

**BACK TO THE BASICS  
THE EIGHT WINDS  
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In “The Eight Winds,” one of Nichiren Daishonin’s many letters to lay believer Shijo Kingo, he writes: “Worthy persons deserve to be called so because they are not carried away by the eight winds: prosperity, decline, disgrace, honor, praise, censure, suffering and pleasure. They are neither elated by prosperity nor grieved by decline” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 794). In a way, this can be read as an elongated definition of the Daishonin’s famous phrase “Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy” (WND, 681).

The Daishonin explains in “The Eight Winds” how to reveal our Buddha nature, which is innate in all of us. Neither fame nor obscurity, neither wealth nor poverty can awaken Buddhahood. Because Buddhahood is inherent in all people, its manifestation cannot be contingent solely on responses to external forces. Whatever happens, it is up to us to bring forth Buddhahood.

At the same time, though, external forces can sway us from attaining Buddhahood if we let them. The Daishonin had personally experienced each of these eight winds in gale force but was never slowed in the least. His admonition to Shijo Kingo, based on his own experience, was a reminder to focus on the true goal of Buddhism and not to place undue importance on matters of fleeting influence.

It should be noted that the Daishonin did not endorse a “que sera, sera” attitude regarding personal struggle. Nowhere does he recommend a blasé, passive acceptance of our situation over consistently moving forward and facing obstacles. His point is that, while struggling to show actual proof in the real world, we should never let the ups and downs that we must experience affect us.

After all, he follows “enjoy what there is to enjoy” with “Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens” (WND, 681). To continue chanting, no matter what happens, is the heart of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. And it is the means by which the eight winds are faced.