

PERSPECTIVE: A New Year, a New World
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New Year's Day gongyo is typically an important part of celebrating the new year for many people in the SGI-USA. I look forward to it every year. But this year is a little different. I have lived in Kansas City since May after living in Arizona for almost eight years. I am bombarded with questions like "You don't celebrate Christmas?" from people here in what is referred to as the Bible Belt. This made me start thinking about why New Year's Day is important to us as Buddhists.

Mircea Eliade, in his book *The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History*, discusses the significance of what he calls "the regeneration of time." In almost any culture, primitive or modern, he says, there is some kind of celebration of a new time, whether it be a month, season, year, or observing a day of significance. One example he gives of a New Year's celebration is that of the pre-Judaic monotheistic Zoroastrians of Persia: "The Nawroz, the Persian New Year, is at once the festival of Ahuramazda (celebrated on the day 'Ormazd' of the first month) and the day on which the Creation of the world and of man took place," he writes (p. 64). Elsewhere, Eliade tells us, "It is interesting to note further that among the Fijians of the mountainous region of Viti Levu, the installation of the chief is called, 'Creation of the world...'" (p. 80).

Why is it significant to us as Buddhists? In the "New Year's Goshu," Nichiren Daishonin states, "The sincerity of making offerings to the Lotus Sutra at the beginning of the New Year is like flowers blooming from trees, a lotus unfolding in a pond, sandalwood blossoming on the Snow Mountains, or the moon beginning to rise" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 272). It is important to me to express my gratitude to the Gohonzon as well as give thanks to friends and family through my prayers on this day. By also thinking about how far I have come this past year, resetting goals that have been forgotten, as well as making new ones, I give myself a new start. I think this is why so many people tend to make New Year's resolutions. Combine my objectives for the start of the year with daimoku, and I am sure to accomplish what I set out to do for the year ahead.

You might say I'm creating a new world.

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