

WHY READ THE WORLD TRIBUNE & LIVING BUDDHISM? BY JAMES TRAMBLE, BROOKLYN, N.Y.

I wrote and read the following essay at our recent publications meeting of Brooklyn Downtown Chapter held at the New York Culture Center.

When I read the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism*, I receive the following benefits: The articles explain the correct practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism; I get answers to questions; I find out what others have to say about this Buddhism and how they are showing actual proof; and I am inspired to develop a stronger practice in faith.

My Sado Island is often my very own mind. The erroneous negative thinking can keep me confused and struggling. I have the great good fortune to have a wonderful, patient sponsor, Garry, who has strong determination, who is rooted and grounded in the practice and who is available to me. Yet if I didn't have the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism*, I would be missing two valuable teaching and learning tools. SGI President Ikeda, other leaders in faith and fellow members do the teaching and I do the learning; then at some point I can do some teaching.

Although I attend meetings at members' homes and at the New York Culture Center and keep close contact with my sponsor, I have additional support and nurturing when I pick up a copy of one of the publications and connect with President Ikeda's spirit or mind of faith as he embodies and explains Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. As I read what President Ikeda is explaining, I imagine what his voice sounds like and that he is talking to me personally.

Having printed copy makes learning more concrete and wherever I go, it will go. I can read on the train, in the bathtub, in between meetings. I can refer to articles over and over again. It allows me to share the printed copy with others. The *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism* assure me that we SGI members are receiving the same guidance. Old issues are also good material to share Buddhism with others. It is something about seeing the printed words that helps to get people interested.

I collect and save old *World Tribune* and *Seikyo Times* (former name of *Living Buddhism*) issues (so don't throw them out; give them to me). At the beginning of my practice, Garry gave me a pile of old *World Tribune* issues to read while I awaited my personal subscription to begin. One of the first articles that tantalized me and filled me with hope is titled "Everything Necessary for Our Happiness Exists Within Us" (Aug. 11, 1995, *World Tribune*, p. 6). Wow! What a mind-blower.

Happiness! A million questions arose in my mind at once: Now what is that? Am I happy? Have I ever been? Will I ever be? Not just momentary, but sustained continuous happiness? What is that? Is it possible for me?

In this article, President Ikeda inspires me to think. He says the following: "From another, deeper viewpoint, Buddhism teaches optimism; that is, it seeks a positive meaning in every negative occurrence. In other words, every difficult experience can be the start of the process of 'changing poison into medicine.'"

And it shows me what to do with a negative feeling I might have: “At the same time, it is important to realize that through heartfelt chanting, we can dissolve the inner negativity — grudges, ill feelings, disrespect, etc. — stored in the eighth consciousness. Negative emotions can easily block the Buddhahood from emerging within our lives.

“Doubt may arise within our hearts, but that is when we have to guide ourselves toward trusting our inner Buddha nature and the power of the Gohonzon. We can do this by squarely facing the Gohonzon and chanting daimoku from the depths of our lives. Faith, in a sense, means to continue in our efforts to extinguish all doubts. That is why in the Gosho, Nichiren Daishonin stressed the importance of asking questions until there are no more doubts.”

Within these few short paragraphs, President Ikeda tells me I can be happy, tells me how to get rid of the nasty emotions that keep me unhappy, tells me not to be ashamed to ask all necessary questions to get rid of doubt; tells me to keep on chanting, and alerts me to the results as follows: “The proof of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is not how much you know about Buddhism but how much you are changing for the better. Are you becoming more compassionate and stronger as human beings? And he gives me an added definition for faith: “Faith, in a sense, means to continue in our efforts to extinguish all doubts.”

The publications are also a place for members to express how the power of the Gohonzon has manifested in their lives. I have read countless experiences of members from all ethnic backgrounds and styles of living. Their experiences are *always about overcoming something. This inspires faith in me.* People who admit their *poisons* explain the *process* of how they gradually built a life of unshakable happiness as they chanted to change poison into medicine.

This lets me know that we are all struggling with something. That is called human revolution. Some people will share what they are going through one on one or in meetings; some will not. But the beauty of the publications is that people put it out there for the world to see. There will always be someone who can identify with an experience. Opening myself up to reading, understanding and appreciating another person’s reality broadens and expands my compassion and deepens my faith. This enables me to suspend judgment, lighten up on my imperfections, accept being human. More important, I am inspired to believe in my OWN Buddha nature, to continue to develop a practice that is stronger and more consistent so that I can show actual proof of the power of the Gohonzon.

As time passes, and my sincere consistency develops in the practice of this Buddhism, I am able to recognize and appreciate inconspicuous benefit and rejoice in conspicuous goodies!

I AM DETERMINED TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

1. To keep practicing anyhow, anyway, no matter what.
2. To be alert to tell people about the Mystic Law.
3. To keep my subscriptions to both the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism* current.
4. To keep reading them over and over again.
5. To encourage the members to subscribe and keep current.
6. To send at least one person a partial subscription this year.
7. To promote group reading and study of articles in both publications.

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