

**SIGNIFICANT DATE: Oct. 12, 1279: Inscription of the Dai-Gohonzon
The Spirit To Help All People
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Over the past year or so, I have been studying the issues between the SGI and the Nikken sect regarding the correct practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. One morning during gongyo, the question came to my mind as to why we offer prayers praising the Dai-Gohonzon in the second silent prayer, especially since we have been excommunicated by Nikken, who has the Dai-Gohonzon. In searching for an answer, I reviewed the history surrounding the Dai-Gohonzon's inscription:

In 1274, the same year that Nichiren Daishonin was pardoned from his exile on Sado Island, he moved to the Minobu region. Over the years, his disciple Nikko Shonin propagated the Daishonin's teachings in the surrounding area, converting many friends and relatives, as well as the farmers in Atsuhara Village.

He also converted several of the priests from the Tendai temple Ryusen-ji. Eventually, these actions upset various officials, including the deputy chief priest of Ryusen-ji, Gyochi. Tensions escalated until Sept. 21, 1279, when 20 farmers were arrested on false charges and taken to Kamakura to be tried.

On Oct. 1, the Daishonin sent a letter to the farmers and other lay believers, encouraging them to deepen their faith through the persecution that they were experiencing. Sadly enough, some of the farmers were tortured, and three of them were executed.

The willingness of these farmers to sacrifice their lives rather than renounce their faith and their practice of Buddhism led the Daishonin to believe that strong faith had become the rule rather than the exception among his followers. The time was right to inscribe the Dai-Gohonzon for all humanity, he felt.

It is, after all, as the Lotus Sutra teaches, the seeking spirit of the people that causes the Buddha to reveal himself. It was with this spirit — to make this Buddhism available to all people who sought it — that the Daishonin inscribed the Dai-Gohonzon on Oct. 12, 1279. For all humanity.

The significance, therefore, of the Dai-Gohonzon was the Daishonin's heart in inscribing it. That is, his spirit to help all people — no matter what country they are from or their economic or religious background — manifest the life-condition of Buddhahood as foremost in their lives.

By inscribing the Dai-Gohonzon for all humanity, the Daishonin's message was that it was possible for all people to break through their circumstances and establish Buddhahood in their lives. The Nikken sect's excommunication of millions of believers seems to be the antithesis to the Daishonin's spirit to teach all people of their Buddhahood.

For more than 700 years, the Fuji School has had the Dai-Gohonzon. Even so, Nikko Shonin had to correct the five senior priests after the Daishonin died. And a few hundred years after that, Nichikan Shonin had to correct the priests of his time for their lack of faith, their corruption of the Daishonin's teachings. Being physically close to the Dai-Gohonzon thus has nothing to do with being able to attain enlightenment — nothing to do with developing the desire to help all people, with capturing the spirit with which the Daishonin created the Dai-Gohonzon or with understanding the message of the Dai-Gohonzon.

Being *spiritually close* to the Dai-Gohonzon, however, has EVERYTHING to do with leading ALL people to happiness. The Daishonin says, "If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, then you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 93). This is the spirit with which I offer prayers to the Dai-Gohonzon during gongyo.

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