

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON FAITH**  
**Can I Practice Without the Gohonzon?**

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*Debuting in this issue, the World Tribune will offer a regular question-and-answer series on vital issues of faith. Readers are invited to submit questions concerning the doctrines of Buddhism and the formalities of our practice to the World Tribune office, to be answered by SGI-USA Study Department Chief Ted Morino.*

**Q: Can I practice without the Gohonzon?**

A: Yes. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the fundamental Law of the universe and it has the unique ability to awaken and fuse with the inherent Buddhahood of anyone who chants it.

In a broad sense, this fundamental core of the universe and innate Buddhahood within our lives are the same as the Law depicted on the Gohonzon.

When we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the desire to embrace this Law, our lives open to the boundless potential of the universe. That's how we awaken the qualities of a Buddha.

The benefit we derive from chanting, therefore, stems from our faith in the Mystic Law that is embodied in the Gohonzon — not from the fact that we merely possess the Gohonzon.

In this vein, the Daishonin asserts that “faith alone is what really matters” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 246).

SGI President Ikeda portrays the first time Nichiren Daishonin chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, years before he inscribed the first Gohonzon, in *The Human Revolution*, vol. 6:

There must have been a sunrise in his heart, as well as the richest life condition that was ever realized. A man and nature — a man and the life of the universe itself — were fused into one.

So before he inscribed the Gohonzon, we can say that the Daishonin chanted daimoku to the universe, with reverence for the Mystic Law he had found in the depths of the Lotus Sutra.

The important point for us to realize is that the Gohonzon is the ultimate gift from Nichiren Daishonin to each of us who holds faith in the Mystic Law.

The Gohonzon is a means to bring about the happiness of all humanity through the Mystic Law. In “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon,” the Daishonin states:

Now, over two hundred years have passed since the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. How awesome that Nichiren was the first to inscribe this great mandala as the banner of propagation of the Lotus Sutra, when even such great masters as Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, T'ien-t'ai and Miao-lo were unable to do so! This mandala is in no way Nichiren's invention. (MW-1, 211–12)

Fortunately, through the auspices of the SGI organization, the Gohonzon is widely

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available to all who want to sincerely practice to it.

Of course there will always be some circumstances when we cannot chant to the Gohonzon, such as when we are traveling or visiting relatives.

At such times, though, if we open our hearts to the Daishonin's profound sentiment in inscribing the object of worship for the happiness of all people, we can experience the same benefit as if we were sitting directly in front of the Gohonzon. We can thus awaken the joy, courage and energy to advance in our lives at any time.

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