On Repaying Debts of Gratitude
Living Buddhism Jul-Aug, 2009

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Repaying Our Debts of Gratitude

To repay one's debts of gratitude is the **highest virtue**.

Neglecting gratitude is a reflection of a life **controlled by innate negativity**.

As we each deepen our faith in the Mystic Law, **break through our fundamental darkness** and live true to our **greater self**, we will come to feel **boundless appreciation** for all those around us and for all who have nurtured and helped us become who we are.

And we will confidently make our way along the **invigorating path** of recognizing and **repaying our debts of gratitude**.
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**Greater Self or Lesser Self**

In contrast, those who fail to refresh their faith, who give in to negativity and are shackled by attachments to the lesser self invariably become ruled by arrogance, cowardice or anger.

As they descend, their ability to appreciate the goodness of others wanes until, eventually, they neither recognize nor repay the kindnesses others have done for them.

It all comes down to either living based on the greater self or remaining attached to the lesser self.

Ultimately, this difference in the fundamental orientation of our attitude determines whether we will lead lives of gratitude or ingratitude. (LB-72)
The Human Being: A Magnificent Cosmos

In 1994, President Ikeda delivered his second lecture at Moscow State University on "The Human Being: A Magnificent Cosmos." In this lecture he stated:

"I am one who believes that absolute and indestructible happiness in life lies only in working selflessly for others, while expanding one's inner realm from the lesser self caught up in the snares of egotism to the greater self fused with universal life."
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**Wisdom Comes from Conquering Ignorance**

“Recognizing debts of gratitude expresses the Buddhist spirit of **cultivating the richest possible humanity**, while repaying that gratitude is the hallmark of a life of **wisdom that comes from conquering fundamental ignorance**.

Hence, the lives of genuine Buddhist practitioners always shine with the inner light of appreciation and gratitude.” *(LB-73)*

"Ever since I began to study the Law handed down from Shakyamuni Buddha and undertook the practice of the Buddhist teachings, I have believed it is most important to understand one's obligations to others, and **made it my first duty to repay such debts of kindness**

("Conversation between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man," WND- 1, 122).
Three Great Secret Laws

“The first ... is the object of devotion of the essential teaching. In the Gohonzon, Nichiren embodied the supremely noble life-state of his own enlightenment. He did so in order to enable each person to become aware of this state of life that inherently and equally exists in all human beings.

The second ... is the daimoku of the essential teaching. This consists of our chanting Nam-myoho-ренге-kyo and teaching others to do the same Nam-myoho-ренге-kyo being the name of this noble state of life, or Buddha nature."

The sanctuary of the essential teaching, the third of the Three Great Secret Laws, serves as the foundation for constructing a harmonious community of believers in which members encourage one another to maintain firm faith in Nam-myoho-ренге-kyo, vow to propagate the Law and actualize the principle of establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land.” (LB-76)
The Teaching That Clarifies the Cause of Suffering

“Since the earliest times, religious teachings have been expounded with the aim of relieving human suffering. There is a significant difference, however, between a teaching that clarifies the fundamental cause of suffering and one that fails to do so. Teachings that offer only a shallow understanding of life's truths will have a limited scope and be short-lived.

In contrast, the teaching of Nam-myoho-ryoh –kyo is the fundamental Law of life. Therefore, at present and for eternity, it will lead people to enlightenment. The power of Nam-myoho-ryoh –kyo will endure for eternity because the Law itself is infinitely profound and because of the selfless struggles Nichiren underwent to establish and propagate it. Because there is depth in the teaching accompanied by a profound struggle, kosen-rufu will advance and be achieved.”

(LB-79)
Widespread Propagation is the Fundamental Wish

"The Buddha vows to save all people. And widespread propagation of the correct teaching that continues after the Buddha's passing is the fundamental wish of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures and all Buddhas throughout time and space. ...

The virtue of parent referents the function of nurturing and caring for people. ...

The virtue of the teacher represents the function of correctly guiding people. ...

The virtue of the sovereign represents the function of protecting others." (LB.81-82)
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_Buddhism Always Comes Down to Action!_

We must never forget that Nichiren demonstrated a living example of the virtues of parent, teacher and sovereign through his fierce and selfless struggle to propagate the correct teaching in the evil age of the Latter Day. **Buddhism always comes down to action.** (LB-83)

Inheriting Nichiren's selfless spirit ... Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, stood up to actualize kosen-rufu in society. Thanks to the appearance of the Soka Gakkai, an organization dedicated to carrying out the Buddha's decree, the "great river of kosen-rufu" with Nichiren's teachings as its source now flows powerfully throughout the world in the 21st century. **This is indisputable.** The establishment of **the foundation of worldwide kosen-rufu is complete.** The time has at last arrived to extend this great river into an ocean of kosen-rufu encompassing the globe. (LB-83)
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Repaying the Mentor by Sharing Buddhism

Ikeda: “The "Entrustment" chapter further says that those who spread the teaching "will have repaid the debt of gratitude" that [they] owe to the Buddhas" (LS22, 278).

The sole prayer of the Buddha and the mentor is for kosen-rufu. That is why exerting oneself in spreading the teaching is what it means to truly repay one's debt of gratitude to one's mentor.

To forget one's debt of gratitude is not Buddhism; in fact, it is not the true way of humanity. Buddhism teaches how to live as a human being. A Buddhist must therefore be someone who is aware of and endeavors to repay his or her debt of gratitude.

Saito: I think it is vital that we never forget our debt of gratitude to the SGI, which has taught us about the Daishonin's Buddhism.” (WLS-5 p.246)
A Subtle Difference in Spirit Produces Diametrically Different Results

Commenting on a passage from the Lotus Sutra President Ikeda said: “The sincerity of his efforts to repay his debt of gratitude illuminates the world. We, too, have been able to become happy thanks to the Gohonzon. And thanks to the SGI, which has taught us about the Gohonzon, we have learned the correct path in life.

If we cherish the spirit to repay this debt of gratitude in the depths of our hearts, then our good fortune will increase in leaps and bounds. No matter how much action someone might seem to be taking outwardly, if they lack the spirit to repay their debt of gratitude, their arrogance will destroy their good fortune. Consequently, they will be unable to genuinely transform their state of life. A subtle difference in our spirit, or ichinen, produces diametrically different results.” (WLS-6 p.13)
"Nichiren Daishonin further explains that the benefit received from widely propagating Nam-myoho-rengi-kyo during the Latter Day of the Law surpasses that of Dengyo, T'ien-t'ai, Nagarjuna and Mahakashyapa. Striving to free people from suffering at the most fundamental level in this defiled latter age is an action that brings immeasurable benefit. Hence, Nichiren says, "A hundred years of practice in the Land of Perfect Bliss cannot compare to the benefit gained from one day's practice in the impure world."

The most trying times represent the most wonderful opportunities for challenging ourselves in our Buddhist practice and for deepening our faith. All of our arduous efforts during those times will turn into incalculable benefit."
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**Life-Changing Practice**

“We who dedicate our lives to a grand mission will face even more daunting obstacles. The key, however, is to use these obstacles as a powerful impetus to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and actively challenge ourselves to overcome the problems we face.

Each day we spend engaged in this manner is one of life-changing practice, and the continuation of such practice over time produces the great benefit of attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.” (LB-85)
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The Disciple Is Like the Plant and the Teacher, the Earth

Nichiren says that “the disciple is like the plant and the teacher, the earth. The flower of victory that the disciple causes to blossom will unfailingly return to the earth as the good fortune of the mentor. And without doubt a new flower of victory will fragrantly bloom from this earth of mentor and disciple.

I have served Mr. Toda with that conviction for the past 61 years. Even now, every day I am devoting myself to kosen-rufu with a fresh determination to reply to his expectations. That's why I'm not afraid of anything.

Mr. Toda used to always say, "To have an honorable disciple is a mentor's greatest happiness." I am confident that Mr. Toda would be pleased by my efforts.” (LB-89)
The Best Way to Repay Our Mentor Is Through Our Own Victories

Win without fail!

Triumph in the end even over the harshest reality through prayer based on a vow!

Break through all hardships to ring the bell of victory!

I always recall the compassionate visage of Mr. Toda, who believed in the triumph of his disciples.

The best way to repay our mentor is through our own victories. Let's set our sights on November 18, the Soka Gakkai's 78th anniversary.

The time has arrived to create a fresh record of victories of mentor and disciple.

I believe in the absolute victory of my beloved disciples. And I am especially looking forward to the victory of the youth who will carry on as my genuine disciples. (LB-89)
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This presentation was assembled by Joseph de Melo on behalf of the Florida Zone. Any comments or recommendations are welcome and appreciated.

Joseph de Melo
FL Zone Study Committee
demelojo@gmail.com
561-603-0039