

**SIGN POSTS: APPLYING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS TO DAILY LIFE**  
**Examining My Gongyo**

**BY MALINA MOORE**  
**SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE**

**Among the entire twenty-eight chapters, the *Hoben* chapter and the *Juryo* chapter are particularly outstanding. The remaining chapters are all in a sense the branches and leaves of these two chapters. Therefore, for your regular recitation, I recommend that you practice reading the prose sections of the *Hoben* and *Juryo* chapters. (“Recitation of the *Hoben* and *Juryo* Chapters,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 10)**

In this passage, Nichiren Daishonin clarifies a basic of our Buddhist practice — doing gongyo. As many people do, this New Year’s Day I made the determination that I would chant more daimoku this year and put all my effort into doing a powerful morning gongyo.

Last year, I was asked to lecture on gongyo — what it is, why we do it and what it means in our practice. I was referred to this letter, which was written as a reply to the wife of Hiki Daigaku Saburo Yoshitomo. In a letter to the Daishonin, the wife had asked which chapters of the Lotus Sutra should be recited daily (great seeking spirit, huh?), and this was the Daishonin’s answer.

In my preparations, I reflected on my practice and examined what doing gongyo means in my life. I thought about the way I feel when doing gongyo, my attitude and the benefits of doing it. And I realized that when I do gongyo, I feel totally free. I often think of this feeling when I hear the term *absolute freedom*. It’s the freedom to dream when dreams are too often trampled under the heavy feet of reality. It’s the freedom to have hope when cynicism is all the rage. It’s the freedom to be our true selves, with all our quirks and imperfections. It’s the freedom to be happy when misery can be such an effective restraint. I think that SGI President Ikeda put it best in 1990 when he said that “Buddhism aims to make people free in the most profound sense; its purpose is not to restrict or constrain. Doing gongyo is a right, not an obligation.... If you want to develop a profound state of life, you should exert yourself accordingly.”

**WT**