

**BELIEVING IT**  
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**Are you saying that besides these bodhisattvas, the persons of the two vehicles who obtained their enlightenment by destroying their illusions, Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, the four wheel-turning kings, and the immense flames of the great citadel of the hell of incessant suffering — all beings and all things in the ten directions are inherent in the Ten Worlds and in the three thousand realms of our own lives? Even if you say that this is what the Buddha taught, I still cannot believe it.** —“The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 361

Why is it sometimes difficult to acknowledge the great aspects of our lives, like the world of Buddhahood? Instead of recognizing that the noble characteristics of the deities and kings described in this passage are functions within my life, I imagine them to be mythical beings who can fly and, with a wave of their magic wand — “Poof!” — make a person’s sufferings disappear.

The functions of the Four Heavenly Kings as described in the sutras are actually to protect the world; to discern evil and punish those who commit it; to listen to the sutras and protect the place of practice; and to relieve people of their sufferings.

These characteristics remind me of SGI members! Just without the magic wand and the flying ability. So both Hell and Buddhahood exist within my life.

Confident as I am most of the time, I found that not believing in my own world of Buddhahood had crept into my life in the form of thinking others would not listen to me. I noticed that a new acquaintance, whose religion was different from mine, was having a difficult time at work. Yet I did not tell her about chanting, thinking she would not listen.

Another friend wanted to talk, but she was so angry that I thought once more, if I tried to encourage her, she wouldn’t listen.

Recently, I received a phone call from a friend I had not seen in 10 years. During our warm-hearted, laughter-filled conversation, he told me he had been a temple member for eight years.

Through his confusion at the outset of the priesthood issue, he had visited a local temple to find some answers. The priest convinced him that the only way to enlightenment was by sticking to the people who “owned” the Dai-Gohonzon.

But Nichiren Daishonin teaches us that the Gohonzon is found in faith alone. Furthermore, the priesthood’s so-called ownership of the Dai-Gohonzon amounts to nothing more than ransom.

How compassionate can Nikken, the current high priest, be, when he does not allow the world access to such a precious object of devotion as the Daishonin intended? The priests may as well just say: “Follow me. Get enlightened for a fee!”

None of these thoughts did I share with my friend at the time. I thought, he has been with the temple this long, he probably will not listen to me.

With each of my friends, I did not believe in my own power to encourage them or to relieve their sufferings. Relieving the suffering of others is the primary characteristic of the Buddha! I had denied the Buddha nature in myself and my friends. Believing that the world of Buddhahood exists within us is crucial, because human beings base their actions

on what they believe to be true. Once I acknowledged the Buddha that I am, I realized the great qualities of the Four Heavenly Kings within my life.

So I initiated a dialogue campaign with my friend who joined the temple to discuss the correctness of the SGI based upon the Daishonin's teachings. I spoke to my acquaintance with the problems at work and shared how I solve problems through my Buddhist practice. And my angry friend was grateful that I called her back and told her what was on my mind.

I believe they all listened to me because I care about them.

Buddhism teaches that there are many noble aspects to our lives. With the awareness that Buddhahood is my life itself—that “all beings and all things in the ten directions are inherent in the Ten Worlds and in the three thousand realms of our own lives”—I am now taking responsible action.

“I still cannot believe it”? I find now that I can.

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