

Question: What is Shodai?

Shodai is the abbreviated Japanese term that means, “chanting Daimoku.” The Daishonin states:

The most important thing is to chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo and attain enlightenment.

(*Gosho*, p.1388; *MW-1*, p. 214)

The most crucial point in our faith and practice is to chant Daimoku. When we earnestly chant to the Gohonzon, the four powers of the mystic Law come together and we receive great benefit. The four powers are: the power of the Buddha (the Daishonin), the power of the law (the Gohonzon), the power of faith (belief in the Gohonzon), and the power of practice (chanting Daimoku). Among these four powers, the power of the Buddha and the power of the Law are absolute. On the other hand, our power of faith and power of practice are not necessarily strong all the time. In fact, sometimes we might miss Gongyo or we might not be able to concentrate when we chant Daimoku.

When these four powers come together, however, our wishes will come true. Therefore the important point is our strong faith and practice—the power of Shodai. It is of utmost importance to continue doing Gongyo and Shodai every day, without slackening. The Daishonin states:

If only you chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, then what offense could fail to be eradicated? What blessing could fail to come?

(*Gosho*, p. 406; *MW-5*, p. 110-11)

Chanting Daimoku (Shodai) enables us to eradicate our offenses from our past lives, which are the causes for our suffering. This is the reason why it is important to chant to the Gohonzon. The Daishonin teaches the following in the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings” (“*Ongi kuden*”):

We wake up with the Buddha in the morning, and we go to bed with the Buddha at night. We are always attaining Buddhahood, and we are always manifesting the original state.

(*Gosho*, p. 1749 [Summary])

This means that no matter what circumstances may arise, we must never neglect our faith and practice to the Gohonzon, and we must base our life on chanting Daimoku. As we grow older, we face many challenges in our daily life. If we continue to chant earnestly every day, we will find all solutions without fail. Therefore let us continue to do Gongyo and chant Daimoku, whether or not we are facing challenges right now.

Many temples have Daimoku chanting meetings, called Shodai-kai, at certain times of the day, led by the chief priest. Are you participating? Even though you can chant at home, it is important to visit the temple and chant Daimoku together with the priest and fellow Hokkeko members. *Itai doshin* is especially important in our faith and practice. Even though we are many in body, the aspiration of our faith and practice is the same. Thus the members of a local temple should make efforts together with one mind, toward the purpose of advancing kosen-rufu.

The Daishonin states the following on the importance of *itai doshin*:

Though numerous, the Japanese people will find it difficult to accomplish anything, because they are divided in spirit. On the contrary, I believe that although Nichiren and his followers are few in number, because they act in *itai doshin*, they will accomplish their great mission of propagating the Lotus Sutra.

(*Gosho*, p. 1389; *MW-1* pp.153-154)

This principle applies not only to Buddhism. It also is exceptionally crucial in our daily life. For example, think about events such as sports events or music festivals. If the teammates or members of a band do not work together harmoniously, an event will not go well. In order to be successful, it is necessary for us to cooperate with each other with one mind. Spreading the Daishonin's Buddhism around the world through shakubuku is a really daunting task. In order to achieve this, the entire priesthood and laity of Nichiren Shoshu truly must practice in *itai doshin*, following the guidance of High Priest Nichinyo Shonin. The Daishonin teaches that if we do this, then no matter how small we are in number, we will be able to achieve kosen-rufu. How do we unite our mind as one? This can be achieved when the members gather at the temple and chant Daimoku with the chief priest.

Centering on Head Temple Taisekiji, Nichiren Shoshu temples all over Japan conduct the Kosen-rufu Shodai Ceremony at 9 AM on the first Sunday of each month. This is a special Shodaikai to pray for kosen-rufu. All of the priests and lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu in Japan chant together at the same time as the High Priest. If you are having trouble chanting Daimoku, you can participate in the Kosen-rufu Shodai Ceremony on the first Sunday of each month. Your problems and challenges will be solved, and you will be able to lead your daily life in high spirits!