

VICE PRESIDENT KAWA'S GUIDANCE (1996)
Practising to Realise Benefits in Your Life

Today I won't be speaking about study. Members who are here today who hoped I would be speaking about study may be disappointed but please don't be, please relax.

I'll begin by telling you how to practise but not get results, I've heard that this way of practising is very common these days. The following is a very sad story that I heard recently:

A lady had a very big problem. She chanted 10 million daimoku but still her big problem was not solved. I heard that she was so depressed after chanting 10 million daimoku with no results that she went to bed for about three months, it's such a terrible story! A senior member went to this lady's house to talk to her. the lady said this is how she chanted:

"You stupid Gohonzon I chanted this much to you but I'm not getting any benefits."

It may have appeared that she was practising properly on the surface but she wasn't really believing in the Gohonzon. That's why her problem was never solved. The senior member said to her:

"You don't truly believe in the power of the Gohonzon, do you?"

"I am a fervent believer of this practice," she replied.

Though on the surface the lady appeared to be an ardent believer, her heart and spirit were not focused on the practice. When she finally realised her mistake she was so upset that she cried nonstop for thirty minutes. She then asked the senior member what she could do to improve her practice. The senior member recommended that she pray to the Gohonzon with precise, focused prayers on solving her particular problems by a certain date. So the lady did as suggested and solved her problem within a week. Beforehand, because she was not chanting for anything specific during the 10 million daimoku, the results were not specific.

Prayers need to have a specific focus. Just chanting daimoku does not constitute prayer with desired results. Also the lady was chanting while thinking that the Gohonzon is stupid. I know many people who chant in this manner, there are many women's division members who chant one million daimoku and still feel depressed because they don't achieve their results. What a strange way of practising! I can understand if someone chants one million daimoku and sees some actual proof but many people who chant one million daimoku are chanting with the goal to complete the million, so their goal is, in fact, to complete 10,000 per day. On the surface their actions may seem commendable but their prayers are going unanswered.

Prayers equal practice. What does it mean to pray? It means to pray specifically, clearly praying for what you want, by when and by what means. So if you chant for specific results, you will achieve them. if you are wishy-washy in your prayers, you won't get results. If you are only making half-hearted efforts in your daily practice, it's what I call, 'Taking a Walk With No Particular Destination' type of practice, it is like taking a walk with no objective or destination in mind and then returning home with nothing achieved.

In Japan, we have what are called 'Boso-Zoku' drivers. These are juvenile delinquents who drive mindlessly in packs on the expressways just to enjoy the thrill of speeding. They race down the expressways alongside the big articulated trucks in the wee hours of the night but they are different from truck drivers. The truck drivers have

to reach a specific destination by a certain time, the 'Boso-Zoku' drivers on the other hand have no particular destination and are just speeding down the expressway for something to do. Therefore, I like to call people who say they are practising very hard but have no specific goals 'Boso-Zoku Practitioners'. This seems to be a very popular type of practice and a lot of members who do this 'Boso-Zoku Practice' are women, many of whom, practising like fire, eventually lose steam and regress.

In life, because you make plans and then take the appropriate action, you are able to attain specific goals. For example, the people here today made plans to arrive at this culture centre by 7: 00.p.m., no one came here by mere chance. Daily life works this way, the practice works the same way. If you chant for specific goals you will get results, this is a clear-cut formula. If you are wishy-washy, you won't achieve results because you have no particular goals and are just driving aimlessly. Just praying aimlessly and not taking action won't bring results, you must have specific goals in mind and then take action. This is the correct method.

At the New Year's discussion meetings, many members make fresh determinations such as:

"I will practise harder, or promote publications, or do shakubuku."

The determinations in themselves are commendable but I never hear people making a determination to change. They all make determinations to try harder, they say, 'I will try harder.' They later share experiences about their activities but no experiences about benefits. Therefore, the December discussion meeting later in the year becomes a meeting of apologies. It should really be a place to share experiences of growth and development and happiness. I rarely hear about this type of discussion meeting for December. Also, I frequently hear that there is a lack of good experiences to share at the chapter-level meetings. Although I hear that there are good experiences given at discussion meetings, these experiences are mostly given by new members. Members who have been practising longer do not seem to have experiences to share, which seems odd when those members have been practising so hard. However, it is superstition to believe that just practising hard will result in benefits, just practising hard will not result in benefits if there are no goals. There is nothing wrong about the fact that they are practising hard but they have the incorrect determination, therefore, they're going in circles. It is not the quantity of daimoku that is important, what is important is the clear objective of desiring to change one's lifestyle, environment, problems, etc. You are practising to change yourself, not just to practise hard. There's nothing wrong in practising hard but it is a mistake not to change yourself. For example, a member brought their child to a discussion meeting. The child heard members at the meeting say:

"We must fight and try hard!"

"What's the point of trying so hard?" The child questioned.

This is a truly serious question! A lot of members are trying hard for the sake of trying hard. However, you should be practising for the sake of changing your lifestyle, heart and environment, in other words, practising for the sake of change. If you haven't experienced much change in yourself, then you haven't made enough effort to do so.

The following is not a Buddhist phrase: 'Rather than trying to comprehend, just change!' Everyone tells me that they understand this but if they haven't changed, then they don't. If they have changed then that means they've grasped the meaning. Even if you memorised the entire Goshō, it doesn't mean you will change, you change only if

you are practising properly. On the other hand, even if you don't understand the Gosho, if you are practising properly, you will see results. If you just logically study and understand this Buddhism, you will not change but if you practise correctly, you continue to progress and change; one must change. So it's important to make an effort to change, the objective is to change. Currently, I believe that many members are feeling half-hearted about this matter, viewing their practise as an obligation. Their efforts are correct but their determination is incorrect, with the result that their lives are going in circles. Sensei always says:

"The heart is the most important thing, no one says just try hard. You can make a change, depending on the state of your heart."

Determination is the key. What kind of determination is important? If you make a determination to change, then you will continue to change. A person with no determination to change will not change. People who have clear, specific determinations and have a strong will to change can be called, 'People with a Progressive Practice', people who are practising out of obligation are called, 'People with a Lateral-Moving Practice', and people who are practising with suspicion, complaint and negativity are called, 'People with a Reverse-Moving Practice'. Many women's division members fall into this category. The people who are moving forward will continue to progress and grow, the people who are moving sideways will continue to move in circles and the people who are moving backwards will continue to regress and eventually quit practising altogether.

In terms of the automobile, we call this 'Drive', 'Neutral' and 'Reverse'. If the engine is running but you are in 'Neutral', you won't go anywhere. If you are in 'Reverse', you will go backwards and maybe even have an accident. Many women's division members get into 'Reverse' when they try hard but then complain. Again they try hard but then make negative remarks and because they are in 'Reverse', they run over their husbands and children with their negativity. Because the wives do not improve, their husbands and children do not want to practise but the wives continue to try hard, it really is a strange way to practise!

If your car is stalled, your surrounding environment never changes. So if your environment doesn't change, that means that you yourself are not changing. If your husband and children do not practise, it means that you yourself have not changed; it means that you are trying hard, so they don't practise. A certain husband said to me:

"I understand that you are working hard for the sake of world peace but can you save this family?"

I felt sorry for this family. The wife was doing activities but forgetting about her husband and children. So just practising hard for purposes like this is not good. It is the meaning behind the action that is the most important thing, not taking action for the sake of it. The determination or heart behind it is what's important. Depending on what type of determination is behind the action determines what type of results you get, just trying really hard does not guarantee any benefits. You get benefits depending on your sincere determination coming from the bottom of your heart.

What does it mean to believe? It means to have no doubts. How can we have no doubts? If you yourself have experiences of receiving benefits, then you will have no doubts. These type of experiences are not activity experiences. You will obviously deepen your faith after receiving benefits but if you only have activity experiences, you may become weary after a while. Through having actual proof if in your life, you are

believing in this Buddhism on the basis of logic. For example, If there is an empty boat floating on the ocean and a wave hits it, it will capsize but if you place a rock in the bottom of the boat, it will stabilise it. So if you receive incredible benefits after an enormous struggle, your faith will not waver so easily. The pioneer members received many benefits, so their faith is very deep and does not waver. There are now an increasing number of second and third generation members. From the time of their birth, they are relatively lazy and weak in their practice and they don't have much actual proof. Therefore, their conviction is weak and when they have a problem their faith wavers. If the second generation members can achieve actual proof in their lives, they will develop into strong members. It is important for them to experience actual proof for themselves, if you force them to learn Gongyo, they will start to dislike the practice. Even children have problems sometimes, teach them to chant to overcome the specific problem. When they experience the actual proof and see the power of the Gohonzon, their faith will grow.

Second generation members who have no experience are weak in faith, they just have pleasant personalities. Going back to the previous example of the boat, if you have many pebbles in the boat they will eventually accumulate so that the boat becomes very stable in the water. It is the same with experiences. If you accumulate enough small experiences, your faith won't waver but if you don't get actual proof then you are not practising properly. How can we experience this actual proof? As I mentioned earlier, have specific goals and then take action toward those goals, this is not an activity. Having the objective to change yourself is important, determine to do this and then take the appropriate action. When you receive benefits from practising in this way, your faith will deepen and you will feel like trying harder.

So please teach new and second generation members the correct way to practise, teach them the importance of having specific goals. Please teach them to chant specifically about a certain goal or problem so that they can experience the benefits of the practice. After they receive the actual proof, they will joyfully do activities and become good leaders. Don't push activities on them initially, it will become a burden to them. Because they don't have enough actual proof yet, their faith is still weak and they may become weary.

In some ways this practice is very simple. Nam means:

"I entrust my life to you, Gohonzon, I will leave everything up to you."

Right now, however, lots of members are doing this, they are asking the Gohonzon for something but saying to themselves that it won't really happen. They are half 'Nami- ing', half-believing and half-doubting is not good. If you say to the Gohonzon, 'it is not going to happen,' the Gohonzon will answer you right back, 'You're right, it won't happen.' Your prayer is being answered by not achieving the goal because you have prayed to the Gohonzon with the conviction of not having your prayers answered, you are not entrusting your life to the Gohonzon, but using your head instead. So at this point you are actually suffering, you are actually confused and truly worried. Without strong, specific prayer, you won't be able to resolve the problem.

As I said, practising this faith is very simple:

"I have a problem, Gohonzon, and I don't know what to do, please help me, Gohonzon."

That's it. Keep it simple. If you have a way to resolve the problem, you can try it, you can take possible action but for something impossible, you have to chant. When

there is no other way, then chant. You don't have to chant about trying to find the appropriate method to resolve the problem, just chant and trust the Gohonzon to show you how.

About two years ago in October, a member who heads a small company came to visit me for guidance. He said to me:

"We are losing money because of the economic slump, I may lose my business, please tell me what I should do."

"I don't know," I replied. "I have no answer. You yourself don't know how to resolve your own situation, how should I know?" I continued, "you concluded that there are no other ways to resolve your problem and came to visit me to receive guidance, ask your parents for help."

"My parents are deceased," he replied.

"Your parent is the Gohonzon," I said to him. "You ask the Gohonzon for help as a son but you have to talk to the Gohonzon in a sweet and appealing manner, just like a cute little boy appealing to his mother to buy him his favourite toy. 'Mummy I want that little car, p-l-e-a-s-e!' The mother would buy the little boy the toy. You should not demand of your mother, 'Mum, give me \$100!' It does not matter what you look like or what your age is, just pray in a cute, appealing manner to the Gohonzon 'my dear Gohonzon, p-l-e-a-s-e.' It has to be a pure and strong prayer, you have a parent who would provide you with anything you need. Many members don't realise this and they suffer in agony, how stupid! Just ask the Gohonzon for help because the Gohonzon is your caring parent."

He decided to utilise my advice. About a week later he got a big project contract because some other company had gone bankrupt and, as a result, their project was offered to him. Now he has more work than ever before, his company is flourishing and he is very affluent.

When the problem or the goal is impossible to resolve or to achieve, then we should chant to the Gohonzon, this is the correct attitude in this faith. There is no impossible task for the Gohonzon, even if it defies logic, nothing impossible for the Gohonzon. We chant to the Gohonzon to change the impossible into the possible, this is the correct way to practise this faith, this is what we call entrusting our lives to the Gohonzon. Quite often, however, our attitude is, 'my prayer won't be answered.' This is not trusting the Gohonzon. Your attitudes such as: 'It won't happen, I can't overcome this, it is impossible, I'm not good enough,' are all not trusting the Gohonzon. The correct attitude to practising this faith is: 'I am not strong enough to overcome the problem, I will chant to the Gohonzon to strengthen my life.' Again, let me stress that we chant to change the impossible into the possible in this faith. When the goals or problems are not impossible to achieve or overcome, we don't have to chant.

About a year and a half ago, a women's division member came to see me, she said to me:

"My husband is being hospitalised because of cancer and the doctors have said that he has only three more months to live. Do you think he can overcome his cancer?"

"I don't know," I answered. "I don't have the answer. I cannot simply say that he will not be able to overcome his cancer because his is not strong enough. However, I will say that if you both have pure and strong faith, he will definitely overcome this cancer, change his karma and also prolong his life. I presume the doctor told you there was no hope, therefore, since the medical profession have given up on him and don't

feel that they can offer any chance of a cure, this is an impossible problem to overcome. In this situation you should chant and pray to the Gohonzon, even if you feel that his recovery is impossible, that is when the road to recovery will begin. What this means is that you exert all your life-force to cure yourself."

I also told her that many people had overcome their terminal illness in such a manner. Mystically, instead of dying three months later, both the lady and her husband came to visit me a year later, they had changed the undesired situation of the husband's impending death and he was completely cured. They came to greet me and inform me that he would shortly be returning to work, they had put my guidance into practice and chanted to change the impossible into the possible. This is an excellent example of the correct way to practise. When there is no other way to overcome one's problem, that's when true faith begins. If there is some way out, then faith is not necessary.

Last March, a women's division member told me that her husband's employer had gone bankrupt and he wished to start his own business but because he was an office worker, he had capitol to invest in his new venture. He required a small factory and some equipment which would cost about \$100,000.00. He also had no collateral for a business loan.

"This sounds like an impossible situation so why don't you both chant to change the impossible into possible. You know the situation is impossible but if you chant in this way, an opportunity may arise," I told her.

Three months later I met the couple again. They had chanted according to this guidance and had immediately found a small house that could be converted into a factory. In spite of having no collateral, they had submitted a business plan to a bank for a loan to purchase their needed equipment and, mystically, had received a loan for the \$100,000.00 that they sought. Normally in Japan, a bank does not lend that amount of money in the month of August, especially to people without collateral but they had got the loan and were able to launch their business in September. I saw them again just recently and they reported that their business was going well and they were buying more equipment.

This is what I mean by entrusting everything to the Gohonzon, especially in impossible situations. Just keep it simple! Don't make it so complicated! Don't think about it too logically or dwell on it! When you are in a pinch, leave your brain elsewhere and use your desires and prayers to the Gohonzon. This is what faith is all about, expressing your desires and prayers to the Gohonzon and then leaving the rest up to the Gohonzon. People have a tendency to think too much, so their prayers aren't answered. That's what is happening to many members.

About a month ago, a women's division member who had heard about the previous experience, came to a discussion meeting. She told me that she had applied my guidance about changing the impossible into possible and received great results. Her husband had had a chronic illness for the last three years and they were losing hope of him ever recovering. Although they realised that overcoming the husband's illness was impossible, they chanted with the determination to change the situation. 'Please Gohonzon, make him well.' The husband became well within one month, his doctors were amazed! Therefore, the lady concluded, it really works when you chant to change the impossible into possible.

So when an impossible situation arises, it is a great opportunity! It is a great chance to improve and overcome the situation. If you chant in this manner, you will definitely get

results. However, if you have the attitude of 'as long as I chant I will be all okay,' you will not receive benefits. If your determination is strong, you will see the benefit. On the other hand, a weak determination won't produce any benefits.