

**SGI-UK Study Department
Introductory Study Programme**

The Gohonzon

NOTES

Aims of the meeting

The Gohonzon in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is truly profound. Please try and enable everyone to gain some clearer sense of

- Its purpose, why it was inscribed, and what it is for
- Its relationship with the Lotus Sutra, and the Ceremony in the Air
- What is on the Gohonzon; its form and the main characters on it
- What it is like practising to the Gohonzon

You may also be able to enable those who participated in earlier sessions to see that the principle of the mutual possession of the ten worlds is at work in chanting to the Gohonzon, also the principle of three thousand worlds in a single moment of life. It may be possible to draw attention to many other principles or workings of life.

A Diagram of the Gohonzon

The April 1998 UK Express magazine had a 'Map of the Gohonzon' and the SGI-USA website also has one which can be downloaded.

Other Materials

In the series of *The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings*, there are three parts dedicated to explaining the Gohonzon from different aspects. Parts 11, 12 and 13 go into the topic in great detail. See also the *Art of Living* magazines in Oct, Nov, Dec 2004.

In Richard Causton's *The Buddha in Daily Life* there is a section on the Gohonzon on pages 225 to 242.

In *The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon* [WND p831-2] Nichiren Daishonin explains the relationship between the Gohonzon and the emergence of the treasure tower in the Ceremony in the air in the Lotus Sutra. On pages 831-2 starting with 'This mandala is in no way my invention to.....This is the object of devotion', the Daishonin explains the characters on the Gohonzon.

On the Treasure Tower [WND p299] explains the Gohonzon from the point of view of the Treasure Tower, and contains the famous lines: 'Abutsu-bo is therefore the treasure tower itself, and the treasure tower is Abutsu-bo himself. No other knowledge is purposeful.'

The following quotations from President Ikeda may help in understanding how to approach the Gohonzon and practise to it:

The Gohonzon is the physical manifestation of the very existence of Nichiren Daishonin who taught kosen-rufu. Because of this, if you only practice gongyo and chant daimoku and don't take any other action for the sake of kosen-rufu or improving your own life, the Gohonzon will not have its true, full effect. If, however, you take actions to achieve kosen-rufu, those actions will serve as that extra push for your own life, helping you leap to higher and higher states of mind in your gongyo and chanting. [*Faith into Action* p89]

Josei Toda once said, 'The Gohonzon is truly great. But because this is so simple, people fail to understand it.' Because the Law is so profound, its practice is simple. The more technology advances, machines become simpler to operate. Mr Toda went so far as to liken the Gohonzon to a 'happiness-manufacturing machine'. And the switch for turning this machine on is chanting daimoku for oneself and others. It could be said that Nichiren Daishonin distilled Buddhism down to irreducible simplicity for all people. [*Faith into Action* p114]

It's important to want to sit before the Gohonzon as though going to meet the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, and that daimoku and gongyo be enjoyable. What's most important is that you continue in your Buddhist practice throughout life. There's no need to be overly concerned with formality. [*Faith into Action* p122]

When looking at the Gohonzon, directing your gaze wherever is most natural for you is fine. You can look at the characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in the centre, or you can gaze at the entire Gohonzon. As long as we chant with strong faith, our prayers are fully communicated. ... Being human it's natural for our minds to wander, for all sorts of thoughts and memories to surface during prayer. You can share all those thoughts with the Gohonzon. There is no set form of pattern for how we should pray. Buddhism emphasises being natural. Therefore, simply chant earnestly without pretence, just as you are. In time, as your faith develops, you'll find it easier to focus your mind when you chant. [*Faith into Action* p153]