

## **BUDDHIST CONCEPT FOR TODAY'S LIVING (7) TO OPEN, SHOW, AWAKEN, AND INDUCE TO ENTER**

When Thomas Edison was a child, he was extremely inquisitive. He perhaps spent much time pondering such questions as “What makes the wind blow?” But in school, he was having trouble with the basics—English and math. Suffering from a hearing deficiency, and bored with the rote learning conducted in class, others labeled him a misfit. After attending school on and off for five years or so, he dropped out.

His mother, believing in her son's potential, tutored him at home in subjects that seemed to spark his interest. Young Edison became a voracious reader, and taking nature as his instructor, he learned through a process of repeated trial and error. This style of learning contributed at least in part to his great success as a master inventor in later years.

If, like his school, his mother had labeled him slow or deficient, our world today might be decades behind in terms of technological advancement. It is clear that whether or not children can learn in a way that opens and cultivates their innate potential will dramatically effect their growth and future.

If people become aware of the hopes and expectations of teachers and loved ones toward their growth and success, come to share those hopes themselves, and actually live up to those hopes, this contributes tremendously to their level of confidence. On the other hand, if led to believe they are inferior or deficient, people will lose confidence, and their emotional and intellectual growth will stall. In this sense, low expectations become a self-fulfilling prophecy. While this applies in particular to children, it is true of adults as well.

The “Expedient Means” Chapter of the Lotus Sutra teaches the principle of “opening, showing, awakening, and inducing to enter.” This comes from the passage that reads:

“The Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, wish to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings, to allow them to attain purity. That is why they appear in the world. They wish to show the Buddha wisdom to living beings, and therefore they appear in the world. They wish to cause living beings to awaken to the Buddha wisdom, and therefore they appear in the world. They wish to induce living beings to enter the path of Buddha wisdom, and therefore they appear in the world.” (*The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 31).

Thus, the purpose of a Buddha's appearance in this world—any Buddha's *raison d'être*, so to speak—is to “open” or cultivate the Buddha wisdom within the lives of all people, to “show” them the Buddha wisdom, to “awaken” them to it, and to lead them to “enter” that condition of life called Buddhahood.

Though the Buddha is called “World-Honored One,” Buddhas never consider themselves exclusively worthy of respect. The aim of all Buddhas is to help all people, whatever their background, achieve the same level of enlightenment as the Buddhas themselves enjoy, thereby securing their happiness. According to the sutra, this is the sole purpose of a Buddha's existence. The principle of “opening, showing, awakening, and inducing to enter” the Buddha wisdom is a declaration of this purpose.

Prior to this declaration in the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni's disciples never imagined themselves capable of becoming Buddhas. Like children in school who assume they can never compete with the best student in class, they viewed Shakyamuni as exceptional—an

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unexcelled prodigy of the spiritual realm. But with the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, it became clear that the Buddha's true purpose was to enable his disciples to excel to the same degree—to attain the same state of life he had attained.

In reality, Shakyamuni Buddha spent his life actively sharing and spreading his teachings, converting one person after another. From the time he set out from his parents' home to embark on a religious life, he never resided long in one place. The Buddha was the ultimate educator, endlessly on the move, reaching out to open and nurture the condition of enlightenment within people's lives. In fact, he believed more strongly and completely than anyone else in the capacity of ordinary people to become Buddhas. His example should serve as a model for all teachers.

Edison's great success as an inventor may be traced to his mother's strong belief in his rich potential and her efforts to help him open and broadly cultivate that potential. The true purpose of education and of Buddhism is to help human beings cultivate their innate unique qualities, individuality and creativity.

"To open" means to cause to manifest what is inherent but hidden in the individual. No matter how many priceless treasures we may have locked in a vault, unless we can open the vault and put those treasures to use, they have no value. Ultimately, they go to waste.

Nichiren Daishonin stated that "to 'open' is another name for faith. If one chants the Mystic Law with faith, one will directly open the Buddha wisdom" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 716).

The Daishonin assures us that the way to open the wonderful "treasure storehouse" of Buddhahood within is to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon with faith in our own enlightened potential. In this way, we come to "show" actual proof of our innate enlightenment, thus "awakening" others to the benefit of Buddhist faith and practice and inducing them to "enter" a most fulfilling way of life.

Actually, we can view these four points as steps in an educational process. It is the method by which a Buddha, as the ultimate educator, teaches the people, his students, how to become Buddhas.

In our case, to help us open the door to our Buddha wisdom, Nichiren Daishonin "showed" us this wisdom by revealing the Gohonzon and Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. By practicing as he taught, we "awaken" our own enlightened nature. This awakening then moves us to "enter" the way of life of a Bodhisattva of the Earth—a way of life dedicated to helping others "open," "show," "awaken to" and "enter" their own Buddha wisdom. To the degree we strive to do this, we embody the oneness of teacher and student, the oneness of mentor and disciple. That is, the purpose of our lives becomes one with that of the Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. And when this happens, our contribution to peace and human happiness will be no less revolutionary and important than Thomas Edison's contribution to technology. □

By Jeff Kriger, Managing Editor, based on the book *Yasashii Kyogoku* (Easy Study) published by the Seikyo Press, Tokyo.