

A Religion of Human Revolution—Part 9

The Buddhism of the People (1)—Awakening to the Dignity of One's Own Life

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Hi there. Thanks for joining us today. We're continuing to study President Ikeda's series of articles entitled "A Religion of Human Revolution". This month we're looking at "The Buddhism of the People (Part 1)—Awakening to the Dignity of One's Own Life", which you can find in the March 2019 edition of *New Century*. We hope that you'll have time to read the article before your district study meeting.

This month's article focuses particularly on the power and significance of the Gohonzon, which should be interesting to both newer and more experienced practitioners.

The passages from Nichiren Daishonin's writings in this study are all drawn from the Gosho "The object of devotion for observing the mind", written by the Daishonin while he was in exile on Sado Island in April 1273.

The first Gosho passage reads:

The observation of the mind means to observe one's own mind and to find the Ten Worlds within it. This is what is called observing the mind. For example, though we can see the six sense organs of other people, we cannot see our own. Only when we look into a clear mirror do we see, for the first time, that we are endowed with all six sense organs. Similarly, various sutras make reference here and there to the six paths and the four noble worlds [that constitute the Ten Worlds], but only in the clear mirror of the Lotus Sutra and of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai's Great Concentration and Insight can one see one's own Ten Worlds, hundred worlds and thousand factors, and three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

This idea of “observing one’s mind” is something that pops up more and more these days, with our society’s growing interest in meditation and mindfulness. Here’s what President Ikeda has to say:

Buddhism directs its gaze into the inner dimensions of life, delving deeply into the true nature of human existence. This is why it is called the “inner way.”

The fundamental approach of Buddhism is for each of us to observe our mind and thoroughly examine our self, so that we can come to understand the ultimate essence of our being.

He goes on to say that what we need is a mirror to look **inside** us—a “clear mirror” that “accurately and fully reflects our life through the wisdom of the Buddha”. The Gohonzon is that kind of a mirror, but we’re going to get to that in just a moment.

A “clear mirror” allows us to see the true nature of everyone’s life, including the fact that everyone’s life embodies the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds—which means that every life contains Buddhahood and is worthy of respect.

The mutual possession of the Ten Worlds is the subject of the next Gosho passage:

The mutual possession of the Ten Worlds is as difficult to believe as fire existing in a stone or flowers within a tree. Yet under the right conditions such phenomena actually occur and are believable. To believe that Buddhahood exists within the human world is the most difficult thing of all—as difficult as believing that fire exists in water or water in fire. Nevertheless, the dragon is said to produce fire from water and water from fire, and although people do not understand why, they believe it when they see it occur. Since you now believe that the human world contains the other eight worlds, why are you still unable to include the world of Buddhahood? The Chinese sage kings Yao and Shun were impartial toward all people. They manifested one aspect of Buddhahood within the human world. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging saw the Buddha in everyone he met, and Prince Siddhartha [Shakyamuni] was a human who became a Buddha. These examples should help you believe.

The mutual possession of the Ten Worlds is a very important Buddhist concept. President Ikeda comments:

This teaching that ordinary people in the nine worlds possess the life state of Buddhahood, and that the Buddha who has attained enlightenment also possesses the life states of the nine worlds, is the crux of the Lotus Sutra.

Especially from the standpoint of ordinary people, the principle that “the nine worlds have the potential for Buddhahood” is the key to attaining Buddhahood, or enlightenment.

Nichiren Daishonin himself is our best example of an ordinary person revealing Buddhahood in his or her daily life. At the time of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, he faced certain death as an ordinary human being and yet was able to reveal his true identity as a Buddha. His message to us is that we can all do this.

The next Gosho passage goes into more detail about how we can realize Buddhahood in our own lives.

Shakyamuni’s practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo. If we believe in [embrace] these five characters, we will naturally be granted the same benefits as he was. . . . The “Life Span” chapter reads, “It has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood”. The Shakyamuni Buddha within our lives is the eternal Buddha since time without beginning, who obtained the three bodies more than numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. The “Life Span” chapter states, “Originally I practiced the bodhisattva way, and the life span that I acquired then has yet to come to an end but will last twice the number of years that have already passed”. He was speaking of the world of the bodhisattva within ourselves. The bodhisattvas, as numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds, who emerged from beneath the earth, are the followers of the Shakyamuni Buddha present in our lives.

President Ikeda summarizes the first part of this passage as follows:

If we believe in, or embrace, the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo, chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo ourselves and teach others to do the same, exerting ourselves in our Buddhist practice, we will be granted exactly the same

causes and effects of enlightenment as the Buddha. The Daishonin established and revealed this principle for practice for ordinary people to attain enlightenment in the Latter Day of the Law.

And President Ikeda adds that:

When we rouse deep faith and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the Gohonzon in the depths of our being is illuminated and drawn forth by the clear mirror of the physical Gohonzon we chant to. We can see the world of Buddhahood in our own life. Because by merely embracing it, we can observe our mind and attain enlightenment, the Gohonzon has the tremendous power to enable us to overcome any hardship and resolve all troubles.

This power, of course, is available to everyone. President Ikeda says that the Gohonzon is “an object of devotion for all people, accessible to all people”; and everyone can benefit from this “Gohonzon for Human Revolution”.

While the mechanics of it may seem complicated, Nichikan Shonin very clearly states that when we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon, our lives become the life of Nichiren Daishonin himself. At the most fundamental level, we possess the same Buddha nature and the same ability to transform our lives, help others do the same and change the entire world.

This idea is in perfect keeping with the theme of “empowerment of the people” which is increasingly important in the 21st century. People everywhere are looking for the kind of inspiration and hope that a powerful personal practice like ours can provide.

As you can see, it’s a great article this month with some fascinating insights into our practice and lots of encouraging quotes.

You can find the entire article in the March 2019 edition of *New Century*. If you’re not receiving *New Century* right now, you can subscribe by talking to your district leaders, or by visiting the publications page on this website.

And we wanted to remind you also that volume 30 of *The New Human Revolution* is being serialized right now in *From Today Onward*. It’s not too late to subscribe! Again, talk to your district leaders, or visit the publications page on this website

We hope that you'll find this month's study interesting and useful, and we'll see you next time. Bye for now.