

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE BY JOSEI TODA

The following is a translation of an essay by second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda. The article was originally published in the July 1955 issue of the Daibyakurenge, the Soka Gakkai's study journal, and reprinted in Collected Works of Josei Toda, vol. 3, pp.5-22. This year marks the one-hundredth anniversary of his birth.

When the ultra-nationalist, totalitarian regime of Japan used Shinto to lead the nation to the outrage of the Pacific War, along with my teacher Mr. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and my beloved like-minded comrades, I strongly proclaimed that the government's religious policy was utterly wrong. I explained why it was illogical and immoral to force the citizens to pay homage to the Shinto shrine. For this, I was persecuted in the summer of 1943 and spent two years in prison.

Though innocent, I spent many forlorn days pondering in a cold prison cell. One thought led to another, and I finally came to the essential issue of life, that is, the inscrutable essence of life. What is life? Does it exist only in this world? Or does it continue for eternity? These questions have long been considered mysteries. The so-called saints and sages of the past attempted to solve these problems.

Due to its unsanitary condition, the prison was infested with lice. Basking in the spring sunlight, lice just crawled out to frolic. I put two of them on the floorboard; their legs were struggling mindlessly. I squashed one; the other kept moving about nonchalantly. The life of the squashed louse — where did it go? Did it disappear from this world for eternity?

Suppose there is a cherry tree. If you break off a branch and put it in a vase, its buds will eventually bloom and new fragile leaves will come out in time. Is the life of this cherry branch the same as that of the original tree? Or is it now different? Life is indeed mysterious.

From days long past, I have recollected the great agony and torment that I suffered when my daughter died not long after her birth. My thoughts were: Why am I suffering so much from my daughter's death? What if my wife dies? (Later she died, and her death gave me much sorrow.) What if my parents die? (They also died, and I lamented greatly over their deaths.) Then I thought: What if I myself die? I trembled at this thought and felt dizzy.

From that experience, I began studying Christianity and next relied upon the sutra of Amida Buddha, seeking the correct path through different faiths. Yet, no matter how hard I tried, I could not find a convincing solution to the quandary of life. So I brooded over this problem once again in my solitary cell. Since I was always interested in science and mathematics, I could not believe in anything illogical or unreasonable.

I devoted myself to reading the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Daishonin's writings. Then I came across some mysterious passages in the Lotus Sutra. To experience the meaning of those passages, I began chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, as the Daishonin taught. When I finished chanting two million times, I experienced something mystic, beholding in my mind a state of existence never known to me before. Trembling with joy, I stood in my solitary cell, proclaiming to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout time and space: "I have shaken off my delusions five years behind Confucius but came to know my mission five years ahead of him."

Through this experience, I came to understand the essential aspect of life expounded in the Lotus Sutra, which I shall discuss in the following.

THE LIFE OF PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

The “Simile and Parable” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states:

At that time the Buddha said to Shariputra, “Now, in the midst of this great assembly of heavenly and human beings, shramanas, Brahmans and so forth, I say this. In the past, under twenty thousand million Buddhas, for the sake of the unsurpassed way I have constantly taught and converted you. And you throughout the long night followed me and accepted my instruction. Because I used expedient means to guide and lead you, you were born in the midst of my Law.

“Shariputra, in the past I taught you to aspire and vow to achieve the Buddha way. But now you have forgotten all that and instead suppose that you have already attained extinction. Now, because I want to make you recall to mind the way that you originally vowed to follow, for the sake of the voice-hearers I am preaching this Great Vehicle sutra called the Lotus of the Wonderful Law, a Law to instruct the bodhisattvas, one that is guarded and kept in mind by the Buddhas.

“Shariputra, in ages to come, after a countless, boundless, inconceivable number of kalpas have passed, you will make offerings to some thousands, ten thousands, millions of Buddhas, and will honor and uphold the correct Law. You will fulfill every aspect of the way of the bodhisattva and will be able to become a Buddha...” (LS3, 51)

The “Parable of the Phantom City” chapter states:

[The Buddha announced to the monks: “...The Great Universal Wisdom Excellence Buddha... addressed the whole of the great assembly, saying:] ‘These sixteen bodhisattva shramaneras¹ are of a kind very rarely to be found, their faculties penetrating and sharp, their wisdom bright and comprehending. Already in the past they have offered alms to immeasurable thousands, ten thousand, millions of Buddhas. In the company of those Buddhas they have constantly carried out brahma practices, received and embraced the Buddha wisdom, and expounded it to living beings, causing them to enter therein. Now all of you should from time to time associate closely with them and offer them alms. Why? Because if any of you, voice-hearers or pratyekabuddhas or bodhisattvas, are able to take faith in the sutra teachings preached by these sixteen bodhisattvas, and will accept and embrace them and never disparage them, then such persons will all be able to attain anuttara-samyak-sambodhi, the wisdom of the Thus Come One.’”

The Buddha, addressing the monks, said:

“These sixteen bodhisattvas have constantly desired to expound this Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Law. The living beings converted by each one of these bodhisattvas are equal in number to six hundred ten thousand million nayutas of Ganges sands. Existence after existence these living beings are reborn in company with that bodhisattva...” (LS7, 133-34)

The “Life Span of the Thus Come One” chapter states:

[At that time the Buddha said to the multitude of great bodhisattvas...] “Good men, the Thus Come One observes how among living beings there are those who delight in a little Law, meager in virtue and heavy with defilement. For such persons I describe how in my youth I left my household and attained anuttara-samyak-sambodhi [supreme enlightenment]. But in truth the time since I attained Buddhahood is extremely long, as I have told you...” (LS16, 226)

The verse section of the “Life Span of the Thus Come One” chapter also states:

Since I attained Buddhahood
the number of kalpas [an extremely long period of time] that have passed
is an immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten thousands,
millions, trillions, asamkhya [uncountable]. (LS16, 229)

Though only a fraction of the Lotus Sutra, the above passages indicate that the entire Buddhist teaching of Shakyamuni is expounded upon the basic assumption of life’s past, present and future, that is, the eternity of life. Therefore, if the concept of eternal life was replaced with the idea that life is limited to the present, Buddhism would lose its philosophical foundation.

In this regard, it is possible to judge the depth and breadth of various Buddhist scriptures according to their views on life, whether they are profound and broad or shallow and narrow. Needless to say, Nichiren Daishonin established his teaching upon the notion of the eternity of life. The Daishonin, however, delved deeper into the existence of life than Shakyamuni; he thought of life on its essential level.

The Daishonin states in “The Opening of the Eyes”:

Confucianism describes the Three Sovereigns, the Five Emperors, and the Three Kings, whom it calls the Honorable Ones of Heaven. ...Some say that, if we ask what existed before our ancestors were born, we will find that life was born out of the primal force, while others declare that eminence and ignobility, joy and sorrow, right and wrong, gain and loss occur simply as part of the natural order. These are theories that are cleverly argued, but that fail to take cognizance of either the past or the future. Mystery, as we have seen, means darkness or obscurity, and it is for this reason that it is called mystery. It is a theory that deals with matters only in terms of the present. (WND, 220-21)

He also states in “The Opening of the Eyes”:

This I will state. Let the gods forsake me. Let all persecutions assail me. Still I will give my life for the sake of the Law. Shariputra practiced the way of the bodhisattva for sixty kalpas, but he abandoned the way because he could not endure the ordeal of the Brahman who begged for his eye. Of those who received the seeds of Buddhahood in the remote past and those who did so from the sons of the Buddha Great Universal Wisdom Excellence, many abandoned the seeds and suffered in hell for the long periods of numberless major world system dust particle kalpas and major world

system dust particle kalpas, respectively, because they followed evil companions. Whether tempted by good or threatened by evil, if one casts aside the Lotus Sutra, one destines oneself for hell. (WND, 280)

In “The Selection of the Time,” the Daishonin states: “No matter how the people of today may follow the teachings of the sutras in hopes of a better life in the hereafter, if the sutras they follow are in error, then they can never attain enlightenment. But that is not to be attributed to any fault of the Buddha” (WND, 555).

Passages such as these abound in the Daishonin’s writings. It is unimaginable to approach Buddhism without understanding the concept of the eternity of life. It is the true aspect of life, and one’s understanding in this regard is the first step toward his or her sacred enlightenment. Many intellectuals may regard this as superstition, denying it with derisive laughter. From my own perspective, however, the ignorance of those in denial of the eternity of life is indeed laughable for they do not examine their own lives in a scientific manner.

Science cannot exist without recognizing cause and effect. All phenomena of the universe are invariably accompanied by their causes and effects. Attributing the appearance of life to the conception of an egg with a sperm is simply a description of the fact; it does not offer us any essential insight. While acknowledging that all phenomena have their causes and effects, some nonchalantly think that only life appears by chance and then disappears like a bubble after death. I must say that such people are exceedingly lackadaisical about their own lives.

No matter how much natural science develops or no matter how loudly people scream for the abolition of classes and for equality, the real phenomena of life can be neither explained nor fully understood by science or politics alone.

We see people, cats, dogs, tigers and giant cedar trees. Are their lives the same or are they different? Furthermore, how are they related to one another?

Although people are all humans, some are born intelligent while others are not. Some are born beautiful while others are born ugly. Some are born healthy while others are born sickly. Some people, no matter how hard they work, remain poor. Science and social institutions are utterly powerless to help people suffering from their own greed or jealousy or people tormented by others who are greedy or jealous. Differences in our realities have their causes. Without seeking the causes on a fundamental level, the solutions to those problems will not likely be found.

While I expound on the eternity of life, I am not advocating the existence of a soul or ghost. Let me make it clear that I am not asserting that there exists a kind of ghost or soul that exists apart from one’s body and mind, controls one’s present life and continues indefinitely in afterlife.

THE ETERNITY OF LIFE

Human life exists throughout the three existences of past, present and future. The length of life, in this regard, is essential to Buddhism. The “Life Span of the Thus Come One” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states:

“But good men, it has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood.

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“Suppose a person were to take five hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million nayuta asamkhya [extremely large number] thousand-millionfold worlds and grind them to dust. Then, moving eastward, each time he passes five hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million nayuta asamkhya worlds he drops a particle of dust. He continues eastward in this way until he has finished dropping all the particles. Good men, what is your opinion? Can the total number of all these worlds be imagined or calculated?”

The bodhisattva Maitreya and the others said to the Buddha: “World-Honored One, these worlds are immeasurable, boundless — one cannot calculate their number, nor does the mind have the power to encompass them. Even all the voice-hearers and pratyekabuddhas [self-enlightened beings] with their wisdom free of outflows could not imagine or understand how many there are. Although we abide in the state of avivartika, we cannot comprehend such a matter. World-Honored One, these worlds are immeasurable and boundless.”

At that time the Buddha said to the multitude of great bodhisattvas: “Good men, now I will state this to you clearly. Suppose all these worlds, whether they received a particle of dust or not, are once more reduced to dust. Let one particle represent one kalpa. The time that has passed since I attained Buddhahood surpasses this by a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million nayuta asamkhya kalpas.

“Ever since then I have been constantly in this saha world, preaching the Law, teaching and converting” (LS16, 225).

The above sutra passage, among Shakyamuni’s many scriptures, is the most important part, the quintessence of his enlightenment. Its meaning could be paraphrased in Shakyamuni’s address to his disciples as follows: “You all think that I became a Buddha in this world. In truth, however, I became a Buddha in the distant past, numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago. And since then I have been active in this saha world.” He reveals here that his life along with his enlightenment not only exists in this lifetime, but has also existed since the remote past.

The following passage from the “Life Span of the Thus Come One” chapter, however, may be understood from a viewpoint different from the previous passage:

[At that time the Buddha said to the multitude of great bodhisattvas...] “Good men, the Thus Come One observes how among living beings there are those who delight in a little Law, meager in virtue and heavy with defilement. For such persons I describe how in my youth I left my household and attained anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. But in truth the time since I attained Buddhahood is extremely long, as I have told you...” (LS16, 226)

In this passage, Shakyamuni explains that although those “meager in virtue and heavy with defilement” think that their lives are only of this present lifetime, the true aspect of life is eternal, without beginning or end.

In contrast with Shakyamuni, who viewed the nature of life from the perspective of Buddhahood attained in the distant past, Nichiren Daishonin, from the viewpoint of an ordinary person who is in the second of the six stages of practice, expounds on the intrinsic nature of life and the eternal existence of Buddhahood. That is, the Daishonin explains that within our lives as ordinary people exists the unchanging, eternal reality of

life. The moment embraces eternity while eternity is a sequence of moments. The Daishonin explains that “extremely long” [in the Lotus Sutra] means “without affectation” or “originally endowed.”

In “The Ultimate Teaching Affirmed by All Buddhas of Past, Present and Future,” the Daishonin states:

Shakyamuni Thus Come One realized at the very beginning of numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago when he was an ordinary person that his body is earth, water, fire, wind and space. And he immediately attained enlightenment. Afterwards he appeared in world after world, lifetime after lifetime, attaining the Way in place after place through the eight phases of a Buddha’s existence² for the sake of teaching others (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 568).

The Daishonin also states in “The Entity of the Mystic Law”:

When the sage was observing the principle and assigning names to all things, he perceived that there is this wonderful single Law [*myoho*] that simultaneously possesses both cause and effect [*renge*], and he named it Myoho-*renge*. This single Law that is Myoho-*renge* encompasses within it all the phenomena comprising the Ten Worlds and the three thousand realms³, and is lacking in none of them. Anyone who practices this Law will obtain both the cause and the effect of Buddhahood simultaneously.

The sage practiced with this Law as his teacher and attained enlightenment, and therefore he simultaneously obtained both the mystic cause and the mystic effect of Buddhahood, becoming the Thus Come One of perfect enlightenment and fully realized virtues (WND, 421).

In “On the Ten Dharma Worlds,” the Daishonin states:

The theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra expounds the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds from the viewpoint that Shakyamuni attained his enlightenment for the first time in the present lifetime; the theoretical teaching has not yet revealed the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds⁴ of the original enlightenment that is intrinsically endowed.... The theoretical teaching, therefore, lacks in the meaning of Buddhahood that has neither beginning nor end (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 421).

In the “Record of Orally Transmitted Teachings,” the Daishonin also states:

The “three bodies⁵ of the Buddha of absolute freedom” indicates the votary of the Lotus Sutra of the Latter Day of the Law. The title of the treasure of the three bodies of the Buddha of absolute freedom is Nam-*myoho-renge-kyo*. These three bodies are the three most important points in the actuality of the “Life Span of the Thus Come One” chapter. Thus Come One of this chapter shall be described in terms of the six stages of practice as follows: Thus Come One of the first stage is an ordinary person who then advances to the second stage when he receives upon his head Nam-*myoho-renge-kyo* as he hears the title of the Lotus Sutra for the first time. He then moves to the third stage when he starts to practice upon hearing the Law. This third stage is to

observe the object of devotion of the three thousand realms in a single life moment in actuality. When he subdues the obstacle of earthly desires, he is in the fourth stage. In the fifth stage, he devotes himself to the practice for others. When he attains the ultimate realization that he possesses the three bodies of the Buddha of absolute freedom, he is said to be a Buddha of the sixth stage. In general, instead of regarding the suppression of earthly desires as the ultimate teaching of the “Life Span of Thus Come One” chapter, one must regard the originally endowed life of an ordinary person as the ultimate teaching of this chapter (GZ, 752).

As clarified in those passages, Shakyamuni’s three thousand realms in a single life moment expounds from the viewpoint of a Buddha and is a doctrinal principle both in his theoretical and true teachings. I think that the Daishonin’s three thousand realms in a single life moment is expounded from the viewpoint of an ordinary person whose life is originally endowed with the Mystic Law. It is a practice of directly observing one’s mind and thereby attaining enlightenment; it reveals the reality of life on the most fundamental level.

In the following, I will state some of my views regarding the eternity of life, though not without trepidation that my interpretations might defile those original texts.

Life exists simultaneously with the universe. It did not precede the universe, nor did it come into being after the universe took form, either by chance or as someone’s creation. The universe itself is life; it would be a mistake to view life as exclusively limited to the planet earth. Now, bathed in the Daishonin’s vast and boundless compassion, we are devoting ourselves to the Gohonzon, the object of devotion for the direct attainment of Buddhahood. In so doing, we are in fact striving to grasp the mystic reality of life itself.

Some may deny my view of eternal life, asserting that humans and other creatures evolved from unicellular life forms. But I would counter, why did these one-celled life forms come into being, where did they come from, when our red-hot planet had cooled?

Be it on our own earth or on other worlds, when conditions are right for unicellular life forms to appear, then they appear. And when the soil and climate are right for moss or algae to flourish, they proliferate. I am not denying the evolutionary theory of their development, but because the universe is itself life, wherever conditions are right, primeval life forms will appear. Therefore, it is in no way strange to think that thousands of billions of years ago the human race may have inhabited other stars and is now flourishing on earth. Moreover, we can imagine that somewhere on other worlds exist animals striving to evolve into human beings. I have heard from astronomers that certain forms of plant life may exist on other planets in our solar system. Not being an astronomer, I am in no position to prove it, but I am inclined to believe that it may be so.

I cannot accept the view that proteins or other substances somehow combined at a particular time to produce life. The presence of proteins and the like may provide a condition necessary for life to emerge, but life itself is forever inherent in the cosmos.

HOW DOES LIFE CONTINUE?

life is eternal. People often talk about the continuation of life, but we find a number of views on the subject. Some preach in the abstract that “life is eternal” and believe it vaguely, but such abstract notions elude our grasp.

We also find those who say that a person’s life is passed on to offspring, and that she

therefore lives on in her descendants. But this cannot be called eternal life. If one's descendants were to die out, would not she herself cease to exist? Moreover, a life that could perish with the destruction of the earth cannot be considered eternal. Were we to accept these people's views, we would have to say that one's own life is even now active within her son or daughter, just as it is within herself, which would be unreasonable in the extreme. How do these people regard their own lives after death? In effect, they view their descendants' bodies as their own cemetery, a shallow concept of life indeed. We cannot say that they understand life's eternity.

I remember that the famous Chogyu Takayama [novelist, 1871–1902] once said, “Men perform great works that remain even after they themselves have passed away. Thus, men live on in the great works they leave behind.” Because Takayama was such a respected man of letters, I worried greatly over his explanation. If what he said is true, then the lives of us ordinary people cannot be considered eternal, let alone the lives of dogs or cats. In this case, eternal life would not be universal. For a long time I pondered whether or not this was true. In consequence, I reached the conclusion that while Takayama was a great literary man, his views on life after death were exceptionally shallow.

Although this may become a bit theoretical, among those theories of life that depart from demonstrable fact, we find the idea that within living beings there exists such a thing as a spirit or soul, which lives on eternally after death. Because this view at first sounds quite plausible, a considerable number of scholars and many other people embrace it. From the standpoint of Buddhist philosophy, however, it is quite worthless. Shakyamuni categorically denies the existence of the soul in his Nirvana Sutra, defining this belief as non-Buddhist and incorrect. Then in what way does the life of living beings continue? The problem of what happens after death occupies a prominent place in Buddhist thought, as it does in that of other religions. As it might easily create misunderstanding on the part of those not well versed in the Buddhist teachings, however, I will omit a detailed, doctrinal explanation at this time and rather deal with this subject in the most simple, common-sense terms. I ask for the reader's understanding on this point.

The verse section of the “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, “as an expedient means I appear to enter nirvana” (LS16, 229), thus expounding that death is a sort of expedient. For example, when seen in terms of life's fundamental objective—to be awake and active—sleep is merely a means. If we say that human beings are supposed to be active, then they should not need to sleep. But without sleep, one cannot dispel his fatigue or work energetically. In a similar way, when people grow old, fall ill or find their bodies seriously damaged, they have no alternative but to rejuvenate their life force by the means of death.

The supreme principle of Buddhism is three thousand realms in a single moment of life. Needless to say, Buddhism resolves the problem of life after death in connection with this principle. “The Opening of the Eyes” reads, “The doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life begins with the concept of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds” (WND, 224). Concerning these Ten Worlds, “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind” states:

When we look from time to time at a person's face, we find him or her sometimes joyful, sometimes enraged, and sometimes calm. At times, greed appears in the person's face, at times foolishness, and at times perversity. Rage is the world of Hell, greed is that of hungry spirits, foolishness is that of animals, perversity is that of asuras, joy is that of heaven, and calmness is that of human beings.... The fact that all

things in this world are transient is perfectly clear to us. Is this not because the worlds of the two vehicles are present in the human world? Even a heartless villain loves his wife and children. He too has a portion of the bodhisattva world within him. Buddhahood is the most difficult to demonstrate. But since you possess the other nine worlds, you should believe that you have Buddhahood as well. (WND, 358)

If we contemplate our state of mind over the course of a day's activities, we find that moment by moment, different states arise and vanish within us, such as greed, joy or rage. Here, parenthetically, I would like to explain a bit: The passage cited above says, "Buddhahood is the most difficult to demonstrate," but what exactly is the relationship or external stimulus that will allow us to manifest our inherent world of Buddhahood? The ultimate truth of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the reality of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, or, in terms of our practice, the Three Great Secret Laws. Thus, only by taking faith in the Gohonzon of the high sanctuary of true Buddhism can we establish the relationship that enables us to attain Buddhahood in our present form. I would like to discuss this point in detail on another occasion, however.

When we observe the workings of our mind we discover that even when we feel joy, that joy disappears with the passing of time. It has not gone away somewhere, like a departing spirit or soul, but has melted back into the recesses of the mind where we can no longer find it. Yet after several hours or days, that same joy surfaces again. Or, suppose that some circumstance has caused one to grieve. Even after several hours or days have passed, if he happens to recall his misfortune the same sorrow may suddenly overwhelm him again. In such cases we often say that one "grieves anew," but between prior and present grief there exists a mysterious continuity; there is no gap between them whatsoever.

A similar phenomenon transpires when we sleep each night. While we are asleep, our conscious mind is nowhere to be found, but nevertheless it functions, whether we are sleeping or not. When we sleep, our conscious mind seems to vanish; when we awaken, it instantly returns. Does our conscious mind exist, or not? We can say it exists, but there are times when it vanishes. The view that defines things neither as existence nor non-existence is called the perception of non-substantiality. This dimension of life transcending the distinctions of existence and non-existence is also called that which is mystic (*myo*). When we consider the mind and its workings in the microcosm of our own being, and also study the profound teachings of Buddhist philosophy, we can reach a valid conclusion about the existence or non-existence of life's continuation after death.

As I mentioned before, the universe is itself life; therefore, when we die, our lives melt back into the greater life of the universe and are nowhere to be found. This is analogous to the interval between the two instances of grief when there seems to be no grieving, or the interval between two moments of rejoicing when joy appears to have vanished, or the interval of sleep when our conscious mind is nowhere to be found. Our life in death does not flit about somewhere like a spirit. Even though it has melted back into the cosmos, however, it is not therefore necessarily at peace, just as sleep is not always restful. Some people sleep soundly, but others suffer from frightful dreams, and still others, plagued by worries, sleep only fitfully.

We can readily grasp this matter of life melting back into the cosmos if we study the sutra and cherish the essence of Buddhism in our hearts. When life in the state of death is aroused by some external stimulus, it reappears in the world in visible form and resumes its life-activities. And, just as one resumes his mental activities from the day before upon

opening his eyes in the morning, so too are we born carrying with us undiminished our karma created in prior existences, receiving its effects as we live out our lives in this world.

In this way, just as we sleep and wake, wake and sleep, we are born and die, die and are born anew, thus maintaining an eternal cycle of life. Because each person carries his own destiny, those who share the relationship of husband and wife, or parent and child in this lifetime cannot maintain this relationship eternally. Only those who embrace the true and pure law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo—who have faith in the Gohonzon—receive immense benefit, maintaining their bonds with one another throughout eternity.

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Footnotes

1. Shramanera—A male novice in the Buddhist Order who has vowed to uphold the ten precepts.
2. Eight phases of a Buddha's existence—Eight successive phases which a Buddha is said to manifest when he or she appears in the world to save people. They are: 1) descending from Heaven; 2) entering the mother's body; 3) emerging from the mother's body; 4) renouncing the world; 5) conquering devils; 6) attaining enlightenment; 7) turning the wheel of the Law; and 8) entering nirvana.
3. Three thousand realms—A philosophical system set forth by T'ien-t'ai of China based on the Lotus Sutra. The expression "three thousand" is an integration of the Ten Worlds, their mutual possession, the ten factors and the three realms of existence. These component principles may be thought of as the three thousand conditions that life may manifest in any single moment.
4. Mutual possession of the Ten Worlds—The principle that each of the Ten Worlds contains all the other nine as potential within itself. This is to be taken to mean that an individual's state of life can be changed, and that all beings of the nine worlds possess the potential for Buddhahood.
5. The three bodies—Three kinds of body a Buddha possesses: 1) the Dharma body, which indicates the Law to which a Buddha is enlightened; 2) the reward body, which indicates wisdom; and 3) the manifested body, which is the physical form the Buddha assumes to save people.