

**PERSPECTIVE: ‘THREE BUT NOT THREE’
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At the onset of our May commemorative contribution period, I was reflecting on the profound and positive impact that Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhist practice has had on my life. A quote from Ni-chiren Daisho-nin’s “The Three Kinds of Treasures” is near and dear to me: “More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 239).

Until very recently, I conceptualized these three treasures as a hierarchy that separates and consequently devalues material wealth compared to heart and health. My mind’s eye saw an inverted triangle with cash (“the storehouse”) placed at the bottom.

A few weeks ago, however, I was chanting and studying about the treasure of the body when I experienced a strong “AHA!” I suddenly perceived these three treasures in a comprehensive and all-encompassing way.

Regarding the body, a letter to an ill woman follower in “On Prolonging Life,” the Daishonin says: “Life is the most precious of all the treasures. If you are unwilling to take care of yourself, it will be very difficult to cure your illness. One day of life is more valuable than all the treasures of the universe, so first you must muster sincere faith. A single life is worth more than the universe” (MW-1, 230–31).

In “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon” he also speaks to the tremendous value of treasures of the body. Regarding the “storehouse,” the Daishonin teaches us through his own behavior. His attitude was one of tremendous gratitude for gifts of food, clothing and the mundane materials that supported his daily life.

In the “Gift of Rice,” he writes: “I am an ordinary man and find it hard to endure the winter’s cold or the summer’s heat. Nor do I have enough to eat. Without food, I could not long continue to recite the sutra or concentrate on meditation. Thus your offerings are more than mere gifts” (MW-1, 269).

It was such clear reference to the value of both the “storehouse” and “body” treasures that led me to understand their great value to the heart. These three treasures can dynamically interact to enhance and amplify the Buddha life force of the Universe in a harmonious way. When this occurs, all three function in a mutually supportive manner and are all of equal value. I discarded my hierarchy as inaccurate.

My new perception of these three treasures looked like overlapping circles.

Sometimes we may concentrate more on one or the other, but from the enlightened perspective they are not separate. Furthermore, my “storehouse” treasure offering during the May commemorative contribution period is not of lesser value in some hierarchy but is an integral aspect of a dynamic interaction of these three treasures that supports the advancement of kosen-rufu.

As the Daishonin states, “It is obvious that rice is not merely rice but life itself.”

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