

The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood

“The way to Buddhahood lies within the two elements of reality and wisdom (...)The Lotus Sutra states that Bodhisattva Superior Practices and the others will appear in the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law to propagate the five characters [of the Mystic Law, Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō], the embodiment of the two elements of reality and wisdom. The sutra makes this perfectly clear (...) Above all, be sure to follow your original teacher so that you are able to attain Buddhahood!”

The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin provides us with the philosophy and practice for realising genuine happiness for ourselves and others. Its driving spirit is to undertake this difficult challenge and never give up trying to achieve it. And the mentor-disciple relationship lies at the very heart of the human network and the united efforts that are so vital to succeeding in this endeavour.

The Mystic Law is the key to connecting with an inexhaustible wellspring of wisdom.

Fundamentally, the lives of human beings are supremely noble and respectable entities of the Mystic Law, and they are all endowed with immeasurable wisdom.

How can we bring this wisdom to shine? How can we draw forth the

infinite, latent potential that we each possess? Buddhism responds to these questions by teaching the eternal and universal Law that pulses within life. This Law exists equally in all people. By awakening to the existence of this Law that pervades life and the universe, anyone can overcome the four sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death and gain lasting happiness. In Buddhism, the path of teacher and disciple is indispensable in transmitting and spreading this great Law of happiness that exists within us.

At the beginning of this letter, the Daishonin describes the Law as embodying “the two elements of reality and wisdom”¹. This is a crucial principle explaining the Buddha’s enlightenment. “Reality” means the objective reality or truth,

and includes all things spiritual and physical. “Wisdom” means the subjective wisdom to perceive or illuminate that truth. The towering wisdom of the Buddha not only illuminates the true nature of all universal phenomena, but also makes us aware that we ourselves are entities of the Mystic Law.

The essential point regarding the two elements of reality and wisdom is illuminating our true self with the light of great wisdom. This is the fusion of reality and wisdom, through which means we can attain the expansive and perfectly serene state of mind of a Buddha. Once we become aware of our true self – that is, our greater self – we can gain the immeasurable wisdom, to break through and surmount all delusions and sufferings that arise from our attachment to our lesser self.

1). WND p746-748

Herein lies the path to realising genuine happiness.

The two elements of “reality” and “wisdom” constitute none other than Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the Law propagated by Nichiren Daishonin. In other words, when we “dedicate our lives” (nam or namu in Japanese) to Myoho-renge-kyo, the supreme Law of the universe, we become one with the “principle of eternal and unchanging truth” and thereby attaining the life-state of Buddhahood, in which we can base all our activities on “the wisdom of the truth that functions in accordance with changing circumstances.”² And, the water of immeasurable wisdom that issues forth from our greater self will then flow full powerfully in our lives.

The Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo enables us to bring forth the boundless life-force or vitality from our greater self. Therefore, in this writing, the Daishonin says, “What then are these two elements of reality and wisdom? They are simply the five written characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.”³

To use a simile, our greater self is like a broad and deep spring overflowing with the water of wisdom.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo serves as the means for tapping this water and bringing it to flow richly in the fields of our lives. To live in accord with the limited wisdom of our lesser self, in contrast, is like drawing water from a vast spring with a tiny ladle. No matter how much effort we make, we can only scoop up a very small amount. In this situation, there is a disconnection between reality and wisdom’ and they are definitely not fused.

With the Gohonzon, that embodies the life of Nichiren Daishonin as our “reality” and faith in Nam-myoho-renge-kyo based on the Gohonzon as our “wisdom,” (in accordance with the principle of “substituting wisdom for faith”⁴) we can achieve the same state of fusion of reality and wisdom (or enlightenment) as the Buddha. All we that we require is the strong faith to withstand and repel obstacles and devilish functions that are a manifestation of darkness and ignorance. All that we require is a persistent faith that never wavers under any circumstances.

Mr. Toda said, “The Gohonzon [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] is the fundamental entity or life that powers changes in the universe. By achie-

ving the fusion of reality and wisdom in our lives [by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith in the Gohonzon], we can change our lives and bring forth benefit.”

The beneficial power of the Gohonzon is infinitely profound and immeasurable. The Buddhist Law is eternal, boundless and untrammelled. By chanting to the Gohonzon and taking action based on faith in the Mystic Law, we can bring this inexhaustible wisdom to well forth in our lives. Thus, there is no way that we can ever be truly deadlocked in life.

2). According to The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings, the act of devotion (nam or namu in Japanese), has two aspects: one is to devote oneself to, or fuse one's life with, the eternal and unchanging truth; the other is that, through this fusion of one's own life with the ultimate truth, one simultaneously draws forth inexhaustible wisdom that functions in accordance to changing circumstances. See The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings, translated by Burton Watson, Tokyo, Soka Gakkai, 2003, p3

3) (WND-1, p.746) Nichiren Daishonin often regards the words Myoho-renge-kyo as the equivalent of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with. While Myoho-renge-kyo consists of five Chinese characters, Nam-myoho-

renge-kyo consists of seven. In his writing “The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra,” for example, the Daishonin mentions the “the five or seven ideograms of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” WND-1, p.141)

4) Substituting wisdom for faith: The principle that faith is the true cause for gaining supreme wisdom, and faith alone leads to enlightenment. In general, Buddhism describes supreme wisdom as the cause of enlightenment. According to the Lotus Sutra, however, even Shariputra, who among the Buddha's ten major disciples was revered as foremost in wisdom, could attain enlightenment only through faith, not through wisdom.