

FROM 'MY DEAR FRIENDS IN AMERICA' NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM LIVES ONLY WITHIN THE SGI

'Only the SGI has shown actual proof of the benefit of faith,' SGI President Ikeda explains. 'It is an organization of believers overflowing with such proof, an organization that pulses with the lifeblood of faith.'

From SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 1st SGI-USA Executive Conference, held in Malibu, Calif., Sept. 16, 1993.

While making it clear that we should base ourselves on the Gohonzon, 26th High Priest Nichikan [one of the restorers of Nichiren Shoshu] also insisted that strong faith and practice are necessary to tap the infinite powers of the Buddha and the Law. He wrote in his commentary on "The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind": "One should understand that when one believes in the object of devotion [that is the embodiment of the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] hidden in the depths of the Lotus Sutra, and chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, one can, through the powers of the Buddha and the Law, perfect the practice of observing the mind and attain enlightenment. But if one is lacking in faith, the power of the object of devotion will not enable one to attain enlightenment" (*The Commentaries of Nichikan*, p. 456).

Faith is crucial. Only with the actual practice of chanting daimoku and taking action for kosen-rufu does one's faith become true and correct and can one reap infinite benefit and blessings.

Nichikan also wrote: "The Gohonzon of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is not somewhere outside us. It resides within the faith of us ordinary people" (*Commentaries*, p. 465).

Of course, Nichikan's declaration is based on Nichiren Daishonin's injunction: "Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself... This Gohonzon also is found only in the two characters for faith" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 832).

Even though you may possess the Gohonzon, you will not enjoy its true benefit unless you have faith and take action for kosen-rufu.

First Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi spread the Law by teaching the concept of punishment. Believe it or not, there were priests who opposed this, saying that it contradicted the teachings of Nichiren Shoshu. Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda decried this error on the part of the priests and wrote: "In the upper right corner of the Gohonzon are the words, 'If you slander this Law, you will have your head broken into seven pieces.' Doesn't this signify the theory of punishment? At the same time, in the upper left corner of the Gohonzon is an inscription that reads, 'If you make offerings to the Law, you will receive more good fortune than that derived from holding the ten titles of the Buddha.' Doesn't this signify the promise the Gohonzon makes to us that we will receive benefits when we devote ourselves to it? Benefit, or value, and punishment, or anti-value, constitute the reality of our daily lives. Some Nichiren Shoshu priests had forgotten that the power of the Gohonzon can be revealed in one's daily life in either way until President Makiguchi discussed it. They were astonished at what he brought out, and I am dumbfounded that many of them have since pretended that they have known this

principle very well for quite some time.

“Also, some priests are not yet aware of this principle. I am saddened rather than surprised by their ignorance” (“*The History and Conviction of the Soka Gakkai*,” 1951).

How astonishing was the priests’ ignorance of Buddhism, and how little their faith in the Gohonzon! What is worse, they attacked and criticized the Soka Gakkai, which was working hard to spread the teachings in exact accord with the Daishonin’s teachings while demonstrating the power of the Gohonzon.

The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood today has not the least bit of faith in the Gohonzon. To them, the Gohonzon is nothing more than a tool for controlling the believers and greedily plundering their offerings. They will inevitably face the Daishonin’s condemnation.

Nichiren Daishonin said, “And even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact” (WND, 599). Nothing is more powerful than the proof of actual fact. Nothing is more convincing than the actual fact of benefit and victory. The purpose of our faith is to show actual proof of the benefit we derive.

Only the SGI has shown actual proof of the benefit of faith. It is an organization of believers overflowing with such proof, an organization that pulses with the lifeblood of faith.

Nichikan attacked aberrant teachings out of his passion to accomplish kosen-rufu.

Nichikan strongly desired the realization of kosen-rufu. All of his writings, including the *Six-Volume Writings* and commentaries on various Gosho, were written solely for the sake of kosen-rufu. That is why he fiercely attacked the many aberrant teachings rampant throughout the land at the time and proclaimed the truth of the Daishonin’s teachings. It was all an expression of his desire to accomplish kosen-rufu.

For example, in his introduction to the “Interpretations Based on the Law,” one of the six treatises that comprise his *Six-Volume Writings*, he wrote: “I have examined the passages [of the Lotus Sutra] that clearly indicate the Three Great Secret Laws, and, using them as proof that these principles represent the truth hidden in the depths of the Lotus Sutra, I humbly present this treatise to the disciples of later ages. It is entirely for the sake of accomplishing kosen-rufu.”

Nichikan also criticized as slanderers of the Law those people who do not face the Gohonzon nor wish in their hearts to share Buddhism nor spread the teachings with their mouths.

In his “Commentary on ‘On Practicing the Buddha’s Teaching,’” Nichikan wrote: “The minds of those who forget *shakubuku* and are not always mindful of the four dictums are identical to the minds of slanderers of the Law. If they are not practicing *shakubuku* with their mouths, it is the same as if their mouths are slandering the Law. If their bodies are not facing toward the Gohonzon with prayer beads in their hands, it is equal to their bodies slandering the Law. (*Commentaries*, p. 767)

No one can compare to SGI members when it comes to practicing the Buddha’s teachings as Nichiren Daishonin instructs in the Gosho, for it is we who face the Gohonzon, do gongyo, chant daimoku, pray for the achievement of kosen-rufu and teach others of this Buddhism.

We have prayed, worked, taught others with all our might, faced and overcome one great persecution after another, and through it all, introduced many people to the Gohonzon. As a result, we have seen kosen-rufu develop on an unprecedented scale throughout the globe.

The Nikken sect does not do gongyo as it should; it does not do *shakubuku*. It

excommunicated the SGI, which is faithfully practicing in accord with the Buddha's teachings; it obstructs kosen-rufu. It is in total and direct violation of the aforementioned injunction of Nichikan.

Nikken and his followers are committing great slander of the Law in all three categories of action—words, thoughts and deeds. To carry out Nichikan's teachings properly, we must strictly rebuke their slander of the Law.

The SGI will henceforth confer upon members *okatagi* Gohonzon produced from a Gohonzon transcribed by Nichikan, who clarified the correct way of faith and practice and who embraced a strong desire to accomplish kosen-rufu. This marks the start of a new phase in the advancement of kosen-rufu and is, I believe, a development in complete accord with the wishes of Nichiren Daishonin, Nikko Shonin and Nichikan. I am also confident that it would give them all the greatest joy.

We can transform our lives into the Buddha of limitless joy.

Nichiren Daishonin's purpose in revealing the Gohonzon was to share with all people the heritage of the Law for becoming a Buddha, in other words, to enable them to attain enlightenment.

In the Goshō "The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life," the Daishonin wrote: "Nichiren has been trying to awaken all the people of Japan to faith in the Lotus Sutra so that they too can share the heritage and attain Buddhahood. But instead they persecuted me in various ways and finally had me banished to this island" (WND, 217).

Nichikan also declared that when common mortals embrace the Gohonzon, their lives are transformed just as they are into the Buddha of limitless joy from time without beginning. This refers to the principle of the oneness of mentor and disciple.

In his "Commentary on 'The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,'" Nichikan wrote: "Everyone who receives and embraces this object of devotion enters the way of the Buddha of time without beginning.... And we common mortals who have entered the way of this Buddha are entirely one with this Buddha of limitless joy. The Buddha of limitless joy is entirely one with us common mortals. How could this not indicate the oneness of mentor and disciple?" (*Commentaries*, p. 488).

The mission of followers of the Daishonin is to uphold the Gohonzon and to teach others about the Gohonzon and lead them to embrace faith so that they may attain Buddhahood. Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin's immediate successor, wrote, "Until kosen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability without begrudging your life" (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 1618). This instruction is primarily addressed to priests. But in fact it is none other than the members of the SGI who are practicing without begrudging their lives to propagate the Gohonzon throughout the world in accord with Nikko Shonin's admonition.

Where within the Nikken sect have we seen anyone practice with the spirit of "not begrudging one's life"? Nikken himself has schemed to destroy the SGI and disrupt the flow of kosen-rufu.

SGI members are directly connected to Nichiren Daishonin.

The previous high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, Nittatsu, told the priests: "Always remember that our believers are believers of the Daishonin. Our duty is simply to look after the believers and make it easier for them to pray to the Daishonin" (Jan. 15, 1972). Nikken tried to usurp the believers of the Daishonin and make them believers of Nikken.

This is a revolt against the original Buddha.

Nichiu, the ninth high priest, declared that when someone strays from the faith of the Daishonin, the heritage of the Law for attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime is severed. [In his treatise “On the Formalities of True Buddhism,” Nichiu wrote: “When we remain true to the faith of the Daishonin, our bodies and minds are the bodies and minds of Myoho-rence-kyo, but when we stray from that faith, our bodies and minds are those of mere mortals, and as mere mortals, we cannot receive the heritage of the Law, which ensures the attainment of Buddhahood in our present form.”]

About this statement, the 59th high priest, Nichiko, said that when we deviate even in the slightest from faith as it is taught by Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin, falling into false faith that deviates from the Buddha’s intent, we lose our claim to receive the heritage of the Law. [Nichiko wrote: “When we do not deviate in the least from the faith of Nichiren Daishonin, the founder of true Buddhism, and Nikko Shonin, the founder of Taiseki-ji, we, as their followers, though possessing lives that are vulgar, evil and impure, will exhibit the truth, goodness and purity of Myoho-rence-kyo in body and mind.... However, when our faith deteriorates into impurity and becomes mistaken and confused, thereby straying from the Buddha’s intent, the path of the water of the Law will be clogged, and only our inherent baseness will be manifest in our body and mind, thus disqualifying us from receiving the heritage of the Law for attaining Buddhahood in our present form.”]

Nikken has excommunicated the SGI, an organization of believers that, in accordance with the Buddha’s mandate and decree, is dedicated to the advancement of kosen-rufu. He is an aberrant priest who rebels against the Buddha’s will. He has, as a result, disqualified himself from receiving the heritage of the Law for the attainment of Buddhahood in one’s present form, just as Nichiko stated. It goes without saying that Nikken has lost all qualifications to transcribe the Gohonzon and confer it upon anyone. I want to make this fact perfectly clear.

The SGI is carrying out the Buddha’s will to achieve kosen-rufu.

In May 1951, soon after his inauguration as the second president, Mr. Toda declared that the time had come for a great propagation campaign, and he requested that the high priest transcribe a Gohonzon specially dedicated to the fulfillment of the Daishonin’s vow to accomplish kosen-rufu.

Responding to the Soka Gakkai’s request, the high priest at that time, Nissho, transcribed the Gohonzon, and down one side he wrote the following dedication: “For the Fulfillment of the Great Desire for Kosen-rufu Through the Compassionate Propagation of the Great Law.” This Gohonzon clearly reveals the great significance and mission of the SGI, which made its advent to carry out the Buddha’s mandate and decree to achieve kosen-rufu.

Now that Nikken has become an enemy of the Buddha, it is the mission and duty of the SGI to undertake the conferral of Gohonzon for the sake of people who seek it the world over, as well as for the sake of the ongoing advancement of kosen-rufu. This is an undertaking that accords with the time. It is also in perfect accord with the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin.

As I have already discussed at length, there is profound significance in the SGI’s conferral of the Gohonzon transcribed by Nichikan, who was directly connected to the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin.

We should look upon the Gohonzon in our homes as Nichiren Daishonin's life.

The Dai-Gohonzon, which Nichiren Daishonin bestowed upon all people of the world and which was the ultimate purpose for his advent in this world, is and will always be the basis of our faith. This will never change.

High Priest Nittatsu remarked: “The Daishonin has already died. His life, the life of Nichiren Daishonin, is the Dai-Gohonzon of the high sanctuary.... The Gohonzon enshrined in your altar is, itself, the life of Nichiren Daishonin. Your Gohonzon manifests the three enlightened properties of the Buddha — the property of the Law, the property of wisdom and the property of action — that is, Nichiren Daishonin himself” (Sept. 7, 1962).

We should look upon the Gohonzon enshrined in each of our homes as the life of the Daishonin, the entity of the original Buddha. When we chant daimoku with that conviction, it is the same as if we are devoting ourselves to the Dai-Gohonzon itself right where we are.

Nittatsu also said: “Wherever the Gohonzon is enshrined, that place, in a broad sense, takes on the significance of the high sanctuary. The sincere daimoku you chant to that Gohonzon with a concentrated mind free of all extraneous thoughts is instantly received by the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism. The place where you chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is instantly transformed into Eagle Peak. And this is where you attain Buddhahood in your present form” (Nov. 23, 1977).

Wherever you may be in the world, if you believe in the Gohonzon and chant daimoku with sincere faith, you are in contact with the Dai-Gohonzon at that moment and in that place. The claim that unless you visit the head temple you will not acquire true benefit is a great falsehood in violation of the teachings of Nittatsu.

Nichikan wrote of the benefit of the Gohonzon, “If only you take faith in this Gohonzon and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo even for a while, no prayer will go unanswered, no offense will remain unforgiven, all good fortune will be bestowed, and all righteousness proven” (*Commentaries*, p. 443).

Let us continue to advance confidently on the golden road to worldwide kosen-rufu, always basing ourselves on the Gohonzon and accumulating infinite benefit on our way.