

December Discussion Topic – The Oneness of Life and its Environment

The Buddhist principle of the “Oneness of Life and its Environment” implies that life and its environment are one. At the most fundamental level of our lives, we are not separate from our surroundings, even though we often perceive the things around us as something external to ourselves.

Depending on their life-state, living beings experience their surroundings in different ways. For example, a person in the life-state of hell will experience travelling on a crowded underground train as hellish, whereas a person in the bodhisattva life-state will be able to feel compassion and camaraderie towards those who are pressed up against him.

Buddhism explains that everything around us, including our work and family relationships, is a reflection of our inner lives. For example, if we are depressed, we will probably neglect both our homes and ourselves. On the other hand, if we are confident and generous, we will create a warm and attractive environment around ourselves. Thus, when we change, so do our circumstances.

This is a liberating approach, because it means that we do not need to seek enlightenment outside ourselves. Wherever we may be, whatever our circumstances, we can bring forth our inherent Buddhahood and change our environment into a “Buddha land” – a joyful place where we can create value for ourselves and for others.

- ✓ Can you give an example where, through raising your life-state, you gained a different perception of your surroundings?
- ✓ Have you experienced that when you changed, your environment changed, too?