

January Discussion Topic - Establishing Buddhahood as Our Basic Life State

Life is constantly changing, from moment to moment. There is always an interaction between our external circumstances and our inner tendencies. In Buddhism, this is explained through the Ten Life States. These ten possible life states consist of the six lower life states - hell, hunger, animality, anger, humanity and relative happiness - and the four higher or noble life states: learning, realization, bodhisattva and Buddhahood. All ten of these life states are naturally existing in our lives.

Not one of the Ten Life States is permanent or lasting. They arise, disappear and constantly change. They are not separate or independent life states; each life state also contains the other nine life states within. Any of the other life states can become a person's dominant life state from one moment to the next. Our life state is therefore never permanent or unchanging, but changes throughout our entire lives, from moment to moment.

While we all possess the Ten Life States, our lives often lean toward one particular life state more than others - for instance, some people's lives are basically inclined toward the life state of hell, while others tend naturally toward the life state of bodhisattva. This could be called the "habit pattern" of one's life, a life state formed through karmic causes that a person has accumulated from the past. Just as a spring returns to its original shape after being stretched, people tend to revert to their own basic life state. But even if one's basic life state is the life state of hell, it doesn't mean that one will remain in that state 24 hours a day. That person will still move from one life state to another - for instance, sometimes manifesting the life state of humanity, sometimes the life state of anger, and so on.

The kind of life we live is decided by our basic life state. For example, those whose basic life state is hunger are as though on board a ship called *Hunger*. While sailing ahead in the life state of hunger, they will sometimes experience joy and sometimes suffering. Though there are various ups and downs, the ship unerringly proceeds on its set course. Consequently, for those on board this ship, everything they see will be colored by the hues of the life state of hunger.

We change our basic life state by carrying out our human revolution. It means changing our mind-set or conviction on the deepest level. Buddhist teachings are intended to help people to bring forth the highest and boundlessly powerful life state of Buddhahood. That is the core of our Buddhist practice. Nichiren Daishonin gave us a concrete and practical means to do this - the Gohonzon and Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Establishing the life state of Buddhahood as our basic life state is what it means to "attain Buddhahood." Of course, even with Buddhahood as our basic life state, we won't be free of problems or suffering because we will still possess the other nine life states. But the foundation of our lives will become one of hope, and we will increasingly experience a condition of security and joy. SGI-president Daisaku Ikeda says: "Even on cloudy or rainy days, by the time a plane reaches an altitude of about 10,000 meters [33,000 feet] it is flying high above the clouds amid bright sunshine. In the same way, no matter how painful or difficult our daily existence may be, if we make the sun in our hearts shine brightly, we can overcome all adversity with calm composure. That inner sun is the life state of Buddhahood."¹

¹ From *On Life and Buddhism*, published in Japanese in November 1986.

Therefore, no matter how hopeless our circumstances may seem, we can choose at any moment to bring forth the highest life state of Buddhahood by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

- What is your basic life state?
- Do you have an experience with raising your life state and what happened?
- What do you feel when you are in the life state of Buddhahood?