

THE POWERS OF FAITH AND PRACTICE BY JOSEI TODA

Josei Toda was the second president of the Soka Gakkai, who was responsible for rebuilding the organization after World War II by spreading the Daishonin's Buddhism to more than 750,000 households in Japan. He was imprisoned during the war, along with his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, for opposing the policies of the militarist Japanese government and refusing to incorporate state-sponsored Shintoism into Buddhist beliefs of the Soka Gakkai. He died on April 2, 1958. February 11, 2000, was the one-hundredth anniversary of President Toda's birth. The following is a translation of an essay by Mr. Toda originally published in the May 1955 issue of The Daibyakurenge, the Soka Gakkai's study journal, and reprinted in Toda Josei Zenshu (Collected Works of Josei Toda), p. 148).

There are four principles by which human beings can connect themselves with the Gohonzon. These four are the power of faith, the power of practice, the power of the Buddha and the power of the Law. People possess the two powers of faith and practice, while the Gohonzon is imbued with the two powers of the Buddha and the Law. It is important to consider how these powers of faith, practice, the Buddha and the Law interrelate, and what sort of result they produce.

In his writing "On the Teachings Affirmed by All Buddhas Throughout Time" Nichiren Daishonin states, "When we perceive that our mind and the Buddha's life are one, we instantly become Buddhas.... When we awaken to the truth that our mind and the Buddha's mind are actually one, no evil karma will obstruct us at the final moment of life, and no illusions will hold us back among the sufferings of birth and death" (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 569–70). To perceive that our minds and the Buddha's mind are one means that the Buddha's mind is the object of devotion that embodies Myoho-enge-kyo, and one's own mind, as well, is the object of devotion that embodies these five characters of the Mystic Law. In other words our life itself is the Mystic Law of Myoho-enge-kyo. Though one's own mind and the Buddha's mind appear different, in that both are Myoho-enge-kyo, the Mystic Law embodied in the Gohonzon, they are essentially not different.

How, then, can we come to "perceive" that there is no difference between our minds and the Buddha's mind? Only through our human powers of faith and practice. Even new practitioners, who have just taken faith and understand nothing about Buddhism, can naturally develop a state of fusion between their own mind and the Buddha's mind if they believe single-mindedly in the Gohonzon and exert their powers of faith and practice. The powers of the Buddha and the Law inherent in the Gohonzon will then be clearly manifest in their lives, producing immense benefit.

I often hear new believers complain that they have not yet received any benefit. Such people, I find, are preoccupied with obtaining benefit and are paying little attention to strengthening their powers of faith and practice. The Biblical statement "Knock, and the door will be opened for you" serves to illustrate the function of the four powers. For example, if one exerts a single degree of faith and practice, the powers of the Buddha and the Law will each manifest themselves to a single degree of magnitude. Likewise, one hundred times this exertion of the powers of faith and practice will bring forth one hundred times the powers of the Buddha and the Law. Exerting one's powers of faith and practice to a degree of 10,000 will cause the powers of the Buddha and Law to become

manifest to a degree of 10,000. We should fix this principle in our minds and dedicate ourselves to faith and practice, purely and without reservation.

One thing to bear in mind, however, is the difference between the benefit of Shakyamuni's Buddhism and benefit in the Buddhism of Sowing [the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin] in the Latter Day of the Law. What characterizes benefit in Shakyamuni's teaching is conspicuous benefit, while what distinguishes benefit in the Buddhism of sowing is called inconspicuous benefit. Conspicuous benefit is the kind of benefit that appears immediately and directly in a seemingly miraculous manner. Inconspicuous benefit appears naturally and gradually over time, without one's being aware of it. Of course, there is also inconspicuous benefit in Shakyamuni's Buddhism, but conspicuous benefit is the more prominent. Likewise, there is also conspicuous benefit in the Buddhism of Sowing, but of the two, inconspicuous benefit is the more important.

Inconspicuous benefit is comparable to the growth of plants and trees. It is like the sprouting and growth of a seed planted in the earth. Because the seed of Myoho-renge-kyo has the potential to grow into a great tree of benefit, it is only natural that months and years must pass before the new sprout becomes a full-grown tree. We can notice no difference in the size of the tree from one day to the next. Nevertheless, one, two, three, ten or fifteen years later, its growth is unmistakable. We should think of the benefit of the Mystic Law in the same way. This is what we call inconspicuous benefit.

If a single "worm" of doubt invades our faith, however, our power of practice will be eroded, causing the great tree of benefit to rot from within and eventually topple. We must therefore make continual efforts to challenge and overcome our doubts. Be aware that even a small doubt, left unresolved, can grow to inflict grave damage. If we think of the Gohonzon as the pure water of the Law, then its great enemy is the polluted water of doubt. If our power of faith is tainted by this polluted water, the Gohonzon of Myoho-renge-kyo in our own hearts will be clouded over. We will then find it hard to fuse our lives with the pure life of Myoho-renge-kyo that is the Gohonzon, and we will be unable to manifest the powers of the Buddha and the Law.

We must therefore arouse the great power of faith in the Gohonzon. The beneficent power of the Gohonzon is absolute; do not allow your conviction in this point to waver in the slightest. We should not allow even the tiniest doubt to persist unchallenged.

Moreover, even if our power of faith is strong, if we lack the power to put it into practice, we cannot bring forth the powers of the Buddha and the Law. For this reason we must also develop a strong power of practice. If, along with a strong power of faith, we exert a strong power of practice by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon and teaching others, the powers of the Buddha and the Law will never fail to appear in our lives. □