

January Discussion Topic – Benefit

Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha who lived in India 2,500 years ago, expounded the Lotus Sutra in order to make all people aware of the buddhahood inherent in their lives. Everyone who practises Nichiren Buddhism and sincerely chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo creates benefit.

There are two kinds of benefit. The first is conspicuous benefit: discernible things we can observe in our environment. The second is inconspicuous benefit: life force, wisdom, compassion, joy and protection. The inconspicuous benefit we accumulate deep within our lives will eventually also become visible in our environment. It is our faith, which is invisible, that steers us, and our environment, towards happiness and the fulfilment of all our wishes.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “The word “benefits” (*kudoku*) means the reward that is represented by the purification of the six sense organs... The element *ku* in the word *kudoku* means good fortune or happiness. It also refers to the merit achieved by wiping out evil, while the element *toku* or *doku* refers to the virtue one acquires by bringing about good. Thus the word *kudoku* means to attain Buddhahood in one’s present form.” (OTT, 147-48)

It is very important that we challenge and overcome our negative impulses and all forms of injustice. It is best to begin with our own fundamental darkness, our intrinsic negative tendencies that give rise to doubt and disbelief. As we tackle this challenge, the direction of our lives will change in accordance with the choices that we make. As we also challenge the negative tendencies in our environment, our Buddhahood is activated, and through this change, great benefit will appear in our lives.

A Laotian proverb states: “Whoever seeks good company will see benefit flourish in his life. Whoever seeks evil company will see benefit fade from his life.”

Nichiren Daishonin quotes a passage from a sutra that includes the following warning: “Thrust aside evil friends and associate with good companions.” (WND I, 832) A good companion means somebody who desires the best for others, who genuinely wishes for them to attain Buddhahood.

Buddhism is about action. Without efforts to attain Buddhahood for ourselves and for others, we cannot become truly happy, nor fully reveal our potential. A passive attitude brings neither joy nor happiness. It may be challenging to tell others about Nichiren Buddhism, but the benefits arising from such efforts will come back to us. Thus, “benefit” means “creating happiness and becoming happy”.

Through practising Nichiren Buddhism and striving with all our being for the happiness of ourselves and of others, we gain great benefit that will endure throughout the three existences (past, present and future).

1. Benefit means creating happiness and becoming happy. What does that mean to you?
2. Can you share an experience of how benefit deepened and strengthened your faith?