

SOKA GAKKAI SOPHIA WOMEN'S STUDY

March 8th, 2015

Upon entering the room within a private residence of this practicing Buddhist, an overwhelming sense of calm and peace descends. Immediately one's eyes turn toward the altar. This table is adorned with a singing bell, candles, plants, and most importantly a *Gohonzon*, a painted scroll serving as the object of fundamental respect.

Nichiren Buddhism is a branch of Mahayana Buddhism. A monk named Nichiren developed it in Japan in the 13th century. This particular Nichiren Buddhist community is part of Soka Gakkai International whose head is President Ikeda of Japan.

As the chanting begins, the devoted face the Gohonzon. The painted scroll contains a powerful message written by Nichiren hundreds of years ago.

"Nam Myoho Renge Kyo" is the mantra that is beautifully chanted. It is a devotion to the Mystic Law of the Lotus Sutra. There is a rhythmic harmony and mesmerizing tone as the chanting changes in speed.

The words then merge into prayers of gratitude for Nichiren's enlightenment as well as for deceased relatives.

As the prayers change the singing bell sounds. Nichiren Buddhism focuses on strength, wisdom, and compassion. Each soul houses a Buddha nature, therefore each person is capable of attaining enlightenment and happiness.

The ultimate goal is world peace but this can only be achieved with finding peace within oneself. The gathering ends with the same chant, *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*.