

## **YOUTH STUDY APRIL "ON ATTAINING BUDDHAHOOD"**

*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 3*

Life at each moment encompasses both body and spirit and both self and environment of all sentient beings in every condition of life, as well as insentient beings — plants, sky and earth, on down to the most minute particles of dust. Life at each moment permeates the universe and is revealed in all phenomena. One awakened to this truth himself embodies this relationship. However, even though you chant and believe in Myoho-rence-kyo, if you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but some inferior teaching.

### **ERADICATING SELF-DOUBT BY JAMIE LIPTAN, SEATTLE**

Self-doubt is as much a part of life today as grocery shopping or tying one's shoes. For many of us, our days are filled with worry and confusion about our own abilities. We can talk about having confidence, but we live in a society where it's hard to have confidence in anything.

Great religions are interpreted in many different, mutually contradicting ways. Violent acts are committed in the name of religions founded on the ideals of peace. In the political world promises are made routinely, but few people seem accountable when these promises are unfulfilled. In fact, decisions are made in the name of the "greater good" but seem to result in the greater suffering for individuals. Even the media seems sensationalistic and unreliable at times. We are surrounded by statements and images that make it hard to have a clear or confident view of life.

In a society like this, there is little wonder that self-doubt plays such a large role in so many of our lives. But, in the above passage, Nichiren Daishonin speaks with clarity and confidence about the power we possess within our own lives.

The "inferior teachings" the Daishonin refers to are not simply other religions. "Inferior teachings" are anything we use to seek our happiness outwardly — money, relationships, social status, possessions. Our entire economic system is now based on the consumer's desire to possess, to possess as a means of solace. In this environment, many people lose confidence in their own ability to overcome sufferings without external intervention.

The Daishonin makes it perfectly clear that our life itself is the Supreme Law and that we should have absolute confidence in this point. There is certain value in the pursuit of mundane things like money and romance, but if these things become the endpoint for our happiness, we're no better off than a hamster in a wheel.

The Buddhist principle of "earthly desires lead to enlightenment" teaches us that through the pursuit of our conscious desires, we reveal what our lives truly need to become indestructibly happy. What the Daishonin says here is that those answers are already within us. We don't need to search for them anywhere else. Through our everyday struggles, we will reveal the truth of our lives — that "Myoho-rence-kyo is your life itself."

In this Latter Day of the Law, this age of confusion and suffering, Nichiren Daishonin's teachings continue to stand out as a lighthouse on the rocky shores of our suffering. This

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is a life philosophy in which we can develop absolute confidence and through which we can empower ourselves to act effectively for the sake of others. The Daishonin is unwavering in his pronouncement of the incredible power of each individual. Self-doubt, therefore, can be completely eradicated through our practice of this Buddhism.

## **NO MAN IS AN ISLAND BY MARK KAPLAN, SAN FRANCISCO**

Is there someone in your class you just can't stand? Do you have friendly conversations with everyone at work except one person, whom no one likes anyway?

In this passage, Nichiren Daishonin says that we are all connected. In that sense, as President Ikeda says: "We cannot be truly happy while others remain miserable. Nor is the misery of another that person's alone. As long as one unhappy person remains, our own happiness cannot be complete" (May 1996 *Living Buddhism*, p. 21).

When I read this passage and think about how connected all life is, I realize that I can't just ignore the people in my life whom I'd rather not deal with. For me, the challenge is to crawl out of my comfort zone and seek out those people whom I find most difficult. It's easy to feel enlightened and Buddha-like when you are talking with people you like. But how Buddha-like can you be when you are with someone who bothers you?

Sometimes, however, the people I want to avoid are in fact people who are suffering, people who need a friend. And isn't it the mission of a Buddha (that's us) to lead all beings to Buddhahood?

Through the act of helping others, we bring out our Buddha nature. In the passage, the Daishonin explains that the fundamental difference between common mortals and a Buddha is this realization that we are all connected, based on the Mystic Law within our lives. In this sense, helping others is a way to act on this awareness.

The challenge, then, is to reach out to another person, get out of our comfort zone and embrace people we normally wouldn't embrace. Whether we realize it or not, everyone affects everyone.

Propagating this practice is the ultimate expression of the realization that we are connected. Opening our hearts to another person to understand their problems and help them find the wisdom to solve their problems is the ultimate act of kindness. It is an expression of our Buddhahood and Buddha wisdom.

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