

# What is the Purpose of Faith?

## Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime

For those who have recently joined Nichiren Shoshu and are taking their first steps in faith, it is most important to have a clear understanding of the purpose of faith.

The following analogy may serve to illustrate. Suppose there are two people reading the same book. One person strives to learn all the words and grammar in the book, while the other makes efforts to grasp the author's intent. Clearly, what the two will gain from reading will be quite different. Even in reading a single page of a book, there is a tremendous difference in the result gained by each type of reader. Inevitably, the first won't gain the significance, while the other's effort can open up a whole new world.

Our approach in faith is even more important. The more we can awaken to the purpose of faith, the clearer the approach necessary to achieve that purpose will become, as will the correct attitude in faith.

The most important point to keep in mind is that the practice of true Buddhism is a lifelong journey. Nichiren Daishonin teaches us that to begin is easy but to continue is difficult; however, attaining enlightenment lies in continuing faith.

So what is the purpose of faith in Nichiren Shoshu? To put it simply, there are two ultimate purposes for taking faith in this Buddhism. One is to realize an absolutely unshakable state of happiness in which there is boundless joy in being alive (attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime). The other is to realize an ideal society in which people can enjoy happy lives together based on true Buddhism (kosen-rufu).

"Attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime" does not mean changing your human form. Nor does it mean becoming a Buddha when you die, a mistaken view commonly held in other Buddhist denominations. Rather, it means achieving, in this lifetime and in our present form, the greatest potential life condition contained within the depths of our lives through sincere faith in and practice to the Gohonzon.

This highest life condition is called "The Buddha," "Buddhahood," or "the Buddha nature." Another name for it is "Myoho-Renge-Kyo."

Buddhahood is a mighty force that manifests a solution to every kind of suffering. It is a source of energy that manifests in our daily lives and propels each of us into a brilliant, truly joyful and fulfilled existence in the present moment. Striving in faith, we aim to establish an absolutely indestructible life condition of spiritual strength, wisdom and peace grounded in the world of Buddhahood.

Of course, situations in which an ill person becomes healthy, an unhappy family finds harmony, or poverty changes to financial security are necessary conditions for a happy life. However, if these conditions are examined closely, they can all be seen to be relative, partial forms of happiness in comparison to an inner condition based on Buddhahood. In many cases, relative happiness is manifested only temporarily or partially.

However, within the reality of our daily lives, we are often embroiled in so many kinds of hardships that we cannot keep track of them all. Though we are able to make money, we may suffer with family discord, or even if we are healthy we may have unhappy children.

Uncovering and revealing the world of Buddhahood is the fundamental source for attacking the root cause of suffering in human life, and for resolving every possible form of distress. This is the absolute happiness each and every person in the world is longing for in the depths of his or her heart.

Just as a single drop of water is included within a great ocean, a person who has established an absolutely happy life condition through embracing true Buddhism will definitely be able to resolve flaws in his or her character, and overcome sickness, poverty, or family problems.

Thus, it is important for us to have unshakable faith and tenaciously seek the attainment of Buddhahood in this lifetime, without being swayed by external circumstances. With strong faith, we need not be joyful one moment and depressed the next because of the ups and downs of life. Even small prayers will be answered without fail.