

# In This Time and Place: A Buddhist Perspective

Chaos. That is the word that characterizes the state of the world today.

As citizens of this world, should we hate others because others look different from ourselves, hold different opinions, believe in different faiths, live in different countries, or come from different backgrounds and different circumstances? Aren't these differences the wonderful, natural tapestry of this diverse planet?

Namumyōhōrengekyō. That is the name of the Buddha-nature in every living thing. There is not a different Buddha-nature for me and another for you. Or a different one for able-bodied people and a different one for people of special needs. Not a different Buddha-nature for Buddhists, Christians, Moslems, Jews, Hindu, etc. Nor a different one for Central Americans, North Americans, Africans, Asians, Europeans, etc. and a different one for me or you. There's not a different one for plants and animals, water and air; nor a different Buddha-nature for the sun, the stars, or the entire universe. There is only one Buddha-nature—Namumyōhōrengekyō. What that means is we are all related.

Because everyone has Buddha-nature, and therefore all have the same potential to become Buddha, when you kill someone, you are killing the Buddha. When you disparage someone, you are disparaging the Buddha. When you have contempt for someone, you are holding contempt for the Buddha.

Namumyōhōrengekyō is a Buddhist Law. It is the Mystic Law of Cause and Effect. In addition to having this Buddha-nature, all life is equal and eternal. This is the teaching of Buddhism. It doesn't matter if you believe or not, it is just THE FACT of life. No one is above this Law; no one is exempt from this Law's workings. Our lives are determined by causes – thoughts, words and deeds – we make. This reservoir of causes is what is known as *karma*. On a daily basis, we continuously create good and bad *karma* for ourselves. The Buddha said, "If you want to

understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present.”<sup>1</sup> This means, it is possible that in the next life, any one of us could have the same experience as migrants fleeing desperate conditions, whether it’s due to climate change, or violence, in Central America, the Middle East, Africa or elsewhere.

“...If the minds of the people are impure,” the Buddha wrote, “their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land. There are not two lands, pure and impure in themselves. The difference lies solely in the good or evil of our minds.”<sup>2</sup>

Buddhism views all life as basically good, because all life possesses Buddha-nature. But also contained within all life are the worlds of Hell, Greed, Animality and Anger. As human beings, we have a choice between expressing our Buddha mind and heart, or expressing our lower natures. At present, the baser, destructive natures in humankind are increasing in dominance, causing us to lose our pure minds and pure land.

It should be mandatory for world leaders to spend time in the International Space Station. If they looked at planet earth from that vantage point they would not see any borders. Instead, wouldn’t they be awed by all this life sharing this one planet in an uninhabited solar system suspended in infinite space? Thereby, wouldn’t they come to realize that we, in this time and place, are all related, and must care for and take care of this planet and each other?

Nonetheless, it is up to each one of us to seriously consider our actions, our words, and our thoughts because they are permanently recorded as our *karma*. Our individual *karma* and our collective *karma* not only affect ourselves, our communities, our country and our people, but also determine the viability of our planet.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Opening of the Eyes,” Part 2, *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, (Nichiren Shoshu International Center, Tokyo, 1981), Vol. Two, p. 197

<sup>2</sup> “On Attaining Buddhahood,” *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, (Nichiren Shoshu International Center, Tokyo, 1986), Vol. One p.4,