

## Questions and Answers on Faith: How Do the Ten Worlds Work?

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### Q: How do the ten worlds work in our daily lives?

A: What we call the mutual possession of the ten worlds speaks to the changeability of our lives.

Buddhism sees in each human life the same potential for revealing Buddhahood from within. This is expounded in Buddhism as a life-condition free from the limits of the lower nine worlds: Bodhisattva, Realization, Learning, Rapture, Tranquillity, Anger, Animality, Hunger and Hell.

However, this does not mean that Buddhahood exists apart from the reality of these other nine worlds.

Nichiren Daishonin inscribed his life as the Buddha in the form of the Gohonzon. Down the center of the Gohonzon is written “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo — Nichiren.” And written alongside it are the names of representatives of all ten worlds. This indicates that all ten worlds, illuminated by the light of the Mystic Law inscribed down the center, can display their inherent nobility through Buddhism. This point is fully explained in the letter “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 211).

Once our innate Buddhahood is solidified enough through our daily Buddhist practice — or once our Buddha nature actually becomes our basic life-condition — all the other nine worlds start functioning to create happiness.

For instance, Hell is considered the worst life-condition; it is characterized by rage toward others with resultant sufferings as retribution. In Buddhism, though, what matters is the content of one’s rage. Some may be enraged because, controlled by materialistic and/or selfish desires, they feel dissatisfied at not getting what they want. But others may be enraged because, empathizing with the suffering of others, they are exhausting their energies to find solutions to others’ problems. This is rage illuminated by the Law. The Daishonin says that such “anger leads to either good or evil” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 584).

So, even the terrible life-condition of Hell, when based on the Mystic Law, can be an aspect of Buddhahood. Experiencing Hell has a significant role to play in furthering our happiness; we can’t know the greatest happiness unless we know the greatest unhappiness. If Buddhas never experienced the pain of Hell, they would never understand others’ sufferings, let alone be able to help others work toward solutions. It is a limited Buddha indeed who can relate only to certain types of people.

This principle, of course, applies not only to Anger and Hell but to all the other worlds as well. It’s because the lower nine worlds are inherent in Buddhahood that Buddhas can express their full potential to guide untold numbers of people to happiness. All in all, the lower nine worlds take on their true significance when based on Buddhahood.

Take the suffering that accompanies the death of a loved one: People who base themselves on the world of Buddhahood can turn all their sadness into prayers for their loved ones’ repose; they can encourage others by courageously facing their loss. Other people in the same situation might be defeated by this loss. The practical application of the ten worlds is that we can create something positive no matter the situation that we find ourselves in.

When we chant, basing ourselves on the Mystic Law, it can be said that our nine worlds equal Buddhahood, and that Buddhahood equals our nine worlds. The Daishonin teaches that when our innate Buddhahood is fully developed — through Buddhist practice for ourselves and others — everything that we do when we’re in our lower nine worlds will help us blossom spectacularly as human beings.

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