

ABOUT THE DAI-GOHONZON

After the onset of the temple issue, SGI President Ikeda stated: “Nothing has changed in the way we view the Dai-Gohonzon: It was inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin for the happiness of all humanity and is the basis of our faith.” The SGI has always upheld the validity of the Dai-Gohonzon, even during these years when we have not been able to see it.

Now that the Nikken sect uses its physical possession of the Dai-Gohonzon at the head temple to entice lay believers to join the priesthood’s organization, we should clarify what is the correct attitude toward the Dai-Gohonzon.

First, the power of any Gohonzon, including the Dai-Gohonzon, can be tapped only through the power of faith. In other words, we should be clear that it is wrong to think that the Dai-Gohonzon alone has some kind of unique mystic power that no other Gohonzon possesses. The Dai-Gohonzon and our own Gohonzon are equal.

What is most important is the power of our faith and practice, which enables us to tap the power of the Buddha and the Law in the Dai-Gohonzon and in all other Gohonzon, and within ourselves.

In this respect, the Daishonin states: “The Gohonzon is found in faith alone. As the sutra states, ‘Only with faith can one enter Buddhahood’” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 213).

The Daishonin does not directly refer to the Dai-Gohonzon, which he inscribed on Oct. 12, 1279, in any of his known writings. However, in the following passage from “On Persecutions Befalling the Buddha,” which he wrote just 11 days before this date, he refers to the fulfillment of his life’s purpose: “The Buddha fulfilled the purpose of his advent in a little over forty years; T’ien-t’ai took about thirty years, and Dengyo, some twenty years. I have repeatedly spoken of the indescribable persecutions they suffered during those years. For me it took twenty-seven years, and the persecutions I faced during this period are well known to you all” (MW-1, 239). Because the Dai-Gohonzon was inscribed some 27 years after the Daishonin embarked on his course of propagation, this passage is taken to mean that he considered that inscription the purpose of his advent.

The inscription of this particular Gohonzon was triggered by the occurrence of the Atsuhara Persecution, where lay believers, many of them new to the practice, had displayed their staunch faith in this Buddhism. This prompted the Daishonin to create an ultimate Gohonzon for the happiness of all humanity, whose inscription he called the fulfillment of his advent in this world.

And as is indicated by a note written on the Dai-Gohonzon, it is true that this Gohonzon holds special significance: It is the Gohonzon “to be enshrined in the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism.” But, again, it is wrong to think that, whether we have faith in the Dai-Gohonzon or not, the Dai-Gohonzon is absolute. Faith is what matters.

In the past, visiting the head temple to worship the Dai-Gohonzon was encouraged in the SGI. It was done so in the spirit of supporting the head temple.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda originally initiated the SGI pilgrimages to the head temple after World War II, when Nichiren Shoshu’s condition was extremely destitute. He also did this to teach members to have a seeking spirit and pure faith through their experiences of praying to the ultimate object of devotion that Nichiren Daishonin left for all humanity of the Latter Day of the Law.

Title: About the Dai-Gohonzon

Subject: World Tribune 09/10/99 n.3259 p.5 WT990910p05

Author: Ted Morino

Keywords: About Dai-Gohonzon Encouragement Gohonzon Guidance Morino

With a challenging seeking spirit, the obstacles that came with participating in the pilgrimages strengthened the members' faith and practice to their own Gohonzon. If the Dai-Gohonzon had been brought to their doorstep, the results faith-wise would not have been the same.

It is important to understand that since Nikken is using the Dai-Gohonzon to try to control people — requiring that they join the temple and pay in order to see it — visiting the head temple is no longer a good cause. If we do, we fall into the trap that he has set. Because Nikken's actions and intent have consistently been to undermine and disrupt the movement for kosen-rufu — the spread of the Daishonin's teachings — to support him financially is equivalent to supporting that negative intent. That, from the standpoint of Buddhism, is a very negative cause.

In this respect, President Ikeda states: “Some say that you have no faith or won't attain Buddhahood unless you want to directly see the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism. This is of course a wrong idea.

“The Gohonzon enshrined at our home carries the same significance as the Dai-Gohonzon. They are as beneficial as the Dai-Gohonzon, in accord with the Buddhist principle of “dispersing the body of the original in different forms” (Jpn *funjin santai*).

“In one of his writings to Lord Matsuno, whom he had never met, the Daishonin extends his heartfelt encouragement to this believer. Lord Matsuno must have never seen the Daishonin. However, the Daishonin's response to him is that ‘even if we have never met each other, you have taken faith in my teaching. How wonderful! You will definitely attain Buddhahood’ (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1379). As the Daishonin also says, ‘What matters is one's heart’ (MW-5, 289).

“What determines whether you attain Buddhahood is not a physical encounter with the Daishonin or the Dai-Gohonzon. In this vein, it is not only totally wrong but also totally in opposition to the Daishonin's teaching to contend that you have no faith unless you have the spirit to visit Taiseki-ji to see the Dai-Gohonzon. You will gain no benefit even if you see the Dai-Gohonzon, if you oppose the heart of the Daishonin that was behind his inscription of the Dai-Gohonzon.”

Since the Dai-Gohonzon is made of wood, its physical longevity is naturally limited. But the essence of the Dai-Gohonzon, the Law, will never perish because it inherently exists in the universe and within each of us.

President Toda used to use the expression “the Dai-Gohonzon in my home,” meaning that the Gohonzon we worship at home is essentially the Dai-Gohonzon itself. The millions of SGI members who have achieved numerous victories in their lives have done so through their practice to their own Gohonzon. This is because we have been practicing the Daishonin's Buddha's correctly in accord with the compassionate spirit behind the Daishonin's inscription of the Dai-Gohonzon. This awareness is more important than ever today.

— TED MORINO, SGI-USA STUDY
DEPARTMENT SENIOR ADVISOR