



A BLOSSOMING LIFE

Nomsa Mdlalose-Dyantyi describes how her Buddhist practice has enabled her to expand her life beyond her imagination.

I started practicing Nichiren Buddhism in May 2001, after being on a spiritual journey for a year or so. I was introduced to the practice by a friend's friend. It was the first time I heard of Buddhism. I was in my early thirties and was working as a storyteller.

At the time I was very worried that my life and career had stopped moving forward. I went to school during the height of the uprising against apartheid, the period of 1976 to the 1990s. It was a norm then that classes would be disrupted until examination times. I therefore took about ten years to matriculate and only matriculated at the age of 29. After matriculating, I worked hard to achieve a degree in Communication but was unable to make a career with my degree.

This was where I was in life when I met Buddhism.

APPLYING THE PRACTICE

I chanted and did gongyo every single day without fail, chanting for at least thirty minutes each morning and evening and got involved in SGI activities. I began to feel wisdom emerging from within my life and benefits came in one after another. One of these was that my relationship with money improved, and a year after I began chanting I bought a house. Having experienced the power of the Gohonzon myself, I naturally began to tell others about it.

Initially, I found this hard. In my observation, the society has become very materialistic and one has to have lots of money or material possessions

before one is respected and recognised. Because of this, I decided that to introduce others to Buddhism, I need to use my life as an example. That made me even more determined to win in my daily life, and I made the determination that I would further my studies and improve my qualifications.

In 2005, I won a scholarship to do a Master's degree in Storytelling in America, at the only university in the world with such a program. I was in my early 40s by then. Before I left for the US, I sought guidance with the senior leader who emphasized that over the next ten years I should chant hard to achieve something of great value to my life.

A TEN-YEAR PURSUIT

In the US, I connected with a local SGI group and the members supported me wholeheartedly. After successfully achieving my Master of Arts in Storytelling, I returned to South Africa in 2007. I still had more years to achieve valuable things in my life, and since I had no plan for my next achievement, I chanted to find direction.

Six months after my return, I was offered a scholar residency at the University of Witwatersrand, which led to my being employed in a part-time lecturing position. This was an achievement, but I continued to chant about what more I could do. I decided I needed to

take new action, so, in 2008, for the first time in my practice, I chanted one million daimoku, praying for clarity in my life.

I completed that million daimoku in three-and-a-half months. Immediately after I chanted the last daimoku and closed my altar, as I turned to tidy up my chanting space, the phone rang. A person informed me that my organization, Kwesukela Storytelling Academy (KSA), had been approved for a very substantial funding for a storytelling programme to take place during the 2010 Soccer World Cup in South Africa. KSA received over R16 million in funding.

A year later, we received the money, executed the task from start to finish with very minor challenges and reported to the funder. Afterwards we learned that among the 2010 special project grants, Kwesukela was the only organization that was implemented successfully. Through that project, I trained over 100 people in various skills including storytelling. Today, a number of them are working as storytellers throughout the country. Other skills imparted included project management, writing and research. Two of the storytellers have since joined SGI-SA, while others support our activities, such as our Hope Talks Events.

A MIGHTY SWORD

A few years ago, I was recruited into a business incubator programme run by the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry which was set up to provide the previously disadvantaged, especially, with business skills and support. The story company I have established produces storytelling products like talking





dolls, books, performances, animation and film. I have also written and published seven children's books, five of which have been approved by the Department of Basic Education.

In July 2019, I was awarded a PhD in African Literature and Linguistics by the University of the Witwatersrand. Achieving this doctorate degree was a tremendous struggle that required me to chant deeply because it pushed me to my furthest limits, to spaces that by myself I would not sustain any energy.

I recently completed chanting 4 million daimoku in just over a year. I am also

continuing to read President Ikeda's *Human Revolution* and am now re-reading it for the third time. This has helped me deepen my faith. I want to share this Buddhism with others and have committed myself to introduce at least two people this year. Four of the people I have introduced have received the Gohonzon including my husband. I am continuing to chant in order to reveal my true potential and understand my mission. In that way, it is easy for me to introduce others. Nichiren Daishonin writes that a sword is useless in the hands of a coward. So, I am using the

sword of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to courageously expand my life. I am always inspired by these words of Ikeda Sensei: "There may be times when life seems gloomy and dull, when we feel stuck in some situation or other, when we are negative toward everything, when we feel lost and bewildered, not sure which way to turn—at such times we must transform our passive mid-set and determine, 'I will proceed along this path, I will pursue my mission today.' When we do so a genuine springtime arrives in our hearts, and flowers start to blossom"

(*Daily Encouragement*, March 20). ■