

Unity Based on Many in Body, One in Mind (*Itai dōshin*)

In the term “many in body, one in mind” (*itai dōshin*), “many in body” (*itai*) represents our individual differences in aspects such as age, appearance, preferences, thoughts, and personalities. This is commonly exemplified by the saying, “Different strokes for different folks.”

“One in mind” (*dōshin*) means that everyone possesses the same objectives, aspirations, and wishes.

In the Goshō *Many in Body, One in Mind* (*Itai dōshin ji*), Nichiren Daishonin expounds the importance of having the spirit of *itai dōshin*:

If...the believers are united with the spirit of many in body, one in mind (*itai dōshin*), they will achieve everything, whereas, in the case of one in body, many in mind (*dōtai ishin*), they will not accomplish anything.

(*Goshō*, p. 1389)

In the same Goshō, the Daishonin gives an example of this principle:

There was a battle between King Zhou of Yin with his 700,000 soldiers and King Wu of Zhou with his 800. King Zhou was defeated due to disunity, whereas King Wu won because of unity.

(*ibid.*)

King Zhou of Yin was a ruler during the Yin Dynasty in China. He was arbitrary and functioned only to suit his own conveniences in his political maneuverings. He was an abusive sovereign who retaliated against the ministers and sages who did not agree with him. King Wu of Zhou went up in arms with his troops to overthrow him.

King Wu of Zhou raised an army, but the number of soldiers in King Zhou’s army was exponentially larger. King Zhou’s troops, however, felt detached from their sovereign because of his abusiveness. Thus, the soldiers lacked any fighting spirit. In fact, they already had developed animosity toward him. By contrast, the warriors of King Wu had a strong determination to suppress King Zhou. Manifested here was the principle of many in body, one in mind (*itai dōshin*). Although they were all individually different, they were united in one mind with one purpose. As a result, King Wu of Zhou, with a much smaller army, was successful in defeating King Zhou.

Based on this historical reference, Nichiren Daishonin continues:

An individual at odds with himself will not achieve anything, because his heart is not dedicated to a single purpose. Even if there are 100 or 1,000 people, if they are united with one heart, they can definitely accomplish anything. Although there are many people in Japan, they will find it difficult to accomplish anything because of disunity (*dōtai ishin*).

(*Gosho*, p. 1389)

According to this passage, if the mind of an individual is divided in two—that is, if there is confusion or delusion in one’s mind—nothing can be achieved successfully. In the same way, if there is even one person among a group of 100 or 1,000 people who is not of like mind and who does not uphold the same objective, then the goal cannot be accomplished.

The Daishonin continues:

I believe that despite their small numbers, if Nichiren and his followers have the spirit of many in body, one in mind, they certainly will accomplish their great purpose and the Lotus Sutra will spread. No matter how numerous evils may be, they will never defeat the single truth.

(*ibid.*)

The Daishonin teaches that, when the priests and lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu unite in the spirit of many in body, one in mind (*itai dōshin*) and exert their utmost efforts to do shakubuku, then true Buddhism will spread without fail. Regardless of the proliferation of erroneous teachings, if we unite together in *itai dōshin*, we never will be defeated.

However, this unity of *itai dōshin* does not merely signify being friendly with one another. High Priest Nichinyo Shonin clearly instructs us:

What we mean by “one mind” (*dōshin*) is to uphold the sacred will of the Daishonin, to entrust our hearts and minds to true Buddhism, to focus single-mindedly on kosen-rufu, and to advance in our actual practice in the same way.

(*Collection of Directions of High Priest Nichinyo shonin*
[Goshinan-shu], No. 12, p. 84)

Here, the High Priest instructs us to “uphold the sacred will of the Daishonin.” We cannot possibly uphold the will of Nichiren Daishonin merely by just reading his Gosho. This will invariably cause us to form arbitrary perspectives. Without fail, we must embrace both the sacred teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and the guidance of the successive High Priests. Otherwise, we cannot uphold the sacred will of Nichiren Daishonin correctly. Moreover, “to entrust our hearts and minds to true Buddhism” means that we must entrust our faith and practice to the Gohonzon and follow the directions of the High Priest.

In other words, we are of one mind (*dōshin*) with Nichiren Daishonin’s will when we exert our utmost efforts in our faith and practice, based on the

directions of the successive High Priests, who have received the Heritage of the Law and who transmit the sacred will of Nichiren Daishonin. By so doing, we will be able to gain the great benefit of attaining Buddhahood in our present form (*sokushin jōbutsu*).

Furthermore, as priests and lay believers, we must focus single-mindedly on *kosen-rufu* and *do shakubuku*. Then, we can establish faith and practice based on the unity of many in body, one in mind (*itai dōshin*).

It is not easy to establish faith and practice based on the unity of *itai doshin*. There are those who have just started to practice true Buddhism and do not yet have deep conviction in this faith. There may be also others who regress in their practice as a result of various obstacles and devilish functions. Nichiren Daishonin describes this in the *Letter to the Ikegami Brothers* (Kyōdai-shō):

Devils will appear without fail if you propagate this teaching. If these devils did not vie with one another [against us], we would never know that this is the true teaching.

(*Gosho*, p. 986)

Indeed, at times like this, we must chant Daimoku continuously, regardless of what obstacles and devils may compete with each other against us. We must believe firmly in the Daishonin's instruction in the *Gosho*, *On Prayer* (Kitō-shō):

The prayers of the votary of the Lotus Sutra would never be unanswered.

(*Gosho*, p. 630)

The Daishonin states the following in the *On the Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life and Death* (Shōji ichidaiji kechimiyaku-shō):

All disciples and believers of Nichiren should chant Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō with the spirit of many in body, one in mind (*itai dōshin*), overcoming all differences among themselves, just like fish being inseparable from the water in which they swim. This is called the Heritage of the ultimate Law of life and death. This is also what Nichiren is trying to propagate now in the Latter Day of the Law. When you are so united, even the great aspiration for *kosen-rufu* can be fulfilled without fail.

(*Gosho*, p. 514)

Thus, as priests and lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu, we must establish an indestructible unity, based on absolute faith in the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of the Essential Teaching and the Lifeblood Heritage of the Law entrusted to a single person. Furthermore, we must build a Hokkekō organization that is united in the spirit of *itai dōshin*. If we exert our utmost efforts in chanting Daimoku and doing *shakubuku*, based on this spirit, we will be able to accomplish our great aspiration of *kōsen-rufu*. Additionally, we all will be able

to gain the great benefit of attaining enlightenment in our present form throughout the three existences of past, present, and future.

High Priest Nichinyo Shonin presented us with the following directions:

In striving to accomplish the solid unity of different bodies but one mind, it is essential for each one of us to uphold the achievement of kosen-rufu as our personal mission and to thoroughly challenge ourselves, based on our determination to never regress or slacken in our faith. We must follow the Daishonin's sacred instructions precisely, embracing the attitude of "single-mindedly yearning to see the Buddha, they do not begrudge their lives." Through this challenge to achieve kosen-rufu, in total unity of one mind, we can create true solidarity. Herein lies the essential key to accomplish our designated objectives and to defeat the obstacles and devils.

*(Collection of Directions of High Priest Nichinyo shonin
[Goshinan-shu], No. 14, p. 60)*

Thus, as priests and lay believers, we thoroughly must uphold both practice for ourselves and for others (*jigyō keta*), make a solid determination never to regress or slacken in our faith, and advance in our shakubuku efforts. By so doing, we can create a true bond of unity amongst ourselves, and we will be able to overcome and destroy all obstacles and devils.

Last month, we held the grand ceremony celebrating the achievement of the fifty percent increase in the Hokkeko membership on the occasion of the 770th anniversary of the birth of Second High Priest Nikko Shonin and commemorative ceremonies and general meetings for the achievement over the ten days for Japanese Hokkeko. This was the designated objective that we received from High Priest Nichinyo Shonin in 2009. Additionally, over a period of ten days, grand ceremonies and meetings were held to commemorate this achievement.

This month is tremendously important. It is the kickoff month toward our next objective of establishing a membership of 800,000 Hokkeko believers by 2021, the year of the 800th anniversary of the advent of our founder, Nichiren Daishonin.

High Priest Nichinyo Shonin stated the following in his New Year's Address for this year:

When we look upon our future attainment of kosen-rufu, the accomplishment of the goal of 800,000 Hokkeko believers is our objective. It is a matter of foremost importance that we absolutely must achieve, regardless of the many hardships and infinite difficulties that we may encounter.

(Dainichiren, No. 827, p. 4)

Now is the time when we, the priests and lay believers, under the protection of the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of the Essential Teaching and based

on the directions of our High Priest, must exert our efforts and advance with devotion. We must chant Daimoku, do shakubuku, and construct a solid unity based on many in body, one in mind, as we advance toward the accomplishment of the great objective of kōsen-rufu.

Let us continue without ever disrupting this unity of *itai doshin*. Let us strengthen it further and exert our utmost efforts in our faith and practice for both ourselves and for others.