

July Discussion Topic – True Happiness Lies in the Richness of Our Hearts

For many, happiness can be difficult to grasp. In the next passage Nichiren Daishonin explains how we can become truly happy: “More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all. From the time you read this letter on, strive to accumulate the treasures of the heart!” (WND-I, 851)

He divides these 'treasures' into three categories. “Treasures in a storehouse” refers to money and material wealth. “Treasures of the body” symbolizes our health, physical and mental abilities and social standing. The “treasures of the heart” indicates an inner richness or strength. On a more fundamental level, these treasures of the heart are the qualities we develop and store in our lives through deepening our faith. They represent the boundless life state of the Buddha; abundant good fortune, vigorous life force, inexhaustible wisdom, courage and compassion. Because the treasures of the heart are the key to building true happiness, Nichiren asserts that they are the most valuable of all.

While treasures in a storehouse and treasures of the body are important, they don't guarantee lasting happiness. Though some may have material wealth, unfortunate events can cause them to lose everything. Some may enjoy good health, but they might encounter an accident or illness. And certainly after one is confronted with what Buddhism calls the four sufferings—birth, old age, sickness and death—these external treasures lose all meaning. The sense of loss one feels at parting with such treasures can even become a cause for further suffering. In this light, it is easy to see why it is important to not to be defeated by our desires.

Treasures of the heart, however, are the internal riches we develop by challenging our inner transformation, the courage to win over our problems and reaching out to others who are suffering. Though intangible and often difficult to measure, these qualities are what stay with us no matter what we go through.

Therefore it is important to accumulating the treasures of the heart. President Ikeda writes, “When you accumulate the treasures of the heart, then the treasures of the body and the treasures of the storehouse will naturally follow”.¹

Ultimately, treasures of the heart mean developing the strength, wisdom and good fortune not to be defeated by desires and suffering. They refer to our inherent Buddha state, which we bring forth through our Buddhist practice.

* What do “the treasures of the heart” mean to you?

* We develop “the treasures of the heart” as we overcome our problems. Do you have any experience with that?

¹ Daisaku Ikeda, *My Dear Friends in America*, 290.