

Februari Discussion Topic - Many in body, one in mind

The Buddhist ideal of “many in body, one in mind” is unity of diversity.

It is unity based on the respect for the diverse and unique qualities and characteristics of each individual, like physical appearance, personality, skills or interests (“many in body”).

Such unity arises, President Ikeda says, when people “treasure each other as unique and irreplaceable individuals, and try to bring out the best in each other.” He adds that “many in body and many in mind” is the opposite of unity; it is disunity.

The expression “one in mind” does not mean we all need to adopt a standardized, uniform set of values or way of thinking. Rather, it refers to a shared, yet deeply personal, commitment to a common goal or ideal. It offers a model for solidarity among people who make efforts for a positive change in the world.

Everyone has a unique mission only he or she can fulfill and make his or her own special contribution. A respectful, voluntary collaboration toward a common ideal creates an environment in which each person’s unique qualities and talents can be fully realized.

Buddhism places great importance on human bonds. Together they form the network in which Nichiren Buddhism is practiced and transmitted.

Nichiren Daishonin’s expression of “many in body, one in mind,” consists of four Chinese characters that could also be rendered, as “different in body, same in spirit.”

He wrote: “If the spirit of many in body but one in mind prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas if one in body but different in mind, they can achieve nothing remarkable.” (WND-I, 618)

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founder and first president of the Soka Gakkai, noted the irony that evil-minded people actually find it relatively easy to create solidarity—united by a shared interest of material or political gain. People of goodwill, being more spiritually independent, he wrote, tend to overlook the importance of unity. History is filled with tragic examples in which the failure of people with good intentions to work together has effectively ceded the field to the forces of hatred and destruction.

Only the unity of people committed to a more human future will enable us to face the challenges of the future. The unity of independent people who try to improve themselves, care for others and believe in a better future.

- What does the spirit of “many in body, one in mind” mean to you?
- How can we advance Kosen-rufu with the spirit of “many in body, one in mind” ? Do you have an experience with it?

