

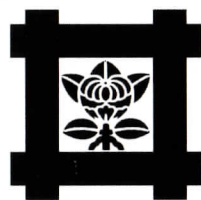
• Peace and Justice

The law of cause and effect guarantees people will “reap what they sow” and therefore “those who live by the sword die by the sword.” On the other hand, those who initiate peace, however great the sacrifice is, will have set in motion a

new cycle which can bring healing and peace to people and communities torn apart by hatred and violence. In other words, it is the conviction of Buddhists that due to the workings of cause and effect “blessed are the peacemakers.”

This does not mean that those who follow the Dharma stand by idly and permit violence and injustice. What it does mean is that Buddhists view the use of deadly force as the ultimate failure. While in the short term the use of deadly force might put a stop to violence or injustice, in the long term it merely sets up the karmic seeds which perpetuate the very same problems. The Buddhist solution is to find non-violent alternatives to personal, social and international problems. With courage and creativity, wisdom, and compassion, Buddhists have faith that such solutions can be found.

The most important goal of any belief is the improvement of self and of the world in general. As a meaningful Buddhist group, the Nichiren Shū and its practitioners must strive for the peace, happiness, and enlightenment of every living being. Human life and the environment must be cherished and protected, and society must be encouraged toward peace and happiness. Therefore, the Nichiren Shū firmly holds the convictions of opposition to all war, prohibition of nuclear arms, and the promotion of justice and peace in society. Besides promoting these values in society, we believe that by living as the Buddha taught us in the Lotus Sutra and by following the teachings of Nichiren Shōnin, we can manifest these values naturally. We also spread this peace and happiness through the world by teaching others to follow the Buddha.



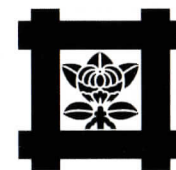
The Nichiren Buddhist
International Center

29490 Mission Blvd.
Hayward, CA 94544
Telephone: (510) 690-1222
Fax: (510) 690-1221
Web site: www.nichiren-shu.org
E-mail: NBIC@nichiren-shu.org

009



NON VIOLENCE IN BUDDHISM



The Nichiren Buddhist
International Center

• The Value of Life

More than 700 years ago in Japan, the great Buddhist reformer Nichiren Shōnin wrote the following in a letter to his followers:

“We should treasure all life from the greatest sage on high to the lowliest mosquito or gnat. Therefore, depriving any being of life is the greatest of crimes. When the Tathagata appeared in the world he made compassion for all life the basis [of his teaching]. In order to show his compassion for all life he made non-killing and providing sustenance the first precept.” (Myōmitsu Shōnin Goshōsoku 1276)

Nichiren Shōnin was inspired and guided in his convictions regarding the supreme value of life by the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha. In the Dhammapada, Sakyamuni Buddha urged his followers to realize the great value which all beings place upon their own lives and to remember to refrain from violence out of compassion for all beings:

Everyone fears punishment; everyone fears death, just as you do. Therefore do not kill or cause to kill. Everyone fears punishment, everyone loves life, as you do. Therefore do not kill or cause to kill. (Dhammapada 129-130)

Nichiren Shōnin lived in a society ruled by warriors and the constant threat of warfare and violent persecution. Inspired by the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha's ultimate teaching, Nichiren Shōnin taught that every person, in fact every sentient being, is worthy of respect.

This is because every sentient being is a potential “Buddha” or “awakened one.” “Awakened Ones” are beings whose beauty, compassion, and wisdom shine throughout the universe which they adorn like priceless wish fulfilling jewels or blossoming lotus flowers. So despite the violence around him and even directed towards him, Nichiren Shōnin insisted on the value of life, stating: “...life itself is the most precious of all treasures. Even the treasures of the entire universe cannot equal the value of a single human life.” (Jiri Kuyō Goshō 1275)

• Ending the Cycle of Violence

In Nichiren Shōnin's day, the military rulers of Japan (the Kamakuran Shogunate) were busily preparing for war against the Mongols, who were themselves preparing to invade Japan from Korea. The Shogunate even had to violently put down internal rivals and squash attempted palace coups. Even unauthorized religious movements were violently crushed by the Shogunate in their zeal to maintain their authority. Nichiren Shōnin himself faced four major violent persecution and countless minor assaults, and in one case was almost beheaded at the execution grounds of Tatsunokuchi. In another incident, three peasant followers were executed because they would not renounce their faith in the Lotus Sutra. And yet, Nichiren Shōnin

peace

himself did not resort to violence and even gave the following counsel to his followers: “Even if others are clad in armor and instigate, my disciples should never do the same. If there are some who prepare for fighting in our group, please write to me immediately.” (Shōnin Gonanji 1279) Nichiren Shōnin clearly did not feel that violence was a solution. For Nichiren Shōnin, faith in the supreme value of life as taught in the Lotus Sutra was the only way to assure peace.

Nichiren Shōnin, like Sakyamuni Buddha, realized that the only way to break the cycle of violence is to have the strength and courage to resist the tendency to respond in kind to the violence of others. Instead of giving in to the violence, those who strive to follow the Dharma cultivate a spirit of forgiveness and loving-kindness. They turn away from the desire for retribution in order to offer healing and peace. This is what the Buddha taught in the famous opening verses of the Dhammapada:

“He was angry with me, he attacked me, he defeated me, he robbed me” - those who dwell on such thoughts will never be free from hatred.

“He was angry with me, he attacked me, he defeated me, he robbed me” - those who do not dwell on such thoughts will surely become free from hatred.

For hatred can never put an end to hatred; love alone can. This is an unalterable law. People forget that their lives will end soon. For those who remember, quarrels come to an end. (Dhammapada 3 - 6)

