

**WHAT A CONCEPT: ONENESS OF BODY AND MIND ('SHIKISHIN FUNI')**  
**NO DEGREE OF SEPARATION**  
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Buddhist texts and teachers talk about Buddhahood as being unfathomably joyful and beyond our ability to imagine. It's difficult, though, to teach others about something that defies standard methods of conceptualization. So in a way, Buddhist concepts are like a bridge; they represent a struggle to explain and describe the life-condition of Buddhahood in terms that we can grasp.

Oneness of body and mind (Jpn *shikishin funi*, literally body, mind: two, not two) explains that our lives are both intangible (spiritual) and tangible (material). This isn't news, of course: The mind-body connection as it relates to healing and illness is widely accepted, and most of us have experienced that a sullen or a happy mood can affect our physical well-being. Buddhist practice enables us to create harmony between our physical and spiritual aspects, to recover from illness and maintain our health.

On another level, Buddhist practice enables us to attain an awareness that there is NO separation between physical and spiritual; both are expressed simultaneously in all phenomena of our lives throughout past, present and future. Nichiren Daishonin states that "the oneness of the physical and spiritual aspects is the ultimate reality" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708).

At its root, oneness of body and mind means that we are one with the single great living entity that is the entire universe.

SGI President Ikeda writes: "Everything in the universe is 'alive.' Everything is an entity of life and death, an entity of the Mystic Law. Even if we look at the material aspect, matter that is scattered throughout the universe as a result of the death of a star will be used in the birth of new stars and in the bodies of biological organisms. It may be that the atoms making up our bodies, too, were once shining as part of a star somewhere. Human beings are children of the stars, of the universe.... The benefit of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is literally the benefit of the entire universe. It is inexhaustible. Limitless."

Our lives are without beginning or end. This eternity is expressed even in the ever-changing — and seemingly perishable — material aspect of our existence. To understand this is to accrue great benefit.

The Daishonin writes: "When we revere Myoho-renge-kyo inherent in our own life as the object of worship, the Buddha nature within us is summoned forth and manifested by our chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo; this is what is meant by 'Buddha.' To illustrate, when a caged bird sings, birds who are flying in the sky are thereby summoned and gather around, and when the birds flying in the sky gather around, the bird in the cage strives to get out. When with our mouths we chant the Mystic Law, our Buddha nature, being summoned, will invariably emerge" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, pp. 207–08).

The concept of the oneness of body and mind illustrates, in part, that through the physical action of using our mouths to faithfully chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, our Buddha nature emerges. When we chant, our mind and body become the Buddha's mind (wisdom) and body (compassionate action).

*Twenty-two in a series*