

Gosho for discussion

On upholding faith in the Gohonzon

I am entrusting you with a Gohonzon for the protection of your young child. This Gohonzon is the essence of the Lotus Sutra and the eye of all the scriptures. It is like the sun and the moon in the heavens, a great ruler on earth, the heart in a human being, the wish-granting jewel among treasures, and the pillar of a house.

When we have this mandala with us, it is a rule that all the Buddhas and gods will gather round and watch over us, protecting us like a shadow day and night, just as warriors guard their ruler, as parents love their children, as fish rely on water, as trees and grasses crave rain, and as birds depend on trees. You must trust in it with all your heart.

(WND, Page 624)

The teaching that states: “embracing faith in the Gohonzon is in itself enlightenment” constitutes a revolutionary point of view with regard to what “attaining Buddhahood” signifies.

This letter was written at Minobu in the eighth month of the first year of Kenji (1275) to the lay nun Myoshin, a believer who lived in Nishiyama in Fuji District of Suruga Province

The fundamental law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the source of all Buddhas. In other words, the fundamental law allowing all Buddhas to attain enlightenment does not consist of having undergone various austerities during uncountable periods of time so much as having become aware of the fundamental law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The Buddhist practice of the Latter Day of the Law is to embrace and uphold the law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo directly. Therefore, in the Daishonin’s Buddhism it is not neces-

sary to undergo austerities to attain Buddhahood.

Nichiren Daishonin points out in “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind” WND, p. 365:

“Shakyamuni’s practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo. If we believe in these five characters, we will naturally be granted the same benefits as he was.”

The practice for attaining Buddhahood carried out by Shakyamuni and “The Buddhas of the ten directions and three existences”, as well as the virtues they attained as a result of them, are all contained in Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Therefore, by embracing the five characters of the Mystic Law, we naturally acquire the benefits of the practices and virtues of Shakyamuni and all the Buddhas without fail and therefore we can reveal our Buddhahood. This is the principle that says: “embracing faith in the Gohonzon is in itself enlightenment”¹. Also, the expression that states “attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form” and “one can immediately attain Buddhahood”²

Nichiren states that for one who embraces the Mystic Law

1) From the Gosho “The Entity of the Mystic Law”, WND, Page 431

2) From the Gosho “On Repaying Debts of Gratitude”, WND, Page 723

“it is not difficult to become a Buddha”. Through the Daishonin’s teaching a path leading everyone to enlightenment has been set. Manifesting our own Buddhahood is not something that happens in the distant future or in some remote place. The Daishonin’s Buddhism makes it possible for everyone to manifest the condition of Buddhahood within this existence.

The teaching that states: “embracing faith in the Gohonzon is in itself enlightenment” constitutes a revolutionary point of view with regard to what “attaining Buddhahood” signifies. President Toda used to say: **“In contrast to the Buddhas of the Expedient Means chapter who practised for tens of millions of years, we can carry out our practice to manifest Buddhahood by simply believing in the Gohonzon and chanting the phrase Nam-myoho-renge-kyo”**

Even the act of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo only once has enormous benefit, equal to that acquired by all the Buddhas through their practice over numerous existences, during an unimaginably long period or time. The Mystic Law is that great.

According to the view of conventional Buddhism, the process of “attaining enlightenment” is

reminiscent of an exhausting ascent of a mountainous slope. On the other hand, Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is a teaching that allows everyone to reach the peak of their own Buddhahood instantly. From the state of Buddhahood we can observe the surrounding mountains spreading out below us and contemplate the spectacular scenery of Nature extending out in all directions.

We can manifest this grand condition of Buddhahood directly, right now, right where we are. And then, we go out to society to share with other people the immense joy that one experiences in such a life condition. Buddhist practice must be undertaken with determination and courage. When we challenge ourselves in the face of obstacles with the spirit of achieving “more today than yesterday” and “more tomorrow than today” we can say that we are truly practising. Without this spirit of courage and energy, no-one can break the chains of destiny or defeat obstacles and negative functions. Our daily practice is like an epic poem in pursuit of a challenge, in order to create something new in our life. When we stand up with our own resolve in faith, the darkness of desperation and anguish vanishes and gives way to the light of hope and growth. This spirit is the essence of faith.

From the point of view of the Daishonin’s Buddhism “exerting ourselves” means chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo diligently for our own happiness and that of others. What counts is that we chant daimoku every day, earnestly and in a consistent way. Only by doing this will it become a practice capable of polishing our life and enabling us to manifest Buddhahood in this existence.

The Daishonin states: “If you exert a hundred million aeons of effort in a single moment of life, the three enlightened properties of the Buddha will manifest within your life at each moment.” Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the practice of “exerting ourselves”.

When chanting daimoku we are carrying out the practice of “engaging ourselves”. Therefore, the three enlightened properties and the immeasurable wisdom and compassion of the Buddha will manifest at each moment in the life of those who possess a serious and sincere concern for the Law and engage earnestly with it. When we possess this brave and vigorous attitude in faith, we instantly manifest the “life of the Buddha”. This is what is referred to in the expression “embracing faith in the Gohonzon is in itself enlightenment”.