

BACK TO THE BASICS
THE ONENESS OF LIFE AND ITS ENVIRONMENT
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What do you call everything from your skin inward? Probably your “self.” What do you call everything from your skin outward? Probably your “environment.” People generally perceive the world in this way, divided into two realms—self and environment.

In Japanese, Buddhism calls the self *shoho* and the environment *eho*. Contracted, they make *esho*, or a living entity and its environment. Buddhism further teaches that these two realms are actually one, or as the Chinese text *funi* indicates, two but not two. Thus, we have the term *esho funi*, the oneness of life and its environment. Simply put, this doctrine emphasizes that living beings and their environments are interrelated and inseparable. It further teaches that we have the power to influence and reform our environments through inner change.

As Nichiren Daishonin says: “If the minds of living beings are impure, their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land. There are not two lands, pure or impure in themselves. The difference lies solely in the good or evil of our minds” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 4).

A close-to-home example of this, literally, is that of a bedroom. Imagine a bedroom—any bedroom. What does it look like? Perhaps the bed is messy, and various things are strewn about the floor. Or, perhaps it is amazingly organized. Perhaps neither. Perhaps it is an almost empty, barren room. Whatever the case, a bedroom is in many ways a reflection of its inhabitant, and vice versa. Although they appear to be separate entities, the room and its inhabitant are mutually dependent. After all, the inhabitant affects the room’s condition, and the room’s condition—whether luxurious or dirty, too cold, too hot or just right—affects the inhabitant’s condition.

In the same way, our greater surroundings, such as work, school, family and our natural environment, comprise the “rooms” of our lives. On a global scale, the world itself can be seen as the “room” of humanity. From the perspective of the oneness of life and its environment, we can improve any of these “rooms” by first improving ourselves.