

YOUTH STUDY MARCH
CHANGING OURSELVES CHANGES THE WORLD AROUND US
BY KEN SARAGOSA, YOUTH STUDY COMMITTEE

Buddhism teaches that all change starts from within—that “a great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation, and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all mankind”(“Foreword,” *The Human Revolution*, vol. 1).

In truth, we don’t have the right or the power to force our will on anyone else. But Buddhism teaches that through a process of self-reformation, we not only improve our own lives, but we provide an example and an inspiration to others. In this way, when we speak to others—out of compassion and sincerity, not out of a desire to impose our will on them—we can have a meaningful impact on their lives. Changing ourselves is the key to changing the world around us.

“Buddhism expounds the principle of three thousand realms in a single life-moment. This principle holds that each life-moment is endowed with three thousand different functions, which influence not only our own lives but those all around us. They also influence society, our natural environment and the earth, and encompass the entire universe. Therefore, once you have decided to do something, the three thousand functions and your entire being start working to help you reach your goal. The entire universe also starts moving toward the fulfillment of your goal. If you pray, ‘This is how I want to be,’ and continue to work toward your dream, you will gradually realize the future you have envisaged” (Feb. 25, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 5).

Buddhism is so practical. We believe in big ideas and grand ideals—world peace, human rights, the power of a single person to make a great change. But every one of those big ideas has its root in the daily life of every single one of us.

Concepts like three thousand realms in a single life-moment (in Japanese, *ichinen sanzen*) seem so abstract and theoretical. But in actuality, they are meant to teach us something about how to live our own lives and how Buddhism enables us to take control over our own destiny.

In a way, it’s a matter of outlook. We can choose to live in a world where we have no control over anything, where things happen around us and to us, and where the problems we see everywhere are beyond our ability to do anything about them. Or we can live in a world where we are a participant, where we are a part of our environment, and we have something to say about anything that happens around us. Is your work environment bad? What can you do about it? Is school a lonely or alienating place? How can you do something about that through your own actions?

“An ascending life, where you keep striving to grow and improve—this is what we mean by human revolution. Human revolution doesn’t mean becoming something special or different from who you are; it simply means striving to improve yourself, no matter what challenges you face. Your future self does not exist in some far-off place; it exists in the heart and mind of your present self. That is why you have to face and tackle the realities that confront you. Just wishing to be a certain way and not making any concrete efforts will get you nowhere” (Feb. 25, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 5).

The most important thing is to pursue our dreams. Human revolution—changing our own lives for the better, and by doing so, influencing our family,

friends, and communities — starts with trying to become something more than what we are. This is an ascending life, a life of growth and improvement. The loftiest Buddhist principles come down to enabling each of us to lead the most valuable, happy and meaningful life. And we practice Buddhism so that we can make concrete and practical efforts to improve ourselves and realize our dreams — every single day.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does “human revolution” mean to you?
2. What is the relationship between pursuing your own dreams and goals, and making a change in the world?