

The Importance of Doing Gongyo

This month, my sermon will focus on Gongyo, since it is the most fundamental practice of our faith.

The essential basis of our faith and practice lies in the five morning and three evening prayers that we recite during Gongyo each day. The ultimate objective of the true Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin is the attainment of enlightenment in our present form (*sokushin jōbutsu*). The performance of the five and three prayers in Gongyo is absolutely indispensable.

What is meant by enlightenment, which is the objective of our faith? In Nichiren Shoshu, the principle of enlightenment in our present form (*sokushin jōbutsu*) affirms that we can achieve Buddhahood in this lifetime. This is an extremely important issue. Approximately 30 years ago, our Honorable Retired High Priest Nikken Shonin presented the following guidance at a Training Meeting on Practice and Study, which was attended by young trainee priests. I will quote him here, since he touched upon truly significant issues that pertain to today's topic. He stated:

What is the nature of enlightenment—in particular, what is enlightenment in our present form (*sokushin jōbutsu*)? This is extremely important, since it is the fundamental basis of Nichiren Shoshu. It is the essential core of all teachings....The Daishonin states in the Goshō, “On the Four Stages of Faith and the Five Stages of Practice” (“*Shishin gohon shō*”):

Because common mortals in the Latter day of the Law are lacking in wisdom (compared to those living in Shakyamuni's lifetime), they must substitute faith and practice for wisdom.

As he explains through this passage, since we do not possess wisdom, we must substitute it with faith. By upholding sincere faith, as we worship with our palms pressed together in prayer and chant Daimoku with great devotion, we are able to achieve the fusion of objective reality and subjective wisdom (*kyōchi myōgō*) with the Gohonzon. The attainment of enlightenment in our present form in the Latter Day of the Law corresponds to the fusion of reality and wisdom. Without it, enlightenment in our present form cannot be achieved in the Latter Day of the Law....What then, is the fusion of reality and wisdom? It is to become a single entity with the Gohonzon through faith.

Therefore, as I explained at the beginning of the course, our daily Gongyo is extremely significant. We must sincerely understand how

important it is and how it is the essential source of all things. This is why I am always strict in my directions concerning Gongyo. If we distance ourselves from this prime point, we will lose sight of true Buddhism, Nichiren Shoshu, and the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. Thus, the fusion of reality and wisdom in the Latter Day of the Law is none other than to chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo to the Gohonzon with sincere devotion and without any distractions.

(*Dainichiren*, Vol. 427, p. 22)

These directions are truly significant and profound. The most essential point in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the achievement of enlightenment. The life condition of the True Buddha is characterized by the fusion of reality and wisdom and the oneness of the person and the Law. It is manifested as the object of worship of the observation of the mind, which enables all mankind to attain enlightenment. Therefore, the Buddha is constantly guiding the people. The Honorable Retired High Priest describes the way to open forth the life condition of enlightenment in one's present form through the fusion of reality and wisdom. In concrete terms, the fusion of reality and wisdom and the attainment of enlightenment in one's present form signify our fusion with the Gohonzon of the oneness of the person and the Law, inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin. We must understand that the significance of correctly doing Gongyo rests upon this point. In other words, this passage discusses the mystic benefits of the daily manifestation of the life condition of enlightenment in our present form through our consistent practice of Gongyo.

The fundamental source of all things is the achievement of the fusion of reality and wisdom with the Gohonzon, by upholding sincere faith—as we worship with our palms pressed together in prayer and chant Daimoku with great devotion. Furthermore, “if we distance ourselves from this prime point, we will lose sight of true Buddhism, Nichiren Shoshu, and the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.”

Nichikan Shonin, the Twenty-sixth High Priest of the Head Temple, explained the following about the fusion of reality and wisdom, in his *Exegesis on the “Essentials of the Lotus Sutra”* (“Hokke shuyō-shō” mondan):

The Gosho, “On the Meaning of the True Entity of Myoho-Renge-Kyo” (*“Tōtaigi-shō”*), states: “That they are able to achieve the lotus of the essential entity and manifest the mystic principle of the essential entity of the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light shows that they believe in the golden words of the master [our master Nichiren Daishonin] and chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.” The Three Great Secret Laws are clearly described in this passage. Those who study it will see it. They will realize it as a matter of course. If we sincerely believe in the Gohonzon, it will permeate our hearts and function as the true cause (*hon'nin myō*), based on the principle of Buddhahood possessing all nine worlds. If we recite the mystic Law (*Myoho*) with our mouths, our lives immediately will permeate the Gohonzon and manifest the true effect (*hongā myō*) based on the principle of the nine worlds possessing Buddhahood. As a result, reality and wisdom will fuse. Then, how could the body and mind

be separate from one another? The actual practice of Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo will be characterized by the mutual possession of the ten worlds, the hundred realms and the thousand factors, and *ichinen sanzen*.
(*Mondan*, p. 545)

The profound principles indicated here, such as the fusion of reality and wisdom and the attainment of enlightenment in one's present form, explain that facing the Gohonzon and sincerely doing Gongyo and chanting Daimoku, without distraction, is a truly significant practice for all mankind in the Latter Day of the Law.

The Primary Practice and the Supporting Practice

In the Buddhist tradition, there are primary practices and supporting practices. In Nichiren Shoshu, the primary practice consists of chanting Daimoku—Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo—and the supporting practice is the recitation of the *Hōben* and *Juryō* chapters.

In “The Practice of this School” (“*Tōryū gyōji-shō*”), Nichikan Shonin wrote:

The supporting practice consists of the recitation of both the *Hōben* and *Juryō* chapters. It enhances the tremendously profound benefits of the primary practice.

(*Mondan*, p. 161)

Nichikan Shonin explains that the supporting practice enhances and manifests the benefits of the Daimoku, which is the primary practice. In the relationship between the primary and supporting practices, the primary practice can be likened to freshly baked bread, newly cooked rice, noodles, and other such foods. By contrast, the supporting practice is comparable to the sweet jams and the savory seasonings and flavors that function to enhance the taste of the bread, rice, and noodles. The primary and supporting elements combine to produce a delicious meal.

Therefore, we must never assume that we need not do Gongyo as long as we chant Daimoku. We must understand the importance of practice based on doing Gongyo.

Understanding the importance of doing Gongyo

As we achieve purity in our lives through our fundamental practice of Gongyo and Daimoku, we must directly proceed to do shakubuku, the practice for the sake of others (*keta*). We must focus our lives on the great objective of the achievement of *kōsen-rufu*, based on the lifelong instructions contained in the following golden words of Nichiren Daishonin, the True Buddha: “The great objective is none other than to propagate the Lotus Sutra.” This, in turn, will directly enable us to advance toward the attainment of enlightenment in this lifetime (*isshō jōbutsu*). Let us make a determination to achieve this together with our fellow believers.

Gongyo is the fundamental practice that is manifested in the form of an essential formality for the attainment of enlightenment. Through the effects of the fusion of reality and wisdom and the attainment of enlightenment in our present form, we must strive to manifest a life condition that is pure and profound. Furthermore, as

individuals who share a karmic bond with the True Buddha, we must endeavor to promote the ultimate propagation of the mystic Law (*Myoho*) and the establishment of the Buddha land.

The potential that we possess in our lives will open forth and increase infinitely through our practice of Gongyo and Daimoku. Only through our actual practice of Gongyo can we develop a strong conviction that we possess a karmic bond with the Buddha. Such function, strength, and causal karmic bonds all are manifested through the practice of Gongyo. Through the benefits that we receive, the internal virtues and benefits that we will gain will greatly expand. They will brilliantly glow and become activated.

On the occasion of the Shodai-gyo on July 1st, our High Priest Nichinyo Shonin presented us with the following directions:

The phrase “A jewel that remains unpolished will not sparkle,” is a well-known proverb. Even if we possess wonderful talents and superb potential, if we do not polish and enhance them, we cannot make the best use of such talents and potential. In the same way, even though we inherently possess the Buddha nature and the potential to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime, we cannot expect to achieve our own enlightenment if we do not strengthen our faith and sincerely engage in the practice of chanting Daimoku, as we strive to polish and improve our lives. Furthermore, we cannot expect to achieve our own enlightenment and fulfill our roles as we strive to attain *kosen-rufu*.

(*Daibyakuho*, July 16, 2011)

Without exception, all of us, who share a karmic bond with the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, possess individual missions that have been determined in a past lifetime. Doing Gongyo and chanting Daimoku will enable us to understand and acknowledge our missions. As priests and lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu, we are the only ones who are able to bring salvation to our evil world of delusion and confusion, steeped in the five impurities.

Let us deeply etch into our hearts these directions from our High Priest. Now is the time for us to stand up and take action. Furthermore, let us manifest in our lives the justice and virtue expounded in the *Rissho ankoku-ron*, the singularly great document of instructions on how to establish the Buddha land. I would like to conclude my sermon for this month by sincerely praying for your ever-increasing advancement and devotion.