

On the Ten Factors



WE ourselves are none other than Thus Come Ones of original enlightenment, who possess the three bodies within a single body. This is made clear in the passage in the Lotus Sutra that speaks of the ten factors of “appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end.”¹

First, with regard to appearance, this refers to the appearance manifested by the form and shape of our bodies. This corresponds to the manifested body of the Thus Come One. It also corresponds to emancipation and to the truth of temporary existence.

Next, with regard to nature, this refers to the nature of our minds. This corresponds to the reward body of the Thus Come One. It also corresponds to wisdom and to the truth of non-substantiality.

The third factor is entity, which is the entities of these lives of ours. It corresponds to the Dharma body of the Thus Come One. It also corresponds to the truth of the Middle Way, to the essential nature of phenomena, and to tranquil extinction.

These three factors constitute the Thus Come One of the three bodies. That these three factors represent the Thus Come One of the three bodies

may seem to be an extraneous matter, but in fact it concerns these very lives of our own. One who understands this may be said to have grasped the meaning of the Lotus Sutra.

These three factors constitute the beginning, or basis, from which emerge the other seven factors, thus forming the ten factors. These ten factors are the basis of the hundred worlds, the thousand factors, and the three thousand realms. In this way a great number of doctrines are enunciated, which are known collectively as the eighty thousand teachings. But all of these come down to one single doctrine, that of the three truths. Outside of the doctrine of the three truths, there is no other doctrine.

The hundred worlds represent the truth of temporary existence, the thousand factors represent the truth of non-substantiality, and the three thousand realms represent the truth of the Middle Way. Non-substantiality, temporary existence, the Middle Way—these are the three truths. And although they are elaborated in numerous doctrines such as those pertaining to the hundred worlds, the thousand factors, or the three thousand realms, these are all simply the one doctrine of the three truths.

Thus the three truths expressed in the first three of the ten factors and the

three truths expressed in the remaining seven factors are simply this one doctrine of the three truths. The first three factors and the remaining seven factors are the principle contained within our own lives and are simply one thing, wonderful beyond comprehension. Hence it is stated in the sutra that they are marked by complete consistency from beginning to end. This is what is meant by the words "consistency from beginning to end."

The first three factors are the "beginning," and the remaining seven factors are the "end." These make up the ten factors, which constitute the three truths contained within our own lives.

These three truths may also be called the Thus Come One of the three bodies. Outside of our own minds and bodies, there does not exist the tiniest trace of anything pertaining either to good or evil. Therefore we know that we ourselves are in fact Thus Come Ones of original enlightenment, possessors of the three bodies within a single body.

To suppose that what has been described here is something quite removed from oneself is to be what is called an ordinary living being, to be in a state of delusion, to be an ordinary mortal. But to understand that this applies to oneself is to be what is called a Thus Come One, to be in a state of enlightenment, to be a sage, to be a person of wisdom.

Once one realizes this and can visualize it clearly, then one's life, as it really is, manifests itself in one's present existence as the Thus Come One of original enlightenment, and one achieves what is termed the attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form.

To offer an analogy, if in spring and summer one plows the field and plants it with seed, then in autumn and winter one may reap and store away the harvest, and all will proceed as one wishes it to. It may seem like a long

wait from spring to autumn, and yet within the space of a single year one's wishes will be fulfilled. And in like manner, it may seem a long time to wait in order to enter the state of enlightenment and manifest our Buddhahood. And yet such a manifestation may be accomplished within the space of a single lifetime, and we ourselves can become Buddhas who possess the three bodies within a single body.

Among those who follow the Buddha way, we may distinguish three degrees of capacity, namely, superior, middling, and inferior, though all alike succeed in manifesting the Buddha nature within a single lifetime.

Persons of superior capacity, as soon as they hear the teachings, become thoroughly enlightened and manifest the Buddha nature.

Persons of middling capacity may require perhaps a day, perhaps a month, or perhaps a year in order to manifest it.

Persons of inferior capacity seem to make little progress but to be stuck in one place. As they are certain, however, to reach enlightenment within a single lifetime, when they are on the point of death, just as all one's dreams vanish when one returns to a waking state, so all the erroneous views and mistaken ideas they have up to now entertained with regard to the realm of birth and death and of delusion disappear without a trace, and they return to the waking state of original enlightenment and see the entire realm of phenomena as it really is. Then they realize that all this is the blissful land, the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light, and that they themselves, whom up to now they have looked on as mean and lowly, are in fact Thus Come Ones of original enlightenment, who possess the three bodies within a single body.

In the case of rice plants, there are three types, those that ripen early in autumn, those that ripen in a middling

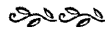
time, and those that ripen late, and yet all are ready to be harvested within a single year. In the same way, although persons fall into three different categories of superior, middling, and inferior, all alike, within the space of a single lifetime, can come to the realization that they themselves are identical and in no way at variance with all the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones.

The entity of Myoho-enge-kyo in all its splendor—just what is this entity? If we hope to answer this, we must say that it is the eight-petaled white lotus that is the true nature of our own lives. Since this is so, then the essential nature of our lives is Myoho-enge-kyo. And once we have come to understand that Myoho-enge-kyo is not the name of a sutra but is the entity of our own lives, then we will see that our own lives are in fact the Lotus Sutra, and the Lotus Sutra is none other than the sacred word preached by the Buddha in order to make manifest the entities that are our lives. And seeing that, we will know that we ourselves

are Thus Come Ones of original enlightenment, who possess the three bodies within a single body.

Once we have become enlightened to this, then all the delusions and mistaken habits of thought that we have entertained from the beginningless past until the present will be swept away like yesterday's dreams and will vanish without a trace.

When we have faith such as this, then it is taught that one chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is equivalent to one recitation of the entire Lotus Sutra carried out just as the sutra prescribes and with the correct understanding of its meaning, that ten chantings are equivalent to ten recitations of the sutra, a hundred chantings are equivalent to a hundred recitations, a thousand chantings are equivalent to a thousand recitations, all carried out just as the sutra prescribes. And one who has such faith may be said to be a person who carries out religious practice just as the sutra prescribes. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.



Background

On the Ten Factors is one of several works related to the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life that Nichiren Daishonin wrote in 1258.

He begins with the conclusive statement that the lives of all people are one and identical with the Buddha, or Thus Come One, of original enlightenment. To make his point, he cites the ten factors of life from the "Expedient Means" (2nd) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, and defines the first three of the ten factors in terms of their correspondence with the three bodies of the Buddha and with the three truths. Thus we have, (1) the factor of appear-

ance, the manifested body, the truth of temporary existence; (2) the factor of nature, the reward body, the truth of non-substantiality; and (3) the factor of entity, the Dharma body, the truth of the Middle Way. One who realizes that this applies to oneself, he states, is a Buddha and one who does not is an ordinary person.

The Daishonin indicates that those who believe that their lives are one with the Buddha, and consistently carry out Buddhist practice, regardless of differences in individual capacity, will in this present lifetime definitely achieve Buddhahood. The Daishonin refers to the splendor of the entity of

Myoho-rence-kyo, describing it as “the eight-petaled white lotus that is the true nature of our own lives.” Each single recitation of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, he says, is equivalent to reciting the entire Lotus Sutra in accordance

with the sutra’s teachings. He closes by stating that a person who believes in this principle and chants the dai-moku is practicing exactly as the sutra teaches.

Note

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.