

## THE TEN WORLDS AND VICTORY OVER VIOLENCE BY MAHOGANY GAMBLE, SAN FRANCISCO

I once heard a high school student say: “Violence is natural. We are nothing but animals and our instincts lead us to fight. Not only to protect ourselves but to become the best and be at the top of this human food chain.” Unfortunately, no sooner did he said that than he had to change schools after being the center of a massive fight. At the time I heard him say that, I didn’t know what I know now. I didn’t know how to react or what to say in an attempt to get him to change his thinking.

Thinking about what he said, there is not much science out there to prove that we humans aren’t merely an advanced form of animal species. Is it then truthful to say that we act solely on instinct? Science has proven that our brains are much more complex than other animals. That advancement gives us the ability to formulate thoughts, change our feelings, communicate in an entire language and learn more. It seems as though while other animals are acting out their instincts, we’ve been given a tool to move beyond that.

Further on the science note, think for a minute about your house or about your body. How difficult it is to maintain it. How hard it is to have to constantly clean your house or exercise to maintain your body figure. In physics they say that things naturally tend to decrease or get messy; that the Earth, like your house if not constantly maintained, will become dirty and fall apart. This phenomenon says that things will naturally tend to decrease or take the easier route. Similarly, it is said that a person put in the situation to choose peace or violence will naturally choose violence because peace is so much more difficult to attain.

Do you think that this summary is true? How do we become victorious over violence?

Going back to us being animals, I would like to share about the Ten Worlds, which is one way this practice explains life. It is believed that there are ten states, or life-conditions, that we all have within ourselves. There is potential for any one of them to be manifested at any time depending on our actions, which depend on our environment. The ten states from lowest to highest are: Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Heaven or Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood. It was earlier believed that humans were born in the world of Humanity and animals in the world of Animality based on their karma in previous lifetimes. In Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, it is believed that all humans possess these 10 life-conditions at every moment and may experience them at any time. It was easy to see in my previously mentioned experience that I was in the state of Animality, which says: In this state, we are ruled by instinct. “We exhibit neither reason nor moral sense nor the ability to make long-range judgements. In the world of Animality, we operate by the law of the jungle, so to speak. We will not hesitate to take advantage of those weaker than ourselves and fawn on those who are stronger.” That was a quote from the book *The Winning Life*. Many of us are in this state when we act violently.

We can overcome the six lower states—Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity and Rapture—by simply chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the

Gohonzon. In the Goshō (which are writings by Nichiren Daishonin) “On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime,” it says that the Mystic Law is the reality of life and “is called the Mystic Law because it explains the mutually inclusive relationship of a single moment of life and all phenomena” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 3). The Mystic Law is represented by *myōhō* in the phrase *Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō*. It further states that *renge* is representative of the lotus flower, which symbolizes the wonder of *myōhō* or the Mystic Law. “Once you realize that your own life is the Mystic Law, you will realize that so are the lives of all others.” I’ll go into that point a little later. The Gohonzon is the physical form of this Mystic (or universal) Law. By chanting to the Gohonzon and having faith in it, we can activate the powers of the Buddha and the Mystic Law, hence raising our state of consciousness or life-condition. Meaning that by chanting, our fundamental life-conditions can rise above the six lower states.

Once our basic life-conditions reach the states of Learning and Realization (the seventh and eighth states), which are together called the two vehicles, we are no longer captives to our own reactions as in the lower states. Meaning in part that we don’t react to in our environment by lowering to one of the six lower states. At this point we have recognized the Mystic Law (or *myōhō*) as the law of the universe and are beginning to realize that our lives are the Mystic Law. In these states, though, we have tendencies to look down upon those who have not reached our same understanding and the potential to drop down into one of the lower states is present. In further explaining that each of our lives is the Mystic Law, this Buddhism believes *Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō* is the law of life. That “[this law] gives rise to all phenomena, and all phenomena are manifestations of *Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō*.” So the law of life and all phenomena that we see are inseparable. This becomes a part of us in the principle known as *esho funi*, the law of the oneness of life and environment. That our lives are inseparable from the environment and the environment is a direct reflection of our life-condition. This explains the girl at my school who constantly felt the need to pick on me. She, being part of my environment, was a direct reflection of me being in the state of Animality. This law is why when you wake up some mornings you are already in the state of Hell, or when you’re feeling good everybody wants to say “Hi” to you. Just to recap, the universal law is all phenomena and all phenomena is our environment and our environment is a reflection of us, therefore we are the universal or Mystic Law.

With that knowledge we now go back to what Nichiren Daishonin said, “Once you realize your own life is the Mystic Law, you will realize that so are the lives of all others.” As is further stated in the Study Department exam booklet, “If we truly understood that everyone we meet is ultimately a Buddha, we could never take pleasure in another’s suffering or think that we could be happy at their expense.” Once we have reached that realization, we are said to be in the state of Buddhahood, the 10th or highest state of life.

That is the key to being victorious over violence as well as all of life’s other difficulties. Once we have reached that state, we have an unwavering happiness. Our happiness and realization are reflected in our environment and those in our environment will act accordingly: peacefully. Had I been in a higher state of life when I was 12, my friend would not have picked on me; there would’ve been no group of 20 middle school students attacking one girl; there wouldn’t have been violence or

animality in my environment. Peace may be more difficult to maintain, especially at the crucial moments, but that is what this practice is about. If one person becomes happy, so does his or her environment. When we tell others about this practice, we open up their minds to reach that realization. They then spread peace and happiness by becoming peaceful and happy. We can reach the state of Buddhahood only by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon.

It is important for us to strive daily to reach this state. It is said in the book *The Winning Life*, “The SGI’s ultimate purpose is to contribute to the establishment of a peaceful world where all people experience happiness.”