The Unity of Many in Body, One in Mind

SGI-USA January 2022 Discussion Meeting Topic
Key Points

When we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and unite to spread the Mystic Law, which harmonizes all things, we can:

- free ourselves from our negative tendencies that lead to suffering;
- fully express our unique potential; and
- deepen our affinity and appreciation for everyone in our lives.
Many in Body, One in Mind

• “Many in body,” also expressed as “different in body,” refers to people’s diverse personalities and characteristics, and the roles they have to fulfill.

• “One in mind,” also expressed as “same in heart or spirit,” means sharing the same purpose or values or cherishing a shared wish to realize a lofty goal.
Unity Is the “True Goal”

All disciples and lay supporters of Nichiren should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the spirit of many in body but one in mind, transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim. This spiritual bond is the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate Law of life and death. Herein lies the true goal of Nichiren’s propagation.

—Nichiren Daishonin, “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 217
At times, our personalities may not mesh with those of other individuals. That is why unless we each ground ourselves within our own human revolution, we cannot create genuine unity. ...

The Daishonin also urges us “to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim” (WND-1, 217). This means developing a sense of affinity or fellowship with everyone who joins us in studying and practicing Nichiren Buddhism and working for kosen-rufu, and indeed with all people with whom we have a connection.

Having the Same Spirit as the Mentor Is the Key to Unity

In terms of Buddhism, the core of “being one in mind” is faith based on the oneness of mentor and disciple—that is, each person taking kosen-rufu, the Buddha’s will and intent, as a personal mission and actively working for its realization. For disciples to take on challenges and strive to win with the same spirit as their teacher is the essence of the spirit of many in body, one in mind.

—Ikeda Sensei, *The Hope-filled Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 205–06
Suggested Questions:

1. Why do you think creating unity is one of the greatest aims of Nichiren Buddhism?
2. What has your experience been of “transcending differences” and creating unity?
SLIDE 1

• Hello everyone!
• Today, we will study the Buddhist concept of “unity,” also described as being “many in body, one in mind.”
• Let’s get started!

SLIDE 2

• The famous author Helen Keller once said: “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”
• Similarly, Buddhism teaches that when we dedicate ourselves to a noble cause that is greater than ourselves, chant and unite to spread the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that harmonizes all things, we can:
  o free ourselves from suffering;
  o fully express our unique potential; and
  o deepen our appreciation for everyone in our lives.
• As we strive to create such harmonious unity, we realize the interconnectedness of life and bring forth even greater power, resilience and wisdom—individually and collectively.

SLIDE 3

• First, let’s take a look at the two components of “many in body” and “one in mind”:
• “Many in body” is expressed as Chinese characters meaning “different in body,” and referring to people’s diverse personalities, characteristics and the roles they fulfill.
• This conveys the guiding principle of Buddhism that all people have limitless potential and can create the most beautiful lives while staying true to themselves.
• “One in mind” is expressed as “same in heart or spirit,” or sharing the same purpose or cherished wish to realize a lofty goal.
• In our Buddhist practice, this means each person working to fulfill the Buddha’s wish to awaken and lead all people to lasting happiness.
• But this unity isn’t achieved through external restrictions or conformity.
• Rather, by aligning our hearts with the Buddha’s heart, we can recognize and free ourselves from tendencies to make distinctions between self and others, which appear in feelings such as contempt, hatred, jealousy, arrogance, ingratitude, impatience and the like.
• Anytime we catch ourselves feeling such negative things, we know it’s time to chant.
• Sensei teaches that “a mind prone to making distinctions of self and other lead one to self-isolation, to self-attachment and to regarding the self as faultless, which gives rise to evil and misery… [While] those who have conquered the tendency to focus on differences come to manifest in their lives the workings of the Mystic Law, which connects and harmonizes all things” (*The Hope-filled Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 213).

SLIDE 4

• Essentially, that which divides us is evil while the Mystic Law, which unites all life and phenomena, is the ultimate good.
• Nichiren teaches that our Buddhist practice’s “true goal” is to become people who can unite with and cherish others.

• He states: “All disciples and lay supporters of Nichiren should chant Nam-myoho-RENge-kyo with the spirit of many in body but one in mind, transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim. This spiritual bond is the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate Law of life and death. Herein lies the true goal of Nichiren’s propagation” (“The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 217).

• This is why the Soka community is so vital—it is in working with one another in this community toward the noble cause of spreading Buddhism that we learn how to transcend differences, begin to recognize our inseparable connections with others, and grow to better respect and support one another.

SLIDE 5
• Sensei also explains: “At times, our personalities may not mesh with those of other individuals. That is why unless we each ground ourselves within our own human revolution, we cannot create genuine unity. …

“The Daishonin also urges us ‘to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim’ (WND-1, 217). This means developing a sense of affinity or fellowship with everyone who joins us in studying and practicing Nichiren Buddhism and working for kosen-rufu, and indeed with all people with whom we have a connection” (The Hope-filled Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 212–13).

SLIDE 6
• Two kinds of unity that are essential to deepening our faith and realizing the healthy growth of our Soka community are “the oneness of mentor and disciple” and the “unity of many in body, one in mind.”

• Because our hearts and minds can be fickle and easily swayed by changing circumstances, a good mentor always directs us back to uniting around the shared goal of widely spreading Buddhism, or what we call kosen-rufu.

• As diverse as we are, we won’t be able to genuinely unite unless we share our mentor’s heart to realize kosen-rufu.

• Ikeda Sensei says: “In terms of Buddhism, the core of ‘being one in mind’ is faith based on the oneness of mentor and disciple—that is, each person taking kosen-rufu, the Buddha’s will and intent, as a personal mission and actively working for its realization. For disciples to take on challenges and strive to win with the same spirit as their teacher is the essence of the spirit of many in body, one in mind” (The Hope-filled Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 205–06).

• In this time of division and uncertainty, what’s urgently needed is the unity exemplified by the Buddhist ideal of many in body, one in mind.

• Based on what we learned today, how can we create harmony in our own families, workplaces and communities as we uphold and inspire a culture of respect, diversity and equality?

SLIDE 7: SUGGESTED QUESTIONS
• Let’s explore this topic some more through our discussions!

• In addition to that concluding question, here are a few questions to help us start our conversation:

1. Why do you think creating unity is one of the greatest aims of Nichiren Buddhism?

2. What has your experience been of “transcending differences” and creating unity?