can never encounter an example of a result (effect) arising without a cause. Science, which is concerned with phenomena, also demands that such a relationship exists between cause and effect, and people who do not understand reason and logic are generally regarded as foolish. Therefore, no matter how positive a religion may appear or claim to be, it cannot represent the ultimate truth if it teaches the paradox of something arising out of nothing (i.e., miracles), since it ignores cause and effect.

Buddhism, on the other hand, is based on the strict law of cause and effect. It clearly explains the Law, which is the true cause to lead people to absolute happiness.

COMPARING THE BUDDHIST SUTRAS WITH ONE ANOTHER

There are many different sects and schools within Buddhism itself. How do we determine which is the correct form of Buddhism that is true to Shakyamuni's intention? It may appear that they are all the same, since they all came from Shakyamuni's sutras. However, he warned that:

> The wisdom of all Buddhas is immensely deep and incalculable. The way into this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter . . . . [the Buddha] preaches according to what is good, but his intention is difficult to understand.
>
> *(*Kaiketsu, *p. 88)*

In short, even in Buddhism, there are provisional teachings and the one True Teaching. It is important to differentiate between them. In order to differentiate between the various Buddhist sects, we must begin with their original sources and examine the sutras which Shakyamuni preached.

Shakyamuni said that among all the Sutras that he had preached in the past, was preaching in the present, and would preach in the

future, the Lotus Sutra alone was supreme. In the "Sutra of Infinite Meaning" (*Muryogi* Sutra), he also made it clear that, although he had been preaching the Law for forty-two years, he had until then revealed only the provisional teachings in preparation for the Lotus Sutra, which he preached during the final eight years of his life.

But what is this Truth which was only revealed for the first time in the Lotus Sutra? It was not explained during the first forty-two years of Shakyamuni's preaching, and although one may refer to the teachings of this period as Buddhism (teachings leading to Buddhahood), the actual path leading to the attainment of Buddhahood *(Jobutsu),* is left unclear. As revealed in the Lotus Sutra, that doctrine is *Ichinen Sanzen,* which teaches that all living beings can attain Buddhahood. Thus, in the whole of Shakyamuni's Buddhism, the one supreme teaching is the Lotus Sutra. The provisional teachings may be likened to the scaffolding used during the construction of a building, which becomes a hindrance once the building has been completed. Similarly, once the Lotus Sutra had been expounded, adherence to the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings became harmful and fruitless.

Sects such as Pure Land, Shingon (Esoteric Buddhism),Tibetan Buddhism, and Zen are based upon general Buddhist teachings. However, they go against Shakyamuni's words of wisdom, since they are completely founded on the *pre*-Lotus Sutra teachings, and must therefore be recognized as provisional religions.

DETERMINING THE BUDDHIST LAW APPROPRIATE TO *MAPPO*

Shakyamuni explained in the Lotus Sutra and The Great Collection Sutra (*Daijuku* Sutra) that two thousand years after his passing, the world would enter the age of *Mappo,* when many disputes would occur. People's thoughts would become impure like a muddy swamp, their ideas would become confused, and Shakyamuni's Buddhism would lose its power to save them from suffering. In *Mappo,* even adhering to the Lotus Sutra, the most excellent Sutra in Shakyamuni's Buddhism, is useless.

Shakyamuni also predicted that in this age of *Mappo,* when the Pure Law has become obscured and lost, a great Buddhist Law hidden in the depths of the text of the Lotus Sutra and never before heard would appear and replace his own Buddhism. He also predicted that the teacher of this great Buddhist Law of *Mappo*, the Original Buddha, would reveal this Law. The Twenty-first Chapter of the Lotus Sutra states:

> Just as the light of the sun and moon illuminates all obscurity, this person will practice among the people and dispel the darkness of all humankind.
>
> *(*Kaiketsu, *p. 516)*

This Buddha to whom Shakyamuni referred is the eternal True Buddha of the infinite past. He would also be subjected to numerous persecutions for teaching this Law, including exile and a death sentence. All these things plus many other details were predicted in the Lotus Sutra.

Looking back through world history, it can be seen that only one person, Nichiren Daishonin, completely fulfilled all of Shakyamuni's predictions. Therefore, in the age of *Mappo,* the current time period, we can depend only on the supreme teaching, the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin.

COMPARING NICHIREN SHOSHU WITH OTHER NICHIREN SECTS

In order to honor Nichiren Daishonin as the Original Buddha in the age of *Mappo,* we must first define the form of Buddhism which is correctly based on the Daishonin's teachings. However, over seven hundred years have passed since the time of Nichiren Daishonin, and there are many sects which call themselves the "Nichiren Sect" and chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. In addition, many new religions have appeared in Japan since World War II. They teach that, simply by chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, they are following lofty teachings. However, this is far from true.

The confusion of these forms of Buddhism results from the fact that these sects all ignore the transmission of the Heritage of the Law (*kechimyaku sojo).* The Heritage of the Law refers to the master (the Buddha) selecting a single disciple whom he considers to be most suited for his successor, and entrusting him with the essence of Buddhism in its entirety. The transmission of the Heritage of the Law is of utmost importance, since the Law would be lost no matter how outstanding the teacher if he had no successor to follow him.

Nichiren Daishonin transmitted the Heritage of the Law only to His designated successor, the Second High Priest, Nikko Shonin. Nikko Shonin transferred the Heritage of the Law to the Third High Priest, Nichimoku Shonin, and it has been passed down through the unbroken succession of High Priests at the Head Temple Taisekiji to the current High Priest. Nichiren Shoshu is the only orthodox sect which has handed down the Daishonin's teaching correctly in such an unbroken line.

Nichiren Daishonin repeatedly maintained that the different sects of Buddhism had gone astray concerning the true object of worship. He taught:

> We must take faith in the superior teaching as our object of worship.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 1275).*

The Daishonin established the Gohonzon as the True Object of Worship for the age of *Mappo*. Other so called "Nichiren Sects" do not understand the essence of the Object of Worship. For example, the Nichiren Shu sect at Mt. Minobu appears completely confused concerning its object of worship, sometimes using statues of Shakyamuni, sometimes using mandalas, or chanting the Daimoku to the goddess Kishimojin or even to foxes. They sell mandalas as souvenirs to visitors.

The situation is similar with Rissho Kosei Kai and Reiyukai. Rissho Kosei Kai has changed its object of worship five or six times.

Reiyukai, who until recently had revered the posthumous Buddhist names of their ancestors and a mandala of unknown origin, have changed to worshipping a statue of Shakyamuni. There are also several "Nichiren Sects," such as Kempon Hokke Shu, who make their own counterfeit copies of Gohozons that the Daishonin inscribed. The Soka Gakkai International is a group that was originally founded as a lay organization of Nichiren Shoshu. Due to the refusal of the leaders to correctly follow the teachings of Nichiren Shoshu, this organization was excommunicated. Presently, the members are issued a counterfeit copy of a Gohonzon inscribed by Nichiren Shoshu Twenty-sixth High Priest, Nichikan Shonin.

Although they may use the words "Nichiren Sect" or "Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo," their actual teachings are completely different from those of Nichiren Daishonin. Superficially, they appear similar to the Daishonin's True Buddhism, but in reality they are nothing other than false religions and, as such, deceive many people and lead them along the wrong path.

The only true religion which has any power in this world at this time is Nichiren Shoshu. Its doctrines are perfectly logical and consistent, and the experiences of the many people who have faith in this great Buddhism and who have overcome their negative karma are proof of this.

THE NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF FALSE RELIGIONS.

Some people maintain that other sects are not false because they have had their prayers answered by believing in such-and-such a religion, or that their illness was cured through a particular practice. Such arguments may seem reasonable. No matter how crude a teaching, some benefit may be gained from it. People may think their situation has improved or that they have had their prayers answered, but the Daishonin teaches that this is only temporary, and in the long run they invite great misfortune, because they are going against the True Law. Their subsequent thoughts and activities continue to arise out of a false world view.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote:

> Although they may think they have been given a sign for a moment, this will not answer a prayer to know heaven and earth. Although there seems to be a sign that the devils and demons will give them their protection, the master and the believers will certainly enjoy no peace.
>
> (Gosho, *p. 1531)*

Through practicing inferior teachings people lose the ability to recognize unhappiness because their senses are clouded by delusion. We often look at the world around us and are shocked by the acute suffering caused by unforeseen disasters, illnesses, suicide, and physical handicaps. People think, "It has nothing to do with me. I don't suffer any negative influence from provisional teachings." Nevertheless, if you are born into a family which follows a provisional religion, you will be adversely influenced by it. People are often not aware of the power of religion, so they think that calling other religions false is exclusivist and intolerant, but this is not always so.

If we are to eliminate the root of all unhappiness, we should be wary of the negative influence of provisional teachings and adhere strictly to Nichiren Daishonin's orthodox teachings.



CHAPTER 10

Benefit and Negative Effects

WHAT IS BENEFIT?

When we practice to the Gohonzon with faith, the great life condition of Buddhahood will manifest in the depths of our lives. We can expiate our negative karma from the past and experience it as a lesser effect. We are, at once, able to lessen the heavy suffering, both material and spiritual, that would have manifested in our present life as a result of negative past causes.

What is more, for the practitioner of Nichiren Shoshu, the lesser negative effects can be changed into great benefit. This is called *hendoku iyaku,* the Buddhist term for "changing poison into medicine." No matter how many problems and sufferings may arise, if we muster strong faith and never give up this practice, these situations will be resolved. Moreover, our life condition will open up to a life of greater happiness. This is the Gohonzon's great benefit, changing misfortune into happiness. To state a few examples: poor health can change into good health, poverty can become financial stability, a selfish person can become a person of noble character, and family discord can be transformed into true family happiness.

Thus, by overcoming our sufferings and problems, we are filled with a strong life force and enjoy true fulfillment. The force that impels us to accomplish this is Buddhahood welling up within our hearts as a result of our faith in the Gohonzon. The greatest benefit is the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form.

Nichiren Daishonin stated:

> Great achievement means happiness. To subdue evil is the great achievement. To accumulate goodness is called virtue. In Buddhism, great achievement and virtue (benefit) mean attaining Buddhahood in one's present form.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 1775)*

> Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, no matter what happens. Then you will experience boundless joy from the Law. Strengthen your faith more than ever.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p. 161;* Gosho, *p. 991)*

The attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form does not mean that we will become detached from people in the world or be without troubles or sufferings. Rather, it is the ability to live a life filled with joy, challenging problems and resolving them.

The attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form is the life condition symbolized by the four virtues of *Jo, Raku, Ga,* and *Jo. Jo* (eternity) is an indestructible eternal life. *Raku* (happiness) is a feeling of absolute (as opposed to "relative") happiness from enjoyment of living itself. *Ga* (true self) is a strong and harmonious will, undisturbed by any outside influence. *Jo* (purity) is a pure life, unaffected by outside influences.

CONSPICUOUS AND INCONSPICUOUS BENEFIT

By having strong faith in Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, all people can attain the life condition of absolute happiness, or Buddhahood. As proof, benefit is revealed by the effect of Buddhahood welling up inside the life of the believer. The emergence of the great power of benefit from the Gohonzon will provide absolute proof, leaving no room for doubt.

In Nichiren Daishonin's words:

> Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle? It is written that those who embrace the Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra will be protected by Kishimojin and her ten daughters. They will enjoy the happiness of Aizen and the good fortune of Bishamon. Wherever your daughter may frolic or play, no harm will come to her; she will be free from fear like the lion king.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p. 119;* Gosho, *p. 685)*

There are two kinds of benefit: conspicuous and inconspicuous. In the Latter Day of the Law, inconspicuous benefit is most important. Conspicuous benefit is an obvious realization of our prayers. But the greater benefit is inconspicuous benefit, which appears gradually over time.

The Daishonin states:

> Those who obtained benefit during the Former and Middle Days of the Law received "conspicuous" benefit, because the relationship they formed with the Lotus Sutra during the lifetime of the Buddha had finally matured. On the other hand, those born today in the Latter Day of the Law receive the seed of Buddhahood for the first time, and their benefit is therefore inconspicuous.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 4, p.113;* Gosho, *p. 1104)*

The one thousand year period following Shakyamuni's death is called the Former Day of the Law *(Shobo),* and the subsequent one thousand year period is called the Middle Day of the Law *(Zobo).* Those born during these two periods were able to attain enlightenment through the Buddhism of Shakyamuni. These people had, in the past, laid the foundation to become Buddhas, and had in past

lives accumulated great good deeds through their Buddhist practice. This is why the benefit they received was mainly conspicuous benefit, revealed immediately and clearly.

On the contrary, those born in the period of the Latter Day of the Law *(Mappo)* have not accumulated any good deeds from Buddhist practice in the past because they have no connection with Shakyamuni's Buddhism. Only after meeting Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism have we begun to build the foundation to become Buddhas. Therefore, the benefit we receive is inconspicuous, like the seed that has just been sown, which grows into a seedling, and gradually develops to become a mature tree. It is impossible for the seed sown yesterday morning to grow into a mature tree by today. For the seed to germinate, sink its roots, and then grow into a great tree, it will take care and a number of years. In the beginning, it is hard to discern any growth, but as time passes, one can see that great growth has been achieved. Inconspicuous benefit is comparable to this process.

As one accepts and embraces the Gohonzon, and strives in faith, various conspicuous benefits will often be experienced in accordance with the time and the situation, such as the benefit for the beginner in faith, the protection of the *Shoten Zenjin* when one is facing a problem that needs to be solved, or when one's life or livelihood is on the edge. These conspicuous benefits are but a small part of the benefit from the Gohonzon in comparison to inconspicuous benefits.

Some who take faith for only one or two months, not understanding this point, might complain saying that they still haven't received any benefit. They misunderstand the essence of great inconspicuous benefit. If we continue to practice for three years, five years, and so on without impatience, we will all be able to look back on our lives and, without exception, realize that our whole life has elevated, and that we have accomplished immense development. Whether we realize it or not, the actual proof of inconspicuous benefit will become undeniably evident.

There are also believers who start practicing consistently, yet obstacles still arise in their lives. This is due to negative karma from past lifetimes coming to the surface. As we continue a persistent practice to the Gohonzon we will certainly be able to change our negative karma and enjoy happy lives. Eradicating the karma of unhappiness and establishing a happy, elevated life condition is a manifestation of inconspicuous benefit.

Nichiren Daishonin stated:

> Because of actual proof, which we accumulate from our daily practice, we must take strong faith in this profound Buddhism.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 814)*

By experiencing the benefit of the Gohonzon, one can be firmly convinced of achieving the life condition of "attaining Buddhahood in one's present form," which is the greatest of all inconspicuous benefits, and is the purpose of our faith.

WHAT IS *"BACHI"*?

Bachi is a Buddhist term. Simply stated, it is the phenomenon in our lives whereby we have a loss instead of a gain, or when we have negative effects instead of positive experiences.

In general, when we think about negative effect, we tend to view this as something enforced on us by an outside power, such as a punishment meted out by Buddha or by God. Negative effects in Buddhism are not like this. They are based on the strict law of cause and effect.

For example, traffic regulations are one set of rules we live by in our present society. Whether we know about traffic regulations or not, when we ignore the traffic lights, some form of negative effect results, such as a car accident or a traffic ticket. Even though we do not know the rules, the penalty is still the same. When we suffer a loss, no other person has caused it to happen, nor given us punishment. It is a direct result of our own actions.

Bachi (negative effect) in Buddhism works in essentially the same manner. It is not something that is imposed. It is born out of one's own actions. The person engaging in negative behavior will experience the effect.

This Buddhism of the Three Great Secret Laws was established by Nichiren Daishonin, the True Buddha of *Kuon Ganjo* (the infinite past), with His compassion and great mercy, for the sake of all humanity. The Three Great Secret Laws were established in the form of the Dai-Gohonzon. By taking faith we are able to make the highest possible cause to acquire absolute happiness, the life condition of Buddhahood. Therefore, the root cause of unhappiness is going against the teachings of True Buddhism.

Nichiren Daishonin has shown us the principle that:

> To begin with, the Lotus Sutra was taught to lead all people to enlightenment. However, only those who have faith in it attain enlightenment. Those who slander it fall into the hell of incessant suffering.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p.157;* Gosho, *p.905)*

FOUR KINDS OF *BACHI*

Negative effects are classified into four types. They are conspicuous, inconspicuous, individual, and general. The difference between conspicuous and inconspicuous negative effects *(bachi)* is seen in how they manifest. Conspicuous effects are clearly revealed. Inconspicuous negative effects do not appear immediately, but accumulate over time as the person falls into more severe unhappiness. The individual and the general are different in scope. Individual negative effects are experienced by the individual, and general negative effects are experienced at large, as by a group or a particular country. Inconspicuous is more serious than conspicuous. Likewise, general negative effects are greater in scope than individual effects.

For example, Ota Chikamasa, Nagasaki Tokitsuna, and Daishinbo, who persecuted believers during the Atsuhara Persecution,

suffered the conspicuous negative effect of an untimely death when they fell from their horses. Hojo Nagatoki and his father, Hojo Shigetoki, sentenced Nichiren Daishonin to the Izu Exile. They experienced inconspicuous, individual, negative effects. Nagatokoi died from an illness and Shigetoki went insane. Hei no Saemon had the Three Martyrs, led by Jinshiro, beheaded during the Atsuhara Persecution. His whole family was exiled, and he and his son were executed fourteen years after the persecution. These are examples of inconspicuous negative effects because they appeared a long time after the causes were made. They can involve more severe results than conspicuous negative effects might.

These examples are called "individual" because each person received the effect in a different manner. But in a country filled with people who go against the Three Great Secret Laws, general negative effects such as inflation or war will occur, and, as a result, the whole population will fall into great suffering. The Daishonin stated:

> Just as an arrow never misses the target of the earth, all people in Japan who slander this True Law will definitely fall into the hell of incessant suffering.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 750)*



CHAPTER 11

The Root of Unhappiness

Hobo (literally, "slander of the Law") is the act of going against the teachings of True Buddhism. The correct Buddhism in the Latter Day of the Law is the Three Great Secret Laws as expounded by Nichiren Daishonin, who stated:

> If you doubt or slander even in the slightest, you will fall into the hell of incessant suffering.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p. 159,* Gosho, *p. 906)*

Slander of the Law is the cause that invites all misfortunes. When we commit an act of slander, our life condition diminishes causing us to suffer as a result. That is why slander is the root of all unhappiness.

The "Fourteen Slanders" are fourteen slanderous attitudes. They are:

1. **Arrogance:** when one makes light of Buddhism, placing excessive confidence in oneself.
2. **Negligence:** when one neglects to do the Buddhist practice out of laziness.
3. **Egotistical judgment:** when one interprets Buddhism through one's egotistical viewpoint; to interpret or judge the deep and profound teaching with distortion.

4. **Shallow understanding:** when one makes judgments about Buddhism with a shallow understanding of Buddhist reasoning.
5. **Attachment to earthly desires:** when one takes advantage of Buddhism or has no yearning for Buddhism due to being caught up in one's earthly desires.
6. **Lack of seeking spirit:** when one does not seek to understand the deep Buddhist doctrines.
7. **Disbelief:** when one does not believe in the correct Buddhism or does not wish to take faith in it.
8. **Aversion:** when one feels repugnance towards Buddhism or when one insults those who take faith in it.
9. **Doubt:** when one has doubts and delusions about Buddhism.
10. **Defamation:** when one criticizes Buddhism and reviles those who take faith in it.
11. **Contempt:** when one has contempt for Buddhism or those who take faith in it.
12. **Hatred:** when one detests and opposes Buddhism or has hatred for those who take faith in it.
13. **Jealousy:** when one is jealous of the prosperity achieved through correct Buddhism or is jealous of those who take faith in it.
14. **Resentment:** when one resents Buddhism or bears grudges against those who take faith in it.

We listed fourteen kinds of slander here, but every religion, idea, action (or inaction) that goes against the correct practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is, in fact, slander. This is especially true for those who follow distorted teachings. Whether they recognize it or not, they are going against the teachings of the True Law. Even if these people do not speak ill of Nichiren Shoshu, they cannot escape committing slanders.

Nichiren Daishonin stated the following about the last days of slanderers:

> In the Latter Day of the Law of both Shakyamuni and the Buddhas before him, the rulers and people who despised the votaries of the Lotus Sutra seemed to be free from punishment at first, but eventually they were all doomed to fall.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p. 241,* Gosho, *p. 1397)*

> The ruler and other high-ranking officials will be carried off to a foreign country, and these people who conducted the prayer ritual will die insane, flee to other provinces, or hide themselves in the mountains and forests. The messenger of the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni [Nichiren Daishonin] has twice been paraded through the street, and his disciples have been thrown into prison, killed, injured, or driven from the provinces where they were living. Therefore, the guilt of those offenses will surely extend to each inhabitant of those provinces. For example, many will be afflicted with white leprosy or all kinds of other terribly grave illnesses. My disciples should understand this matter thoroughly.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 6, p. 242,* Gosho, *p. 1271)*

AVOIDING SLANDER

Even though we have had the great fortune to encounter Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, and have already become believers, we may commit any of the Fourteen Slanders through lack of awareness.

As the Daishonin stated:

> I realize that although they profess faith in the Lotus Sutra and clasp its scrolls, they act against the spirit of the sutra and thereby readily fall into the evil paths. To illustrate,

> a person has five major internal organs, but should even one of them become diseased, it will infect all the others and eventually he will die.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p. 253,* Gosho, *p. 1456)*

Although we protect the Gohonzon and practice True Buddhism we will erase our own benefit if we commit any of the Fourteen Slanders. Some examples might include not doing Gongyo out of laziness or saying bad things about other believers. There are several kinds of particularly serious slanders that believers of Nichiren Shoshu might commit. One of these is the offense of slandering the Three Treasures. The Daishonin stated:

> The slander of the Buddha or of the Priest is the slander of the Law, for the Three Treasures are of one body . . . . Therefore, the Lotus Sutra stated, "it will eliminate the seed of Buddhahood in any world."
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 608)*

The True Buddha, the True Law, and the Priest are the treasures that will save every country and lead all living beings to attain Buddhahood. The Buddha is Nichiren Daishonin, the True Law is the Gohonzon as revealed by the Daishonin, and the Priest signifies the successive High Priests beginning with the second High Priest, Nikko Shonin. To speak ill of, or to slight, the Three Treasures of the Buddha, Law, and Priest, is like scorching the seed of Buddhahood for all living beings. This is an extremely grave slander.

Those who have put their hands on the Gohonzon in anger, or displayed contempt for the Daishonin or the High Priest, have experienced serious negative effects for slandering the Three Treasures.

By extension, the priests of Nichiren Shoshu, who are the direct disciples of the High Priest and protect this deep and profound Buddhism, are also included as a part of the Treasure of the Priest. It is important to keep this in mind and to interact with both senior and junior priests in a respectful manner.

Another slander that believers must be on guard against is ignoring the instruction against accepting a single verse from any of the other teachings. One is committing a slander when one accepts and venerates religious objects other than those of Nichiren Shoshu (such as a statue of Buddha, crucifix, etc.), or visits or donates to the temples, churches, or shrines of heretical religions. On this point, Nichiren Daishonin stated:

> To revere another teaching as its equal . . . can only be the cause for disaster . . . . To mix other practices with this Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo is a grave error.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 3, p. 266,* Gosho, *p. 1219)*

To consider Nichiren Shoshu and heretical religions equivalent is the same as mixing poison with medicine. It is also important not to accept religious objects even if you intend to discard them later.

A third slander the believers must avoid is that of *onshitsu* among the believers of our faith, that is, to be jealous of and denounce other believers. Regarding this the Daishonin stated:

> The fourth Volume of the Lotus Sutra states, "The offense of uttering even a single derogatory word against the priests or laity who believe in and preach the Lotus Sutra is even graver than that of abusing Shakyamuni Buddha to his face for an entire kalpa." The Lotus Sutra also states, "[If anyone shall see a person who embraces this sutra and try to expose the faults or evils of that person, he will in the present age be afflicted with white leprosy,] whether what he speaks is the truth or not." Take these teachings to heart, and always remember that believers in the Lotus Sutra should absolutely be the last to abuse each other. All those who keep faith in the Lotus Sutra are most certainly Buddhas, and one who slanders a Buddha commits a grave offense.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 3, p. 208,* Gosho, *p. 1047)*

Indeed, those who correctly believe in this Gohonzon have the life of the Buddha emerging in their hearts already. Even if some believers are still poor, sick, or committing evil deeds, there is no doubt that they will eventually change their lives for the better. The benefit of faith and practice in the present will become the cause, and then the effect, of admirable changes in their circumstances and character which will certainly be revealed in the future.

The Daishonin regarded a positive cause made for the sake of the attainment of Buddhahood more highly than its effect, the attainment of Buddhahood. Since each person who correctly believes in this Gohonzon is becoming a Buddha, the Daishonin taught that to be jealous of, or to speak ill about such a person is an offense of slander which will certainly invite negative effects. Moreover, whether such criticism is true or not, the act of slandering believers constitutes slander of the Law.

The fourth slander is the offense of impeding faith in the True Law. The Daishonin stated:

> Slander is to cause others to abandon the True Law.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 279)*

This is considered an extremely heavy offense because not only do we commit slander but we cause others to lose faith. This particular slander arises from not keeping our own slander to ourselves but expressing these slanders to others. For example, to say things like, "There is no power in the Gohonzon," regardless of our own disbelief, or saying, "that person chants, yet still has such a negative character," constitutes slander of the Law. Whether we recognize it or not, this will destroy the developing faith of other believers and will repel non-believers away from the True Law. Therefore, it is extremely important to avoid these sorts of actions and not to agree with others when they do commit slander.

In order to build truly happy and peaceful lives, it is important to firmly admonish ourselves about our own slander. Although we

may take faith in Nichiren Shoshu, if we commit slander, we will not experience the actual proof of benefit.

In summary, with absolutely no doubt in the great power of the Dai-Gohonzon and following the guidance of the High Priest, we can always confront and overcome our own slanderous nature. This will help us achieve happy lives.



CHAPTER 12

Shakubuku

Shakubuku is the ultimate act of compassion for people who have not yet taken faith in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. They suffer misfortune derived from the effects of continuing adherence to false teachings. This results in their inability to eradicate the negative karma which causes them unhappiness. Thus, we must teach and lead people to help them break through their misfortune.

When we look at people living around us, they may look happy on the surface and even seem to have no problems. But, when we look deeper into their lives, what we actually see is a whirl of difficulties such as sickness, family discord, financial problems, and so on. Unless one accepts and believes in the True Law, one cannot overcome material and spiritual sufferings in the deepest sense.

As Nichiren Shoshu believers, the greatest act of compassion we can perform is to teach others about Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism whenever possible and lead them to true happiness. This is the practice of Shakubuku.

Sometimes people don't understand the importance of exerting themselves to care for others. The Daishonin stated:

> If you are to be compassionate towards those who are inferior to you in virtue, you must think of them as a parent thinks about his child, and you should always lead them with compassion.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 922)*

When we understand that True Buddhism is the path to true happiness, it is natural to want to share the joy we feel with others so we can become happy together. It is stated in the Lotus Sutra:

> Even the Buddha himself will fall into the state of Hunger as a result of the offense of greed, if he first perceived the Mahayana teaching that teaches the supreme path (where all living beings equally attain enlightenment), then afterwards, expounded the inferior teaching of Hinayana.
>
> *(*Kaiketsu, *p. 110)*

This passage admonishes us that even though we have taken faith in True Buddhism, if we begrudge teaching others about it, we will not gain true satisfaction from our practice.

It is our mission to shakubuku the people around us, never forgetting the joy of accepting this wonderful Gohonzon.

SHAKUBUKU ERASES THE NEGATIVE KARMA FROM OUR PAST LIVES

Nichiren Daishonin stated:

> Thus it would seem extremely difficult for you to avoid the offense of complicity in slander. Nevertheless, you have communicated this teaching to your lord and urged him to take faith in it. How admirable! Even though he may not accept it now, you have been able to avoid the offense of complicity.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 6, p. 91,* Gosho, *p. 744)*

He teaches us that we can avoid complicity with slander if we do shakubuku. The offense of complicity manifests itself if we do not remonstrate with a person while seeing him committing slander, thus being accomplices to the same offense. Just as water drips

out of a container through a crack, the benefit accumulated through our practice of Gongyo and Daimoku will diminish if we don't make efforts to do shakubuku. The great benefit of doing shakubuku will implant fortune deep within our lives and will lessen the effects of heavy negative karma from past causes.

The difficulties we encounter while doing shakubuku are evidence that our own negative karma is being expiated. In this way we steadily change our karma from past lives. We gradually transform our lives into a state of happiness.

The benefit of doing shakubuku is not limited to helping others realize the joys inherent in True Buddhism. It is also the straight path to a greater, more open life condition for ourselves. With firm belief in the Gohonzon, we have profound incentive to do shakubuku with a smile and a warm heart, no matter how difficult the path may become.

JOY AND CONVICTION AS THE BASIS FOR DOING SHAKUBUKU

In order to do shakubuku successfully (i.e., with profound compassion and mercy), the most important thing is to have firm faith in the Gohonzon, because, as the Sixty-sixth High Priest Nittatsu Shonin stated, "If you forget to practice for yourself, you cannot teach others about this Buddhism."

We must practice our own faith continuously. This is the root of all benefit. Then when we do shakubuku, it will truly be a great benefit. When we live and practice correctly, we are so filled with joy and conviction about the Gohonzon that we cannot stop ourselves from teaching others about it. This is real shakubuku.

We shouldn't worry about whether or not we can speak eloquently about Buddhist doctrine or whether we have a prestigious lifestyle. If we truly live our faith and feel in our hearts the great power of the Buddha and the Law from the Gohonzon, we can do shakubuku. Firmly stand on your own faith, and do shakubuku with an open, straightforward demeanor.

When we do shakubuku, we must behave with good manners and common sense; treating people with true compassion and patience.

Indeed, many people in our surroundings are completely unfamiliar with Buddhism, and in some cases, they have mistaken or biased points of view towards the religion itself. Thus, it is important that we explain Buddhism to them patiently and politely without compromising or hesitating. Explain with conviction about the great benefits you have received and which they, too, can experience with faith in and practice to the Gohonzon, because of the undeniable power of the Law.

We are the followers of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. We should compassionately do shakubuku with common sense and dignity.



CHAPTER 13

The Master-Disciple Relationship

Since childhood, we have learned languages, studied academic subjects, and trained for occupations. We could not possibly have done these things alone. Instead, we have been able to gain knowledge through instruction by our parents, friends, teachers, seniors or superiors. Since this is true in the case of daily life, how much more true it is within the profound world of Buddhism! It's impossible to gain a correct understanding of faith by relying on our own limited knowledge and experience.

In Buddhism, we follow the path of the Master-Disciple relationship. In order to learn and embrace Buddhism correctly, one follows a master in faith. We practice faith and obtain true benefit by learning the teaching as a disciple.

The relationship between master and disciple is not meant to be construed as passing orders down from a superior to a subordinate. We enter into the Master-Disciple relationship when, from our hearts, we have respect for, and wish to learn from and follow, one who has grasped the Buddhist Law correctly and can show us the way to the life condition of Buddhahood.

When we stay on the path of master and disciple, we can directly embrace the Buddhist Law which the master has already grasped, and together with the master, embark on the path which leads to the life condition of Buddhahood.

The basis for this Master-Disciple relationship in Nichiren Shoshu is found in the Gosho, *Nichiren Ichigo Guho Fuzokusho* ("The

Document Entrusting the Law that Nichiren Propagated Throughout His Life"), which says:

> The order of the Heritage: from Nichiren to Nikko.
>
> (Gosho, *p. 1675)*

In the Master-Disciple relationship between the founder Nichiren Daishonin and the Second High Priest Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin transferred the entirety of His Buddhism to Nikko Shonin, without the slightest deviation, and this transmission has been repeated with each successive generation. It follows that the Master-Disciple relationship of faith, the path which the master and disciple walk together, is a direct relationship in which the master teaches and the disciple learns. This has been the tradition of Nichiren Shoshu for over 750 years.

The Fifty-ninth High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu, Nichiko Shonin, taught the following about the path of the master and disciple:

> It is a rule of the three existences and of the ten directions that the disciple respect and follow the master: as Shakyamuni followed Kasho Buddha,[2] the same relationship existed between the Daishonin and Shakyamuni, between Nikko Shonin and the Daishonin, between Nichikan Shonin and Nichiei Shonin, and between Nichiden Shonin and Nissei Shonin. The master is like a needle and the disciple is like the thread. The transfer of the True Law and the transmission of the Heritage of the Law are always conducted in this way from master to disciple. The path of the master and disciple must be kept sacred. It must be kept separate from interests of society at large. Depending on the depth of one's faith, the mystic truth that master and disciple are indivisible will become apparent, and the mystic doctrine that the leader and follower are, in truth, as one mind, will be proven.
>
> (Yoshu, *Vol. 1, p. 124)*

The Daishonin states:

> In the *Maka Shikan,* T'ien-t'ai says, "Without encountering a master, evil thoughts will increase daily, and the sufferings of birth and death will become deeper by the month. Just like trying to escape from a dense jungle while dragging a gnarled branch, escape would be impossible. Even in the general affairs of this world, one asks for advice. How much more important is it that we not rely upon our own self-centered wisdom when it comes to the profound truths of Buddhism?"
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 29)*



Even though we worship the Gohonzon and study the Daishonin's Gosho, if we do not respect our master, our Buddhist practice will center on our own limited wisdom. We will be in danger of committing the slanders of self-satisfied understanding and egocentric judgment, and will eventually drift more and more deeply into confusion.

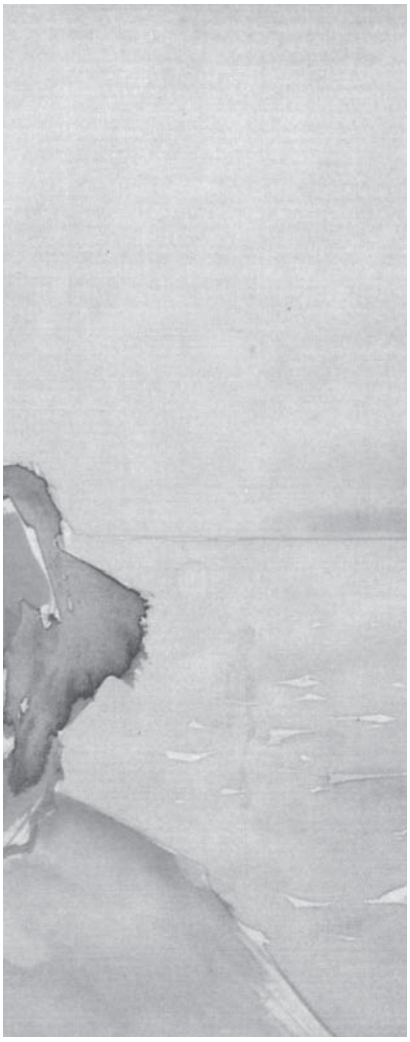
The Thirty-third High Priest, Nichigen Shonin, instructed:

> The water of the True Law has no place to gather on the tall mountain of arrogance. How shall we enter the true path?
>
> *(*Yoshu, *Vol. 1, p. 388)*

He is saying that because the water (benefit) of the Law (True Buddhism) cannot gather in the heart of an arrogant per-

son who does not respect the master, such a person cannot attain enlightenment.

We all know of people who might prefer to practice alone and who think that it's sufficient to just stay at home and chant to the Gohonzon. In reality, this type of practice can turn into a kind of arrogance which manifests in a lack of respect for the master and, in this way, true benefit from the Gohonzon escapes such a person. It is important to always have an attitude of faith that constantly seeks and respects the master.



CORRECT FAITH IS FOSTERED BY THE MASTER AND DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

It is extremely important to choose the correct master.

A person may be a brilliant scholar, or may be of great renown; however, these things have nothing to do with whether or not a person has a correct grasp of Buddhism. Furthermore, if we choose as our master a priest or leader of a misguided religious sect, we will be led away from the True Law and into a life condition of suffering. Whom, therefore, do we respect as the true master?

It was exactly for this purpose that Nichiren Daishonin appeared as the True Buddha, to teach the true Buddhist Law in the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law *(Mappo).* On this most fundamental level, Nichiren Daishonin is the true master. However, after the Daishonin's passing, the entirety of His Buddhist teaching was passed down in the transmission of the

Heritage of the Law to the Second High Priest, Nikko Shonin, and from Nikko Shonin to the Third High Priest, Nichimoku Shonin, and on down through the generations of successive High Priests. In each generation, as successor of and in proxy for the Daishonin, each High Priest is revered as the true master.

The Daishonin Himself clearly admonished us about this reverence for each successive High Priest when He said in the Gosho:

> Each and every successive High Priest possesses the mind and heart of Nichiren.
>
> *(*Seiten, *p. 379)*

There are often people who say that their faith is directly connected to the Daishonin, or their only master is the Daishonin. Even though it is their intention to revere the Daishonin as their master, in reality, without reverence for the living master, the current High Priest, their faith will deteriorate into self-satisfaction and arrogance, and these individuals will be unwittingly committing slander of the True Law.

It is interesting to note that from among His priest disciples, with His discerning eye, the Daishonin chose six priests as His senior disciples. Nikko Shonin explained the reason for this in his letter, "Reply to the Hokkeko members in Sado:"

> We can attain Buddhahood on the basis of the master and disciple relationship. Although we embrace the Lotus Sutra, if we neglect this relationship, it will be the cause of our falling into hell. During the Daishonin's lifetime there were people who declared, "I am the direct disciple of Nichiren Daishonin." Therefore, before He passed away, Nichiren Daishonin decided that all believers should refer to the six elder priests as their master. To each of the six elder priests was handed down Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. As He had anticipated, after the Daishonin's passing, many

> believers declared, "I am the direct disciple of Nichiren Daishonin." This attitude signifies slander. All Hokkeko members should understand the Master–Disciple path.
>
> (Rekidai, *Vol. 1, p. 183)*

During His lifetime, as the number of the believers increased, inevitably they would not be able to receive guidance directly from Nichiren Daishonin. For this reason, the Daishonin selected six executive disciples, and He instructed that the believers who were shakubukued and introduced to True Buddhism by each of these six priests would be the disciples of that particular priest.

There are believers who ignore this lineage of Master and Disciple, going beyond the senior disciple selected by the Daishonin and claiming that they are the direct disciples of Nichiren Daishonin. But ultimately, they display great arrogance in thinking that they can practice faith in their own way. For this reason, Nikko Shonin admonished: "These people are slandering True Buddhism."

The flow of the teachings of True Buddhism from the True Master to direct master, direct master to believers, as initiated by Nichiren Daishonin, has continued for over 750 years until today.

Although the true master whom we must respect is the High Priest, the proxy of Nichiren Daishonin, it is impossible for numerous believers living all over the world to receive direct guidance from the High Priest regularly. For this reason, priests who have earned the High Priest's trust are dispatched as the guiding priests (chief priests) of local temples. They are the proxies of the High Priest, and thus, in charge of guiding the believers.

This position of the chief priest is equivalent in quality to the relationship between the Daishonin and His six executive disciples, or to the relationship between the True Master and the direct master. True to the tenets of the Master–Disciple relationship, each Nichiren Shoshu believer, in order to practice with correct faith, must belong to a local Nichiren Shoshu Temple. We must recognize the High Priest at the Head Temple as the True Master and respect

the chief priest of the local Temple as the direct master, the High Priest's proxy.

From the Buddhist point of view, the Master and Disciple relationship is established between one who teaches and one who accepts the teaching. It can then be said that when you were first able to awaken to the true faith, the master and disciple relationship was formed between you and the person who introduced you. The person who introduced you has in turn received instruction in True Buddhism and the encouragement to do Shakubuku from the chief priest of the local Temple to which he or she belongs.

LEARNING THE BASICS FROM EXPERIENCED MEMBERS

Among the believers in the Daishonin's lifetime, there were people called *Homon-furegashira* (meaning "representative communicators of the teachings") appointed to learn from the Daishonin through the priest's guidance, and then communicate to and guide the other believers.

In order to guide great numbers of believers and to develop strong and correct faith, those believers who have experience in the practice of True Buddhism and who want to offer their sincere support to the Chief Priest of the local Temple may assist him if the Chief Priest requests it. Therefore, we have people who are experienced in faith, practice, and study to administer and develop the lay organization. It is the responsibility of these experienced members to show the basics of faith to believers who are as yet inexperienced. For example, they can give basic guidelines on how to support the priests, how to advance in faith, the spirit of *Gokuyo,* and so forth. The experienced members of the Hokkeko have the responsibility to be models in faith for the other believers. They must be foremost in accomplishing Shakubuku, guiding the members' growth and development, and showing themselves as examples of how to advance in faith.

Nichiren Daishonin instructed the wife of Shijo Kingo, one of the staunch believers of His time, in this way:

> Make Saemon (Shijo Kingo) your teacher and be guided in the faith of the Lotus Sutra.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 5, p. 158;* Gosho, *p. 757).*

This is the spirit with which we practice together.

Finally, depth of faith does not simply depend on how long one has been practicing, or one's occupation or social status. It is most crucial in practicing True Buddhism to follow the three ways of faith, practice, and study.

1. Faith corresponds to believing in the Gohonzon profoundly and with a pure mind, honestly discarding provisional religions and teachings, and avoiding slander of the True Law.
2. Practice corresponds to dedicating oneself to chanting Daimoku, doing Gongyo consistently despite the obstacles which may arise, and doing Shakubuku.
3. Study corresponds to studying the profound doctrines of True Buddhism.



CHAPTER 14

The Importance of Tozan

Tozan, (translated as "to climb the mountain"), is the pilgrimage to Taisekiji, the Head Temple of Nichiren Shoshu at Mt. Fuji in Japan. It is part of the essential practice in Buddhism, and is the basis of daily Gongyo, shakubuku, visits to your local Temple, and other aspects of practice.

During the lifetime of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, tozan was the pilgrimage to visit Him. Its original meaning encompassed directly serving the Daishonin and receiving His guidance. During His lifetime, Nichiren Daishonin Himself was the center of worship, the True Master who would lead all living beings to enlightenment. What should those who were not alive during the Daishonin's lifetime, and who became disciples and believers after His passing do? Making a pilgrimage to Taiseki-ji, the dwelling place of both the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary and the High Priest is the answer. It has exactly the same significance as making a pilgrimage to see the Daishonin during His lifetime.

On October 12, 1279, the Daishonin inscribed the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary, the very entity of His enlightened life, as the object of worship for all living beings in the Latter Day of the Law. The Dai-Gohonzon has been solemnly protected at Taisekiji for over 750 years. The Daishonin transferred the entirety of His own enlightenment as the True Buddha to Nikko Shonin alone and appointed him as His successor after His passing. In this succession,

Nichimoku Shonin followed Nikko Shonin, and Nichido Shonin followed Nichimoku Shonin. This has continued in an unbroken line of succession down to the present High Priest. Therefore, because we didn't live during the Daishonin's lifetime, we make the pilgrimage to Taisekiji, single-mindedly yearning to see the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary and the current High Priest, who is the legitimate successor to Nichiren Daishonin. Herein lies the true significance of tozan in our time.

If we think of the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary, treasured at the Head Temple, as the fundamental root, then all other Gohonzons are branches and leaves. The Gohonzons enshrined in each temple and the Gohonzons that we received and to which we do Gongyo every morning and evening were transcribed by the High Priest from the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary. The great benefits arising from them arise from the power emanating from the Dai-Gohonzon, the source.

If we think that all Gohonzons are the same, and do not seek the Dai-Gohonzon, we will not be able to receive benefits and attain Buddhahood. It is like a branch that has been cut off, losing all access to nutrients, and thereby withering away. The Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary is the source of all Gohonzons. The Twenty-sixth High Priest Nichikan Shonin said this about its immeasurable benefits:

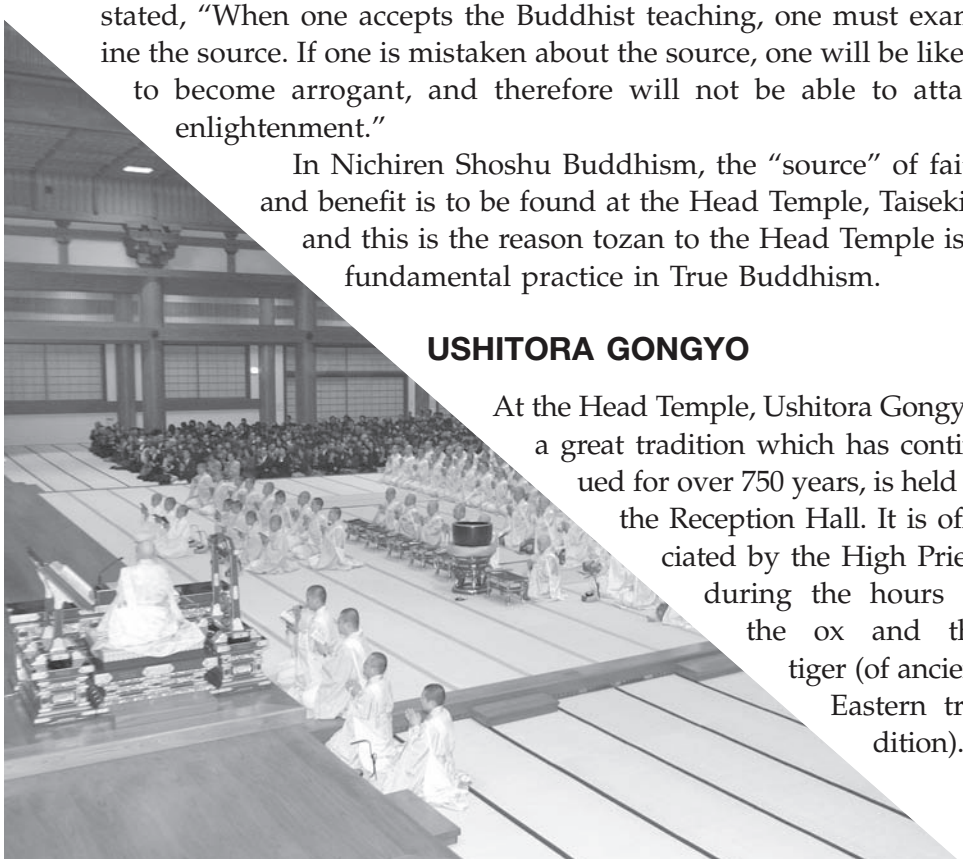
> This Gohonzon bestows limitless, infinite benefit, and Its unfathomable workings are vastly profound. Therefore, if you chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo with faith in this Gohonzon for even a short while, there is no prayer that will not be answered, no evil that will not be eradicated, no blessing that will not be bestowed, and no reason that will not become clear.
>
> (Yoshu, *Vol. 4, p. 213)*

It is said that even our lives can be prolonged if we pray earnestly, always keeping in our hearts the yearning to see the Dai-Gohonzon.

Therefore, at any possible opportunity we should make a pilgrimage to the Head Temple, where the Dai-Gohonzon is enshrined.

Nikko Shonin, Nichimoku Shonin and each successive High Priest possess the entirety of the Daishonin's most profound Buddhism within himself. They each are one of the great *Doshi* (masters) who lead the living beings of the whole world in the Latter Day of the Law to attain Buddhahood. We recognize each successive High Priest as the single person who possesses the Lifeblood Heritage of the Law of True Buddhism and follow him as the True Master. We are able to manifest the immeasurable benefits of the Gohonzon by embracing the original principle of the relationship between Master and Disciple. This can be achieved by going on tozan, deeply desiring to see the High Priest, and by praying to the Dai-Gohonzon together with him. The great Chinese teacher, Miao-lo, stated, "When one accepts the Buddhist teaching, one must examine the source. If one is mistaken about the source, one will be likely to become arrogant, and therefore will not be able to attain enlightenment."

In Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, the "source" of faith and benefit is to be found at the Head Temple, Taisekiji, and this is the reason tozan to the Head Temple is a fundamental practice in True Buddhism.



USHITORA GONGYO

At the Head Temple, Ushitora Gongyo, a great tradition which has continued for over 750 years, is held at the Reception Hall. It is officiated by the High Priest during the hours of the ox and the tiger (of ancient Eastern tradition).

Ushitora (directly translated: ox and tiger) indicates the time near three o'clock in the morning, in between the hour of the ox (1:00 AM–3:00 AM) and the hour of the tiger (3:00 AM–5:00 AM). These hours have been traditionally viewed as the times of the departure of darkness and the arrival of light. This is the time when the darkness of night gradually vanishes and the sun in the eastern horizon makes its appearance at dawn. It is the transitional time in the rhythm of nature, of night and day, and of dark and light.

From the viewpoint of Buddhism, this time is important because Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment and became a Buddha during this period between the hours of the ox and the tiger. Also, at this time, on the 12th of September, 1271, during the occasion of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution of Nichiren Daishonin, He discarded His temporary identity as the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Jogyo and commenced to lead the people as the True Buddha. The hours of the ox and tiger are the hours of transformation from His death as a common mortal to the beginning of life as the True Buddha.

Nichiren Daishonin, and each successive High Priest have been officiating at Ushitora Gongyo every morning for over 750 years. We are able to understand the significance of this special Gongyo when we participate with the High Priest as he officiates at Ushitora Gongyo and assumes the status of the Buddha which he inherited from Nichiren Daishonin. Ushitora Gongyo is also the Gongyo that the High Priest leads so that all living beings may attain Buddhahood. Because of the great mercy of the High Priest, when we are granted the privilege to participate in Ushitora Gongyo, we accumulate the immense benefit of becoming a Buddha as a common mortal.

During Ushitora Gongyo, after the five prayers of morning Gongyo at the center of the Reception Hall *(Kyakuden),* the High Priest moves to the *Yohaijo,* the small altar at the left, and recites the *Hoben-pon, Jigage,* Daimoku, and silent prayers while facing toward the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary in the Enshrinement Hall.

Why does the High Priest offer the prayer to the Dai-Gohonzon from the *Yohaijo* in the Reception Hall? The Dai-Gohonzon of the

High Sanctuary will be enshrined in the Actual True High Sanctuary,[3] as the foundation place of faith for all people of the world at the time of the achievement of Kosen-rufu. Until then, it is being protected in seclusion and is not open to the public. This is why, until Kosen-rufu arrives, the sanctum where the Dai-Gohonzon is enshrined is firmly closed most of the time. For the same reason, in the Hoando Enshrinement Hall evergreens are never offered at the altar. Morning and Evening Gongyo are not conducted there. Until the time comes when Kosen-rufu is achieved, evergreens, candles and incense are offered at the *Yohaijo* and the sutra is recited there, facing the Dai-Gohonzon in the Hoando Enshrinement Hall.

We will receive immense benefits through offering our sincere prayers to the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary with the High Priest. Ushitora Gongyo possesses profound significance and immeasurable benefit. For this reason, it has been one of the great traditions among the Hokkeko membership to participate in the Ushitora Gongyo during tozan.

When the time of Kosen-rufu comes, the name of the Head Temple at Mt. Fuji is to be changed from *Taisekiji* to *Honmon-ji* [4] (the name left by Nichiren Daishonin). It was the specific will of Nichiren Daishonin that the Actual True High Sanctuary be built at that time and in that place.

Participation in Ushitora Gongyo

When we participate in Ushitora Gongyo, it is important to have an attitude of appreciation to be given the opportunity to accompany the High Priest.

When the High Priest enters, he faces the Gohonzon, chants Daimoku Sansho and then faces east and chants Daimoku Sansho again to begin the first prayer as in Morning Gongyo. At these times, when He faces the Gohonzon and also when we face east, we silently do Daimoku Sansho in our hearts while placing our palms together in prayer. The rest is to be done in the same manner as one would do the five prayers during Morning Gongyo with two or

more people. However, when the High Priest recites the *Hiki* (prolonged) Daimoku after the *Jigage* section of the sutra before the first, second, third and fourth silent prayers, we follow the High Priest's lead, reciting the *Hiki* Daimoku softly, making sure we do not get ahead of him.

Ushitora Gongyo is performed in front of the *Ozagawari* Gohonzon (the Gohonzon bestowed upon Third High Priest, Nichimoku Shonin, by Second High Priest, Nikko Shonin, signifying the transmission of the Heritage of the Law) enshrined in the main altar of the Reception Hall. When the High Priest moves to the *Yohaijo*, the smaller altar located on the west side of the main altar, we change our position so that we are facing the *Yohaijo* and do an additional recitation of the sutra which consists of the *Hoben-pon, Jigage,* and *Shodai* (Parts A and C from the sutra book and Daimoku).

The Silent Prayers for this Gongyo of worshipping from afar, are to be done in the following manner. *Shodai* ends with the ringing of the bell and after the High Priest does Daimoku Sansho, we silently recite the Second Silent Prayer. After the High Priest does another Daimoku Sansho, we silently recite the first part of the Third Silent Prayer for Nichiren Daishonin. Again the High Priest does Daimoku Sansho and we silently recite the last part of the Fifth Silent Prayer. At the end, upon the striking of the bell, everyone, in unison with the High Priest, does a concluding Daimoku Sansho.

GOKAIHI *(AUDIENCE WITH THE DAI-GOHONZON)*

In the course of the more than 750 year history of Nichiren Shoshu, there has been a gradual increase in the number of believers who have had the occasion to hear about the great benefit and magnificent power of the Dai-Gohonzon, and they have developed a strong yearning to see it. The successive High Priests have felt great compassion due to the faith of these pure-minded believers and have allowed them to come into the sanctum housing the Dai-Gohonzon in order to worship the Dai-Gohonzon at close range. This act is called *Naihai.*

Because prayers are normally offered to the Dai-Gohonzon from the *Yohaijo*, being able to go into the sanctum and offer prayers is very special. Because the world is still filled with people who slander the True Law, only Nichiren Shoshu believers are permitted to participate in the *Gokaihi* Ceremony, when the doors to the Butsudan enshrining the Dai-Gohonzon are opened. We are allowed to participate in the *Gokaihi* Ceremony due to the great mercy and consideration of the High Priest, for the sake of pure-minded believers who greatly yearn for the Dai-Gohonzon.

Participating in the *Gokaihi* Ceremony

The *Gokaihi* Ceremony begins with the chanting of Daimoku as the priests enter. The High Priest (or the Senior Priest that the High Priest has designated to lead the *Gokaihi* Ceremony) enters, and the several layers of doors to the Altar of Sumeru (the altar of the Dai-Gohonzon) are opened. Finally, the High Priest rings the bell, and the inner doors of the altar are opened. The believers bow in reverence as the inner doors are opened.



The High Priest leads the recitation of the *Hoben-pon, Chogyo,* and *Jigage* (Parts A, B, and C of the sutra book). The *Jigage* (Part C) section is repeated once or twice. This is followed by the chanting of Daimoku. The High Priest has a list of the names of all the believers in attendance at the *Gokaihi* Ceremony. He offers His prayers to the Dai-Gohonzon for all those in attendance. At the end of Daimoku, the second, third, last half of the fourth, and last half of the fifth silent prayers are offered. The High Priest then turns towards the believers and says a few words. He then leads the chanting of Daimoku as the doors

to the altar of the Dai-Gohonzon are closed. The believers bow in reverence as the inner most doors are closed.

As you face the Altar of the Dai-Gohonzon, you will probably notice that there is a gold pagoda on both the right and left side of the altar. The pagoda on your left contains the ashes of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. The pagoda on your right contains a statue of the Daishonin. This statue was carved by the Daishonin's disciple, Nippo, from a piece of wood that was left over after carving the Dai-Gohonzon. We are told that he personally presented the Daishonin with this statue, and was told by the Daishonin that it looked exactly like Himself. These two pagodas are opened during *Gokaihi* for the Airing of the Sacred Treasures Ceremony in April and the Oeshiki Ceremony in November.

We should attend the *Gokaihi* ceremony with the deep understanding that it is allowed only because of our pure-minded faith and our single-minded yearning for the Dai-Gohonzon.

THE SPIRIT OF THE TOZAN



When a believer named Nichimyo Shonin heard about the Daishonin's exile to Sado Island, she departed from Kamakura with her daughter Otogoze to visit Him. In those days, rebels, bandits, and pirates roamed freely, and one made this journey at the risk of one's life. Nichimyo Shonin made this journey without any male protection, accompanied only by her daughter.

Later, when Nichiren Daishonin moved to the mountains of Minobu, Nichimyo Shonin again immediately made the pilgrimage to Mt. Minobu, thereby demonstrating the depth of her faith. This strong, persevering faith is what made her pilgrimages to Sado and Mt. Minobu possible. The Daishonin praised Nichimyo Shonin's faith and determination to follow Him on her own, even at great danger to herself. That is why the Daishonin gave the Buddhist title of Sage *(Shonin)* to this woman.

Abutsubo and his wife, Sen'nichiama, were converted by the Daishonin on Sado. Later, Abutsubo went on tozan from Sado to visit the Daishonin at Mt. Minobu three times, even at the age of ninety years. On his last tozan in 1278, he carried his articles of *Gokuyo* on his shoulders, and traveled alone for twenty-two days in order to visit the Daishonin. His pure and strong faith is deeply moving. The kind of faith exhibited by Nichimyo Shonin and Abutsubo is the true spirit of tozan.

A major persecution of Nichiren Shoshu believers took place during the Edo era (1600–1867). It was called the Kanazawa Persecution. More than anything else, during this difficult period, it was the greatest wish of the Hokkeko members in the Kanazawa region of Japan to be able to go on tozan to the Head Temple.

There were Kanazawa believers among those who took part in the procession of *sankin kotai.* This was the procession of the lords and their retainers from their hometown provinces to the Capital City of Edo. The Central government had ordered the lords in each clan to pay a visit to the Shogun in Edo (present day Tokyo) at certain intervals. On the night that the procession stayed in the town of Yoshiwara in the Fuji area, the believers waited for the people of their camp to fall asleep and then slipped out of the camp in twos and threes. Outside the camp, they met up again as a group and ran towards Taisekiji, which was about ten miles away. It is said that when they arrived at Taisekiji, they instantly knelt on the stone path in front of the Treasure Storehouse. Focusing their faith on the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary enshrined there, they chanted

intently, ignoring the bitter cold of the winter. Then they ran back to the camp at Yoshiwara, before the lords and their people woke up.

These members of the Hokkeko mirrored the faith of Nichimyo Shonin and Abutsubo. At all times, they considered tozan a great joy and held on to their faith even at the risk of their lives. In the present day, with modern transportation, going on tozan is both safe and easy. It is important, therefore, to remember that the spirit of tozan is to be rigorous in faith.

In a letter to Senichiama, the Daishonin wrote:

> How wonderful your husband was! He came here to Mt. Minobu from Sado Island last year, and again this year as well. He picked the greens, fetched water and chopped wood, and served me for more than a month, just as King Dan sincerely served the Immortal Ashi. I feel a mystic connection existing between myself and him. I cannot express my deep admiration for him.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 1220)*

Since tozan included enduring many hardships, and took many days of travel, we believe that after their arrival, the Hokkeko believers stayed for a time. As they sojourned there, an expression of their sincere faith was to serve the Daishonin in various ways. The Gosho states:

> Truly, the best path for attaining Buddhahood is by serving the master.
>
> *(*Shintei Gosho, *Vol. 3, p. 2308)*

Serving the Buddha or the master is the true spirit of the disciple. This is an element which must never be lacking in our Buddhist practice. Today, we have few opportunities to serve at the Head Temple and to devote ourselves to the master. We do our tozans amidst all the organized arrangements of transportation,

accommodation, and meals. But in spite of this, we must engrave in our hearts the spirit of tozan from ancient times.

Everything we do while at Taisekiji including Gongyo at the Head Temple, *Gokuyo,* meals, the cleaning of the lodging temples, going to sleep, and so on, becomes part of our training in Buddhist practice.



CHAPTER 15

Gokuyo

OFFERING GRATITUDE TO THE THREE TREASURES

Gokuyo is the offering of donations of various kinds (such as financial offerings or food offerings) to the Three Treasures of the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood. These offerings come from our sincerity and reverence.

It has been stated in the Gosho that:

> As a layman, the most important thing for you is to chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo single-mindedly and to provide support for the priests. And if we go by the words of the Lotus Sutra, you should also teach Buddhism to the best of your ability.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 3, p. 216;* Gosho, *p. 1051)*

Thus, for a believer, *Gokuyo* is an important part of Buddhist practice along with Gongyo and shakubuku.

Primarily, *Gokuyo* is offered to the Buddha as a manifestation of a believer's reverent faith. The Buddha, on the other hand, accepts the *Gokuyo* as acknowledgment of the sincerity of that believer. Therefore, in Nichiren Shoshu, we do not accept *Gokuyo* from those who have not yet taken faith in this Buddhism, nor from those who do not have correct faith in the True Law. In other words, *Gokuyo* must be offered from a pure spirit based on faith.

In order to give us the opportunity to attain enlightenment, the Buddha made His appearance in this world and preached the Law. Also, the priesthood, which has correctly learned, protected and handed down this Law, exists in order to teach us this very Law. Only with the existence of the Buddha, the Law and the Priesthood are we able to take faith in the True Law, practice correctly, and attain enlightenment. Therefore, we should protect and support the existence of the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood with our offerings of *Gokuyo.* This is our duty as believers, and the correct attitude towards repaying our debt of gratitude to the Three Treasures. There can be no greater misfortune than, out of lack of awareness of the merit we have received, to forget to offer *Gokuyo* and allow this Buddhism to decline.

It cannot be emphasized enough that we must possess faith that devoutly reveres the Three Treasures, and must not neglect our obligation to offer Gokuyo with the full realization of our mission as lay believers.

THE BENEFIT AND THE SPIRIT OF *GOKUYO*

Nichiren Daishonin stated:

> Whether you chant the Buddha's name, recite the sutra or merely offer flowers and incense, all your virtuous acts will implant benefits and good fortune in your life. With this conviction you should put your faith into practice.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p.4;* Gosho, *p. 46)*

He teaches us that the offerings placed on the altar are *Gokuyo* to the Buddha. Everything pertaining to *Gokuyo* should be based upon our own self-motivation. It is part of our Buddhist practice and enables us to accumulate benefit.

He also stated about the benefit of *Gokuyo:*

> Whether one has wealth or not, life is still the most precious treasure. This is why the sages of ancient times

> offered their lives to the Buddha, and were themselves able to attain Buddhahood . . . . Yet even common mortals can attain Buddhahood if they cherish one thing: earnest faith. In the deepest sense, earnest faith is the will to understand and live up to the spirit, not the words, of the sutras. What does this mean? In one sense, it means that offering one's only robe to the Lotus Sutra is equivalent to tearing off one's own skin, and in a time of famine, offering the Buddha the single bowl of rice on which one's life depends is to dedicate one's life to the Buddha.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1, p. 267;* Gosho, *p. 1544)*

Life is the most important treasure in the universe. To offer this greatest of treasures as *Gokuyo* for the sake of Buddhism will bring forth the great benefit which can eradicate any kind of heavy, negative karma and cause the attainment of Buddhahood in our lifetime.

The Daishonin further stated:

> Therefore, sages consecrated themselves by offering their own bodies, whereas common mortals may consecrate themselves by the sincerity with which they give.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 1 p. 268)*



In terms of our own daily practice of Buddhism, we sincerely make financial and food offerings in place of our own lives. People offer whatever *Gokuyo* they can to the best of their ability and according to their economic circumstances. In short, such offerings of the precious treasures that keep us alive, presented with pure faith for the sake of Buddhism, will bring forth great benefit that equals the benefit of actually offering one's life for this Buddhism.

If we offer *Gokuyo* of a great sum without the sincere desire to do so then not only will the benefit of *Gokuyo* disappear, but we will become arrogant and lose faith itself.

Nichiren Daishonin stated:

> The Buddha, being truly worthy of respect, never judges by the size of one's offerings. In the past, Tokusho Doji offered a mud pie to the Buddha, and was reborn as King Ashoka and ruled over all of Jambudvipa.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 7, p. 259)*

and

> The amount of one's offerings is not what determines the roots of good fortune. The merit differs depending upon the country, the person and the time.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 1581)*

Great benefit is brought forth when *Gokuyo* is offered to the best of one's ability according to one's circumstances, and arises from pure faith.



CHAPTER 16

The Toba Memorial Tablet

When visiting your local Nichiren Shoshu Temple you will probably notice that in the sanctuary, next to the main altar there is a second, smaller altar usually on the right hand side. It has the offerings of a candlestick, incense burner, evergreens, and water. Above these offerings are slots or spaces to place memorial tablets. At the front is a large powdered incense burner. The purpose of this Memorial Altar is for the offering of *Toba* Memorial Tablets for the benefit of the deceased. This is a very significant aspect of the practice of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism.

The word *Toba* is Japanese for the word *Stupa* in Sanskrit. The original form of a Stupa in ancient India was that of a burial mound. Many different forms of stupas developed over the years in both India and China. The five-story pagoda is one of the most commonly known forms of a stupa.

In Nichiren Shoshu, the *Toba* memorial tablet also takes the form of five levels. The five levels signify the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and *ku* (non-substantiality). The bottom level of the *Toba* is shaped like a square. This represents earth. The second level is in the shape of a circle, representing water. The third level, denoting fire, is a triangle. The fourth level, in the shape of a semicircle, represents wind. At the top of the *Toba* is the level representing *ku.* It is shaped like a jewel signifying the "treasure of fulfillment." The Daishonin taught that all phenomena in the universe are composed of



these five elements. This, of course, includes the human body. Therefore, the *Toba* signifies the body of the deceased.

These five levels of the *Toba*, and the five elements, also correspond to the five characters of Myo-Ho-Ren-Ge-Kyo. The Daishonin teaches in the "Record of Orally Transmitted Teachings" *(Ongi Kuden):*

> The head represents *Myo,* the throat is *Ho,* the chest is *Ren,* the womb is *Ge,* and the legs are *Kyo.* This five-foot body of ours is, indeed, the manifestation of the five characters of the Mystic Law, Myoho-Renge-Kyo.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p.1728)*

The Daishonin also states in the Gosho, "On the Ultimate Teaching Affirmed by All Buddhas:"

> The five elements are earth, water, fire, wind, and *ku* . . . . These are, in other words, the five characters of Myoho-Renge-Kyo.
>
> *(*Gosho, *pp. 1418-1419)*

From this it is clear that the five levels of the Toba also signify the body of the Buddha.

It is an extremely important part of our practice to offer prayers to the Gohonzon for the enlightenment of the

deceased. We offer such prayers to the Gohonzon during the final silent prayer during Morning and Evening Gongyo every day. Moreover, Nichiren Shoshu Temples conduct special ceremonies specifically for the purpose of offering prayers for the enlightenment of the deceased. These include the annual *Urabon* Ceremony, the semi-annual *Higan-e* Ceremony, and the regularly scheduled Monthly Memorial Ceremonies.

When we chant sincere Daimoku to the Gohonzon for the enlightenment of the deceased, we, ourselves can attain enlightenment. In addition, the deceased, who cannot chant Daimoku for themselves, gain tremendous benefit from the Daimoku we chant for them. This is the principle behind the *Toba* Memorial Service. The True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin stated:

> The deceased rely on the benefits of offerings from their relatives. So you should offer your benefit to them to relieve their suffering.
>
> (Shintei Gosho, *Vol. 1, p. 72)*

Down the center of the *Toba* is inscribed Myoho-Renge-Kyo. There is also an inscription in Chinese characters stating, "Here exists the body of the Buddha." Under the Daimoku is the name of the deceased. On the reverse side of the *Toba* is inscribed the name of the person who requested it for the benefit of the deceased.

The *Toba* is requested by a believer and is inscribed by a Nichiren Shoshu priest. The ceremony to offer the *Toba* is performed at the Temple by the priest. The *Toba* can be requested for a deceased individual person, a deceased pet animal, or for a family, such as "The Smith Family." This would indicate the deceased ancestors of Mr. or Ms. "Smith."

HOW TO REQUEST A *TOBA* MEMORIAL TABLET

In order to request a *Toba,* one must be a Nichiren Shoshu believer. A believer may request a *Toba* at any time, and as often as he or she wishes. If the request for a *Toba* is made on a day when there is no

ceremony, the chief priest, depending on his schedule, may conduct a special ceremony for the offering of the *Toba,* or he may offer the *Toba* to the Gohonzon and pray for the enlightenment of the deceased person during the regularly scheduled Gongyo at the Temple.

Requests for a *Toba* are made in writing at your local Nichiren Shoshu Temple, or the Temple you are visiting. If you wish to offer a *Toba* at the Head Temple while you are making a pilgrimage (tozan), you may make your request in the *Tobashitsu* (the *Toba* office next to the Mutsubo) on the Head Temple grounds. If you don't live near a Nichiren Shoshu Temple, you can make your request by mail.

The Temple will give you a *Toba* Request Form. It asks for the date you want the *Toba* to be offered, the name of the deceased, and the name of the person making the request. If possible, the relationship of the deceased to the person making the request (such as father, aunt, friend, pet dog) and the age of the deceased should be written on the application. *Gokuyo* should accompany the application.

It is most advantageous if the believer making the request can be present at the Temple when the *Toba* is being offered to the Gohonzon. This way, the Priest and the believer can pray in unity for the enlightenment of the deceased. If this is not possible, the Priest will offer the *Toba* in your absence.

Requesting a *Toba* Memorial Tablet at Special Ceremonies

The *Urabon, Higan-e,* and Group Memorial Ceremonies at the Temple are conducted for the specific purpose of offering prayers to the Gohonzon for the enlightenment of the deceased. At these ceremonies, *Toba* Memorial Tablets are offered by many people. Because of the large number of *Toba* Tablets that have to be inscribed by the priest, applications for requesting a *Toba* are usually available several weeks to a month before the ceremony takes place. When an offering of a *Toba* is made on a non-ceremony day, the *Toba* you requested with the name of the deceased will usually be visible when you approach the Memorial Altar. However, during the large ceremonies when many believers offer *Tobas,* they will be stacked

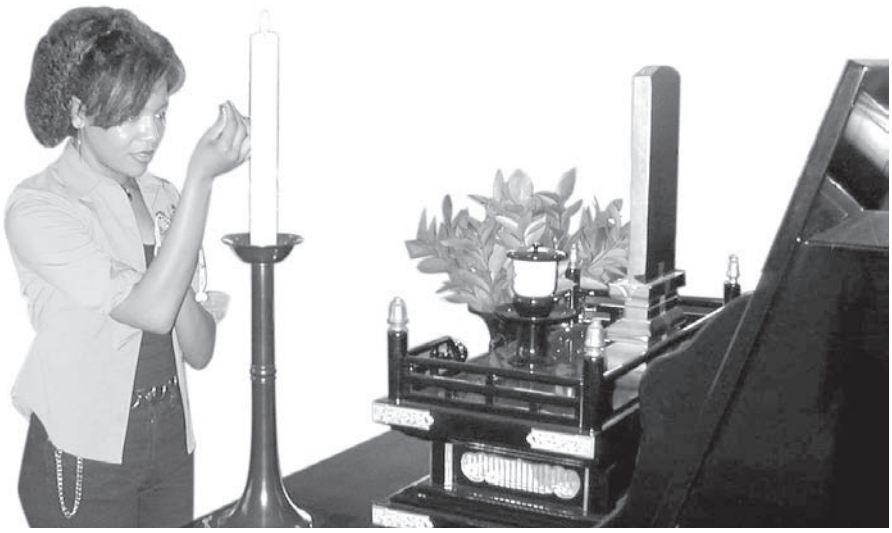
one behind the other because of limited space. In this case, most of the *Tobas* will not be visible.

Requesting a *Toba* Memorial Tablet for Individual Memorial Ceremonies.

An Individual Memorial Ceremony is conducted for the deceased on a specific anniversary date according to the teachings of True Buddhism. A *Toba* is traditionally requested for a deceased loved one every seventh day for the first forty-nine days after death. Another *Toba* is offered on the one hundredth day after death. There are also yearly anniversaries where *Toba* Tablets are traditionally offered to the Gohonzon. If you are attending a Memorial Ceremony as a guest in support of a fellow believer, you can also request a *Toba* for the deceased person. If many believers attend an Individual Memorial Ceremony, there may be many *Tobas* offered at the same time by various people for that deceased person.

OFFERING POWDERED INCENSE AT THE MEMORIAL ALTAR

When a *Toba* is offered to the Gohonzon, the priest prepares the Memorial Altar for the ceremony. The candle and an incense char-



coal are lit and placed in the powdered incense burner at the front of the altar. An open container of incense powder is placed next to the burner.

The recitation of the Sutra begins. When the chief priest begins the recitation of the *Chogyo* section of the *Juryo* chapter of Gongyo (Part B of the sutra book), the assistant Priest goes to the Memorial Altar, takes the powdered incense burner, and places it on the table in front of the Chief Priest. The Chief Priest then offers powdered incense in the burner. The assistant Priest then places the burner back on the Memorial Altar, offers powdered incense himself, faces the believers, and bows. At this time, all those offering powdered incense should approach the Memorial Altar in an orderly fashion.

If there is only one priest in attendance, he usually offers the powdered incense before he takes his seat at the main altar to start the recitation of the Sutra. In this case, when he begins reciting the *Chogyo* section of the *Juryo* chapter of Gongyo (Part B), the believers may approach the Memorial Altar to offer powdered incense. It is not correct to wait until the sutra recitation is finished and offer powdered incense during the chanting of Daimoku. If, however, there are so many people offering powdered incense that it is not possible to finish before Daimoku starts, an exception is made.

When approaching the Memorial Altar, one should chant silently. With palms together, face the Gohonzon, offer three Daimoku silently, and bow. Then face the Memorial Altar, offer three Daimoku silently, and bow. Take a small pinch of incense powder between two fingers, gently raise the hand holding the incense slightly above eye level as a gesture of respect, and place the incense powder on the charcoal in the burner. This is done three times. Then, with palms together, face the Memorial Altar, offer three Daimoku silently, and bow. Then, face the Gohonzon, offer three Daimoku silently, and bow, and return to your seat. When you are seated you may resume the sutra recitation aloud.

There is tremendous benefit in offering a *Toba* Memorial Tablet. Through the power of the Mystic Law we are able to reach and affect the life of the deceased. The Daishonin states:

> You erected a sixteen-foot *sotoba* with the seven characters of Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo inscribed on it . . . . Your deceased parents must be illuminating the pure land as brilliantly as would the sun and moon in the heavens. Furthermore, you yourselves, their filial son and his wife, as well as your children, will live to be one hundred and twenty.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 5, p. 299,* Gosho, *p. 1434)*



CHAPTER 17

The Hokkeko

"Hokkeko" is the general name used to refer to Nichiren Shoshu believers. In Nichiren Shoshu there are many local Temples. In each of these local Temples there is a chief priest who has been assigned to that Temple by the High Priest.

All Nichiren Shoshu believers are affiliated with a local Temple. The believers at each local Temple together make up a Hokkeko believers' organization, and practice together under the guidance of the chief priest. In each believers' organization there is a Koto (representative officer of the Hokkeko), one or more Vice-Kotos (assistants to the Koto), several Kanjis (coordinators or secretaries), and in some cases, a treasurer. All of these officers have been appointed by the chief priest, and their positions have been confirmed by the High Priest.

When we make the determination to take faith, after being introduced to Nichiren Shoshu by our sponsors, we receive the *Gojukai* ceremony and joyfully become members of the Nichiren Shoshu Hokkeko. In this manner we get our start in faith activities in the Hokkeko organization, and receive correct guidance from the chief priest.

The origins of the Hokkeko go back more than seven hundred years, to the Daishonin's time. The Daishonin called the believers during this age the "people of the *Hokkeko-shu*" (Lotus Group). Among those believers were the highly active Hokkeko members in

the Fuji-Atsuhara region. Under the guidance of Nikko Shonin (who later became the second High Priest), the Fuji-Atsuhara Hokkeko achieved remarkable progress in its movement to propagate Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism through shakubuku. These efforts met with great repression in what is called the "Atsuhara Persecution." In the end, three believers were executed, most notably a leading believer named Jinshiro. Regarding the fortitude of the Atsuhara Hokkeko, the Daishonin states in the Gosho, *Shonin-to Gohenji:*

> You (Nikko Shonin) reported to me that when they (the Atsuhara believers) were faced with oppression, they chanted Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo with pure, humble minds. I realized the situation was extremely grave.
>
> (Gosho, *p. 1405)*

As this shows, amidst storms of repression that threatened their very lives, the Atsuhara Hokkeko believers steadfastly maintained their faith. Not a single person among them gave up.

This Atsuhara Persecution was the incident that ultimately resulted in the Daishonin inscribing the Dai-Gohonzon of the True High Sanctuary on October 12, 1279, for the purpose of saving the people of the entire world in the future throughout the long era of *Mappo.*

When a Buddha is going to expound the Law, there must first be people worthy of receiving that Law. In other words, there must be disciples and believers who will protect, propagate and transmit the Law taught by the Buddha, even at the risk of their own lives.

When the Daishonin saw that the faith of the people of the Hokkeko at that time was so pure that they had no regrets even when giving their own lives for the sake of the Law, He felt that the time had arrived at last to inscribe the Dai-Gohonzon, the basis of His Buddhism, which up until then, He had kept hidden in His heart.

There is a supplementary inscription on the Dai-Gohonzon which reads: ". . . with great respect for the petitioner of the High Sanctuary of the Essential Teachings, Yashiro Kunishige and the people of the Hokkeko-shu." This indicates that the Dai-Gohonzon, the fundamental purpose of the Daishonin's advent into this world, was established for the Hokkeko believers in response to their earnest desire to seek the Law. The Sixty-fifth High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu, Nichijun Shonin, stated, "The correct way for believers in this religion to revere the Daishonin is to be the successors to this Hokkeko."

We are the successors to the honorable name "Hokkeko," the name the Daishonin Himself bestowed, the name that is engraved on the Dai-Gohonzon of the True High Sanctuary. We believers in the Hokkeko make it our starting point to pledge our devotion to the Head Temple and look to our great seniors, the people of the Atsuhara Hokkeko, as models in faith. We exert ourselves in faith activities in the Hokkeko organization of our local Temples. The Daishonin teaches:

> The correct master, good believers, and the True Law; when these three are assembled together, prayers can be fulfilled.
>
> *(*MW, *Vol. 6, p. 193,* Gosho, *p. 1314)*

We who have become members of the Hokkeko should aspire to be "good believers" who maintain correct faith and practice of the Buddhism of Nichiren Shoshu.

The Hokkeko organization of believers was established with the primary purpose of enabling each of us to fulfill our potential and to receive the boundless benefit of the Gohonzon. This organization was not founded for the purpose of profit. Rather, the foundation is pure faith. This means that the spirit of faith is of first importance at all places and times.

It is important when people join that they not be concerned with social status, age, or gender. Rather, the new member should think

of himself or herself as a Freshman at school, and with a pure and humble mind, be receptive to guidance from the priests and warm encouragement from experienced members. When various problems or incomprehensible matters crop up in one's practice, the member should seek out and be frank with the priest and receive guidance. If one's judgment concerning this Buddhism is based on one's own egotism, sometimes great mistakes may be made which invite unhappiness.

This organization exists expressly for the sake of further advancing our own correct faith, practice and study. The Hokkeko is a united body of believers of the Nichiren Shoshu Temple. This basic spirit has not changed in the slightest in more than 750 years. The Sixty-sixth High Priest, Nittatsu Shonin stated, "I would hope that the Hokkeko will always stay on its course, and strictly maintain the kind of faith which will share its destiny with that of the Head Temple and local Temples."



CHAPTER 18

Attending Buddhist Ceremonies and Activities

An individual cannot practice correctly or nurture strong faith alone. Sometimes believers would rather practice faith by themselves. However, even in the case of worldly pursuits, it is not possible to do everything alone. If we want to study, we go to school. If we want to earn a living, we must go to our workplaces and interact with others. We learn various skills from our superiors, seniors, or teachers. By cooperating with classmates or colleagues, we make progress in our education or in our work.

In the same way, in the practice of Nichiren Shoshu, we can make progress and deepen our faith when we attend a variety of events. We can receive encouragement from our seniors in faith and likewise encourage fellow members. Nichiren Daishonin stated:

> Those resolved to seek the Way should all gather and listen to the contents of this letter.
>
> *("Letter from Teradomari,"* MW, *Vol. 4, p. 97,* Gosho, *p. 484)*

He also stated:

> The long journey reveals the depth of one's faith.
>
> *(*Gosho, *p. 689).*

If we want to become happy through faith, we should gather together with others and study Buddhism. Then, as now, the desire

to participate with other Buddhist believers is an integral part of Buddhist practice.

The variety of events available to us fall into two general categories:

1. Nichiren Shoshu services and ceremonies held at the Head Temple and at local Temples, and
2. Hokkeko meetings to promote faith, practice, and study for individual members.

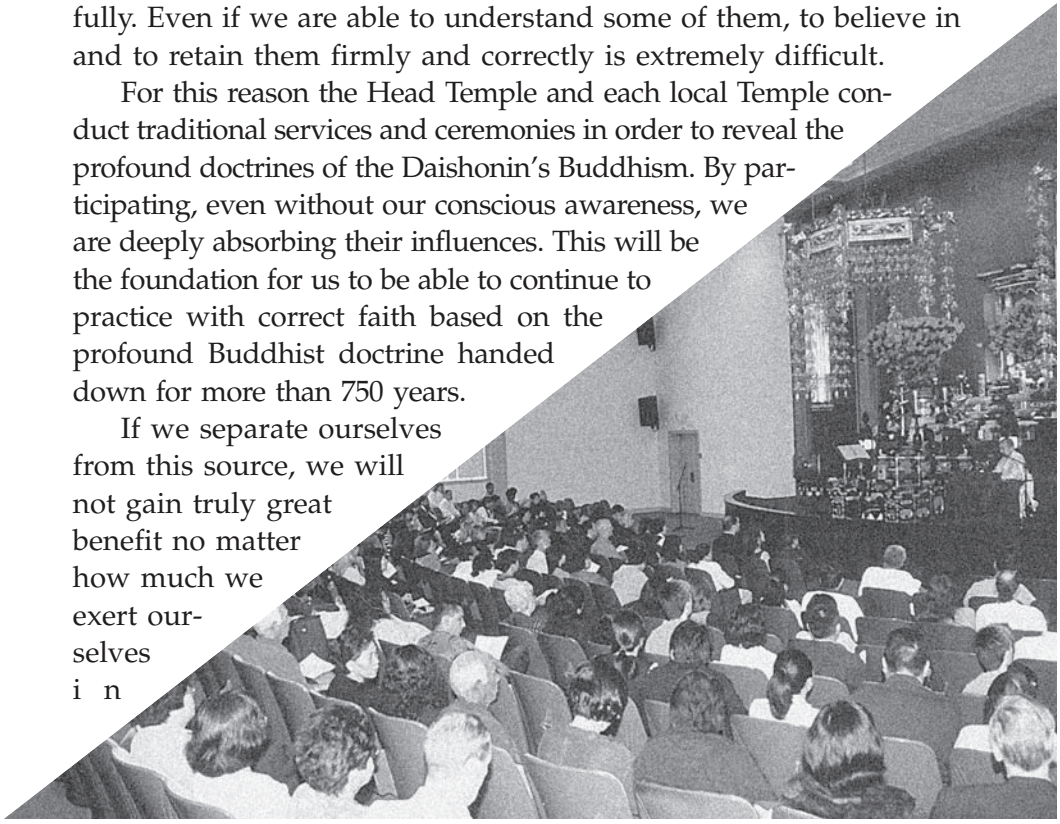
SERVICES AND CEREMONIES IN NICHIREN SHOSHU

Services and ceremonies conducted at the Head Temple and at local Temples express and reveal various profound aspects and concepts of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

It is impossible for us, ordinary mortals swayed by emotion, to understand the profound principles of the Daishonin's Buddhism fully. Even if we are able to understand some of them, to believe in and to retain them firmly and correctly is extremely difficult.

For this reason the Head Temple and each local Temple conduct traditional services and ceremonies in order to reveal the profound doctrines of the Daishonin's Buddhism. By participating, even without our conscious awareness, we are deeply absorbing their influences. This will be the foundation for us to be able to continue to practice with correct faith based on the profound Buddhist doctrine handed down for more than 750 years.

If we separate ourselves from this source, we will not gain truly great benefit no matter how much we exert ourselves in



Gongyo, shakubuku, or study. Eventually, solitary faith will be transformed by our egocentric ideas into a belief of an entirely different nature from the Daishonin's correct Buddhism.

From time to time, some members may express disinterest in attending ceremonies and activities. However, it is important to keep in mind the fundamental significance of the services and the deep meaning of the ceremonies conducted in Nichiren Shoshu.

The profound doctrines of the Daishonin's Buddhism will always be revealed in the form of services and ceremonies. For a believer, correct faith involves enthusiastic and consistent attendance and appreciation of this on-going process.

These are the major ceremonies and services of the Nichiren Shoshu calendar:[5]

Annual Ceremonies:

Gantan Gongyo, (New Year's Gongyo), January 1st

Koshi-e Ceremony, (Memorial for Second High Priest, Nikko Shonin), February 7th

Shuso-Otanjo-e Ceremony, (Nichiren Daishonin's Birthday), February 16th

Spring Higan-e, (Spring Memorial Ceremony at the Equinox), around March 21st

Risshu-e Ceremony, (Celebrating the declaration of True Buddhism), April 28th

Daigyo-e Ceremony, (Memorial ceremony for Nanjo Tokimitsu), May 1st

Urabon Ceremony, (Special Annual Memorial Service for the deceased), July 15th

Kanshi-e Ceremony, (Memorial ceremony for Twenty-sixth High Priest, Nichikan Shonin), August 19th

Tatsunokuchi Gonan-e Ceremony, (Commemorating the Tatsunokuchi Persecution), September 12th

Fall Higan-e, (Fall Memorial Ceremony at the Equinox), around September 22nd

Ushi-e Ceremony, (Memorial ceremony for Ninth High Priest, Nichiu Shonin) September 29th

Mokushi-e Ceremony, (Memorial for Third High Priest, Nichimoku Shonin) November 15th

Oko[6] Ceremony, (Ceremony to repay our debt of gratitude to Nichiren Daishonin, Nikko Shonin, and Nichimoku Shonin), Every 7th, 13th, and 15th of the month at the Head Temple; usually once a month on or around the 13th at local temples.

Special Ceremonies:

Ushitora Gongyo, every morning at the Head Temple

Goreiho Omushibarai-e, (Airing of the Sacred Treasures Ceremony), April 7th at the Head Temple

Shuso Gotai-e (Oeshiki), (Celebration of Nichiren Daishonin's passing), November 21st by the modern calendar, at the Head Temple; October 13th, by the lunar calendar, at most local Temples

Of all the services and ceremonies held at the temples, the most important ceremony for us to attend is the monthly Oko.

The Oko ceremony is held in reverence to the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood of the Three Great Secret Laws, and to repay our gratitude to them. This denotes the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin; the True Object of Worship, the Dai-Gohonzon; Nikko Shonin, Nichimoku Shonin, and the successive High Priests. It is held on the 13th day of every month, the day of Nichiren Daishonin's passing, at the Head Temple, and on a date near the 13th in all Nichiren Shoshu local Temples.

It is very difficult for us to attend the services and ceremonies held at the Head Temple, because of the great distance, so we make every effort to attend the monthly Oko ceremony held at our local Temple, and repay our gratitude to the Three Treasures from the bottom of our hearts.

HOKKEKO MEETINGS

At Hokkeko meetings members gather together to do Gongyo, chant Daimoku, share experiences, ask questions, and study in order to learn about the great power of the Gohonzon. These meetings are generally conducted in an informal environment such as a member's home. Occasionally a priest may also attend and lecture, answer questions, and provide guidance in a smaller, more relaxed atmosphere.

It is important to attend as many such meetings as possible because when we do, conviction in the absolute power of the Gohonzon, the way to practice correct faith, and deeper knowledge gained through study will naturally take root in our lives. The experiences of other members, the friendships based on faith, a shared desire for Kosen-rufu, and our joint efforts in shakubuku all serve to help us deepen our faith and consequently advance in our lives. These Buddhist activities also help encourage us to overcome obstacles as they arise in the course of our practice.

The essential thing is that, through holding these various meetings repeatedly and discussing the questions and experiences from numerous points of view, members will develop faith free of egotistical or biased viewpoints, in a pleasant atmosphere.



GLOSSARY

Buddha One who is enlightened to the eternal truth of life and is able to lead others to attain the same enlightenment. One who possesses the Three Virtues of Sovereign, Teacher, and Parent.

Butsudan The altar in which the Gohonzon is enshrined.

Butsugu A general term for the Buddhist accessories used to make offerings to the Gohonzon in front of the Butsudan. They include the candlesticks, evergreen vases, incense burner, water cup, bell, rice cup, etc.

Dai-Gohonzon The fundamental object of worship in Nichiren Shoshu. It was inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin on October 12, 1279. It was the purpose of His advent into this world as the True Buddha. All Gohonzons of Nichiren Shoshu are derived from the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of the Essential Teachings.

Daimoku Supreme Invocation or Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. This expression also indicates the chanting of Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.

Daishonin Literally, "Great Sage." It is the title given to Nichiren. It indicates The True Buddha.

Gohonzon The object of worship in Nichiren Shoshu. *Go* is an honorific prefix in Japanese. *Honzon* means object of worship. All Gohonzons in Nichiren Shoshu are transcriptions of the Dai-Gohonzon made by the successive High Priests of Nichiren Shoshu. The Gohonzon is the manifestation of the eternally enlightened life of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin (the Person), and Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo of actual *ichinen sanzen* (the Law) to which the True Buddha is eternally enlightened, the oneness of the Person and the Law.

Gokaihi The audience with the Dai-Gohonzon. The ceremony to worship the Dai-Gohonzon in the Hoando at Head Temple Taisekiji.

Gongyo Literally *assiduous practice*. Recitation of a portion of the second (*Hoben*) and all of the 16th (*Juryo*) Chapters of the Lotus Sutra with silent prayers. Performed twice daily.

Gosho The writings of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. They take the form of treatises, the letters He wrote to His disciples, and oral

lectures written down by His successor, Second High Priest Nikko Shonin.

Hoando Enshrinement Hall The Temple Building at Head Temple, Taisekiji where the Dai-Gohonzon of the True High Sanctuary is enshrined and where the *Gokaihi* Ceremony is conducted.

Heritage of the Law (*Kechimyaku*) The lifeblood transmission of True Buddhism. The Heritage of the Entity of the Law is the face to face transmission to a single person of the lifeblood and entrustment of Nichiren Daishonin's True Buddhism from Nichiren Daishonin, to Nikko Shonin (Second High Priest) to Nichimoku Shonin (Third High Priest) down to the present High Priest in an unbroken succession. All those who uphold this heritage and sincerely follow the High Priest, who has inherited the Heritage of the Law, will thereby be within the Heritage of Faith.

Hokkeko Translated as "Lotus Group." The community of lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu. The name "Hokkeko" was given to the lay believers by Nichiren Daishonin Himself.

Ichinen Sanzen "Three thousand realms are possessed by a single life moment." The theory that explains that all existence possesses the Buddha nature along with all the other conditions of life. This is elucidated by teaching that there are ten states of life or mind, called the "Ten Worlds." Furthermore, the principle of the mutual possession of the ten worlds makes this 100 worlds. They are manifested through the principle of the Ten Factors and the Three Realms of Existence, which make 3,000 worlds.

Karma Internal causes residing in the depths of life that manifest themselves as conspicuous effects when external causes or conditions are encountered. All people possess both positive and negative karma. The practice of True Buddhism implants tremendous good karma (fortune) in one's life, and lessens one's retribution for negative karma from causes made in this and previous lifetimes.

Kosen-rufu Means to widely declare and spread True Buddhism. There are two aspects of Kosen-rufu. "Kosen-rufu of the Entity of the Law" signifies the establishment of the Dai-Gohonzon by the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. His will to us was to accomplish the "Kosen-rufu of Substantiation" which signifies the time when all the people of the world embrace the Daishonin's Buddhism and revere the Dai-Gohonzon. At this time, there will be true world peace and the masses of people around the world will attain Buddhahood.

Kuon Ganjo Time and space without beginning or end. In many cases it is used to indicate the eternal past and indicates the eternity of the enlightenment of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin.

Lotus Sutra Shakyamuni's highest teaching. It was his final teaching, preached during the last eight years of his life together with the *Sutra of Infinite Meaning,* an introduction to the Lotus Sutra, and the *Nirvana Sutra,* the teaching for the sake of propagating the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. In it, Shakyamuni expounded the ultimate truth of his enlightenment. However, in the Latter Day of the Law, we can only benefit from the Lotus Sutra when it is viewed through the life of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. Therefore, as Nichiren Shoshu believers, we practice and study the Lotus Sutra based exclusively on the interpretations and teachings of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, and the successive High Priests of Nichiren Shoshu. In His writings, Nichiren Daishonin sometimes uses the term *Lotus Sutra* to indicate Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, or the Gohonzon.

Nichikan Shonin (1665–1726) The Twenty-sixth High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu. He wrote many important doctrinal treatises including exegeses on the five major writings of Nichiren Daishonin and the *Six Volume Writings* (*Rokkan Sho*).

Nichimoku Shonin (1260–1333) The Third High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu. He became a disciple of Nikko Shonin in 1274, and in 1276 went to Mt. Minobu where He was ordained by Nichiren Daishonin. He served the Daishonin for the remainder of the Daishonin's life, and also served Second High Priest Nikko Shonin. He succeeded Nikko Shonin as the Third High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu. He is remembered as a great and courageous debater who remonstrated with the Kamakura Government and the Imperial court many times.

Nichiren Daishonin The True Buddha of *Kuon Ganjo.* The founder of True Buddhism, Nichiren Shoshu. He is the True Buddha who is eternally endowed with the Three Enlightened Properties, and who eternally possesses the Three Virtues of Sovereign, Teacher and Parent. He fulfilled the purpose of His advent into this world by inscribing the Dai-Gohonzon of the True High Sanctuary on October 12, 1279 so that all the people of the Latter Day of the Law (*Mappo*) can eradicate their evil karma and attain Buddhahood. He was born on February 16, 1222 and physically passed away on October 13, 1282.

Nichiren Shoshu Orthodox Denomination of Nichiren. The only denomination that has inherited and propagates the complete True Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

Nichiu Shonin (1409–1482) The Ninth High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu. During his tenure as High Priest there was widespread warfare in Japan. Despite this, he traveled extensively for the sake of propagation and converted many people to Nichiren Shoshu. He authored the very sig-

nificant writing, "On Formalities" (*Kegi Sho*) which delineates the observances of Nichiren Shoshu.

Nikko Shonin (1246–1333) The direct successor to Nichiren Daishonin and the Second High Priest of Nichiren Shoshu. From 1258 when he first met the Daishonin until the Daishonin's passing, he was constantly at his master's side, serving the True Buddha. He founded the Head Temple, Taisekiji, in October of 1290.

Shakubuku (literally "widely declare and spread") Propagation of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism. The process of introducing people to True Buddhism, and helping them overcome their attachment to provisional teachings by refuting incorrect views and heretical religions.

Shakyamuni The historical founder of Buddhism who lived approximately 3,000 years ago. Chinese and Japanese tradition set the date of his birth on April 8, 1029 B.C. and his death on February 15, 949 B.C. He was born in what is present day Nepal as a prince, the son of King Shuddhodana of the Shakya tribe. According to Buddhist tradition, at the age of nineteen he renounced his princely life, and started his journey as a religious ascetic seeking the truth. At the age of 30, having realized that the severe austerities of ascetic life in India did not lead to an awakening to the ultimate truth, he sat under a pipal tree (also known as the "*Bodhi* Tree") and meditated. He attained enlightenment and embarked on a lifelong career of traveling through India, preaching to many disciples and believers to lead them to the same enlightenment.

During the last eight years of his life he expounded the teachings of the "Lotus-Nirvana Period," in which he taught the principles of the *Lotus Sutra,* his highest teaching, and instructions for its transmission. Shakyamuni's teachings in the Lotus Sutra ultimately reveal in the depths of the passages that his status was provisional, and that the True Buddha of *Kuon Ganjo* would appear in *Mappo* to reveal the Buddhism of the True Cause that would lead all humankind to enlightenment.

Shodai **"**Chanting Daimoku." A Japanese term which means the practice of chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.

Shoten Zenjin Protective Deities or "Buddhist Gods" which function to protect those who embrace the Gohonzon and uphold the teachings of True Buddhism.

Taisekiji The Head Temple of Nichiren Shoshu. It is located in Japan at the foot of Mt. Fuji in Fujinomiya City, Shizuoka Prefecture. In the "Document for Entrusting the Law which Nichiren Propagated throughout His Life" (*Nichiren Ichigo Guho Fuzoku Sho*), Nichiren Daishonin

directed that the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism be erected at the foot of Mt. Fuji. In 1290, Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin's direct successor, founded Taisekiji. The land was donated by Nanjo Tokimitsu, a great lay patron of Nichiren Shoshu. Taisekiji is where the Dai-Gohonzon is enshrined, and where the High Priest lives. Nichiren Shoshu believers from all over the world come on pilgrimage to Taisekiji to pray to the Dai-Gohonzon and to participate in Ushitora Gongyo with the High Priest.

Three Great Secret Laws The principles which constitute the core and foundation of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism. They are the True Object of Worship, the True High Sanctuary, and the True Invocation.

The **True Object of Worship** is the Dai-Gohonzon, inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin on October 12,1279. Within the Dai-Gohonzon are the Person and the Law. The Person is the eternal enlightened life of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. The Law is Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo to which the Daishonin is eternally enlightened.

The **True High Sanctuary** is the place where the Dai-Gohonzon will be enshrined at the time of Kosen-rufu so that all the people in the world can eradicate their negative karma and attain enlightenment. At the present time It is enshrined in the Hoando Enshrinement Hall at the Nichiren Shoshu Head Temple, Taisekiji. In a general sense, it also signifies the place where the Gohonzon is enshrined in local Temples and believers' homes.

The **True Invocation** is Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. Nichiren Daishonin established the True Invocation by chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo for the first time on April 28, 1253. The True Invocation carries the significance of both faith and practice.

Three Periods of Propagation The three time periods following the passing of Shakyamuni. The first 1000 year period after Shakyamuni's passing is called the Former Day of the Law (*Shobo*).The second 1000 year period is called the Middle Day of the Law (*Zobo*). The final period, starting thereafter, is called the Latter Day of the Law (*Mappo*). Shakya-muni taught that the Latter Day of the Law would last 10,000 years and more, into the future. He taught that at this time, because the people would have no connection to Shakyamuni, they could no longer gain any benefit from his teachings. The True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, appeared at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law and established the Buddhism of the Three Great Secret Laws so that all people could attain enlightenment now and on into the future.

Three Treasures The Three Treasures are what all Buddhists revere as the most precious treasures in the Universe. They are the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood. The Buddha is one who is enlightened to the

eternal truth of life and the universe and possesses the three virtues of Sovereign, Teacher, and Parent. The Law is the teaching that the Buddha teaches through his own enlightenment. The Priesthood signifies the disciples of the Buddha who inherit, protect, and transmit the teachings to future generations. In Nichiren Shoshu the Buddha is Nichiren Daishonin, the eternal True Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. The Law is the Dai-Gohonzon of the True High Sanctuary of True Buddhism, and the Priesthood is Nikko Shonin, the Second High Priest, who directly received the transmission of True Buddhism, and all of the successive High Priests of Nichiren Shoshu who have received this face to face transmission in an unbroken succession for over 750 years.

Tozan The pilgrimage to Nichiren Shoshu Head Temple, Taisekiji, to have an audience with the Dai Gohonzon. Literally translates as "to climb the mountain."

True Buddhism The Buddhism of Nichiren Shoshu, the one and only true denomination of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Ushitora Gongyo The Gongyo conducted by the successive High Priests of Nichiren Shoshu for the sake of attaining Kosen-rufu. It is conducted around 2:30 AM each morning in the Reception Hall, and has been a tradition of Taisekiji since its founding.

Yohaijo The place in the Reception Hall from which the High Priest offers His prayers to the Dai Gohonzon for Kosen-rufu during Ushitora Gongyo. It is located to the left of the main altar of the Reception Hall and has the complete offerings of candles, evergreens, and incense.

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NOTES

1. The Three Great Secret Laws: The principles which constitute the core and foundation of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism. They are the True Object of Worship, the True High Sanctuary, and the True Invocation. **The True Object of Worship** is the Dai-Gohonzon, inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin on October 12, 1279. Within the Dai-Gohonzon are the Person and the Law. The Person is the eternal enlightened life of the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. The Law is Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo to which the Daishonin is eternally enlightened. **The True High Sanctuary** is the place where the Dai-Gohonzon will be enshrined at the time of Kosen-rufu so that all humankind can eradicate its negative karma and attain enlightenment. At the present time, it is enshrined in the Hoando Enshrinement Hall at the Nichiren Shoshu Head Temple, Taisekiji. In a general sense, it also signifies the place where the Gohonzon is enshrined in local temples and believers' homes. **The True Invocation** is Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. Nichiren Daishonin established the True Invocation by chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo for the first time on April 28, 1253. The True Invocation carries the significance of both faith and practice.
2. This refers to the story in the Nirvana Sutra of the monk Kakutoku and King Utoku. The monk Kakutoku upheld the True Law and was persecuted severely. King Utoku supported Kakutoku and was killed while defending him. Kakutoku was reborn as Kasho Buddha, and King Utoku was reborn as Shakyamuni.
3. In His writings, *Sandai-hiho sho* and *Ichigo guho sho*, Nichiren Daishonin left the establishment of the Actual True High Sanctuary as His Will for future generations. According to these writings, this Buddhism will definitely spread throughout the world. At that time, not only great numbers of everyday people, but also emperors and kings, will take faith in this Buddhism.
4. *Honmonji* roughly translates as "Temple of the Essential Teachings."
5. The services listed here are the ceremonies held at the Head Temple. At each local Temple, the services and ceremonies are also conducted in conformity with the above dates. In the United States, some local temples celebrate the ceremonies on the closest Sunday to the actual ceremony date.
6. *Ko,* as a general term, is a ceremony in which believers offer praise and gratitude to the religion's object of worship and to its founder. The Sutra is recited, prayers are offered, and a lecture about the teaching or a passage from the Sutra or the Gosho is preached.