

Introductory Study Course



This course is designed to be an introduction to the Buddhist concept of a single moment of life comprising three thousand realms, *ichinen sanzen*. The course will be four sessions, plus an introductory session to introduce participants, choose study partners and briefly outline the sessions of the course.

In addition to examining this fundamental teaching of Buddhism, we wish to stimulate self-reflection on how we are living and interacting in our daily life, to encourage dialogue between participants and inspire interest in further study of Nichiren's Buddhism. A more in-depth study of this principle will be published in the October and November issues of Indigo this year.

The topics for each session are:

Introductory Session: Brief outline of the history of *ichinen sanzen*

Session one: *Exploring the dynamism of life*
Three thousand realms – the whole picture
The ten worlds – the first component – 10

Session two: *Revealing the limitless potential of humanity*
The mutual possession of the ten worlds – the second component 10 x 10
Simultaneity of cause and effect

Session three: *Activating our lives with dynamic determined action*
The ten factors – The third component – 10 x 10 x 10

Session four: *Transforming our environment through self-reformation*
The three realms – the fourth component 10 x 10 x 10 x 3

Sessions one and two are in this issue of Indigo

Sessions three and four will be in the May issue.

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INTRODUCTION MEETING

1. For the introductory session the facilitator will need to introduce all the participants, establish study partners and allocate the session for each set of study partners to make presentations. Facilitators will need to help the group members choose study partners who will meet between sessions to discuss the session topics and to prepare for presenting at each session. Allocate a set of different partners to present for each of the future sessions. The study partners are encouraged to meet in between each study session to discuss the material whether they are presenting the next week or not.

2. Task for Session One - All study partners to read material for Session one and pick a point to highlight at Session one.

3. The following text introduces the history of the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life. Please read the material together.

Buddhism is a teaching and practice for ordinary people. Shakyamuni made it his life's mission to enable human beings to transcend the sufferings of daily existence. He was called the "Buddha" or in other words the one enlightened to the true reality of life. The essence of his teaching, contained in his *Lotus Sutra* teaching, was that we can attain enlightenment as we are and in this present life moment. However, as Buddhism spread throughout Asia after Shakyamuni's death, the heart of this teaching of absolute hope became lost. It was in this context that the Chinese monk Chih-hi, also known as T'ien t'ai, undertook a systematic examination of the various sutras of Shakyamuni and their commentaries with the aim of clarifying their relative worth. He classified the sutras chronologically as well as from the standpoint of their profundity. He determined that the *Lotus Sutra* was the most profound teaching of Shakyamuni as it contained the ultimate truth of the 3000 realms in a single moment of life. The *Lotus Sutra* was the only sutra to assert that all people including women, the evil and the young and old had the potential to attain Buddhahood within their lifetime. All the other sutras ascertained that enlightenment in one's lifetime is beyond the scope of even the most dedicated full-time practitioner of Buddhism. The *Lotus Sutra* is exceptional in that it teaches that the enlightenment of the Buddha can be attained here and now by every single living being, just as they are. As a result of his explorations, T'ien-t'ai propounded the view that all the other Buddhist sutras should be regarded as preparations for the *Lotus Sutra* and therefore may be discarded. He also systemised the principle of three thousand realms in a single life moment. Referred to as the theoretical teaching of *ichinen sanzen*, he founded a school based on the *Lotus Sutra* which flourished in China from 618 to 907. When Buddhism was introduced to Japan in the sixth century, the Tendai school, as it was known there, similarly flourished as one of the principal Buddhist sects of Japan's cultural golden age (794-1185). Later, however, the Tendai school became corrupted by the accumulation of great wealth and political influence and lost its original purpose- to save all living beings. Once again Buddhism fell into confusion and it wasn't until the 13th century when Nichiren Daishonin, a young priest who studied the writings of T'ien-t'ai, re-established the supremacy of the *Lotus Sutra*. He challenged the prevailing schools of Buddhism that no longer taught that the common people could attain enlightenment or change their destiny. Other schools' interpretation of Buddhism disempowered ordinary people and left them at the mercy of government authorities and priests who exploited them for their own ends. Nichiren Daishonin, with great courage and insight, overcame relentless persecution by these authorities, in order to bring the *Lotus Sutra* back into its rightful place as the means to overcome authoritarianism and bring happiness to all humankind and thus promote the empowerment and equality of ordinary people. Nichiren reinstated Buddhism as a teaching of absolute hope, encouraging ordinary people with the existence of enlightenment as a life state they could access through the invocation of Nam-myō-hō-rengē-kyō. His interpretation of *ichinen sanzen* as not just a theory but a dynamic life philosophy, reveals the transformative potential contained in life itself. From this life philosophy we can open up to the possibility of living an empowered life, discarding any victim like status, and positively contributing to our environment.

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SESSION ONE

Exploring the dynamism of life

Aim: To examine the Buddhist view of life and explore how this opens up creative potential in people's lives.

Guidelines for Group Facilitators:

1. Introduce study partners to present 2-3 points from the material and relate it to their experience.
2. Ensure that everyone in the group gets a chance to speak in the dialogue.
3. Discuss "For Discussion" questions.
4. Remind all parties to meet and discuss material for Session two.
5. Task for Session two - Allocate a set of study partners to share an experience or an impression based on Session two material. 5-10 minutes



Three thousand realms in a life moment

The whole picture

The three thousand realms, or the entire phenomenal world, exist in a single moment of life. The number three thousand realms comes from the following calculation: 10 (Ten Worlds) x 10 (Ten Worlds = mutual possession) x 10 (ten factors) x 3 (three realms of existence). Life at any moment manifests one of the Ten Worlds. Each of these worlds possesses the potential for all ten within itself, and this "mutual possession," or mutual inclusion, of the Ten Worlds is represented as 100 possible worlds. Each of these hundred worlds possesses the ten factors, making one thousand life potentials, and these operate within each of the three realms of existence, thus making three thousand realms. Our life state, which encompasses all of existence, at every moment, is reflected in the three realms of our physical bodies, our spiritual self and in our environment.

T'ient'ai systemised all these concepts in the theory of three thousand realms in a single moment of life (*ichinen sanzen*). Nichiren revealed the essential teaching of the *Lotus Sutra* based on the true cause (the eternal nine worlds), the true effect (eternal Buddhahood), and the true land (the eternal land or realm of the environment). This explanation of life when applied through the practice of Nichiren Buddhism expresses the truth that all people have the potential for happiness in any circumstance or state of life. As cause and effect are one and cannot be separated, our actions and behaviour are both the cause and manifestation of our state of life. The cause of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo simultaneously manifests through our behaviour as the positive and creative expression of each of the nine worlds. In this way, our daily life can be a creative expression of hope and positive transformation due to the struggles we face in the nine worlds (daily life).

Ichinen sanzen is thus a teaching of hope. A modern expression of *ichinen sanzen* is Human Revolution. President Ikeda's vision of Human Revolution states that "A great revolution in just one single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a society and, further, will enable a change in the destiny of humankind." The reality that allows this change to occur is explained in *ichinen sanzen*. When a fundamental change takes place in our hearts, the effect is immediately reflected in our environment. For example, in a relationship in which we are struggling we will express certain emotions, such as self-righteousness and anger, that may alienate ourselves from the other person. Through transforming these emotions into a desire or a determination to engage wholeheartedly with a concern for the other person's happiness, the environment reflects this change in our heart. The effect occurs immediately within our heart, which has expanded, and transforms both the relationship and the other person as their life responds to the change. The belief in both ourselves and others gives confidence to transform conflict through dialogue. As President Ikeda said in his most recent article in the Japan Times, "To

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have faith in the promise of dialogue is to believe in the promise of humanity". This type of hopeful paradigm shift goes against the grain of humanity's history but holds the key to humanity's future. Delusion expresses itself as doubt in our own and others innate strength and potential to change a difficult relationship into a fulfilling and harmonious relationship. Enlightenment is expressed in our confident and consistent behaviour based on the belief that we can transform our present circumstances through our human revolution.



The Ten Worlds

The first of the component theories of Ichinen Sanzen

Buddhism concerns itself with life's most important questions such as "What is the meaning of Life?" and "What is Happiness?". To this end it is necessary to start with a framework, the most fundamental of which is the theory of the Ten Worlds. What is the significance of the Ten Worlds? From a Buddhist standpoint it is about giving a profound perspective on our lives. Buddhism does not classify people according to ethnicity, race, social standing or status but rather looks to positively transform the condition of people's hearts or minds. In this way Buddhism seeks to transcend the human tendency to discriminate according to outward appearances or status. Through his examination of the *Lotus Sutra* T'ien t'ai identified ten basic states of life that all people experience from day to day, hour to hour and moment to moment. These 'life conditions' are descriptions of life's expressions observed by the Buddha. They describe the expressions of life that may be manifested at any time during our daily life.

Here's an example that most people can probably relate to – let's say you are driving down the freeway and the radio is playing your favourite song, so you're feeling pretty good, peaceful and calm. You are in a state of Tranquility. Suddenly, a car swerves across your lane, narrowly missing you.

Instantly you are overwhelmed with Fear for your safety. But when this moment passes you feel Anger and you react by thinking "how dare someone cut me off!" Then your mobile phone goes off and you feel Rapture because you think it's your new girlfriend ringing. But when you can't get to the phone in time you Panic thinking she won't call again. Does this scenario seem familiar? For some people, this roller coaster ride of emotions may be an all too frequent occurrence. While it is safe to say that external circumstances, like the one described above, can play a role in affecting how we feel (i.e our life states or life condition), the same circumstances do not always produce the same reaction every time. Furthermore, different people, faced with the same situation may react entirely differently. Most perceptions of Buddhism are that a Buddha does not even have to face such situations – they are in meditative retreat. Nichiren Buddhism, however, is concerned with transforming our daily reality, not escaping from it. With a sense of meaning and purpose, we have the opportunity not to be distracted and affected by such endless annoyances. Rather, actively engaged in developing ourselves so as to transform our life, we positively elevate our life condition and are able to gain the wisdom to perceive life as it is without always descending into a state of suffering.

How does Buddhism explain such variability? Buddhism teaches that one's behaviour is the result of the interaction between the environment (external events) and one's inner tendencies or dominant life states. These life states or life conditions (that drive our expression, action and behaviour) are the ten worlds. We may commonly tend to revert to one or two dominant life conditions which end up controlling our minds and therefore our lives, often leaving us feeling that we cannot change our life, which in turn may breed a fatalistic and passive view of life. Nichiren's Buddhism, however, places an emphasis on being able to transform the expression of these negative life states so that we are able to live a happy and fulfilled life, unswayed by external influences: to "be the master of your mind

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instead of allowing your mind to master you.” (WND1p502) It is through cultivating the world of Buddhahood, which like the other nine worlds is inherent in human life, that this mastery can be achieved. The Buddha revealed this potential through his behaviour as a human being. Indeed our cultivating this state of life in ourselves and enabling others to do the same is the essence of the the Ten Worlds.

The Ten Worlds or states of life when considered individually, from the least to the most desirable are: Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realisation, *Bodhisattva* and Buddhahood.

Hell

Characterised by an overwhelming aversion to life itself, hopelessness and helplessness abound. One is completely overwhelmed by suffering and self-destructive tendencies. For example, persons who suffer from chronic pain (physical or mental) may be plunged into a sense of hopelessness and would describe their condition as a “living hell”, unable to find relief from their suffering. People in this world feel trapped and deadlocked – they cannot see beyond their immediate suffering and for them, the future is bleak.

Hunger

As the name suggests, Hunger is a state where desire is dominant and elicits feelings of dissatisfaction. Examples of common desires include: wealth, power, fame, food, sex, love and many others. Whereas hunger is a necessary signal for survival, greed is a negative characteristic of the world of hunger. The consequences of insatiable desire or greed can be seen all around us. Possibly the biggest one is the destruction of our natural environment through mass production and mass consumption. This could be viewed as the result of spiritual isolation that has us desperately trying to fill the void in our lives with lots of ‘stuff’. As Gandhi once said, “There is enough for every-

body’s need, but not for everybody’s greed”.

Animality

Is about instinct and survival without the restraining virtues of reason or morality. It “is where you are dominated by your animal instincts – for food, sleep, sex and survival....We all have it because we are animals. And stupidity’s also part of Animality because we ... don’t think about the consequences of our actions. It’s the Law of the Jungle, might is right, pecking orders, hierarchy.”¹ In modern day terms it could be a state lacking in awareness, when we just do what we want without considering the needs of others in the broader context of belonging to a family, community and global society.

Animality has us disrespecting perceived ‘inferiors’ while at the same time ingratiating ourselves to ‘superiors’. For example, it can be seen when the junior executive in a prestigious firm unnecessarily patronises the administrative assistant, while cowering to the senior executive.

Anger

Is characterised by a state of animosity and aggression, lashing out to those around us with uncontrollable temper or inwardly building resentment and frustration. Dominated by ego, arrogance and pride, it is difficult to reveal one’s true self and to see the true potential of others.

The above four worlds are known as the four evil paths because when we base our actions on these states of life, they lead to great suffering for oneself and others. If we cannot transform these worlds into a positive expression we may find it difficult to extricate ourselves. The negative tendencies of these life states dominate our life state and we create a downward spiral of suffering. For example, if we find ourselves in the world of Hunger it can be all too easy to fall into the world of Hell when something we intensely crave is not fulfilled. As a result we may lash out at others with Anger and become totally focused on our self and our own

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needs, that is, Animality. In other words, we find ourselves trapped in a vicious cycle of negativity and suffering.

Humanity or tranquility

Is a neutral state of life, characterised by calmness and peace. In this world we behave in a conscious and civilised way and we are able to exercise dispassionate judgment and distinguish between right and wrong.

Heaven or Rapture

Is often referred to as relative happiness. It comes when a desire is fulfilled or when we experience relief from suffering. For example, winning lotto, getting a great job, going on holiday, recovering from cancer etc. It is easy to feel happy when times are good and life is easy, however, the reality is that the joy derived from receiving such things is fleeting, as it is dependent on external circumstances. Happiness that is dependent on external circumstances can never be truly fulfilling.

The above six life states are called the six paths and refer to worlds that are primarily reactive to external stimuli and are transient in nature. That is, they emerge according to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. In these states of life, there is little self reflection and without awareness of the existence of other potentials in life we tend to blame the environment for negative events or circumstances. In other words, they are paths that do not lead to happiness, rather they lead to delusion and suffering. Those who make an effort to improve themselves, however, can experience the four noble worlds. These worlds require belief in the potential to elevate our state of life, self-discipline and a conscious effort to sustain and express these states of life.

Learning

Is the pursuit of self-reformation, self-development and knowledge. Based on efforts to improve

The Ten Worlds

The Ten Worlds is representative of a philosophy of hope that can overcome all trials and adversity in any environment and it is faith in the Mystic Law, life's great potential, that enables us to do this. Faith is the world of Buddhahood.

our circumstances, we learn through reading and gaining knowledge from others' experiences and ideas.

Realisation

May be viewed as - "a type of enlightenment that suddenly comes to one in connection with some phenomenon observed or experienced."² Although similar to the world of Learning, this world differs because knowledge is gained through direct observation of life and the application of this learning through our own expression. It could be said to be more experiential and is no longer theoretical, abstract knowledge.

The worlds of Learning and Realisation are often referred to as the two vehicles as they are the means by which we are carried into the four noble worlds (Learning, Realisation, *Bodhisattva* and Buddhahood). In these worlds we are able to understand the suffering experienced by a life dominated by the six lower worlds. In the state of Realisation we can gain awareness and wisdom about the nature of life.

Bodhisattva

In contrast to the world of Learning and Realisation, this world is characterised by the expression of compassion. In this life condition we take on the suffering of others as our own. We are able to overcome self-centredness and egoism because we

² Ikeda, *Life: An Enigma, a Precious Jewel*; p119

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apply ourselves to the happiness of others, freely giving our time and effort. The *Bodhisattva* life condition, in its enlightened aspect, is not limited by feeling sorry or pity for another. Rather the “character of the *Bodhisattva* is completely altruistic, and the essence of the *Bodhisattva’s* compassion is to deliver others from suffering and grant them happiness”³. The *Bodhisattva* life condition does not give rise to judgement about the other person’s suffering nor do we have an agenda connected to the help we give. Unbegrudging, it is based on respect and belief in the inherent potential of each individual to transform their circumstance.

While deluded, one is called a common mortal, but once enlightened, he is called a Buddha. Even a tarnished mirror will shine like a jewel if it is polished. A mind which presently is clouded by illusions originating from the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but once it is polished it will become clear, reflecting the enlightenment of immutable truth. Arouse deep faith and polish your mirror night and day. How should you polish it? Only by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. (WND1p3)

Buddhahood

Is the life condition that enables us to use wisdom, courage and compassion to lead ourselves and others to happiness. In this world of integrity and creativity, our fullest potential to experience living in a way true to ourselves is manifested in freedom and joy in every moment, regardless of the situation in which we might find ourselves. That is, even in the face of problems or stressful life events, we are able to challenge these head on without fear or doubt about our ability to do so. This is true freedom, as we joyfully take responsibility for our lives based on a belief in others’ potential to reveal the state of Buddhahood and transform our lives. This elevated state of life could be said to break through seemingly insurmountable suffering. Most importantly, Buddhahood can only be expressed in the nine worlds, in other words, in our daily behaviour.

Buddha literally means, “Awakened One” but this does not mean a Buddha is a special, super-natural being who exists far removed from everyday life. On the contrary, a Buddha is an ordinary human being, who, awakened to the fundamental Law of life and the universe, uses the Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo as their teacher and therefore, experiences absolute happiness no matter what the circumstance. This fundamental law as expounded by Nichiren is captured by a single phrase: Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. We use the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to reveal the state of Buddhahood allowing this creative and compassionate expression to become our dominant life condition and thus experience unparalleled joy. When we tap into this law, through the act of chanting it, “The entire universe is like our own personal bank account. The amount of fortune we can withdraw depends solely on our faith”⁴

³ *ibid*; p125

⁴ Ikeda, *Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, p32

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Establishing a solid self

For human beings it is extremely difficult to both establish a solid self and manifest true respect for others. Those possessing a strong spirit of independence often have an equally strong tendency to look down on others. And those who have the capacity to respect others may tend to rely on other people to such an extent that they are unable to discipline themselves. It must be said that both cases represent a lack of maturity. Buddhism is the path that enables people to develop the supreme character of the Buddha. It could be said that many concerns of modern society come down to issues of humanistic education and the cultivation of character as expounded in Buddhism.⁵

Summary

The departure from other schools of Buddhism lies in the understanding that Buddhahood can only exist in the nine worlds, that is, daily life. It cannot manifest as an abstract ideal, it is actually through the transformation of an individual that it is revealed and becomes meaningful. It is an expression of a desire to live purposefully, with hope and with the realisation that our own happiness is connected to others. The nine worlds, which form our daily reality have both enlightened and destructive potentialities [see table p22]. It is manifesting Buddhahood through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that allows a creative expression even in the state of hell, hunger and animality (the three 'lower worlds'). As Nichiren Daishonin wrote, "Even a heartless villain loves his wife and children. He too has a portion of the *Bodhisattva* world within him"⁶. The hope contained in this concept is that although we may be in a particular state, the potential always exists for the expression of a different state. For example, even in the state of Hell we can express compassion. This is the 'Mutual Possession of the Ten Worlds'

which will be discussed in Session Two.

This means that we can indeed direct our desires towards a greater purpose in life and draw from the infinite potential within us and others. Therefore, we need not remain trapped in a fatalistic view of life with little hope for transformation of what we perceive are negative states of life. If we can view life based on a belief in the potential of enlightenment, then nothing is ever wasted. Weaknesses no longer have to remain weaknesses; shortcomings are nothing to be ashamed of. Rather they become the impetus for us to polish and develop ourselves beyond what we believe is possible. As encouraged by the Daishonin it is by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that we spiritually polish our lives, allowing our lives to shine like a polished mirror. At first, we may not like the reflection we see in the mirror of our life, but as we continue to practise even our negative traits or tendencies that once appeared to dominate our life are transformed into something of meaning, beauty and value.

Though the Ten Worlds provide great insight into human life, this principle, by itself, is insufficient to give a realistic and pragmatic view. Therefore, we must progress to the Mutual Possession of the Ten Worlds (session two), the theory of the Ten Factors and Three Realms (session three and four) and put these all together in order to explain the Buddhist view of the totality of life in all its manifestations.

For Discussion

1. Do you feel in charge of your life?
Share experiences before and after chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.
2. How has chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo helped you to challenge a dominant life state?

⁵ Ikeda, *Lectures on the Hoben and Juryo Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*
⁶ *ibid*; p25

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Aspects of Buddhahood and the Nine Worlds

Buddhahood - Wisdom, courage, integrity, life force, compassion, joy, true and greater self

Examples of enlightened and deluded aspects of the Nine Worlds

Enlightened Aspects	Life State	Deluded Aspects
Compassion, selfless devotion	BODHISATTVA	Martyrdom, judgment towards those one is helping, self neglect
Insight through observing the world, benefiting from the effects of learning by applying it through our actions	REALISATION	Self absorption and self satisfaction, being pedantic, arrogance
Self Improvement, seeking spirit	LEARNING	Self centredness, superiority to others 'less learned'
Intense pleasure and happiness, appreciation, celebration of others' happiness	RAPTURE	Short lived nature invites craving for more, actions driven by need, risk taking to seek pleasure so as to sustain euphoric feeling
At peace, in control of desires, humane behaviour	TRANQUILITY	Laziness, negligence, complacency
Passion to fight for injustice, force for creative change	ANGER	Egotism, arrogance, self righteousness
Instinct that protects and nurtures	ANIMALITY	Bullying, fear of those perceived more powerful, self indulgence, ignorance of the impact of our actions
Desire to live, desire to achieve goals or improve circumstances	HUNGER	Greed, addictions
Empathy for others, clear insight into the human condition, potential to use suffering to determine to relieve others' suffering	HELL	Rage, despair, destruction of self and others

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SESSION TWO

Revealing the limitless potential of humanity

Aim:

To learn, through the concept of the Mutual Possession of the Ten Worlds, why it is possible for anyone, even in the lowest life condition, to be able to reveal his or her Buddhahood.

Guidelines for Group Facilitators:

1. Introduce study partners who will be presenting this week's topic.
2. Ensure that everyone in the group gets a chance to speak in the dialogue.
3. Confirm/allocate the study partner presenters for session three.
4. Remind study partners that they are to meet between sessions and discuss together how the material for session three relates to their own lives as well as reflect on the topics and questions 'For Discussion'.
5. Task - Choose a set of study partners to present a summary of the material for Session three highlighting two aspects that they relate to from their own experience



Mutual Possession

The second component

In the last session we discussed the existence of ten worlds, most importantly the inherent potential of Buddhahood as a life condition we can both aspire to and express in the other nine worlds. Learning that our life conditions are constantly changing, we can see the events in our lives unfold with different reactions and outcomes as our life condition changes from moment to moment.

This leads us to the Buddhist concept of the Mutual Possession of the Ten Worlds. Simply stated, it means... "each of the ten states of life contains the potential of expressing itself and the other nine as well."⁷ To explain, someone currently in the world

of Anger through their interaction with the environment has the potential to manifest any of the other nine instantly. For example, if we lose our temper (state of anger), and then reflect, even for an instant, on the negative impact, we are expressing realisation through our anger. If we then transform the anger into a dialogue based on a desire for the happiness of the person we were angry with we are in a state of *Bodhisattva*. In this way we break through a tendency we never believed possible. Underpinning this 'upward' spiral is the state of Buddhahood, a desire and determination to express wisdom and creativity. As mentioned in the last session, to achieve these higher states of life needs belief in the potential to elevate our state of life. It was the Buddhist scholar T'ien-t'ai who realised that there are 100 different life states we can experience at each moment (ten worlds multiplied by the potential of expressing another ten worlds). This principle points out the potential to move from one state to another and have the possibility of dynamically shifting it and manifesting Buddhahood.

Although we may... "experience different states in response to our interaction with the environment, we each have one or more worlds around which our life activities usually centre and to which we tend to revert when external stimuli subside"⁸. This is one's basic life-tendency. If, for example, someone's basic life-tendency revolves around the world of Hell, they may tend to always lose hope and experience ongoing suffering even though they may momentarily enjoy the state of Heaven. For example, after hearing the news of securing a new job, someone with Hell as the dominant life state would quickly become totally pessimistic about the job.

However, even if one state is dominant, the other nine are, nevertheless existing latently and any of them may appear instantly. Through making causes we determine which life condition will be our tendency. Even not doing much, leads us

⁷ *Fundamentals of Buddhism*, p54

⁸ www.sgi-usa.org

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to being more prone to the 'lower worlds'. Making effort, for example, to educate ourselves, means learning may become our 'tendency'. The aim of practising Buddhism is for enlightenment to permeate all of our life, that is, for Buddhahood to colour all of the nine worlds.



Struggles in the Nine Worlds reveal the world of Buddhahood

Our Buddhist practice helps us to “elevate the basic life-tendency and eventually establish Buddhahood as one’s fundamental state.” This does not mean that we rid ourselves of the other nine worlds. In fact, all the other nine states of life from Hell through to Bodhisattva are natural expressions of our lives that reveal the humanity that we share with our fellow human beings. Those who have been through Hell and have transformed it, can totally understand the sufferings of someone in a similar state and as a result can bring forth the compassion of the Bodhisattva state and impart hope to them.

In essence, this concept of mutual possession reveals that all people, no matter what their state of

life, have the ever-present possibility of revealing the state of Buddhahood. This means that Buddhahood is found nowhere else except in the reality of the nine worlds. Therefore, a Buddha is not a superhuman being but an ordinary person, who, while going through the realities of this world, has determined to fuse their lives with the eternal life of the universe, believing in the greater potential of their life to express creativity, integrity and compassion as life tendencies. Based on the dynamism of this concept, judgment towards others is futile and denies the potential of life’s transformative potential.

SGI President Ikeda once mentioned, “Daily life equals faith, and faith equals daily life. The *Lotus Sutra* is never divorced from reality. This is its greatness.”¹⁰ In explaining this, he also mentions, “The defiled realm of the nine worlds is transformed into the world of Buddhahood”¹¹. He explains that the reality of daily life, however hopeless it may have formerly seemed, becomes a means for demonstrating our Buddhahood to others. We deepen our faith when we are faced with sufferings and problems, and, when we transform them they become our actual proof of the benefit of faith. This is what it means to change poison into medicine and that... “the nine worlds have the potential for Buddha-



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hood.”¹² The Buddha is not an otherworldly being. Buddhahood is not a static or abstract state, which it is often characterised as, because “...Buddhahood retains the nine worlds.”¹³ In short, a Buddha engages and transforms the nine worlds to courageously guide others to enlightenment.



Simultaneity of Cause and Effect

President Ikeda uses the principle of cause and effect to explain that all that has been discussed to this point does not occur over time but happens in the dynamism of life in this moment.

“...Traditionally, people of the nine worlds (the cause) practised in order to attain Buddhahood (the effect) – this is the principle of ‘from the cause to the effect’. However, Nichiren Buddhism upholds the principle ‘from the effect to the cause’ – that is, people who based on the state of Buddhahood (the effect) they have attained instantly through chanting daimoku to the *Gohonzon*, pursue and challenge the reality of the nine worlds (the cause) in daily life.”¹⁴

In other words, the simultaneous cause and effect of Buddhahood creates the impetus for us to make positive change in our life. Chanting activates this dynamism in the depths of our existence. This is a most hopeful and invigorating way to live as we are no longer trapped by the negative effects of our life tendencies. This is called the practice of true cause, where we are so confident in our cause we do not chase after the effects.

True Cause

A way of life based on the principle of true cause is that of those who practise among the people without putting on airs. There is no need whatsoever for such people to “get all dressed up,” as it were. Honest and straightforward, they give others peace of mind and plant the seeds of happiness in others’ hearts through their unaffected actions. This is the bodhisattva practice of the true cause. Accordingly, the Buddhism of the true cause exists in the way of life, the practice, of ceaselessly striving to improve one’s immediate, everyday surroundings and to carry the age and society forward. The principles “...faith manifests itself in daily life” and “...Buddhism manifests itself in society” are thus central to the Daishonin’s Buddhism.¹⁵



Photo: Tony Stinson

⁹ www.sgi-usa.org

¹⁰ President Ikeda’s *Lectures on the Hoben and Juryo Chapters*

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² *ibid*

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra* Volume 1

Introductory Study Course

To further expand on this point, President Ikeda uses a simile:

“...Shakyamuni’s Buddhism is like climbing a mountain, starting at the foot and heading for the summit. During the ascent, we are given explanations of how wonderful the peak is, but we ourselves cannot fully appreciate or comprehend it. Nor is there any guarantee that we will eventually reach the top. We may become lost or meet with an accident on the way. In contrast, the Daishonin’s Buddhism reveals the way for the direct and immediate attainment of enlightenment, so in an instant we find ourselves standing on the mountain peak. There, we personally savour the marvellous view with our whole beings and, out of our desire to share that joy with others, we return down the mountain and go out into society.”¹⁶

He then goes on to say:

“...In terms of our faith and practice, our daily practise of *gongyo* and *daimoku* may be viewed in a general sense as a practice which leads us from the nine worlds to Buddhahood. As such, it could be called a practice that leads “from the cause to the effect”. On a more profound level, however, our practice of *gongyo* and *daimoku* itself directly connects us to the state of Buddhahood. This daily practice serves as a starting point for activities that spread the wisdom and compassion of the Mystic Law into the reality of daily life.

The faith of those who chant *daimoku* with devotion to the *Gohonzon* simultaneously encompasses the two directions ‘from the cause to the effect’ and ‘from the effect to the cause’. This is what sets the Buddhism of Nichiren Daihsonin in a class of its own.¹⁷

Thus, practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism start their mornings and end their days by doing *gongyo* and *daimoku*. This is like elevating our life condition to the summit of Buddhahood where we can gaze serenely upon all our daily activities from a magnificent height. Once we have finished performing this ceremony, we go back to the earth of reality and society (the nine worlds) and face every challenge fuelled with the life-force of Buddhahood that we ourselves have generated.



The Nine Worlds

A driving force for our human revolution

The most important thing is that we use our struggles to truly grow as a human being, that is, to do our Human Revolution. In this way we inspire hope in others’ to overcome their suffering. With regards to this, President Ikeda states, “Human suffering has a dual nature. It can become either a cause for misery or an incentive for further growth. If we despair in the face of suffering, we are lost, but if we consider it an opportunity for self-development and self-improvement, we find our experience enables us better to lead others to happiness. When we do this we are manifesting the state of the *Bodhisattva* Nature”.¹⁸ When we are suffering in the state of hell, by chanting *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, we are able to open and elevate our life condition to that of Buddhahood. Our suffering becomes purposeful because it drives us to transform our lives, changing poison into medicine.

Furthermore, the theory of the Mutual Possession of the Ten Worlds asserts that “...when one has taken Buddhahood as the basis for life and has recognised that all the other nine states are contained within Buddhahood, then each of these states, from the basest to the most lofty, can become an impetus for one’s personal human revolution. Conversely, it is impossible to make Buddhahood the basis of life without accepting the raging turbulence of the

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Causton, *The Buddha in Daily Life*, p82

¹⁹ Ikeda, *Life, an Enigma*, p143

Humanity and Hope

Revealing life's creative potential

other nine states, for they are co-existent with it.”¹⁹ Thus the direction of our prayers becomes crucial. When we recite Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we must be determined to use our situation to transform our lives. “...Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is not beseeching an outside force for solutions but a means to muster our inner resources to meet life head on.”²⁰ By chanting with a strong determination and battling our negativities, we bring forth an unshakeable state of life that gives us hope. “... We must, for this reason, not seek to avoid the difficulties and challenges of the nine states, but rather meet them head on and overcome them, thus turning them into valuable experiences. If one attempts to avoid difficulties, one misses the chance to develop and improve oneself. To avoid trouble is no more than to succumb to the illusions of the nine states. The mark of Buddhahood is the ability to meet all challenges and turn them into good.”²¹

While we experience the joys and sorrows of the nine worlds, they will not dominate our lives if Buddhahood is established as our fundamental life-tendency. Through the daily practice of chanting to activate this life state, we gradually overcome our small ego and naturally come to feel compelled to reach out to those around us struggling with a message of hope. Indeed, “...by helping others to live, one achieves one's own transformation. This is the principle of human revolution based on the theory of the Mutual Possession of the Ten Worlds.”²²

Understanding and applying the concept of the Mutual Possession of the Ten Worlds gives us hope. No matter how hellish and deadlocked our situation may appear to be, this is not the reality of our lives and therefore we are not destined to remain there forever. The potential is there for us to totally transform any situation in which we might find ourselves. Because the world of Hell contains Buddhahood, “...no matter how much you are suffering at this moment, at the very next you can reveal the highest condition of life.”²³

Our SGI organisation provides the opportunity

for people of the nine worlds to come together and strengthen their Buddha nature through faith, practice and study. Then we go back into society and the realities of daily life to positively impact on the world around us. *Kosen-rufu* means simply to “...struggle to make the world of Buddhahood the basic tendency of society”²⁴ so that the principles of humanism and absolute respect for every single living being become its foundation.

As with all aspects of the study of *ichinen sanzen*, the difficulty arises when we examine each aspect in isolation. There is a tendency to see each component as the whole and therefore miss the dynamism of this profound explanation of the complexities of life. Each of the components we are studying express a part of the whole and should not be seen as definitive or complete explanations of life's reality. As each week's study is completed a broader understanding will unfold and we hope that each participant gains an insight that can open a deeper belief in the great possibility for transforming our life into a joyous expression of appreciation. The danger in looking at each part in isolation is the possibility of missing the true nature of life's totality. ■

For Discussion

1. Discuss how you relate to the simile of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as standing on the mountain peak (direct and immediate attainment of enlightenment) and going into our daily lives as returning down the mountain (the nine worlds).
2. Share experiences of becoming aware of your basic life-tendency, and give examples of how chanting has elevated this tendency. Describe how, for you, the challenges of the nine worlds may support you in experiencing the world of Buddhahood and so do your Human Revolution.

²⁰ *The Quotable Nichiren*, p168

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, P33