

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON FAITH  
HOW DOES BUDDHISM VIEW THE SECULAR WORLD?  
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**Q: How does the benefit of Buddhist practice manifest itself in the secular world?  
And how should I deal with the everyday world?**

A: Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism not only enables us to develop every aspect of our lives, including our inner spirituality, but also helps us realize that our inner positive change can be reflected in the secular world, the ordinary world. Also, the Daishonin's Buddhism urges its practitioners to win in the secular world and contribute to the betterment of it instead of isolating themselves in their own spiritual world.

In "The Gift of Rice," the Daishonin quotes the Lotus Sutra passage "No affairs of life or work are in any way different from the ultimate reality [Buddhism]" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 269). The Daishonin teaches us that Buddhism pulsates in the way we live our lives on a moment-to-moment basis.

This means that all phenomena of life reflect the ultimate truth, the Mystic Law. This does not mean, however, that all religious practices are ultimately the same as Buddhist practice. In this regard, the Daishonin writes: "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the heart of the Lotus Sutra. It is like the soul of a person.... To mix other practices with this Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is a grave error" (MW-3, 266). Nikko Shonin likewise admonishes us to master the Daishonin's teachings first, before studying the teachings of others. So, when viewed with the supreme wisdom of Buddhism, the workings of the Mystic Law are apparent in all human affairs — but, at the same time, the truth of Buddhism can be diluted and obscured by mixing it with other forms of religious and spiritual practice that lead people to depend on some kind of outer, mysterious forces other than their innate Buddhahood.

In any case, an important point is that our Buddhist practice manifests itself in practical affairs. As is implied in the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra — which reads in part, "This reality consists of...appearance, nature...and their consistency from beginning to end" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 24) — the benefit of Buddhist practice is not a matter of mere imagination. While it actually first appears in our enriched, deepened, elevated and purified life-condition, this enhancement unerringly manifests in our ever-developing character, behavior and even in our environment.

We may tend to make distinctions between the spiritual and the secular. But, based on his enlightenment, the Daishonin teaches that on a deeper level, such distinctions are futile.

To have a clear understanding of the Daishonin's view here, it is vital to understand the subtle difference he makes between the provisional teachings and the Lotus Sutra in the following passage, again from "The Gift of Rice": "Whereas they [provisional teachings] relate secular matters in terms of Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra explains that secular matters ultimately are Buddhism" (MW-1, 269).

Buddhism in no way exists apart from the realities of daily living. In other words, what we are encouraged to do through our Buddhist practice is to constantly polish and solidify our innate life-condition of Buddhahood and live it to the utmost as ordinary human beings in the ordinary world.

Therefore, the crucial questions to ask in Buddhist practice are "What is my life-condi-

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tion?” and “What actions am I taking?” Ultimately, Buddhism shines in the splendor of our character and behavior — in how we creatively deal with our surroundings.

After attaining Buddhahood, Shakyamuni, instead of enjoying his enlightenment just for himself, took action to share with other humans the Law of life he had mastered. Until the last moment of his life, he never ceased his efforts to awaken the people to this. To a king who had converted to his teachings, Shakyamuni is said to have advised: “Rule over your nation based upon the Law rather than upon irrationality. Rule the people with correct principles.”

Shakyamuni’s enlightenment was expressed in spontaneous, practical action for the happiness of the people.

Similarly, by submitting the “Rissho Ankoku Ron” to Hojo Tokiyori, the most powerful man of the Kamakura era in Japan, the Daishonin remonstrated with him to make the entire nation aware of the correct way of life. He did so to bring peace and security to the society of his time.

The Daishonin thus lived Buddhism among the people. Never did the people’s happiness leave his mind.

The Law works in one’s life from moment to moment. And our strengthening of the function of the Mystic Law within, in other words, the polishing of our inherent Buddha wisdom and compassion, and our manifestation of them through action is the ideal in Buddhist practice.

In his speech to the youth division in this issue, SGI President Ikeda explains how first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi “declared that a religion that refuses to involve itself in society, that seeks only to provide personal satisfaction through a selfish pursuit of individual happiness, has no reason for existing.

“From early on,” President Ikeda says, “Mr. Makiguchi was absolutely clear on this: A self-serving religion, a closed, isolated religion, a religion that does not contribute to society, has no meaning. This was one starting point of the Soka Gakkai’s dynamic movement of religious revolution and human revolution — a movement pursued amid the reality of this *saha* world, a realm of suffering and endurance” (see p. 10).

As Buddhists, we are working in the *saha* world to relieve ourselves and others of human sufferings. This is always based on the Law that we find in the depths of our lives. In this way, each of us proves every day that “secular matters ultimately are Buddhism.”

**WT**