

Februari Discussion Topic – Buddhist dialogue

In today's troubled, complex and divided world, where people are influenced by the three poisons [anger, greed and ignorance] and many are suffering from feelings of loneliness, it's not easy to have real dialogues and to understand each other. But without dialogue, mutual understanding is impossible.

To base one's positions on speculation and preconceived notions without even attempting to meet and talk with others only increases unnecessary misunderstanding and hostility. That's why it's so important to put aside our differences and really listen to others, sharing their pains and sufferings as fellow human beings. A compassionate heart listening in this way has the power to open people's minds, to dispel anxiety and to heal mental wounds. It takes a human heart to touch a human heart.

Whether in our personal relations - like our interaction with our neighbors and those around us - or in relations between nations, everything starts from meeting directly with others, holding dialogue and getting to know and understand one another. The courage to meet and talk with people is absolutely crucial. Choosing dialogue is itself the triumph of peace and of humanity.

Our dialogues start with a compassionate prayer for the happiness of others. From Buddhist perspective, wisdom and compassion are inseparable and are mutually reinforcing. Compassion in Buddhism does not involve the forcible suppression of our natural emotions, our likes and dislikes. Rather, it is the realization that even those whom we dislike have qualities that can enrich our lives and help us grow in humanity.

This kind of dialogue brims with the conviction that everyone possesses the Buddha nature, even those who may not at first agree with our views. Everyone has different experiences and viewpoints. When we pursue a buddhist dialogue we don't focus on such differences, but try to awaken the other person's Buddha nature and to work together for a higher goal; peace and happiness for all people based on the humanistic principles of Nichiren Buddhism. Ikeda Sensei says: "All human beings, no matter what their social standing or their beliefs, experience the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death. When we engage in dialogue, we should bear in mind that we are talking to another person who, like ourselves, inevitably faces these sufferings. If we can do so we can communicate with anyone."¹

When we talk to someone, we aren't speaking solely to the person before us; but we also touch their family, friends and many young successors who will carry on their work. A beautiful dialogue in which hearts meet is always the beginning of a new dialogue, the first step to creating an ever-expanding network of friendship and peace.

- How do you challenge yourself to engage in Buddhist dialogues?
- Do you have an experience in which a Buddhist dialogue has led to greater mutual understanding or a better relationship with the other person?

¹ *World Tribune*, March 1, 2024, 2-3.

