

**Q&A ON FAITH
WHAT IS BENEFIT?
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What is the Buddhist view of benefit?

The idea of benefit, in terms of our daily practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, originally stems from the Japanese word *kudoku*, a transliteration of the Sanskrit word *guna*. Both signify benefit as expounded in Buddhism, the focus being our innate ability to invite benefit into our lives. They also signify what we gain from the good causes we make.

I want to shed light on the concept of benefit from five different perspectives. First, while it has been traditionally said that there are two types of benefit, conspicuous and inconspicuous, inconspicuous benefit is primary in the practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism. Although conspicuous benefit often plays a crucial role in developing our faith, inconspicuous benefit grows in our lives as our good fortune. This fortune is an aspect of our Buddhahood; it is cultivated within through sincere, serious practice.

Second, Buddhist benefit comes from countering evil. The Daishonin states in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" that "the element *ku* [in *kudoku*] means eliminating evil, while the element *doku* means producing good" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762). The intent of Buddhist practice is, after all, to awaken ourselves and others from our attachment to shallow views and emotions. We ourselves diminish negativity and produce great value in our lives and society through our practice for ourselves and others.

Third, Buddhist benefit is equal to purifying our six senses — in other words, our lives. The Daishonin states: "Benefit means to attain Buddhahood as we are. It also means to purify the six senses. We can gain the benefit of the purification of the six senses if we practice the Lotus Sutra exactly as it teaches" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762). Purifying the six senses is synonymous with purifying our lives and developing ultimate strength within ourselves.

Fourth, Buddhist benefit can only be revealed through our strong faith. In "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon," the Daishonin states: "*Mandala* is a Sanskrit word that is translated as 'perfectly endowed' or 'a cluster of blessings.' This Gohonzon also is found only in the two characters for faith. This is what the sutra means when it states that one can 'gain entrance through faith alone'" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 832). This passage points out the truth that chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith in its power is the real key—nothing else can tap all the benefits contained in the Law of Myoho-renge-kyo.

Fifth, we gain benefit for ourselves by benefiting others. Buddhism encourages us to develop our unique traits in order to fulfill our individual mission to spread Buddhism. The Daishonin thus says in "The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life" that "the function of fire is to burn and give light. The function of water is to wash away filth. The winds blow away dust and breathe life into plants, animals, and human beings. The earth produces the grasses and trees, and heaven provides nourishing moisture. The five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo are also like that. They are the cluster of blessings brought by the Bodhisattvas of the Earth..." (WND, 218).

The great benefit of this practice can never reach the people unless we who know of it are willing to share it. From making this greatest of good causes, we naturally experience the most profound benefit the Mystic Law has to offer.

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