

# To awaken and reveal our unlimited potential

You must never think that any of the eighty thousand sacred teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha's lifetime or any of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and three existences are outside yourself. Your practice of the Buddhist teachings will not relieve you of the sufferings of birth and death in the least unless you perceive the true nature of your life. (...) That is why the T'ien-t'ai school's commentary states, "Unless one perceives the nature of one's life, one cannot eradicate one's grave offenses."

*On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime, WND, Page 3&4*

*The teachings of Nichiren Daishonin allow us to realize the most fundamental inner transformation.*

The character myo, from myoho or the Mystic Law, has three meanings: to open, to be fully endowed, and to revive<sup>1</sup>. These three meanings of myo are all implicit in chanting daimoku.

In other words, chanting daimoku contains: 1) The myo of perfect endowment - meaning that the single Law of Myoho-renge-kyo encompasses all phenomena; 2) the myo of transformation that "opens" the world of Buddhahood in the lives of beings in the nine

worlds (the worlds from hell to Bodhisattva) and 3) the myo of great benefit whereby a life filled with suffering is "revived or reborn" as a life of great tranquility and joy.

Our life is in itself, an entity of the Mystic Law. Therefore it is fully endowed with all phenomena. Fundamental darkness and the enlightened Dharma nature, earthly desires and enlightenment, the nine worlds and the world of Buddhahood – all of these exist

<sup>1</sup> Three meanings of myo. In The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin writes: Myo means to be fully endowed, which in turn has the meaning of "perfect and full." (see WND, page.146); "Hence the

character myo means to open." (Ib., page 145) y "Myo means to revive, that is, to return to life" (Ib., page 149).



within us. For precisely that reason, we can carry out a mystic and fundamental inner “revolution” - changing darkness into light, kindling the flame of enlightenment by “burning the firewood of earthly desires”<sup>2</sup>, and thereby manifesting the world of Buddhahood in our life in the nine worlds.

The key to achieving this profound inner transformation lies in our heart, in our basic mental attitude. Therefore, the Daishonin warns us in “On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime”: “if you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but an inferior teaching”<sup>3</sup>.

When we exert ourselves in chanting daimoku based on that admonition, always remembering that a change in our own heart or mind is crucial, the three meanings of myo will clearly manifest themselves in our lives.

In this sentence of the Goshō, the Daishonin states, “That is why the T’ien-t’ai school’s commentary states, “Unless one perceives the nature of one’s life, one cannot

eradicate one’s grave offences.” What does it mean to say that we cannot eradicate our grave offences unless we perceive the nature of our life? Here “grave offences” refers to ignorance, which is the source of all evil. The grave offence of acting against the Law derives from this denigration of the Law or of the correct Buddhist teaching, as a result of ignorance or innate darkness.

In T’ien-t’ai’s Buddhism it is only possible to eradicate that ignorance through the practice of observing life, in other words, through wisdom. In Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, fundamental darkness is overcome by “the sharp sword of faith” in accord with the principle of “substituting wisdom for faith”. This is the essence of the practice of chanting daimoku.

The essence of our practice is to perceive the true nature of our life and our heart. To do that, we must wage an inner struggle. If we allow ourselves to be defeated by “the three obstacles and four devils”<sup>4</sup>, we won’t be able to attain

enlightenment. That’s why battling our darkness or ignorance within us is an unavoidable part of the process of becoming a Buddha. In other words, whether or not we continuously battle our own innate ignorance is the single most important determinant in whether we attain Buddhahood. In that sense, it is something we must never forget.

The purpose of faith is to freely realise our full potential and to shine, while remaining true to our own nature. That is why it is important to always keep advancing and challenging ourselves and to have the spirit: “I will exert myself in my practice!” This is the certain path for attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime. To seek the Mystic Law somewhere outside or separate from us essentially amounts to an evasion of responsibility for our own life.

For example, if we chant daimoku but always blame others or our environment for our circumstances, we are avoiding the challenge of tackling our own inner darkness or ignorance. By doing so,

2 Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings, translated by Burton Watson, Soka Gakkai, Tokyo, 2004, page 11.

3 (WND), Soka Gakkai, Tokyo, 1999, page 3.

4 In Japanese *sansho shima*: Various obstacles and impediments which hinder Buddhist practice.

we are seeking enlightenment outside ourselves. One begins improving one's situation and seeing changes when one challenges oneself on a more profound level. Prayer is the driving force for that change.

It is also important not to fall into the trap of practising a “dependent faith” thinking that prayers will be answered thanks to the divine or transcendent powers of gods or Buddhas. This is a typical example of viewing the Law as outside ourselves. The teachings previous to the Lotus Sutra promoted teachings and practices which were in essence escapism. Without a struggle nobody can set the gears of his own human revolution into motion. In such a scenario, quite frankly, faith is being used to hide behind and avoid having to deal with reality. If we avoid facing our own problems and tendencies we will never be able to strengthen and develop ourselves and we will never be able to attain Buddhahood in this existence.

In addition, it is also important to make the conscious effort to rid ourselves from doubt and disbelief in general as well as grumbling and complaining. If our attitude of faith is half-hearted, we will not be able to change our attitude or fundamentally transform our life.

It is absolutely essential that, when chanting daimoku, we have a solidly focused mind or attitude. It is like trying to shoot an arrow, without a clear target we will not draw the bow with any real energy or determination. In the same way, our prayers can only be realised when we replace vague yearnings with concrete determinations and

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confident daimoku to definitely accomplish what we hope to achieve.

On the other hand, the great desire of Kosen-rufu can only be fulfilled if we practice united with the spirit of being “many in body, one in mind”. Let's confirm, once again, that chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo for our own

happiness and that of others is the true means for attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism starts from the realisation that the supreme and noble life condition of Buddhahood exists in each of us. The teaching of the Daishonin teaching makes it possible for us to achieve the most profound inner transformation - a transformation of our fundamental attitude or mindset. That's why the Daishonin emphasises the importance of our attitude or inner determination. In regard to this, he writes: “Whether you chant the Buddha's name, recite the sutra, or merely offer flowers and incense, all your virtuous acts will implant benefits and roots of goodness in your life. With this conviction you should strive in faith”<sup>5</sup>. All our efforts in faith, not only the daily practice of Gongyo, or the various activities of the organization, are all virtuous acts that “implant benefits and roots of goodness in our lives”. Those who advance with this deep awareness will be true victors who travel the direct path to attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.