

PERSPECTIVE: Is This As Good As It Gets?

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What appears to be the worst is only a disguise for the best.

At a conference recently I got in a conversation about what is the best computer. It was clear that my points were overwhelming, and the other person really had no logical argument. Whether it is a computer or a camera, I always want the best. But — is what is best always so clear?

Even as a kid I was very discriminating. I had to have the red Schwinn racer, the Wilson A2000 professional model baseball glove that my dad had to buy on layaway. I think this desire has contributed to my inquisitive nature: Always wanting to know everything about any area of interest. It worked out great when I was looking for a spiritual practice. There was no way I could have settled for anything but this Buddhism. I remember being repelled by the phrase “true Buddhism,” but it is. There are no logical, theoretical or actual errors.

The planet I live on is the best in the universe. A magnificent place with a blue sky, billowy clouds, luscious green vegetation, pounding waves and winged creatures that serenade the sunrise. It has beautiful music, prose and images. People of various hues, shapes and natures. Where I live has clean air and majestic mountains.

I am married to the most amazing woman in the universe. She is compassionate, sensual, entertaining, a great cook and has the patience of a saint (after all, she has for 17 years put up with the rather selfish and immature person that I can be). I also have the best job in the world. It is fun, challenging, has the power of communication and influence, and I love going to work each day.

But is the best always a joyous thing? The best can also be the gut-wrenching, lesser-self-shattering obstacle that calls for every ounce of your energy. The perfect devil from within your life to make you grow even more. SGI President Ikeda said: “The Daishonin also tells us not to be discouraged if our lives aren’t of ease and comfort. If they were, we would never be tested or forge inner strength.... We can only achieve a brilliant, indestructible, diamondlike state of life by struggling with obstacles and hardships” (Dec. 16, 1996).

We are so fortunate to be alive at the end of the 20th century on planet Earth with President Ikeda. I am confident that each one of us who faces East in the morning and shows appreciation to the Buddhist gods for another day is in their “best” place. Many times I have wondered why-in-the-heck am I here, or why is this (whatever it is) happening to me? Then, facing my obstacle, I chant to turn poison into medicine. And each apparent detour has eventually been the correct path. The Gohonzon has always led me in the direction of real happiness.

On June 23, 1981, during a very dark time in my life, I trudged up the steps to my apartment and saw sitting on the steps a beautiful woman whom I would later marry. She could sense my despair and quoted the Goshō: “However, life itself is the most precious of all treasures. Even the treasures of the entire universe cannot equal the value of a single human life” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 267).

Each day I grow closer to understanding what she was trying to tell me. I am the best. You are the best. We all are the best. As Shakyamuni was trying to get us to understand, we all have the beautiful jewel of Buddhahood in our life.

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