

Questions & Answers on Faith: Whose Life-Condition Is It, Anyway?

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Q: I understand that when we fuse with the Gohonzon, the life-condition of the original Buddha wells up within our lives — yet we also are told not to seek the Gohonzon outside ourselves. As we chant, is it Nichiren Daishonin’s life or our own Buddha nature that we awaken to?

A: In this context, the phrases “Nichiren Daishonin’s life” and “our Buddha nature” mean the same thing. Both refer to the condition of Buddhahood innate in our lives. When we say that Nichiren Daishonin’s life wells up from within, we mean that every positive human characteristic we have, such as compassion, courage, wisdom and perseverance, is tapped through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and living in accord with the Mystic Law.

The concept of Buddhahood can be confusing. We live in a society that worships the kinds of megapower that can make a common person feel ineffective and insignificant. “The life-condition of the original Buddha welling up within us” might sound like we’re submitting ourselves to a greater power.

The Buddhist principle of a life-moment possessing 3,000 realms, though, clarifies that Buddhahood, a boundless, unrestricted state of being, is actually the essence of all life. You might say that it is a basic building block of our existence. When our Buddhahood is activated by chanting wholeheartedly, we can thus live with boundless, unrestricted creativity.

In “On Attaining Buddha,” Nichiren Daishonin says: “If you seek enlightenment outside yourself, any discipline or good deed will be meaningless. For example, a poor man cannot earn a penny just by counting his neighbor’s wealth, even if he does so night and day” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 4).

Awakened to this reality of Buddhahood within, Nichiren Daishonin exemplified the most lofty way of living through his life-condition and behavior. Embracing the Mystic Law, he never wavered in his mission to awaken the rest of the world to his dream of true happiness for all — even when ostracized by society or faced with life-threatening persecutions. Likewise, as each of us begins to recognize and then fulfill our specific missions for the happiness of all people, we awaken the same passion, joy and wisdom in our lives.

In *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, SGI President Ikeda describes the pioneer members who came to meet him on his first trip to America in 1960 as Buddhas: “The women were not well dressed, but to Shin’ichi each appeared as a golden Buddha who would lead her friends in America to happiness. Buddhas do not exist in some far-off realm; they dwell here in this very real, strife-ridden *saha* world. A Buddha dwells within each living, breathing human being who experiences problems, sufferings and joy.” Talking recently to Hong Kong artist Fang Zhaoling, President Ikeda similarly encouraged her, “Adorned with boundless treasures, your life has been forged and polished by great vicissitude.”

Each of us has a mission for kosen-rufu. As we strive to fulfill this mission through our practice, the world becomes a better place because of our efforts. We come to appreciate our role in creating a society of respect and friendship, opening our hearts to the challenge of encouraging even one more person. In other words, the life of the Buddha cannot help welling up within us.

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