
DATE**September 26, 2003****MEMMO NO.****ORG-037**

DISTRIBUTE TO: All Members

TO: All Zone and Region Leaders and Zone Office Managers

FROM: SGI-USA Organization Department

SUBJECT: New Format for Gongyo and Silent Prayers

A new format for the silent prayers of gongyo was adopted by the SGI Board of Directors and Representatives Conference during the recent Fall Training Course in Japan. Some 250 representatives from 50 countries participated in the weeklong program between September 8–15.

SGI-USA's Standing Central Executive Committee (SCEC), which includes the national leadership of the four divisions, has agreed that the new silent prayers will be implemented gradually as members are informed about them through their local organization, the *World Tribune* and the publication of updated liturgy books.

As stated in our liturgy books: "The silent prayers are intended to express our shared sense of gratitude and resolve as believers in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and members of the Soka Gakkai International. The wording of these prayers is meant as a guideline to help us express this sense of gratitude and determination. Therefore, it is not the specific wording of the silent prayers, but rather our sincerity and heartfelt thoughts while performing the prayers that are important."

New Format for Doing Gongyo

IN THE EVENING:

Face the Gohonzon, sound the bell, and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times (*at meetings, everyone chants in unison*). Sound the bell again, and proceed with the **RECITATION OF THE SUTRA** as explained on page 2 of this memo.

IN THE MORNING:

First, face the Gohonzon, sound the bell, and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times (*at meetings, everyone chants in unison*) to begin the ceremony of gongyo. Then, out of respect for the protective forces, chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times again (*at meetings, everyone chants in unison*). Then offer the first silent prayer below.

- **First Silent Prayer: Appreciation for life's protective forces (*shoten zenjin*)**

I offer appreciation to the functions in life and the environment (*shoten zenjin*) that serve to protect us, and pray that these protective powers may be further strengthened and enhanced through my practice of the Law.

Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times (*the person leading gongyo does this*). Then sound the bell, and proceed with the recitation of the sutra as follows:

RECITATION OF THE SUTRA:

Recite the “Expedient Means” portion (formerly Part A). When completed, sound the bell. Recite the “Life Span” portion (formerly Part C). When completed, sound the bell as you begin chanting daimoku (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo) for as long as you wish.

When completed, sound the bell and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times. (*At meetings, the person leading gongyo does this*).

Then offer the following second, third and fourth silent prayers:

• **Second Silent Prayer: Appreciation for the Gohonzon**

I offer my deepest praise and most sincere gratitude to the Dai-Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws, which was bestowed upon the entire world. I offer my deepest praise and most sincere gratitude to Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. I offer my deepest praise and most sincere gratitude to Nikko Shonin. I offer sincere gratitude to Nichimoku Shonin. (*Please read Note #1 at the end of the memo.*)

Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times. (*At meetings, the person leading gongyo does this*).

• **Third Silent Prayer: For the attainment of kosen-rufu**

I pray that the great desire for kosen-rufu be fulfilled, and that the Soka Gakkai International develop eternally in this endeavor. I offer my most sincere gratitude to the three founding presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda, and Daisaku Ikeda for their eternal example of selfless dedication to the propagation of the Law. (*Please read Note #2 at the end of the memo.*)

Chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times. (*At meetings, the person leading gongyo does this*).

• **Fourth Silent Prayer: Personal prayers and prayer for the deceased**

I pray to bring forth Buddhahood from within my life, change my karma and fulfill my wishes in the present and the future. (*Offer additional prayers here.*)

I pray for my deceased relatives and for all those who have passed away, particularly for these individuals: (*Sound the bell continuously while offering prayers.*)

Then chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times. (*At meetings, the person leading gongyo does this*).

I pray for peace throughout the world and the happiness of all humanity.

Sound the bell, and everyone in unison chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times to conclude gongyo.

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NOTE 1:

The Dai-Gohonzon and Nichiren Daishonin refer to the oneness of the Person and the Law. Nichiren Daishonin revealed the Gohonzon so that all people could attain Buddhahood in this lifetime and for

the sake of realizing kosen-rufu. We thus offer deep appreciation to the Daishonin and pledge to dedicate ourselves to faith in the Gohonzon.

Nikko Shonin represents the oneness of mentor and disciple. Nichimoku Shonin stands for all believers who correctly practice and carry on Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. We offer our appreciation to Nikko Shonin and Nichimoku Shonin, who inherited and passed on the true spirit of faith in the Gohonzon as well as a selfless commitment to kosen-rufu. *(Please read the explanatory articles below.)*

NOTE #2:

Based on the Daishonin's vow to awaken Buddhahood in all people and his instruction to practice with the "same mind as Nichiren" and live as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, we pray for the realization of kosen-rufu.

The foundation of today's global propagation of the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo was established through the selfless dedication on the part of numerous pioneer members, in particular the first three presidents of the Soka Gakkai—Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda, and Daisaku Ikeda. We pledge to emulate their example as we strive for the realization of kosen-rufu. *(Please read the explanatory articles below.)*

ADDENDUM No. 1:

The following excerpt is taken from an article titled "Navigation Points for Our Eternal Journey," which appeared on page 3 of the June 7, 2002, World Tribune. The article related revisions to the Soka Gakkai's bylaws that clearly point out the foundational principles upon which our faith, practice and organization are based.

"On April 1, [2002], the Soka Gakkai revised its bylaws for the first time since 1979 to better reflect our ongoing development as a global religion and our separation from the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. The preamble and first articles (on this page) make explicit our heritage, core beliefs, basic spirit and primary goal.

"The revisions confirm the religious identity of the Soka Gakkai as the body of believers with a direct connection to Nichiren Daishonin, dedicated to accomplishing his will and mandate to carry on the heritage of true Mahayana Buddhism, which extends back to Shakyamuni Buddha's Lotus Sutra. Quite simply, we firmly believe that we are the only body existing today that can be considered true votaries of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, true Mahayana Buddhists and true disciples of the Daishonin.

"The revisions confirm that the essence of faith and practice in the Soka Gakkai is 'faith directly connected to the Daishonin.' There are several components of this 'directly connected' faith. "We believe in the Daishonin as the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law who embodies the three virtues of parent, teacher and sovereign. We base ourselves on the writings of the Daishonin, believing them to be the great scripture of the Latter Day, and base our practice on their teachings as the eternal standard of the Soka Gakkai.

"We embrace with faith the Dai-Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws bestowed upon the entire world. The Daishonin inscribed the Dai-Gohonzon in response to the Atsuhara farmers' unrelenting faith in the face of governmental persecution, embodying his great vow for kosen-rufu. The faith of the Soka Gakkai lies in arousing a great desire or great vow for kosen-rufu in accord with the Daishonin's spirit.

"The true meaning of the Gohonzon's inscription becomes manifest only in one's strong faith to wage a tenacious struggle for the people's happiness and defeating devilish functions seeking to obstruct that path. Practicing with this spirit is to 'embrace with faith.'

“The Dai-Gohonzon was bestowed upon the entire world and embodies the Daishonin’s compassionate spirit to lead all people to happiness. Based on the concept of emanations of the Buddha’s body [the principle of the Buddha projecting emanations of his or her body to various lands and teaching the Law leading the people there to enlightenment], to ‘embrace with faith’ the Gohonzon that is a transcription of the Dai-Gohonzon is to embrace the Dai-Gohonzon itself.

“We strive to realize as our ultimate goal the worldwide propagation of Nichiren Buddhism, thus fulfilling his mandate for creating a peaceful world. This is the great vow for kosen-rufu that is the heart of the Soka Gakkai spirit. We are convinced that the heritage of the ultimate Law flows only within the body of believers whose members possess this great wish for kosen-rufu and are united by the faith of many in body, one in mind. This great wish for kosen-rufu is the heart and soul of the correct body of practitioners dedicated to correctly transmitting Buddhism.

“We cherish the three founding presidents who, because of their undeniable actual proof in upholding and spreading the Mystic Law, shall be considered as perpetual examples of practicing Nichiren Buddhism with the spirit of selfless dedication. They will always be—within the history of the Soka Gakkai that they founded, built and developed—models and teachers of faith and practice.”

ADDENDUM No. 2:

The following article titled “Soka Gakkai Rules and Regulations” appeared on page 3 in the June 7, 2002, World Tribune:

Soka Gakkai Rules and Regulations

Revised April 1, 2002

Preamble

The Buddhist spirit of compassion and peace, first expounded by Shakyamuni, is crystallized in the Lotus Sutra. This sutra represents the quintessence of Mahayana Buddhism and clearly sets forth teachings to lead all people to happiness. Nichiren Daishonin embodied the essence of the Lotus Sutra in the Three Great Secret Laws, establishing an eternally enduring path for saving humanity.

The Soka Gakkai is a religious organization in accord with the Buddha’s will and mandate, charged with the mission of kosen-rufu, to spread Nichiren Buddhism worldwide.

The organization was founded on Nov. 18, 1930, by the first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and second president, Josei Toda.

Presidents Makiguchi and Toda initiated the practice of propagation in the effort to realize kosen-rufu. During World War II, they were imprisoned by the national government, which used State Shinto to enlist spiritual support for its policies, bringing about President Makiguchi’s death in prison. President Makiguchi, who taught Buddhism as a guide for daily living and a philosophy of value-creation, bequeathed to posterity the spirit of selfless dedication to spreading the Law by offering his life for Buddhism.

During his imprisonment, President Toda awakened to the ultimate truth that the Buddha is life itself, and to his own identity and mission as a Bodhisattva of the Earth. Upholding the principles of human revolution, he revived and renewed the significance of Nichiren Buddhism in the contemporary world. He solidified the foundation for kosen-rufu in Japan by fulfilling his vow to enable 750,000 families to embrace this teaching in his lifetime.

The third president, Daisaku Ikeda, has propagated Nichiren Buddhism not only in Japan but throughout the world, applying the philosophy of Buddhism to the promotion of peace, culture and education. He has opened the way for the worldwide propagation of Buddhism for the first time in history.

The spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple and the selfless practice of propagating the Law for the attainment of kosen-rufu embodied in the lives of the three founding presidents is the core spirit of the Soka Gakkai. Herein lies our eternal guiding model. The Soka Gakkai, rooted in the spirit of Buddhist compassion, shall be dedicated to realizing world peace and happiness for all humanity.

Chapter I. General Provisions

Article 1. Name: This association shall be called the Soka Gakkai.

Article 2. This association shall regard Nichiren Daishonin as the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. It shall embrace with faith the Dai-Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws bestowed upon the entire world, base itself on the Daishonin's writings and seek to realize, as its ultimate goal, the worldwide propagation of Nichiren Buddhism, thus fulfilling the Daishonin's mandate.

Article 3. The three founding presidents—first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, second president Josei Toda and third president Daisaku Ikeda—embody the spirit of selfless dedication to spreading the Law for the attainment of kosen-rufu and shall be considered as eternal models of the association.

Article 4. The objectives of this association shall be to propagate Nichiren Buddhism throughout the world, contributing to the realization of world peace and the flourishing of human culture. Based upon such a foundation, this association will spread Nichiren Buddhism's teachings, conduct ceremonies and functions, and help its members to establish and deepen their faith.

(ADDENDUM No. 3)

At the Fall Training Course, held at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Sendagaya, Tokyo, September 9, 2003, SGI General Director Eiichi Wada made the following remarks:

In addition to confirming the guidelines for gongyo, which were agreed upon by SGI constituent organizations in 2002, I would like to announce that a new format for the silent prayers, drafted in response to various requests from SGI organizations, has been approved by the SGI Board of Directors.

First, I would like to confirm the following three points agreed upon in 2002:

1. For SGI organizations that have made the ability to do gongyo one of the criteria for joining the SGI, gongyo shall mean the recitation of an excerpt from the "Expedient Means" chapter and the *jigage* verse section of the "Life Span" chapter plus the chanting of daimoku.
2. Gongyo conducted during SGI meetings shall consist of this gongyo format.
3. In the event of illness or difficult circumstances, such as lack of sufficient time, members may consider chanting daimoku only.

The adoption of this gongyo format was widely welcomed by SGI members throughout the world. In connection with this development, numerous requests related to developing a new format for the silent prayers were also received from many SGI organizations. Following deliberations by the SGI Board of Directors, the adoption of a new format for the silent prayers of gongyo was officially agreed upon.

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