

Session 10 - June

Chapter 3: Faith and Practice

5. Faith Equals Daily Life

Nichiren Buddhism is a religion that enables people to build an indestructible state of happiness amid the realities of living. To that end, it is very important to engage fully in the challenges and responsibilities of daily life while persevering in Buddhist faith and practice. Faith is the process of developing and improving one's life at the deepest level.

In this sense, Nichiren Buddhism is a religion that teaches us that true victory for human beings is to develop our humanity to the fullest. For that reason, it is important that we embody in our behavior the wisdom and life force we cultivate through our Buddhist practice, thereby winning the trust of others. In this section we will delve into concepts that are core to the practice of Nichiren Buddhism. These include “the causality of benefit and loss,” “heavenly gods and benevolent deities,” the unity of “many in body, one in mind,” “faith equals daily life,” and the importance of “one's behavior as a human being.”

1) The Causality of Benefit and Loss

If we correctly believe in and uphold Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the ultimate Law of life and the universe, then we will consistently enjoy the limitless benefit inherent in that Law.

And the ultimate benefit we derive from the Mystic Law is the attainment of Buddhahood; that is, the establishment of an imperturbable state of happiness. Once we believe in and begin to practice the Mystic Law, we have embarked on a course that leads to the life-condition of absolute happiness called Buddhahood. By basing our lives on the Mystic Law, we naturally come to live correctly and to develop such genuine happiness.

Nichiren Daishonin states: “The element *ku* in the word *kudoku* [benefits] means good fortune or happiness. It also refers to the merit achieved by wiping out evil, while the element *toku* or *doku* refers to the virtue one acquires by bringing about good” (OTT, 148). When we strive in our Buddhist practice, we can wipe away negative or evil functions that shroud our inner life, such as deluded desires and impulses, suffering, and apprehension, and bring forth good and positive qualities, such as wisdom, serenity, and joy.

Just prior to this he states: “The word ‘benefits’ means the reward that is represented by the purification of the six sense organs. In general we may say that now Nichiren and his followers, who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, are carrying out the purification of the six sense organs” (OTT, 147–48). Purification of the six sense

organs means purification of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind—that is, every aspect of one’s life—so they may fully perform the positive functions they inherently possess. As a result, one will remain unshaken and unswayed when confronting any kind of difficulty, and will unlock and reveal from within the powerful state of Buddhahood. Our Buddhist practice enables us to tap and manifest our Buddha nature, and clear proof of this will appear as benefit in our everyday affairs and over the course of our lives. We will be able to live each day filled with happiness and good fortune without fail. In this regard, the Daishonin states:

Believe in this mandala [Gohonzon] with all your heart. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?

It is written that those who embrace the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] will be protected by the Mother of Demon Children and by the ten demon daughters. Such persons will enjoy the happiness of the wisdom king Craving-Filled and the good fortune of the heavenly king Vaishravana. Wherever your daughter may frolic or play, no harm will come to her; she will move about without fear like the lion king. (WND-1, 412)

This means that, through the power of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we will also be protected by the heavenly gods and benevolent deities, overcome the various problems and difficulties we face in life, and enjoy happiness and fortune. Wherever we are, we will possess a state of life comparable to a lion king that knows no fear.

And, as the Daishonin’s words “Those who now believe in the Lotus Sutra will gather fortune from ten thousand miles away” (WND-1, 1137) tell us, a person who practices the Mystic Law will derive good fortune and happiness from any situation or circumstance.

He further stated, “Fortune comes from one’s heart and makes one worthy of respect” and “[The believers in the Lotus Sutra] are like the sandalwood with its fragrance” (WND-1, 1137). This last passage tells us that, just as the sandalwood tree emits its special fragrance, those who uphold and practice the Mystic Law will exude from within the fragrance of happiness and virtue, will be loved and trusted by others, and will be protected and supported in their daily endeavors and throughout their lives.

In contrast, those who slander or disparage the correct teaching of Buddhism and go against the principles of cause and effect will engrave bad causes in the depths of their beings. At the same time, they will experience actual loss in the context of their daily lives.¹ It might be said that such loss is actual proof of error that can serve as a

¹ Buddhism expounds the principle of cause and effect. One receives either positive or negative results depending on whether one’s actions have been good or bad. In Buddhism there is no transcendental being, such as a god or gods, who bestows rewards or inflicts retribution. One incurs retribution, or negative results, as the natural outcome of one’s offenses.

warning one is falling into a course or pattern that will lead to unhappiness. By becoming aware of one's errors, reflecting on them, and seeking to correct one's attitude in faith or way of living, one can summon the resolve to practice the Mystic Law more deeply and sincerely.

Seen from a different perspective, the fact that those who act counter to the Mystic Law experience loss is one of the wonderful qualities of that Law, in that it can function to lead them to the correct path and allow them to reclaim the benefit of their Buddhist practice. In this way, Nichiren Buddhism offers a clear explanation of the benefit accruing to those who believe in and uphold the Mystic Law and the loss experienced by those who disparage the Law.

2) Heavenly Gods and Benevolent Deities

“Heavenly gods and benevolent deities” refers to the various workings or functions that serve to protect a person who practices the correct Buddhist teaching. Forces that serve in this way are personified in Buddhist literature as gods or deities that protect and support those who uphold and practice the teaching and guard the land in which they live.

“Heavenly gods” are beings who inhabit the “realm of heaven,” and “benevolent deities” refers to those which support and protect human beings. Buddhism employed the image of gods to make it readily acceptable to the people in lands where it spread, but they can be thought of as representing protective functions in the environment.

The Heavenly Gods Protect Those with Strong Faith

If we practice the correct Buddhist teaching and do good to others, then our environment and the people around us will begin to work to protect and support us—that is, they will function as heavenly gods and benevolent deities on our behalf. Buddhist scriptures describe the correct teaching as the source of power for such gods and deities, calling it “the flavor,” or nourishment, of the Law.

The Daishonin states: “The protection of the gods depends on the strength of one's faith” (WND-1, 953). The strength of the protection we receive depends on the strength of our faith and practice as we uphold and protect the Mystic Law.

3) Many in Body, One in Mind

“Many in body, one in mind” is a most essential principle and guideline for forming unity based on faith for the purpose of advancing kosen-rufu. “Many in body” (also, “different in body”) means that our appearance, nature, qualities and talents, social position, and circumstances differ from one another. “One in mind” means that we share the same intention and purpose.

The fundamental goal of our Buddhist practice, and the great wish of the Buddha, is kosen-rufu—broadly teaching and spreading the Mystic Law to realize peace and

happiness for all people. The “mind” of “one in mind” indicates faith, and “one in mind” means to join our hearts and minds in sharing the great wish and vow to achieve kosen-rufu.

In other words, while each of us gives free and full play to our individuality and distinctive qualities, displaying our unique potential to the highest degree, we aim together for the lofty goal of kosen-rufu. This is the meaning of “many in body, one in mind.”

In contrast, though everyone might be compelled to look and act the same, if each person possesses a different intent or goal, then a state of disorder will ensue. Such a condition is called “one in body, different in mind.”

In this regard, the Daishonin says:

If the spirit of many in body but one in mind prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas if one in body but different in mind, they can achieve nothing remarkable. . . . In contrast, although Nichiren and his followers are few, because they are different in body, but united in mind, they will definitely accomplish their great mission of widely propagating the Lotus Sutra. (WND-1, 618)

If we advance while challenging and overcoming various problems and hardships through unity in faith, the Daishonin assures us, then Buddhism will spread without fail.

SGI President Ikeda has said:

In modern terms, “many in body, one in mind” means “an organization.” “Many in body” means that each person is different—that people differ in their appearances, standing in society, circumstances, and individual missions. But as for their hearts—their hearts should be one; each person should be “one in mind,” united in faith.

On the other hand, if one has a situation of “many in body, many in mind,” there will be no unity of purpose. In addition, the concept of “one in body, one in mind” means that people are coerced into uniformity, made to think, look, and act alike. This is akin to fascism, where people have no freedom; it ultimately only leads to a condition of “one in body, many in mind,” where people give the appearance of being united and committed to the same goal on the surface, but in reality don’t go along with that goal in their hearts. . . .

“Many in body” means to allow each individual to give full play to his or her unique potential and individuality. “One in mind” means that everyone works together based on faith, sharing the same goal and purpose. This is true

unity.²

With the unity of “many in body, one in mind” as our guide and standard, each of us can fully display our unique power and ability as we advance together in realizing the Daishonin’s will for the accomplishment of kosen-rufu.

4) Faith Equals Daily Life

While religion holds a special place in people’s spiritual lives, it is often seen as having little to do with the challenges of living or with real-world concerns. In Nichiren Buddhism, however, faith and daily life are not regarded as separate. The Daishonin wrote to a samurai believer, “Regard your service to your lord as the practice of the Lotus Sutra” (WND-1, 905). “Service to your lord” in this passage would be comparable in today’s terms to any responsibility or obligation we might have in business, at work, or in society in general.

This passage teaches that daily life is the venue for Buddhist practice. It is the context in which we demonstrate how we live as individuals with faith as our basis. Our regular conduct is none other than an expression of the workings of our inner life. And faith is the power that enables us to transform and fulfill our lives at the deepest level.

We face many issues and problems in the course of living, but when we continue making earnest efforts to deal with them based on chanting daimoku with faith in the Gohonzon, those very real struggles become the impetus for us to bring forth our innate Buddha nature. In this way, our mundane challenges become the stage upon which we enact the drama of transforming our life at its essence.

In addition, when we make the vital energy and rich life state we cultivate through our Buddhist practice the basis for conducting our affairs and fulfilling our responsibilities, then our life circumstances will also naturally change for the better.

If we compare our faith to the roots of a tree, our daily lives can be compared to the tree’s trunk and its branches that bear flowers and fruit. On the other hand, a life that lacks a foundation of faith will be like a rootless plant, easily carried away by whatever is happening in our environment. Nichiren Buddhism teaches that the deeper our roots of faith, the more stable and secure our personal life.

In this way, Nichiren Buddhism views faith and the way we live as one and inseparable. For that reason, the guidance of the Soka Gakkai includes the principle that faith equals daily life, which explains that one’s daily life is an expression of one’s Buddhist faith. It teaches that a practitioner of Nichiren Buddhism should strive to be trusted by people in society and to win in all aspects of living.

² Translated from Japanese. Daisaku Ikeda, *Seishun Taiwa* (Discussions on Youth), (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbun-sha, 2006), vol. 1, p. 364.

5) One's Behavior as a Human Being

Buddhism is a religion that teaches how to develop one's humanity to the fullest. For human beings, this is the meaning of true victory.

As the Daishonin states, "The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being" (WND-1, 852). Shakyamuni appeared in this world and expounded the Buddhist teachings. His purpose in doing so (the purpose of his advent) was nothing mysterious or special. It was simply to show people the best way to live as human beings.

In other words, we show proof of the power of our faith by consistently acting with good sense amid human society, and by being people of fine character who are trusted and respected at work, in our communities, and by all those around us.

The noblest kind of human behavior is that which demonstrates respect for people. Specifically, these are actions that recognize the Buddha nature innate in the lives of all people, deeply cherish that Buddha nature, and show respect for everyone. Fundamental to this is living with a wish and vow to enable all people to manifest that nature, that is, attain Buddhahood. This is expressed in our actions to cherish and care for the person right in front of us.

The Lotus Sutra describes the practice of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, which consists of respecting the potential for Buddhahood inherent in all people and for that reason venerating every person he meets. Even those unaware of the realm of Buddhahood within their own lives are still endowed with the Buddha nature and are capable of tapping that potential and bringing it forth. It is the spirit of Buddhism, therefore, to cherish all people as "children of the Buddha," regarding each person's life with the highest respect and viewing all people as equal.

If that spirit prevails, then no violence or action will emerge that tramples on the well-being of others. Based on that conviction, Nichiren Buddhism, through dialogue grounded in the principle of respect for all people, works to realize the transformation of society.

In this evil age of the Latter Day of the Law, people's confusion grows stronger. The kind of thinking that leads to abuse and discrimination against others, or to turning people into tools to serve one's selfish aims, has become prevalent. There is no other way to transform society's tendency toward corruption and raise people's state of life than to spread the practice that embodies behavior that respects others, cherishes life, and upholds human dignity.

In addition, in order to improve society we must strongly challenge the kind of thinking that holds people in contempt and encourages their misconceptions. For that reason, behavior that spreads goodness and admonishes evil constitutes the core practice of Buddhism and produces clear proof of victory in life for us as Buddhists and as human beings.

[To be continued]