ForeWord Reviews

The Buddha in Your Mirror: Practical Buddhism and the Search for Self

Greg Martin
Ted Morino
Woody Hochswender
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If one believes the proposition that "Life is a moment-to-moment battle between one's Buddha nature and the workings of delusion," then one will willingly engage in the processes to attain that "Buddha nature." Considering the persistent media patter attesting to the postmodern malaise most Americans suffer—workaholism, addiction, obesity, materialism, and the quest for meaning—one can easily accept that the existentialist task of finding meaning in life has as much currency today as ever. The ancient teaching and wisdom of Buddhism may well provide a path leading toward happiness and a vibrant sense of self—"one's Buddha nature." The Buddha in the Mirror outlines the relatively direct approach espoused by Daisaku Ikeda and the followers of Nichiren Buddhism.

Buddhism often appears to be, as the authors say, "a beautiful philosophy." However, they reiterate throughout this straightforward book that Buddhism "is about action," and in Nichiren Buddhism this action is the practice of the "eight fold way" as well as chanting. Following a summary of Buddhist principles, particularly as expounded by 12th-century Japanese master Nichiren and his modern interpreter Daisaku Ikeda, the authors-all followers of Daisaku Ikeda-extol the various virtues that come from chanting the Lotus Sutra. According to Nichiren's theory, when we chant the Lotus Sutra the "sound we are making [?] is, in truth, the rhythm of the universe." By chanting we acquire "Wisdom, an understanding of the eternity of life, persistence and tolerance, serenity, feelings of compassion, enlightenment." These are lofty goals, yet, considering the ubiquitous sense of meaninglessness that pervades our culture, these are laudable goals.

The Buddha in Your Mirror promises to help the reader move beyond delusion to an understanding of one's true self. Given the simplicity of the authors' method-chanting-one can ask if such practice is simply another simple piece of advice in the self-help deluge or if it truly is a remnant of an ancient wisdom to put to beneficial use. "The adventure begins the very first time you chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and introduce yourself to the Buddha in your mirror."

Duncan Sprattmoran