

May Discussion Topic – Opening our Greater Self

By chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we can improve our lives, win over our weaknesses and bring forth our strength. We can summon up and open our 'greater self' - our buddha nature. This is an eternal life state that exists in the depths of our lives and pervades the entire universe.

The 'greater self' is a self-awareness with which we can fully relate and empathize with the suffering of others, seeking to reduce that suffering. It is an open and broad-minded self that is rooted in compassion for others and the deep respect for the dignity of life and in which we are aware of the interconnectedness of all life.

This high life state contradicts the limited 'lesser self' (the ego) which is dominated by egoism and self-interest is easily influenced by our circumstances, desires and emotions, causing us to suffer. Ikeda Sensei says: "If we base ourselves on our own fickle, ever-changing hearts, we cannot make our way up steep ridges buffeted by the fierce winds of devilish functions. We must set our sights on the solid and unshakable summit of attaining Buddhahood and continually seek to master our minds"¹

But the 'lesser self', with all its desires and impulses, cannot simply be denied or repressed. Instead, it is important that we learn to transform and redirect these desires. When our personality is illuminated by the Mystic Law, it is firmly anchored in the 'greater self,' a life state of limitless freedom that pervades the entire universe; and will thereby positively transform even the energy of earthly desires directed toward the egoistic 'lesser self'. In other words, we can transform the energy of our earthly desires into brilliant wisdom and compassion; it can be powerfully lifted to a higher level that transcends the individual and benefits others, our environment and the society.

This inner transformation - from a life centered on the 'lesser self' to a life based on the 'greater self' - is a crucial aspect of our Buddhist practice that we call human revolution. It is reflected in the choices and actions that shape our daily lives. The 'greater self' expresses itself in a greater sense of responsibility and the desire to contribute to the happiness of others and the earth. This sense of responsibility increases our humanity, allowing us to have a positive impact on our environment.

When we have established an unshakable life state of happiness, that can't be destroyed or hermes by anyone. Developing this great life state is the goal of our Buddhist practice.

- Are you easily swayed by your 'lesser self', and how does that manifest itself?
- Have you had an experience of summoning up your 'greater self' with your buddhist practice?
- How do you put your 'greater self' into practice?

¹ *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 1, 107.