

Discussion Topic - Living with the Awareness: "It Is the Heart That Is Important"

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda says: "The purpose of faith is to strengthen and fortify our hearts, so that we develop inner strength and conviction. Everything depends on our attitude and our heart."¹ In other words, it is important that we take full responsibility for our lives. Whether we become happy, are on the path to Buddhahood, or end up in a state of suffering - all of it is the result of the wondrous workings of our heart or mind.

When it comes to our heart, President Ikeda explains that what we believe in shows what we value most: "Are we driven by selfishness, seeking only our own personal happiness at the expense of others? Or do we live with compassion, caring both for our own well-being and that of others, refusing to build our happiness on the misfortune of others? The focus is on transforming our mind, our heart, and our values. This is the human revolution that takes place within each individual."²

In life, we encounter all kinds of problems. There will always be moments when we face situations we cannot control. But why is it that one person can move forward cheerfully under the same circumstances, while another becomes sad or angry and complains? It's because happiness is an inner state - something we feel in our own heart.

When we live with joy and appreciate life, we are winners. That's why it is so important to bring about a deep change in our heart and our way of thinking. This is the essence of Nichiren Buddhism. It is not about outward appearances. Many people seem to live in ideal circumstances that others might envy, yet they are deeply unhappy. Those who are strong, wise, resilient, and generous remain positive and cheerful no matter what happens. Nichiren Daishonin says: "It is the heart that is important. No matter how earnestly Nichiren prays for you, if you lack faith, it will be like trying to set fire to wet tinder. Summon up the power of faith." (WND-1, 1000-01)

In this passage, the word "heart" can also be read as "faith." When the Daishonin speaks about the importance of the heart, he is essentially referring to this heart of faith. He writes: "Each of you should summon up the courage [literally, the heart] of a lion king." (WND-1, 997)

The "heart of a lion king" refers to our inherent strength to never be defeated - the courage to always live with determination. The Daishonin teaches that it is important to develop an indomitable courage: the courage to move forward fearlessly, even when surrounded by hostile or negative forces. With our faith in the Mystic Law, there is no problem we cannot overcome and no future we cannot change. Moreover, our shared determination with our mentor - to help others become happy and to chant for that purpose - is the path to a life of happiness and victory.

- Have you had an experience in which your buddhist practice brought about a profound change in your heart, attitude, or way of thinking? How has that shown up in your life?
- How do you challenge yourself to develop "the heart of a lion king" and never be defeated?

¹ Daisaku Ikeda, *The Hope Filled Teachings Of Nichiren Daishonin*, 133.

² Daisaku Ikeda, *Living Buddhism*, januari 2016, 39.