

## EDITORIAL: Everything Is a Benefit

We've all done it...or heard of someone who has. You know, the parking space story. You're driving around and can't find one, so you chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and one magically appears. Or doesn't. But the point is you chanted for it. Or you chanted at the precise moment you pulled the slot machine handle. Or when guessing on a final exam.

Of course, we can chant for anything. And telling such stories can be fun — and funny. The problem comes when we, or the people listening to these stories, think that that's all Buddhism is: a magic formula, a way to get conspicuous benefits.

If we concentrate merely on getting these outward effects, though, we'll wind up disillusioned, missing out on the real power of this practice. For the true benefits of our Buddhist practice lie in the inner changes we make, the transformations that allow us to be happy under any circumstance.

Take the guy who chants for a new job and gets one. The new job isn't really the benefit. People get jobs all the time — and buy houses, find the perfect partners and overcome illnesses. His real benefit is the internal changes he made in getting the job. Perhaps he could never hold a job because he couldn't get along with others very well. Or he was consistently late. Or did sloppy work. Maybe he couldn't take instruction well. The real story is that through faith he changed something about himself that empowered him to not only get this great new job but to flourish on it.

The real story is what goes on inside.

The Lotus Sutra explains 11 main benefits of faith. Only one, good surroundings, refers to such conspicuous benefits as a good job or a big house. The rest — things like wisdom, persistence, tolerance, sense of mission, confidence — deal with the inner universe of the human being.

So victory in life begins with victory in this inner realm. By making internal transformations we construct a foundation for real and, more important, lasting breakthroughs in life.

And our greatest benefit is faith itself — the confidence that no matter what happens we will win. To develop a state of life in which we can enjoy every moment, even painful ones, is the ultimate reason we practice this Buddhism. “Fundamentally, for people with faith in the Gohonzon, everything that happens is a benefit,” SGI President Ikeda writes. “This is the difference between those who believe in the Mystic Law and those who do not” (*Lectures on the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 152).

When we have this attitude, then even *not* getting the job is a benefit. Or we can make it into one, based on the wisdom we gain from the experience.

When it comes down to it, that's what people seek most from our religion — the wisdom to deal with all that life throws at them. And there's no escape from problems, even for the sincerest practitioner. “Never let life's hardships disturb you,” Nichiren Daishonin reminds us. “After all, no one can avoid problems, not even saints or sages” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 162).

While it's important to proudly testify to the conspicuous benefits of faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism and practice within the SGI, it's equally important to always describe the inconspicuous, genuine benefit. The SGI-USA has been criticized by people who've considered the teachings we profess to be shallow, materialistic, even hedonistic. They didn't understand — or we didn't make it clear — that we consider our internal

Title: Editorial: Everything Is a Benefit

Subject: World Tribune 08/29/97 n.3154 p.2 WT970829p02

Author:

Keywords: Benefit Concepts Editorials Everything Guidance Opinion Practice Terms Tribune World

character changes to be of prime importance. Sometimes even our members have been confused about the real purpose of the practice.

Simple stories of parking spaces can have unwanted effects.

In any case, we'd do well to remember why we're really practicing — to develop wisdom. When we look back, we can all see how we've been doing this. Through our practice, everything that's happened to us, the good and the bad, has led to the development of our character.

Everything has indeed been a benefit.

**WT**

Title: Editorial: Everything Is a Benefit  
Subject: World Tribune 08/29/97 n.3154 p.2 WT970829p02  
Author:  
Keywords: Benefit Concepts Editorials Everything Guidance Opinion Practice Terms Tribune World