

QUESTION of the MONTH: 'What does it mean to you to live as a Buddhist?'

What it means to me to live as a Buddhist is to be more optimistic and less pessimistic in my life. I also have more confidence than I used to. More compassion for others and understanding. I have learned to appreciate more than ever the little things in life. I have changed so much.

— ARLENE BROOKS,
Sierra Vista, Ariz.

For me to live as a Buddhist means: To live a life of value to others as well as myself and to create value from adversity. To be helpful and compassionate to others. To have a stand-alone spirit and always continue the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism no matter what. Faith equals daily life, and I would always want to live that equation!

— JB BATES,
San Luis Obispo, Calif.

It means to wholeheartedly show compassion and tolerance toward others and take part in their development as human beings. To display a vast life-condition when dealing with society and adversity and tackling whatever situation head-on. To possess an inner core that is so strong you will not succumb to anything.

— EREK CLACKS,
Fort Stewart, Ga.

In the past it was getting off of social security disability and getting a job. Now it is correcting the wrongs of society, fighting injustice wherever I am, and taking good care of my members, my family and myself to the best of my ability, in the highest possible life-condition. To me, this is what it means to live as a Buddhist.

— THEODORE ANDREWS, Philadelphia

To me it means to view each day or any given moment as a chance for a fresh start, a renewal process of the heart as it were. I pray today I will be a better person, wife and mother that I was yesterday — and tomorrow better than I am today.

— PAMELA SELEZ,
San Marcos, Calif.

I found that the answer to the question "What does it mean to live as a Buddhist?" depends solely on the purity of one's perception. As Nichiren Daishonin said, the evil or good of a land lies in the minds of the people. To me, this says that every human has a choice to be happy. The way we view society is totally up to us. It can be our heaven or hell. We can be happy no matter where we live, with the thought in our minds that "faith does equal daily life!"

— CHRISTINA MULLIGAN,
Newburgh, N.Y.

Living as a Buddhist to me is waking up early in the morning to chant lots of daimoku — winning. Arriving at work with a smile, an open mind and a sense of compassion. Working through the day with professionalism and enthusiasm. Interacting with others yet staying

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away from gossip and negativism. Leaving work with a sense of fulfillment and appreciation.

— CELESTE LINARES,
Phoenix

To me I believe that I have an opportunity to change negative things that are in my life. No other religion can do that. I can chant to raise my life-condition and advance every day in my life. Practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism has given me the courage to battle against my negativity and win. It has taught me that the only devils are within myself. I'm entering my 14th year of practice and I'm going to continue no matter what. I appreciate what the SGI has done for me; this practice has shown me where I really need to change.

— CARL D. MANDLEY, Chicago

Now, after practicing for 21 years, I have total confidence that I am exactly where I am supposed to be no matter how it may look. With a deep appreciation for the ability to change poison into medicine, I live each day fearlessly fighting my darkness and nurturing my light. Daimoku first. Word.

— SHARON SANFORD
O'CONNOR, Riverdale, N.Y.

A pebble is worthless, but a gemstone is precious and everyone wants it. What I needed to do to change from a pebble to a shining gemstone was [chant] daimoku. Have courage, honesty and patience. Buddhism has polished me from a pebble into a gemstone.

— UNHUI BOARDMAN,
Goldsboro, N.C.

The only thing I'm conscious of when I think of myself as a Buddhist is that I do gongyo and daimoku. But this means that I'm connecting daily with the fundamental power of the universe, which allows me to function with more joy, wisdom and compassion. One of the results has been that I've taken more responsibility by doing such things as taking care of my mother after she had been in a car accident. Also, I am becoming more active in the local chapter of the United Nations Association.

— ROYCEANN MATHER,
Overland Park, Kans.

To live and practice as a Buddhist, I am always accompanied by persecutions, difficulties and agonizing ordeals. All the more reason that I should be certain in my heart that sacrificing my life for the Lotus Sutra is like "trading rocks for gold" or enigmas for friends.

— LYNDA CHRISTOPHER,
Tucson, Ariz.

To me to live as a Buddhist is reflected in this poem, "Invictus," by William Ernest Henley:

*Out of the night that covers me
Black as the Pit from pole to pole
I thank whatever gods there be
For my unconquerable soul.*

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*In the fell clutch of circumstances
I have not winced or cried aloud;
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody but unbowed.*

*Beyond the vale of doubt and fear
Looms but the terror of the shade
And, yet, the passing of the years
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.*

*It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.*

In living as a Buddhist, I am the master of my fate and the captain of my soul.

— AHMED SHAHEED, Oak Park, Ill.

Thanks to all who responded!

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