

DILIGENTLY "CULTIVATING THE BUDDHIST HEART"



DILIGENT PRACTICE IS LIKE AN OX MOVING A HEAVY LOAD

[Monk Saigyō (1118-1190)]

This poem celebrates the new year by describing the cheerful mood of spring's arrival at every home.
 "The front of every gate / Is decorated with small pine trees - / Spring is coming, / From house to house."

I hope that all of us will together enjoy a cheerful & healthy 2024, feeling refreshed at New Year's as the invigorating scenery of Japan.

[We]

learn the teachings of the Buddha because we hope that by doing so, we can take even a step or two forward in improving ourselves as human beings.

We are taught that this is hardly wishful thinking because

By setting out to live like the Buddha & practicing diligently as we follow the teachings

[We can always]

Find joy in evolving as human beings and improving ourselves.

[However]

Many people hearing about diligence & practicing the Buddha Way suppose that

it is only possible if you are an extraordinary person who makes a tremendous effort.

[But in the Sutta Nipata]

Shakyamuni says, "Diligent practice is like an ox moving a heavy load, carrying us to a state of peace & tranquility."

There is not the slightest trace of harshness or sternness in this expression.

Instead, an image of

- An ox slowly, quietly pulling a cart.
- Or a cow silently pulling a plow & furrowing a field.

[With this in mind, I wrote *Cultivating the Buddhist Heart*]

- Universality transcends differences in sects & sacred texts.
- Buddhism teaches as the basis for living as a human being.

I believe that simply accepting what Shakyamuni wished for us & wanted to convey to us, & reasonably putting that into practice in our daily lives, is the way to diligently pursue a state of peace and tranquility.

KEEPING TO IT, CONTINUOUSLY

[Founder Niwano]

"Human beings are all the same and all things are one. These are none other than the basic ideas of Buddhism."

If we open our eyes to these basic ideas, our way of seeing things changes & our way of life changes, and if our world becomes a place where there are many people who have this kind of thinking, we will all be able to live together in harmony.

Buddhism teaches us that.

[President Niwano]

Even though we may belong to different religious organizations or sects,

"Every person has a life that is precious & equally worthy of respect" and "We are all fellow participants in the one life of the universe,"

And that we all express these teachings in different ways, according to our individual natures & diverse needs.

[Zen Master Reirin Yamada]

"No matter what Zen Master Dogen saw or heard, he felt as though it were he, himself, who did it..."

What we call 'other people,' Dogen called 'the self of others.' While other people were still other people, he felt as though they were also his own self & therefore, their joy was the joy of his own self & their sadness, the sadness of his own self.

Yamada called this "the true way of life for human beings."

[While rigorous practice]

of the Buddha Way is certainly diligence,

Whenever our minds are led astray by greedy desire, anger, or jealousy in the course of our daily lives,

returning to the mindset of "all human beings are the same" & "all things are one" is also a form of diligence, & continuously keeping to that mindset is, for we who lead human lives, a way of life rooted in Shakyamuni's wishes.

YOUR TAKEAWAY

I hope that we will cultivate our hearts so that this mindset supports our causal words & actions every day & we move forward, in health & peace, from one day to the next.