

**BACK TO THE BASICS
THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDY
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Many of us approach our study of Buddhism with the same passion we reserve for vigorous aerobic exercise and vegetable-rich diets. We know all three are good for us, but some of us just don't seem to act on them.

Some people don't do gongyo once a month, so why study the writings of Nichiren Daishonin even less frequently? Blue dye is produced from indigo, but something soaked in it repeatedly becomes even bluer than the indigo plant itself. Based on my experience, I guarantee that if we immerse ourselves in the Goshō, as if soaking in a warm, comfy vat of blue dye, we will begin to look and feel very different. Indeed, if we want to manifest the vibrant hue of the enlightenment that Nichiren Daishonin is talking about—and see the corresponding changes in our environment—we cannot “spray it on” as if it were fine perfume. We need gallons and buckets of study!

You may recall the Daishonin's letter to Sairen-bo that encouraged him to make the teachings part of his life. The Daishonin tells Sairen-bo: “Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study.... You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 386).

Speaking of teaching others, I recently learned that the school principal who introduced first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi to the Daishonin's Buddhism in 1928, did so over 10 days of intense dialogue. This man had obviously taken his study of Buddhism very seriously. So, too, did the founding presidents. In fact, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda concluded that only thorough familiarity with the Daishonin's writings enabled them to withstand the persecutions they faced during World War II. In his writing “The Fourteen Slanders,” the Daishonin chastises the priests of his day, saying that if one “fails to study the Buddha's teaching and to refute its slanderers but simply spends his time in idleness and chatter, then he is no better than an animal dressed in priestly robes” (WND, 760). So let's immerse ourselves in the writings of Nichiren Daishonin—as if our very lives depend on them!