

**PERSPECTIVE  
HANGING ON TO MY FAITH  
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In my 13 years of Buddhist practice, when I've had a problem in my life, I've always succeeded in breaking through by going back to the basics—improving my gongyo, study, helping others to practice and getting guidance.

This is about study.

In 1990, the opportunity for my first real experience with study presented itself with the priesthood and laity dispute. I was devastated initially by this event. The SGI had saved my life—such was my feeling toward this organization. Plus, I had never recovered from my parents' divorce when I was a teenager, and this split felt the same.

I read everything that was printed and went to all meetings on this issue. This experience deepened my faith by teaching me to “seek the profound and discard the shallow.” I learned not to follow blindly because people are not infallible, and to base my practice on the writings of Nichiren Daishonin. I discovered I cannot follow people based on their position or status; I must look at their behavior. Also, I now know the Gohonzon exists inside me, and I can become enlightened without the piece of paper if I have to. Most importantly, I have the confidence to explain Buddhism to others.

My latest experience with study occurred last month. I had reached a low in my life-condition that actually scared me. I was struggling so much that I was doubting the power of the Gohonzon, something that had not happened in years. Obstacles in my finances, health and relationship hit me all at once. My most trusted leader told me I was suffering because I had lost hope. She said to find any SGI Buddhist publication or study material, and read it with the determination that the answer has got to be in there somewhere. I had recently joined the women's Sophia Group and we are studying *The Human Revolution*. I discovered all the answers to deepen my faith are found in this novel. The more deeply I embraced the points of the guidance and chanted to apply them to my life, the more I saw every single person in my environment as a reflection of myself.

Without fail, once I quit focusing on the weaknesses in other people, I began to see those same weaknesses in myself. I faded in and out of feeling positive and negative. Sometimes I felt like I had sped up my karma and was excited to be getting on with that business. Within hours I would be in the depths of hell. This was the biggest test of my faith.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda says: “There are no flaws whatsoever in the Daishonin's teachings. When he himself was facing his worst hardships, he wrote, ‘Although I and my disciples may encounter various difficulties, if we do not harbor doubt in our hearts, we will as a matter of course attain Buddhahood.’

“Don't doubt the Gohonzon, no matter what. As long as you keep practicing, you'll definitely reach enlightenment and enjoy absolute happiness. That's the Daishonin's teaching. I know how hard it is for you right now, but don't doubt. Hang on to your faith. That's what's going to decide victory or defeat in your lives. Win or lose, it's all up to your practice” (*The Human Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 152).

Mr. Toda's absolute conviction in the Gohonzon is contagious. I began chanting with more confidence and trust, to feel my Buddha nature. This eased the fear about my financial situation and my health. As the worry subsided, I let down my guard and solutions started to emerge. I became more open to seeing how I could change. I realized

that I don't have to feel bad about my rough edges. That this is human revolution and I don't have to be perfect. I don't have to beat myself up; I can feel excited that I'm overcoming my weaknesses.

For the first time in years, I am able to relax my body. It has been tense for years with insecurity and anger. I feel on a deep level, not on the surface yet, but on a very deep level that I am letting go of this. I am growing more confident every day that this will result in restored health and joy in my life.

Sometimes, when I'm suffering, I just can't get in front of the Gohonzon even though I know I need to chant. Reading *The Human Revolution* motivated me when I needed it most. I am learning that when I read a passage by Nichiren Daishonin or guidance by SGI President Ikeda or anything that encourages me, that's when I begin the process of elevating my life-condition, which gets me back in front of the Gohonzon! My determination is to keep growing and studying until my Buddhahood is shining at all times.