

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON FAITH  
HOW DOES BUDDHIST PRACTICE CHANGE US?  
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**Q: How will Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism change me?**

**A:** The basis of the internal condition of our lives can be revolutionized through Buddhist practice. And this fundamental change in us will bring about all sorts of positive changes in our day-to-day existence.

As we solidify our innate Buddha nature as the foundation of our being, we also make joy the basis of our lives. This is a great shift if that basis was previously suffering, which is often the case in this defiled age of egoism and skepticism.

Our life-condition can vary. The quality of our inner lives, at any given moment, is highly changeable, Buddhism says. Like an elevator in a 10-story building, we go up and down among the Ten Worlds between the lowest and the highest—from Hell, where our suffering and rage envelops us and drains our energy, to Buddhahood, where joy, compassion, wisdom and courage are commonplace.

Nichiren Daishonin says, “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the greatest of all joys” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 788). We practice Buddhism to experience the truth of this passage with all our hearts.

Whole-hearted daimoku is the immediate way to gain entry into our Buddhahood within. This is called practice for oneself.

Trying to awaken others to the same process, which is called practice for others, is also good for ourselves. Of course, it is not so easy to inspire those who have little confidence in the power of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to try it. They may be too bogged down with mundane problems to believe in their inner strength.

We often feel how powerless and incapable we are when we face a person who is deeply depressed and hard to encourage. But in struggling to help someone establish absolute happiness within and an unshakable sense of mission for kosen-rufu, we will realize how much we need to strengthen our power of prayer for the happiness of others, to develop compassion, wisdom and courage to penetrate the hearts of people who are lost. In other words, practice for others breaks down the walls of our inner limitations. It takes us to a new level. Buddhist practice for others ultimately strengthens our Buddhist practice for ourselves.

That the state of our lives becomes enriched through Buddhist practice means that we have developed fortune—a quality that attracts good opportunities and good influences to us and distances us from the destructive forces in life.

Also, by practicing as SGI members, studying the Daishonin's writings and learning from the examples of the successive Soka Gakkai presidents, we can develop a deeper sense of purpose and mission in life. When we live up to our noble sense of mission for kosen-rufu, our life force will continue to grow.

As this happens, the life within us becomes greatly different from what we were like before we began to chant. In the SGI this fundamental change is called human revolution—it is the process of establishing a Bodhisattva lifestyle that is an expression of the Buddhahood inherent in our lives.

Then, what does not change, despite our practice to the Gohonzon? First, as Buddhism

expounds the principle of individuality (Jpn *o-bai-to-ri*: the cherry is the cherry, the plum is the plum, the peach is the peach, the damson is the damson), we must know that our individual traits are essentially magnificent—and they will remain magnificently intact as our inner lives progress. Our inherent characteristics will manifest themselves more and more beautifully through our Buddhist practice.

Buddhism teaches that we attain Buddhahood as we are. Along the same lines, Ralph Waldo Emerson stated: “That only which we have within, can we see without. If we meet no Gods, it is because we harbor none. If there is a grandeur in you, you will find grandeur in porters and sweeps.” Our unique character is an expression of Buddhahood. This is the enlightened thinking of Buddhism.

Our character is just like the constant width of a river. The change in our life-condition is something like the river’s waters changing—from impure to pure, or shallow to deep.

By developing our Buddha wisdom and Buddha courage, we can use our character effectively instead of being controlled by it. Being wise enough to realize something that we have never realized about ourselves is a great benefit.

For instance, it is not so easy for selfish people to realize how selfish they are, since such people always live within the realm of selfishness. The same may be true with cold-hearted and arrogant people or people who are always angry.

It is indeed difficult to see the truth of the matter when it comes to the reality of our own lives.

Once we have realized what we need to change, though, everything gets much easier. All we have to do is change ourselves. It can be simple. We know exactly what kind of effort we need to put forth.

When I encounter those who have not been able to achieve an inner breakthrough, often it turns out that they are not trying or what they are trying to change is wrong. Frequently, they are trying to change people in their environment rather than their own life-conditions. Knowing this, the mastery of Buddha wisdom—even a bit—is a great, great benefit of Buddhist practice.

According to the “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha appears in the world to help people gain the Buddha wisdom through his own example. Vowing to fulfill our mission in life, resolving to win, having specific targets in every aspect of our lives and practice, taking the necessary courageous action for ourselves and others—if we set this as a standard to strive for, we ceaselessly bring about positive changes in our lives.

All in all, the Daishonin’s Buddhism teaches that once Buddhahood has actually become our fundamental life-tendency—when our elevator always returns to the 10th floor—the happiness we have achieved will be lasting and indestructible.

SGI President Ikeda explains it this way: “We need to cultivate a state of life where we can thoroughly enjoy ourselves at all times. We should have such joy that even at the time of death we can declare with a happy smile: ‘That was wonderful! Where shall I go next?’ This is the state of mind of a person with strong faith. Such individuals will be reborn without delay and in a form and in a place exactly according with their desires. Faith enables us to attain the kind of generous and all-embracing state of mind where we enjoy everything in our lives” (*Faith into Action*, p. 134).

The change we experience through Buddhist practice is that we find the freedom to enjoy everything. This is the revolution in life-condition that Buddhism talks about. And this fundamental change brings about positive changes not only in our day-to-day existence but in our lives for eternity.