

## “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon”

### Tapping the Infinite Benefit of the Gohonzon Through Faith

Excerpts from *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin:  
The Teachings for Victory*

Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The body is the palace of the ninth consciousness,<sup>1</sup> the unchanging reality that reigns over all of life’s functions. To be endowed with the Ten Worlds means that all ten, without a single exception, exist in one world. Because of this it is called a mandala. Mandala is a Sanskrit word that is translated as “perfectly endowed” or “a cluster of blessings.” This Gohonzon also is found only in the two characters for faith.<sup>2</sup> This is what the sutra means when it states that one can “gain entrance through faith alone.”<sup>3</sup> (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 832)

### The Gohonzon Exists Within Us

Nichinyo must have been extremely moved to learn that the Gohonzon she received from Nichiren Daishonin is the Gohonzon

that has been revealed for the first time in the Latter Day of the Law. But, then, he discloses an even more astonishing fact, writing: “Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (WND-1, 832). He is saying that the Gohonzon does not exist outside us, but within our own lives. Shifting the focus of faith and practice from the external to the internal was a dramatic change.

In Nichiren’s day—and, in many cases, even today—we find a deeply rooted view that we are but small, insignificant beings and the ultimate reality and eternal value lies somewhere outside of us, somewhere far away. Such a way of thinking is inextricably connected with belief in some otherworldly, supernatural power.

Nichiren Buddhism, however, rejects this idea completely. It teaches the true reality of life in which the eternal and ultimate Law is manifested in the physical beings of the ordinary people, living right here and now.

The term *Buddha*, after all, means “enlightened one.” To what did the Buddha become enlightened? To that which should form the true basis of our life—namely, the Law and the true essence of our being. He awoke to the universal Law permeating all phenomena, which had previously been obscured by fundamental darkness,<sup>4</sup> and to the greatness of each individual’s life that is one and indivisible with that Law.

“The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people”—the real significance of this statement is that the Gohonzon inscribed by Nichiren functions as the means by which we can awaken to and call forth the Gohonzon (the Buddhahood) within us. When we chant before the physical Gohonzon, the very same Gohonzon is in our heart; it clearly manifests itself there when we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for the happiness of ourselves and others.

In another letter that the Daishonin sent to Nichinyo the following year (1278), titled “An Outline of the ‘Entrustment’ and Other Chapters,” he writes in a similar vein, “When I ponder where this ‘Treasure Tower’ chapter is now, I see that it exists in the eight-petaled lotus flower of the heart<sup>5</sup> within the breast of Nichinyo” (WND-1, 915). No doubt when she read the Daishonin’s words, Nichinyo was reminded of his earlier assertion that “the Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people.” Here, the terms “within the mortal flesh” and “in the eight-petaled lotus flower of the heart” have the same meaning of “within the depths of one’s own life.”

Still another way Nichiren describes our inner being is “the palace of the ninth consciousness, the unchanging reality that reigns over all of life’s functions” (WND-1, 832). The ninth consciousness—also the *amala*-consciousness, or pure consciousness—is often referred to in Buddhist texts as the “mind king”<sup>6</sup> or “ruler of the mind,” indicating the fundamental entity of the mind itself. “The unchanging reality” means the ultimate truth, free from all delusion. Since the “mind king” dwells in this unchanging reality, our mortal bodies are called its “palace.”

In “Reply to Kyo’o,” he writes, “I, Nichiren, have inscribed my life in sumi ink, so believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart” (WND-1, 412). He is saying here that he has inscribed in the form of the Gohonzon the life state of Buddhahood that he has attained as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, a life state that is identical with the unchanging reality.

The Gohonzon is in the form of a mandala. The Sanskrit term *mandala* has also been translated into Chinese as “perfectly endowed” and “a cluster of blessings” (see WND-1, 832). It means a trove of infinite benefit that we can draw from and enjoy freely.

Mr. Toda said, “Nichiren Daishonin’s life is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, so our lives, as his disciples, are also Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.”<sup>7</sup>

On another occasion, he declared: “When we embrace faith in the Mystic Law, the fundamental power of Nichiren Daishonin wells up in response from within our beings, and we, too, reveal our true self—that is, our true enlightened nature that is one with the eternal, unchanging reality.”<sup>8</sup>

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## Notes

1. Ninth consciousness: Also, *amala*-consciousness. The Buddha nature, or the fundamental purifying force, that is free from all karmic impediments. Here, the Daishonin is associating it with Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.
2. The Japanese word *faith* consists of two Chinese characters.
3. *The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, p. 110.
4. Fundamental darkness: The most deeply rooted illusion inherent in life, said to give rise to all other illusions. The inability to see or recognize the truth, particularly, the true nature of one's life.
5. The “eight-petaled lotus flower of the heart” refers to the arrangement of the heart, lungs and other organs in the chest cavity, which was thought to resemble an eight-petaled lotus blossom.
6. The “mind king” refers to the core of the mind, which controls the various workings of the mind.
7. Translated from Japanese. Josei Toda, *Toda Josei zenshu* (The Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1985), vol. 5, p. 271.
8. Translated from Japanese. Josei Toda, *Toda Josei zenshu* (The Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1992), vol. 2, p. 11.