

December Discussion Topic - Everyone is unique and precious

The original purpose of Buddhism is to make us aware of the boundless dignity of our lives and that of others. Buddhism teaches the principle 'Obaitori' which means that everyone is unique. In his writings Nichiren Daishonin uses the metaphor of different flowering trees - cherry, plum, peach and damson plum - to explain this principle. Each tree blossoms in its own unique way, with its own special characteristics and qualities. He says: "When one comes to realise and see that each thing - the cherry, the plum, the peach, the damson - in its own entity, without undergoing any change, possesses the eternally endowed three bodies."¹ (OTT, 200-01) He explains that a cherry is a cherry (o), a plum is a plum (bai), a peach is a peach (to), and a damson is a damson (ri).

Everyone is a Buddha and doesn't have to change their personality for that. A cherry doesn't need to and can't change into a peach. Whoever you are, be yourself. It is important that we do not compare ourselves with others. No matter how much you want to become someone else, that will never happen. It's about developing and bringing forth our positive qualities.

By reciting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, 'the eternally endowed three bodies' (the three virtues of the Buddha) will shine in your life. By developing courage, wisdom, compassion and life force - our Buddha Nature - we can create value for ourselves and others with our unique personality. President Ikeda says: "There's no need to be swayed by other people's opinions. Just press forward cheerfully and confidently on the path of your own unique mission, in accord with the principle of "cherry, plum, peach, and damson." Strive in a way that's true to yourself."

Everyone is a unique expression of the universal Law. Compared with the supreme, universal treasure of life we all share, distinctions of gender, ethnicity, cultural or religious background, etc., are less important. As this understanding grows, we can learn to overcome our attachment to differences and related feelings of aversion or fear. How can we learn not to be threatened by difference? How can we learn to communicate successfully with those whose vision and understanding of the world differ from ours? Ultimately, our ability to respond creatively to diversity hinges on our ability to develop a palpable sense of the preciousness of life itself, and of each individual expression of life.

* What does it mean for you to stay true to yourself and accept yourself as you are?

* Do you have an experience in having a successful dialogue with people who have a different vision and what have you learned from that?

¹ The three virtues of the Buddha: The three virtues of the Dharma body, wisdom, and emancipation; three attributes of a Buddha. The Dharma body means the truth that the Buddha has realized; wisdom is the capacity to realize this truth; and emancipation means the state of being free from the sufferings of birth and death.