

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON FAITH**  
**What Is the 'Gohonzon Within My Life'?**

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**Q: What is the relationship between the Gohonzon enshrined in my altar and the “Gohonzon within my life”?**

A: When we talk about the “Gohonzon within my life,” we generally are referring to the innate enlightenment that Buddhism teaches exists within us. Most of us understand this concept intellectually, as it is a basic premise of our practice.

As we go through the ups and downs of life, however, we tend to judge ourselves — sometimes feeling that we come up short compared to our ideal image of an “enlightened” person. We then wonder how the Gohonzon could ever exist within our life.

Yet it is wrong to think that the Gohonzon enshrined in the altar depicts a state of life out of the reach of ordinary human beings. This is because Buddhism doesn't look at enlightenment as something separate from ordinary people but rather perceives Buddhahood as a basic principle operating within our daily existence.

This fundamental principle in Buddhism is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo — and it is the basis for both the Gohonzon enshrined in our altars and the Gohonzon within our lives. We can say they both share the same Buddha nature.

Nichiren Daishonin described this in “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life” when he wrote: “Shakyamuni who attained enlightenment countless eons ago, the Lotus Sutra which leads all people to Buddhahood, and we ordinary human beings are in no way different or separate from each other. Therefore, to chant Myoho-renge-kyo with this realization is to inherit the ultimate law of life and death” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 22).

From the deepest point of view, Shakyamuni and the Lotus Sutra in this quote refer to “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo — Nichiren” inscribed down the center of the Gohonzon. “We ordinary human beings” refers to the Buddhahood that exists within our lives. In stating that these are “in no way different or separate from each other,” the Daishonin is declaring that the same infinite potential depicted on the Gohonzon exists within us. At the core of our beings, each of us possesses the power to break through our limitations and continually progress toward happiness.

Nichiren Daishonin taught that we should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo realizing this relationship that exists between our lives and the Gohonzon. Awakened to this reality, we naturally desire to bring out this potential in others as well. That is, we spontaneously start to propagate the Law as we come to understand that this intrinsic Buddha nature is the bond that unites us as human beings — beyond the superficial diversities of race, culture or even religious belief.

The Buddha nature is the fundamental treasure that we, the environment and the boundless universe itself all have in common. To have faith in this point is one meaning of the word *namu* and a key to tapping all the wisdom that lies within us; it is “to inherit the ultimate law of life and death,” directing our lives toward value and the greatest joy.

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