

**PERSPECTIVE: THE POWER TO CHANGE REALITY**  
**BY SANDY PATRICK**  
**VAN NUYS, CALIF.**

When we are young, most of us have a kind of hope that is really simply the energy of youth. Life seems to be almost like a series of roads before us. We simply choose the one that goes to where we want to go and start traveling. Some of us get somewhere; many of us don't. Most of us hit roadblocks or obstacles that take time and energy and ingenuity to get past. When we're young, we have the energy to clamber over some of these obstacles. But soon, the future seems to lead to endless barriers and stop signs and we start getting tired. Spiritual fatigue becomes despair. Life turns into something to be survived, no longer an adventurous journey, but a test of endurance.

Eventually, many of us give up on our dreams and let life go stale. This is when we can do our greatest harm to world peace. As we lose the natural hope of youth, we lose interest in our own lives and in the lives of others. Hopelessness is ultimately boring and nothing relieves boredom quite like war.

Indeed, *A History of Warfare*, by John Keegan, a study of war widely considered definitive, argues that the boredom of hopelessness is what makes it possible for the old to get the young to kill and be killed by other young people. Cultural imperatives are the usual excuse, but all that means is that the "culture" is of greater value than life, itself, which, if you have no hope of fulfilling your potential (i.e., achieving a dream), must seem true. War, at home, in the neighborhood, in the world, is an immediate, enormous distraction from the monotony of lives without dreams. This is why we must go on reaching for our dreams no matter what, beginning again each day to climb the mountain, courageously hoping, even in the face of ridicule. It's our responsibility as Buddhists to refuse to give up on our goals as long as we live.

*Hon'nin-myō* is a Buddhist term meaning something like from this moment. We use it to describe the never-give-up spirit so crucial to Buddhism because it reminds us that Buddhism teaches that this moment mystically contains all the possibilities in life. To which, a lot of people would say: "So what? So, all possibilities are in this moment. Just how does that help me pay the rent?" If you have ever come close to eviction, you know this is a perfectly valid question.

Despair is easy. Some of us seem to default to it. Whatever happened to your old dream of owning your own home? Of being a standup comic? Of writing a book? Did it just become impossible one day? Too hard, too daunting, and besides, maybe you haven't got enough talent to write a Pulitzer Prize winner. That's your lesser self yammering, taking control, taking charge of your life.

We have the power to change the grim reality of the moment into the great reality of our dreams — by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. But it's hard to believe, it's hard to have the confidence that we need to tackle yet another mountain. Here is where the real blessing of this practice comes in. Confidence is expectation, what we expect in our hearts, not our heads. So, confidence is another word for hope. And hope is another word for faith. And faith, this Buddhism teaches, is nothing but chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, regardless of what our heads are mumbling or snarling. Because chanting replaces the darkness in our hearts with enlightenment, with Buddhahood. And the Buddha knows nothing in reality is ever impossible.

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