

April Discussion Topic- Conspicuous and Inconspicuous benefit

People start practising Buddhism for different reasons. Some in the hope of overcoming a problem and others are attracted by the philosophy. Still others find hope, gain more clarity or energy by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Whatever motivated them to start, many confirm that they experience benefit through their Buddhist practice.

When our daimoku is transformed into actual proof, we deepen our faith. Of the three proofs - documentary, theoretical and actual proof - Nichiren Daishonin says: "Nothing is more certain than actual proof." (WND-I, 478) Through actual proof, our understanding grows and we gain confidence, which in turn leads to a deeper faith. Through the three proofs, we can determine whether a teaching enables us to create value or not.

There are two types of benefit of our Buddhist practice. The first is conspicuous benefit. This manifests itself in a tangible improvement in our environment. The second is inconspicuous benefit. This manifests itself in greater life force, wisdom, joy and protection. This benefit is gradually developing in our lives.

Ikeda Sensei says: "It can be likened to the growth of a tree. You can spend day after day watching a tree, and nothing will seem to change. But if you observe it after five, 10, 20 years have passed, you will see that it has grown large and tall. In the same way, if you keep practising this faith for five, 10, or 20 years, your negative karma will disappear, you will change your destiny and gain tremendous benefit. This is what is meant by inconspicuous benefit, and it is the true benefit of Nichiren Buddhism."¹

We often achieve what we are chanting for, but sometimes it seems that not everything goes the way we hoped for, no matter how much we chant. But by challenging ourselves, we develop qualities like patience, perseverance, hope and determination. Our lives improve naturally through our tenacious practice and we feel truly fulfilled. Through strong faith - which is inconspicuous - everything is dynamically directed in the best possible direction: toward happiness and the fulfilment of all our aspirations.

Buddhism is all about action. Without effort, we cannot become truly happy. A passive attitude deprives us of all joy and excitement. Introducing others to Buddhism may be challenging, but all our efforts to do so come back to us in the form of benefit. 'Benefit' therefore means 'creating happiness', and 'becoming happy'. The way to build great benefit is to practise Nichiren Buddhism with the attitude of 'not begrudging one's life', in other words to devote one's life to the happiness of oneself and others.

- Have you experienced deepening your faith after you received actual proof?
- Which inconspicuous benefit have you developed through your Buddhist practice?

¹ *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 8, 66–67.