

STANDS TO REASON: You Are a Buddha

By JEFF FARR

Associate Editor

You, yourself, are a true Buddha who possesses the three enlightened properties [the Law, wisdom and action]. You should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with this conviction. (“On the Treasure Tower,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 30)

Nichiren Daishonin’s letters to Abutsu-bo, an older man, are among his most moving. The frankness with which the Daishonin says in this 1272 letter that Abutsu-bo is a true Buddha — implying that the future reader of the letter is, too — is evidence of his great love and respect for each individual.

The Daishonin had just met Abutsu-bo that year. In exile on Sado Island, he was sometimes visited by Pure Land practitioners angry at him for disagreeing with Pure Land; Abutsu-bo was one of these. Their dialogue led to Abutsu-bo and his wife becoming the Daishonin’s disciples and, soon enough, his greatest supporters on Sado.

You are a Buddha. A simple but profound message that the Daishonin gave Abutsu-bo and, by extension, every “you” who’s reading this article. It’s a condensation of the view the Daishonin’s Buddhism takes toward you, where it places you in the universal scheme of things.

As *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue* explains (Question No. 4), this is a teaching that the priesthood has a lot of trouble with. Since 1990, the priesthood has repeatedly said that priests reside high above you — and Nikken even higher; he’s the highest. For you to entertain the thought that you might be equal to him is slander. Nikken is the Buddha; a believer is just a believer.

The whole problem with SGI President Ikeda, says the temple, is his questioning of this “natural order.” President Ikeda takes letters like “On the Treasure Tower” seriously and thinks that he can face Nikken on equal footing. He was dismissed as the chief lay representative of the head temple in December 1990 for saying that “the high priest must think about the happiness of believers. The high priest of Nichiren Shoshu has nothing to do with power.” Almost eight years later, Nikken’s already infamous reasoning for destroying the Grand Main Temple is to refute President Ikeda’s “great slander” — apparently, again, his questioning of the priesthood’s worldview.

The great slander Nikken talks of is all his own. His view that he’s superior to you essentially dismisses the Daishonin’s Buddhism. “I, myself, am *the* true Buddha,” he seems to say. “You should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with *this* conviction.”

Since we are true Buddhas ourselves, what Nikken says is an affront to who we are, our identity. And, as Buddhas, we will keep letting him know that, whether it’s in writing him letters protesting the Main Temple’s demolition or convincing friends that what he’s doing is wrong.

“We live in a cynical world, a *cynical* world,” says Tom Cruise in *Jerry Maguire* — it’s become a world in which it’s hard to trust people, and Nikken sure doesn’t make it any easier. But in the SGI, this organization of sincere people, we can learn to appreciate an amazing thing: Most people aren’t mean as much as they are kind. Most people aren’t bad as much as they are good. Most people aren’t like Nikken. People are, intrinsically, good, the Daishonin says. *You, yourself, are a true Buddha.*

President Ikeda expresses this teaching in a recent poem to mothers: “How awesome is your resolve / To live among the people / And be victorious alongside them / No matter

Title: Opinion: You Are a Buddha

Subject: World Tribune 06/12/98 n.3195 p.12 WT980612p12

Author: Jeff Farr

Keywords: Buddha Issue Opinion Reason Stands still Study Temple Tribune World

how others may harass you / Or how trying the challenges might be / Who could ever deny that you are Buddhas?"

Well, Nikken probably would, but that's what we now expect from him.

Eleven in a series

Title: Opinion: You Are a Buddha
Subject: World Tribune 06/12/98 n.3195 p.12 WT980612p12
Author: Jeff Farr
Keywords: Buddha Issue Opinion Reason Stands still Study Temple Tribune World