

**BACK TO THE BASICS
ACTIVATING THE THREE VIRTUES
BY GREG MARTIN
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A Buddha possesses the three virtues of parent (the compassion to nurture all living beings), teacher (the wisdom to lead them to enlightenment) and sovereign (the power to protect them). Also, since it embodies the life of Buddha, the Gohonzon, our object of devotion, possesses these three. And since Buddhahood is a potential within the lives of all ordinary people, the three virtues are inherent in our lives as well. When we chant to the Gohonzon, we, too, can manifest these.

How does this work? The principle of the oneness of parent and child teaches us that the Gohonzon manifests its function as a parent when we devote ourselves to it with a child's trust. A child does not distrust its mother's milk. To sustain that trust in the face of the doubts that inevitably arise, we need to develop doubt-free faith in the Gohonzon—not faith that never doubts but faith that can resolve any doubts that appear. This is guarding the life-condition of Buddhahood within. Practicing with the virtue of child awakens the virtue of parent in the Gohonzon and pulls it forth from within our lives.

The oneness of teacher and student (mentor and disciple) is the basis for the Gohonzon to manifest its function as a wise teacher. We should approach the Gohonzon as a student approaches a teacher, seeking advice and counsel concerning things that trouble us, never ceasing in our yearning to develop ourselves further.

The oneness of sovereign and subject implies being an active participant in the society of the Buddha's believers. To practice in the kosen-rufu movement with a sense of duty, responsibility or mission is the Buddha's deepest intent. With this spirit, we will fully display our greatest qualities in our daily lives as outstanding citizens of faith.

Chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with doubt-free faith, a lifelong seeking spirit and a sense of responsibility for kosen-rufu (the virtues of child, student and citizen) form the foundation for fusing with or embracing the Gohonzon (achieving oneness) and for manifesting the virtues of parent, teacher and sovereign.

The three virtues, in the end, are found in our lives. This is why Nichiren Daishonin says that "Shakyamuni Buddha, who has attained perfect enlightenment, is our own flesh and blood. His practices and the resulting virtues are our bones and marrow" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 365).

For further information, please see Selected Lectures on the Goshō, vol. 1, pp. 264–81.