

2 Behold the Sun of Buddhahood in Your Heart

On the 'Expedient Means' Chapter

PRACTICING the Lotus Sutra causes the sun to rise in our hearts. No matter how stormy our situation, when the sun blazes in the depths of our lives, a clear, bright sky—like the blue sky of May—opens in our hearts. And when we possess in our hearts the four virtues of eternity, happiness, true self and purity, then the land—the place where we are—shines as the land of eternally tranquil light.

While everyone has a sun in his or her heart, all too few are aware it exists. The Lotus Sutra is the scripture that reveals the brilliant sun of Buddhahood inherent in our lives.

"You, yourself, are a Buddha." "Revere the sun of Buddhahood in your own life." This is the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, the message of the "Expedient Means" chapter.

Shakyamuni perceived that everyone possesses Buddhahood just as he did. And he made it possible for anyone to advance along the path to which he became enlightened. Based on the irrefutable reason of the proposition that all human beings are respectable, and that there is no human being who is better than anyone else, Shakyamuni went out among the people and began expounding the Law continuously.

Buddhism Is the Path of Limitless Self-improvement

IN the latter half "Expedient Means," Shakyamuni explains that the reason Buddhas appear in the world is to "open the door of," "show," "cause living beings to awaken to" and "induce them to enter the path of" the Buddha wisdom that inherently exists in human life. He further states that all people can equally develop the Buddha's state of life; and that by expounding the Lotus Sutra that enables them to do so, he has fulfilled a vow he made long ago.

I think the spirit of "Expedient Means," as expressed in these passages, is a profound form of humanistic education. The reason for this is that Buddhism starts from the recognition of each person's infinite potential. And it teaches the means whereby people can awaken to, and draw forth, the supreme treasure of Buddhahood in their lives.

When people become aware of this treasure in their own lives, they also come to recognize it in others and so will treat their fellow human beings with heartfelt respect. At the same time, they naturally take action to spark the same awareness in others.

When we make such efforts, the treasure in our own lives is polished, and this in turn enables us to develop still more confidence in our innate potential and dignity. Buddhist practice is thus the path of limitless self-improvement.

After hearing the Buddha expound "Expedient Means," Shariputra and the other voice-hearers (persons of learning) attain enlightenment. Vowing to take

action among the people, they become “voice-hearers who devote themselves to the people”; they emerge as true disciples of the Buddha.

Shariputra and the others no doubt were moved by the profound compassion of their mentor, Shakyamuni. The great light of the Buddha wisdom suddenly illuminated the darkness of their formerly self-centered and tightly closed hearts. Their hearts opened and expanded widely.

They understood it had been the Buddha’s intention all along to guide them to Buddhahood, the vast and boundless state of life. They realized that attaining the two vehicles (the worlds of Learning and Realization) or the three vehicles (the worlds of Learning, Realization and Bodhisattva) was not the true aim of the Buddha’s teaching.

This teaching that guides people to aspire to the Buddha’s state of life rather than the three vehicles is called “the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle” (*kaisan ken’ichi*). The replacement of the three vehicles with the one supreme vehicle is the central teaching of the first half, or theoretical teaching, of the Lotus Sutra. And of the fourteen chapters that make up the theoretical teaching, “Expedient Means,” which reveals the framework of the replacement of the three vehicles with the one supreme vehicle, is the central pillar.

In Buddhism, the term *hoben* refers to the skillful means or methods Buddhas employ to guide people to enlightenment. The “Expedient Means” (Hoben) chapter extols the wisdom of the Buddhas to thus instruct the people. Later, I will elaborate further on the profound meaning of the term *hoben*.

The Essence of the Entire ‘Expedient Means’ Chapter

IN our daily practice of gongyo, we recite the opening portion of “Expedient Means.” This is the most important part of the entire chapter.

Briefly, the contents of this part of the chapter are as follows. First, Shakyamuni clarifies that the wisdom to which all Buddhas are enlightened is “infinitely profound and immeasurable”; and that it is well beyond the capacity of Shariputra and the other voice-hearers to comprehend. Shakyamuni then says he has employed similes and various other means to expound skillfully the Buddha wisdom to the people. Finally, he reveals that the wisdom of all Buddhas is none other than the comprehension of the “true entity of all phenomena” (*shoho jisso*). This concludes the portion of “Expedient Means” we recite each day.

In a nutshell, the “true entity of all phenomena” represents the principle that all people have the potential to be Buddhas. In other words, this passage reveals in theoretical terms the path whereby all people can attain Buddhahood. The portion we recite during gongyo is thus the very essence of the entire “Expedient Means” chapter.

Let us now proceed to the contents of “Expedient Means.”

“Hoben” (Expedient Means), the second chapter of Myoho-enge-kyo

Niji seson. Ju sanmai. Anjo ni ki. Go sharihotsu. Sho-but[^]chi-e. Jinjin muryo. Go chi-e

mon. Nange nannyu. Issai sho-mon. Hyaku-shi-butsu. Sho fu no chi.

At that time the World-Honored One calmly arose from his samadhi and addressed Shariputra, saying: “The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable. The door to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter. Not one of the voice-hearers or pratyekabuddhas is able to comprehend it. (LS2, 23)

SHAKYAMUNI at last begins to expound the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. At the beginning of “Expedient Means,” Shakyamuni, having arisen from samadhi, or deep meditation, on the truth that immeasurable meanings come from the one Law, tells Shariputra straightaway: “The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable.... [None of you] is able to comprehend it.” The teaching thus opens with a scene of considerable tension.

Regarding “At that time...,” which opens the chapter, let us first consider just what kind of “time” is being indicated? President Toda explained:

“At that time...” refers to the concept of time as employed in Buddhism. This is different from time in the sense that we ordinarily use it to indicate some particular time such as two o’clock or three o’clock, or in the sense of “springtime.”

Neither is “At that time...” comparable to the typical nursery tale opening, “Once upon a time....” Time, in the sense signified here, refers to when a Buddha, perceiving the people’s longing for him, appears in order to expound his teaching.

Four conditions must be met for a Buddha to expound the Law—those of time, response, capacity and Law. Time, in terms of Buddhism, indicates when the Buddha appears in order to expound the Law in response to the capacity of people who seek his teaching. In other words, it refers to when a Buddha and human beings encounter one another.

Shakyamuni’s Disciples Were Awaiting a Great Teaching

WHILE Shakyamuni is engaged in meditation in the “Introduction” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the seeking spirit for the Way of his disciples, including Shariputra and others of the two vehicles, no doubt reaches a climax.

They probably thought to themselves: “I wonder what kind of teaching the World Honored One will expound?” “I don’t want to miss a single word.” “I will engrave his teaching in my heart.” While containing their blazing enthusiasm, they all strained their ears to listen. And, focusing every nerve in their bodies, they fixed their gaze on their mentor.

And so the time became ripe. Shakyamuni finally broke his long silence and began to expound the Lotus Sutra—the ultimate teaching that enables all living beings to attain Buddhahood. This is the meaning of “At that time...,” which begins the “Expedient Means” chapter.

In other words, it indicates the time when a Buddha stands up to guide the people to enlightenment, and the time when the disciples have established a single-minded seeking spirit for the Buddha’s teaching. It signifies a profound

concordance of the hearts of the disciples with the heart of the mentor. This scene in the Lotus Sutra represents the opening of the grand drama of mentor and disciple who dedicate themselves to the happiness of humankind.

The Buddha is the one who most keenly “comprehends the time.” The Buddha awaits the proper time, discerns the nature of the time, creates the time and expounds the Law that accords with the time. Such is the Buddha’s wisdom and compassion.

“Why do the people suffer?” “For what do the people yearn?” “What teaching enables the people to become happy? And when should it be taught?” The Buddha ponders these matters constantly and expounds the Law freely in accordance with the time.

In this sense, to “know the time” is also to understand the hearts of the people. The Buddha is a leader who is a master at understanding the others’ hearts. The Buddha is an “instructor of the spirit” and an expert on human nature.

From the Buddha’s standpoint, “that time” is the time when the Buddha initiates the struggle to enable all people to attain enlightenment. And for the disciples, it is the time when they directly grasp and become powerfully aware of the Buddha’s spirit.

Regarding the importance of the time, Nichiren Daishonin says, “One who wishes to study the teachings of Buddhism must first learn to understand the time” (MW-3, 79). Thus he indicates that Buddhism is expounded based on the time, and that the teaching that should be propagated is the one that accords with the time.

Proclaiming this period of the Latter Day of the Law to be the time when the Great Pure Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo should be spread, the Daishonin launched the struggle to propagate the Mystic Law and enable all people of the Latter Day to attain enlightenment.

One’s Inner Determination To Fight Now Opens the Way Forward

IN other words, from the standpoint of the “Buddhism hidden in the depths,” we can interpret “that time” as indicating the time when the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, commenced his great struggle to save all humankind. And it can also be said that “that time” indicates the time when the Daishonin’s disciples stand up in concert with the mentor to realize kosen-rufu.

In terms of our practice, therefore, I would like to stress that “that time” exists only when we pray to the Gohonzon and manifest determination and awareness of our mission for kosen-rufu. We have to make a determination, pray and take action. Unless we do so, our environment will not change in the least; though five or ten years may pass, “that time” will never arrive.

Our single-minded determination for kosen-rufu, and that alone, creates the “time.” “That time” is when we set our lives in motion, when we stand up of our own volition and by our own will and strength. “That time” is when we summon forth strong faith and take our place on the grand stage of kosen-rufu.

Goethe writes, “The moment alone is decisive; Fixes the life of man, and his

future destiny settles." "That time" is the moment you resolve from the depths of your heart: "Now I will stand up and fight!" From that instant your destiny changes. Your life develops. History begins.

This is the spirit of the mystic principle of the True Cause (*honnin-myo*). This is the principle of *ichinen sanzen*. The moment you autonomously determine to accomplish something—not when you do it because you are told to—is "that time," the "time" of mission. □