

**‘Ichinen’ (One Mind; the Life-Moment)
Crashing Into Buddhahood
WHAT a concept**

By LISA JONES, Staff Writer

According to an ancient Japanese creation myth, the Earth came into existence when two immense, willful beings collided. Whether this story is true, it expresses the idea that unfathomable energy is generated when two things come together. When ordinary people fuse with the Gohonzon through chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo — or when two people connect in dialogue — new worlds are born.

In a practical sense, *ichinen* is the sincere, pure determination that motivates one’s collision with Buddhahood, or the ultimate reality. *Ichinen* is the intent or directionality of one’s life.

Ichinen literally means one mind or single moment of life; it’s synonymous with one’s life or life-condition. The concept of *ichinen sanzen* posits that we can manifest one of 3,000 different life-conditions at any given moment — so the issue for us is how we can manifest and solidify our life-condition of Buddhahood. Nichiren Daishonin teaches that one’s ultimate *ichinen* is the realization that the present moment is itself the life of Buddha expounded as Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Nichiren Daishonin characterizes his *ichinen* in this passage: “‘Single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha, not hesitating even if it costs them their lives...’ I, Nichiren, have called forth Buddhahood from within my life by living this sentence [from the Lotus Sutra].” Further, he states: “‘Single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha’ also means to see the Buddha in one’s own mind, to concentrate one’s mind on seeing the Buddha, and that to see one’s own mind is to see the Buddha” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 205).

Using the word *mind* may give the impression that this is an intellectual process, but it’s not. *Ichinen* has more to do with our will than our brain.

In Buddhism, thoughts are like carbonation, air bubbles that float to the surface of consciousness and disappear. What’s most consequential is one’s heart, one’s life-condition. (In the past, we have said that karma is created by one’s thoughts, words and deeds, but thought is perhaps more appropriately translated as one’s will or intent.)

The Daishonin teaches that when we wholeheartedly, unreservedly chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo to the Gohonzon — when we willfully crash into Buddhahood — our heart becomes one with the Mystic Law. This elicits many great human qualities, including wisdom. Things become clear to us, and we act accordingly. Chanting in this way taps an area of our lives that can’t be accessed through mere thinking or reading.

When we’re living our ultimate *ichinen* — our Buddhahood — we’re not necessarily evaluating it at every moment. For example, courageous people often aren’t aware that they’re being courageous; rather, they’re acting out of strong, inner motivation. In retrospect, they may recognize that they behaved courageously, but in the moment, they’re usually just doing what they feel they must.

In *Learning From the Goshō*, SGI President Ikeda explains *ichinen* this way: “It is the fundamental prayer on which we base our existence. A person’s spirit is invisible but it becomes manifest at a crucial moment. Not only that, but it controls everything about a person, each moment of every day — it is the fundamental determinant of one’s life.... One’s heart is the designer, the painter, the sculptor and the architect of his or her being” (p. 128).

Four in a series

Title: Crashing Into Buddhahood
Subject: World Tribune 02/20/98 n.3179 p.7 WT980220p07
Author: Lisa Jones
Keywords: Basics Buddhahood Buddhist Concepts Crashing Faith Ichinen Prayer Study Terms Tribune World