

August Discussion Topic – Faith, Practice and Study

Faith, practice and study are the three pillars of Nichiren Buddhism. As Nichiren explains in his writings: “Both practice and study arise from faith.” (WND I, 386) Faith gives rise to practice and study, and practice and study deepen our faith, and thus they enhance each other. You might say that study is the backbone of faith. Faith is a spiritual struggle against doubt. It is the struggle to break through delusion and the lack of confidence that gives us the hopeless feeling of never being able to become happy.

President Toda once said: “Have faith that is like ceaselessly flowing water. Stagnant water becomes putrid because it stands still. The same is true of our lives: not advancing is regressing. “Faith like fire” corresponds to the faith of those who, when they listen to the teachings, are inspired to strive actively in their Buddhist practice, just like a fire burns brighter when logs are added, but who lose enthusiasm for their practice as time passes. When inspiration runs out, the fire is extinguished. As a result, he becomes susceptible to external influences, is easily distracted, and then often abandons his faith. This kind of faith is not self-motivated.”¹

‘Faith like flowing water’ is equal to faith with a seeking spirit to attain Buddhahood. Such persons stay unwavering, tireless and steadfast in their Buddhist practice, and remain undeterred by any external influences. It is the faith of those who, although their actions may be neither spectacular nor extraordinary, maintain an invincible resolve and sense of mission, and keep on challenging themselves throughout their life in faith, practice and study.

1. What does faith mean to you?
2. Have you had an experience of deepening your faith through study?
3. A big problem is often the greatest opportunity for growth, for challenging ourselves, and for deepening our faith. Have you had an experience with this?

¹ SGI Nieuwsbrief 9254.