

CHAPTER 2

EXPEDIENTS

方便品

Lecture #5 (Oct. 8, 2008)

Lecture #6 (Oct. 15, 2008)

Lecture #7 (Nov. 5, 2008)

In Chapter One, Buddha Sakyamuni emitted a ray of light from his forehead while he was still in deep meditation. Because of the bright light, the congregation was surprised to see many deities and all kinds of people from heaven to hell from this world as well as the other worlds. The ray signifies Buddha Wisdom, while the worlds shown with the light symbolize the Reality of All Things.

In Chapter Two Buddha Sakyamuni emerged quietly from meditation and started to talk and explain about the Reality of All Things.

Profound and Immeasurable Buddha Wisdom 諸佛知惠甚深無量其智慧門難解難入

“Thereupon the World-Honored One emerged quietly from his *samadhi* 三昧, and said to Sariputra, ‘The wisdom of the Buddhas is profound and immeasurable. The gate to it is difficult to understand and difficult to enter.’”

There are two kinds of Buddha Wisdom; one is wisdom to be enlightened to the Reality of All Things for one’s own sake, and the other is wisdom to lead others to enlighten in the Reality of All Things. In martial arts or cultural arts like tea ceremony and flower arrangement, the masters have reached the highest level of the art and also know how to lead his or her students to reach the highest level. Buddha Wisdom is both for our own benefit as well as for others. This is the wisdom we possess.

Profound 甚深 means that continuation of time forever, while immeasurable means that continuations of space is limitless. In other words, the Buddha Wisdom is the same with the universe. Even as scientists have not completely figured out the universe, it is very difficult for us to understand the infinite wisdom of the Buddha. At first we must accept how ignorant we are then try to understand the process to gain the wisdom of the Buddha.

Buddha Sakyamuni’s long time wish for the last forty years was to reveal the highest truth. His first statement after the long silence and meditation was, “the highest truth is rare to hear and difficult to understand.” Then he said not to talk about it any more. Why not talk

about it? The answers are in this and the subsequent chapters; mainly we must be humble and avoid arrogance. We often are vain when we know more than other people.

There are some people among the congregation who think that they already know the highest truth and that they do not need to hear any more. We also make the same mistake by over estimating our knowledge and not listening to others.

Save Us from Various Attachments 令離諸著

“Sariputra! Since I became a Buddha, I have been expounding various teachings with various stories of previous lives, with various parables, and with various similes. I have been leading all living beings with innumerable expedients in order to save them from various attachments, because I have the power to employ expedients and the power to perform the *paramita 波羅蜜 of insight.**

All living beings are attracted to objects and people. We are attracted not only physical objects but also attracted to art, thought, principle, religion, philosophy, and science. As long as we are in good relationship with these attachments, we are happy. However, when these attachments are excessive, we refuse to accept others, become ignorant to others, and feel angry towards others who have different opinions. These three elements of mind (attachment, ignorance, and anger) are called the **Three Poisons** 三毒 in Buddhism. The three poisons are the causes of suffering. In order to avoid these poisons, we must realize that we live together regardless of our race, sex, ideology, status, and so forth. We must accept others as they are.

There is nobody who does not have attachments, including the Buddha. The Buddha’s attachment is, **“How shall I cause all living beings to enter into the unsurpassed way and quickly become Buddhas,”** quoted at the end of Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra. It is important for us to realize that we live with attachments to various things. Rather than avoiding the attachments, we should realize how to use the attachments for something good for our benefit and others.

* *paramita* 波羅蜜 refers to the crossing over from this shore of birth and death to the other shore of Nirvana

Buddha Skillfully Leads All Living Beings to Be Delighted 言辭柔軟悅可衆心

“Sariputra! The Tathagatas divide the Dharma into various teachings, and expound those teachings to all living beings so skillfully and with such gentle voices that living beings are delighted.”

The Buddha can read each individual's mind and knows his or her characteristics, desires, and conducts in the past and present; therefore, he uses various methods and teachings to skillfully convey his message. His spoken words are always gentle to keep listeners at ease.

It is very important for us to bring joy to others at home, work, school and everywhere we go. It is a wonderful feeling to be able to delight ourselves by delighting others.

The Reality of All Things 諸法実相

“The highest Truth, that is, the reality of all things in regard to their appearance as such, their nature as such, their entities as such, their powers as such, their activities as such, their primary causes as such, their environmental causes as such, their effects as such, their rewards and retributions as such, and their equality as such despite these differences.”

The first step in realizing the Reality of All Things is to understand ourselves. The reason that I say “the first step” is because there are many ways to realize the truth. To understand us sounds easy, but it is actually hard. Do we really want to know everything about us? Can we accept the people who bitterly criticize us? If we cannot accept the disgusting parts of ourselves, we hurt ourselves, our pride, status, family, community and so on. We must accept ourselves no matter what we are and love ourselves as we are now.

Chapter 20 of the Lotus Sutra teaches about the Never-Despising Bodhisattva. Every time he saw Buddhists, he bowed to them and praised them saying, “I respect you deeply. I do not despise you. Why is that? It is because you will be able to practice the way of Bodhisattvas and become Buddhas.”

I modified his words when I look at myself in the mirror and state as follows, “I respect me deeply. I do not despise me because I will be able to become a Buddha by contributing to my community.” If we cannot love ourselves, how can we love another? In order to understand the Reality of All Things, try and accept who we are now. This is the first step towards realizing the Reality of All Things.

Another example is to see an object as it is. Suppose here is a desk. The desk is used for studying, reading, and writing, but it could be used as a stand to reach the ceiling or as a table to place items on. What is the desk made of? It consists of four legs, a flat top, and a drawer. Before the desk was made, what were the materials? Are they wood or a sheet of metal or plastic? The desk does not exist forever. When it is broken, it will not be called a desk anymore. Is it called firewood or junk?

As I mentioned earlier, the first step is to understand ourselves. The second step is to see “a thing as it is” meaning to understand what our relationship is with an object. The third step is to see ourselves or an object in terms of the past, present, and future.

Ten Such-nesses 十如是

1. **Appearance as such 如是相:** The first step in understanding ourselves is our appearance. Look in the mirror to see how we appear; the facial features, impressions, elegance, gestures, behavior, habit, ways of walking/talking/eating, clothing among other things.
2. **Nature as such 如是性:** This includes one’s character, goodwill, dream, desire, and so forth. We are supposed to know our character well, but sometimes other people know us better. We even adapt our nature from others, such as our parents. Parents scold their child’s bad behaviors, but they do not realize that they had the same characteristics when they were young. The child does not realize that his or her character was copied from their parents. When the child hates their parent’s bad character, he or she becomes increasingly similar to their parents. If we would like to know our true characters, listen to rumors and gossip about us. This could be how we appear to others which could be very upsetting to us. Are we as truly good or bad as stated or is there some jealousy creating the gossip?
3. **Entities as such 如是体:** In Buddhism, the entity means body and mind. Buddhists consider that body and mind are one, they are not separated. Our body, especially our face represents our mind and heart. Thus our appearance and character can be shown to those around us.
4. **Power as such 如是力:** To be a man or a woman is your power. Power is also your education, ability, status, occupation, property, appearance, and hobby. Everyone is supposed to have unlimited power; however, in order to open up the power, we need to study, to practice, and to give a lot of effort.

The above four such-ness refers to our own matter. The next three such-ness relates to interaction with others, and the last three deals with the consequences of the previous seven such-ness.

5. **Activities as such 如是作:** When power brings forth action, it affects others in either a good or bad way. Our happy face makes others smile, too. Our anger makes others scared of us.
6. **Primary Causes as such 如是因:** There must be some reasons for us to smile or to be angry. The primary causes come out of our body, mouth, and thought. How we behave, how we talk, and how we think all affect others. This can be the same as

how our friends act, talk, and think affect us. Our friends are the primary cause for us to smile or to shout. We will also be deeply affected if our family and friends did not show any affection towards us, showed no interest and did not talk to us. So even no action also has a cause for something to happen.

7. **Environmental Causes as such**如是緣: How we act, how we talk, and how we think are deeply influenced by our parents from childhood. Our actions or behaviors are shaped by our surroundings such as weather, cultural background, education, and how we feel about others. There are many outside influences that form the basis for our action, words and ideas.
8. **Effect as such**如是果: Buddhism always talks about causes, conditions, and effects. The ways we behave, talk, and think affect others, and affect us, too. For instance, if we tell a joke but nobody understands, then we feel disappointment. Or if we make a nice speech with everyone clapping their hands, then we are very happy. We receive gratification or dismay as a product from our actions, behaviors and character.
9. **Reward as such**如是報: Effect as such is how we feel or think, but Reward as such is something we can see physically like a prize, better pay, injure, sickness, old age, or death. What we are now today is a result of how we acted, talked, and thought in the past including our previous lives. Thus, Buddhists are not supposed to blame others for our faults or mistakes since we may have contributed to the result previously though we may not have known it at the time.
10. **Equality as such**如是本末究竟等: Thus, one's appearance, nature, body, power, activities, primary cause, environmental cause, effect, and reward are related to each other. These relationships are called **Reality of All Things**諸法實相.

Why We Chant the Ten Such-ness Three Times? 三回轉誦

Nichiren Buddhists always chant the Ten Such-ness three times. The reason is there are three ways to see things. They are *ku-tai* 空諦, *Ke-tai* 假諦, and *Chu-tai* 中諦. These are based on T'en-Tai's doctrine.

Ku-tai 空諦 means that all existence is non-substantial and void

Ke-tai 假諦 means that all existence is non-substantial, but an object nevertheless has a provisional existence

Chu-tai 中諦 means that all existence is neither void nor provisionally exists, but there is a truth which transcends this dichotomy, which is none other than the middle way.

For example “The desk exists temporally,” is *ke-tai* 假諦. “The desk is nothing but made of wood, metal, and plastic, and it does not exist; therefore the desk does not exist” is

*ku-tai*空諦. “The desk exists, but not forever, but neither the desk exists nor the desk does not exist, in other words, not to attach to one point of view,” is *Chu-tai*中諦.

Another example, according to the Buddha’s teaching, “Everyone is equal (*Ku*) because everyone poses Buddha nature in which he or she is able to someday become a Buddha. Everyone is different (*Ke*) because there are the wise and the foolish, rich and poor, males and females. Women have the privilege of bearing children while men cannot. But a woman cannot bear a child without a man. We are equal but different (*Chu*).

Still another example, parents love their children equally (*Ku*), but the ways they treat an eighteen year old boy from the two year old girl will naturally differ (*ke*). The parents love their children equally, but are treated differently respecting the child’s age, sex, and interest. Wise parents treat their children as whole individual and not just parts (*Chu*).

Three Refuses and Three Requests三止三請

“No more, Sariputra, will I say because the Dharma attained by the Buddhas is the highest Truth, rare to hear and difficult to understand.”

“World-Honored One! Why do you extol so enthusiastically the highest truth, and the power of the Buddhas to employ expedients? Why do you extol the Dharma which you say is profound, wonderful, and difficult to understand? ... Explain all this!”

“Thereupon the Buddha said to him, ‘No, no, I will not. If I do, all the gods and men in the world will be frightened and perplexed.’”

In Chapter Two, Sariputra represents all members of the congregation, so as the Buddha addresses him, his talks are aimed at everyone gathered at Mt. Sacred Eagle.

Thus, the Buddha refused to explain the highest truth three times, but Sariputra sincerely requested the Buddha to explain the highest truth three times. Because of Sariputra’s sincere request all three times, Buddha Sakyamuni responded, “How can I leave the Dharma unexpounded?”

Five Thousand People Retired五千人起去

“How can I leave the Dharma unexpounded?”

“When he had said this, five thousand people ... rose from their seats, bowed to the Buddha, and retired because they were so sinful and arrogant they had already obtained what they had not yet, and that they had already understood what they had not yet.”

As I mentioned in Lecture #2, *arahats* think that they have already reached nirvana, though in actuality have not. They are still in the Period of the Agon Sutras.

Sakyamuni Buddha shows his infinite patience and compassion toward these arrogant people, because if they stayed and listened, they would not understand the truth and speak badly about the truth, then they would fall into hell (Chapter Three of the Lotus Sutra will talk about how these proud people will go to hell). The five thousand people retired here were the *arahats* who could not accept their own faults.

Buddhists, regardless of being priests, monks, or lay people, should always be humble and follow the Buddha's teachings. When we practice the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, we will find our faults. Can we accept our faults? I hope we will be humble and accept our faults; so that we may understand the Reality of All Things and accept whom we are.

The Coming of the Buddhas 諸仏世尊の出現の理由

“The Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, appear in the world in order to cause all living beings to open the gate to the insight of the Buddha, and to cause them to purify themselves. They appear in the worlds in order to show the insight of the Buddha to all living beings. They appear in the worlds in order to cause all living beings to obtain the insight of the Buddha. They appear in the worlds in order to cause all living beings to enter the Way to the insight of the Buddha. Sariputra! This is the one great purpose for which the Buddhas appear in the worlds.”

To open the gate means to be free from many attachments such as our own feelings, fears, worries, and selfishness. When we open up our mind and see things from a different direction, then we will see something different.

Suppose spring has come. But we are still inside a dark room (your own world). The Buddha opens a window and shows the outside for us to look at. We will hear the birds singing, flowers blooming and smell the fresh air. The Buddha wants us to come outside to feel the spring and the awakening world. Then we can enjoy cultivating the soil in order to plant flowers and vegetables. We must take the steps to enjoy spring so likewise we too, must take steps in realizing the Buddha Wisdom.

The insight of the Buddha means to realize the Buddha Wisdom or Reality of All Things. For instance, “Everything is constantly changing.” We exist while we are changing from birth, growth, old age, disease and death. “All things exist because of relationships with others.” We are alive because of water, food, air, energy, other people, and many other components. Everyone and everything rely upon each other.

When we realized the insight of the Buddha, we will be free from suffering. This is called Nirvana. Sakyamuni Buddha was born in order to awaken us to the insight of the Buddha.

When I was young, I used to blame my parents why they gave birth to me. Many people say that God chose me to be born, or the parent chose me to be born. After studying Buddhism for many decades, I realized that I was the one who chose my parents from the spiritual realm to do my task. I believe that there must be a special reason why each one of us were born and live today. However, many people could not see their own future in their spiritual realms thus chose wrong parents.

When we are able to realize why we were born and know the purpose to be alive, our life will be very meaningful and enjoyable. Buddhas appeared in this world for us to realize the reason of our own birth.

Not Three but One Buddha-Vehicle 開三顯一

“Sariputra! All the Buddhas in the past expounded various teachings to all living beings with innumerable expedients, that is to say, with stories of previous lives, parables, similes and discourses, only for the purpose of revealing the One Buddha-Vehicle.”

As we have learned the Five Periods of Buddha’s Teachings in Lecture #2, the Agon sutras were for the salvation for one self, the teachings for *Sravaka* 聲聞. The Hoto Sutras were for the salvation for *Pryataka-buddha* 緣覺. And the Hanya sutras were for salvation for not only oneself but also for *Bodhisattvas* 菩薩. Buddha Sakyamuni taught various teachings with innumerable expedients according to the listeners’ level of understanding. They are called Three Vehicles 三乘.

The Buddha taught not to be attached to one’s previous learning and teachings, and he also taught by practicing hard over many future lives, we too can attain Buddhahood. However in the Lotus Sutra, Buddha Sakyamuni encourages us not to be attached to what we previously learned and practiced with the three vehicles because they are expedients. The real teaching is the One Buddha-Vehicle 一乘 that teaches the Reality of All Things 諸法實相.

“Know this, Sariputra! I once vowed that I would cause all living beings to come exactly as I am.”

This is Buddha’s compassion. How wonderful we are! We have Buddha nature. We have seeds to become Buddhas. We are able to become exactly as Buddha Sakyamuni.

The Abode and the Position of the Dharma 法位法住

“All things are devoid of substantiality. The seed of Buddhahood comes from dependent origination. The Leading Teachers expound the Dharma with expedients

after realizing at the place of enlightenment: “This is the abode of the Dharma and the position of the Dharma. The reality of the world is permanently as it is.”

One of three basic teachings of Buddhism is “Everything relies on one another, nothing exists by itself.” Everything exists temporally depending on its circumstance. Therefore it is difficult to define the Reality of All Things. The Reality of All Things could be explained as the Ten Such-ness, the Seal of the Three Laws 三宝印, Buddha seed 仏種, Buddha Wisdom 仏智見, and many other ways depending on how you look at it. For example, I as a person am a Buddhist priest, a son from my parents, a father for my children, a husband for my wife, a Japanese nationality and a U.S. citizen. However I am defined, I am the same person. The Reality of All Things cannot be explained without phenomena in this world, that is, the abode of the Dharma. Thus, the Dharma exists forever while phenomena are constantly changing. In other words, nothings exist forever, but the law of “Nothing Exists Forever” exists eternally.

“On that occasion King Brahman, Heavenly-King Sakra, the four heavenly world-guardian kings, Great-Freedom God, and other gods [of each world], and thousands of millions of their attendants joined their hands together [toward me] respectfully, bowed to me, and asked me to turn the wheel of the Dharma.”

After Buddha Sakyamuni attained Enlightenment, he continued to meditate for three weeks. The above quotation denotes that the Buddha expounds the Kegon Sutra to these gods and heavenly beings with their requests.

“I will expound the Dharma according to the capacities of all living beings. Having thought this, I went to Varanasi, and expounded the Dharma to the five bhiksus with expedients.”

This is called the First Sermon at the Deer Park. Here the Buddha expounded the teachings of the Agon Sutras such as the Four Noble Truth and the Eight Fold Paths.

“Then I saw many sons of mine, thousands of billions in number, seeking the enlightenment of the Buddha. They came to me respectfully. They had already heard expedient teachings from the past Buddhas.”

At this stage, we can image that the Buddha taught the teachings of the Hoto Sutras and the Hannya Sutras. It is interesting to know that his disciples had learned Buddhism in their previous lives; therefore, they were able to understand the expedient teachings.

“I appeared in this world in order to expound my wisdom. Now is the time to do this.”

Through these phrases, we can see how the Buddha Sakyamuni taught the insights of the Buddha step by step for his disciples and followers to bring up their understanding to the highest truth. It is the five periods of the Buddha’s teachings as we learned in the lecture #1.

“Sariputra, know this! As a rule, the Buddha expounds the Dharma with billions of expedients as stated above, according to the capacities of all living beings. Those who do not study the Dharma cannot understand it. You have already realized the fact that the Buddhas employ expedients according to the capacities of all living beings. Know that, when you remove your doubts, and when you have grate joy, you will become Buddhas!”

It means that you must have faith to understand the Lotus Sutra. Regarding faith, Chapter Four explains more detail.

Please remove your doubts and enjoy this study class on the Lotus Sutra, we will all become Buddhas in the near future.

For Additional Explanations on Chapter 2

Regarding the Ten Suchness

A Piece of Paper

(LOTUS #49, November/December, 2003, From the L.A. Nichiren Buddhist Temple newsletter)

While I was picking up trash in the temple parking lot the other day, I found a piece of paper on the ground. It happened to be a California Lottery ticket. Since the drawing day was a few days away, I placed it in the lost and found box at the edge of the temple altar. I wondered, “Will someone come to claim it?” “Is it going to be a winning ticket?” I waited for the drawing day with some expectation.

Unfortunately, it did not match any winning numbers, and so it went into a trash container. This piece of paper could have made people either happy or sad.

I would now like to explain the Ten Suchness (*Nyoze*) in Chapter Two of the Lotus Sutra. The piece of paper is an object (*Nyoze Tai*). It appeared (*Nyoze So*) as part of the trash in the parking lot. Paper has the characteristic (*Nyoze Sho*) of being easy to burn. The piece of paper also has the characteristic such that if it was just trash, it will be thrown away into a dustpan.

However, it was a lottery ticket that has power (*Nyoze Riki*) to win a million dollars. Therefore I picked it up (*Nyoze Sa*) instead of putting it into a dustpan. Since (*Nyoze In*) someone lost it, I picked it up (*Nyoze Ka*) with the condition (*Nyoze En*) of time: if I had not cleaned up the parking lot at that time, the ticket might have blown away with the wind. The numbers on the ticket did not match the winning numbers, so it resulted (*Nyoze Ho*) in being thrown into a wastebasket.

Since this piece of paper relates to the nine *Nyoze* from *So, Sho, Tai, Riki, Sa, In, En, Ka* and *Ho*, it is called *Nyoze Honmatsu Kukyo To*, which means to relate to all nine facts. Nichiren Daishonin and T'ien-t'ai (Chi'i), a Master of Chinese Buddhism, developed the truth of the Ten Suchness to the *Ichinen Sanzen* or the Three Thousand Worlds in One Instant Thought. One's thought in an instant affects the whole world.

If the piece of paper was worth several million dollars, what would happen to me, to the Los Angeles Nichiren Buddhist Temple, and to other people? It would certainly affect them.

Thus, even a piece of paper relates to many phenomena.

Three Different Levels of Vehicles

(LOTUS #55, November, and December, 2003; From the L.A. Nichiren Buddhist Temple newsletter)

In Buddhism, there are many Buddhas, such as Sakyamuni, Amitatabha, and Maha Vairocana (Dai-Nichi) to name a few. Many other Buddhas appear as past Buddhas in the Lotus Sutra. Chapter Two of the sutra says, "All of the Buddhas appeared in this world to open the gate, to show, to obtain, and to enter the way of the insight of the Buddha."

Buddha Sakyamuni says, in the *Sutra of the Innumerable Meaning*, which is the prelude to the Lotus Sutra, "In forty years and more, the truth has not been revealed yet," even though He revealed 84,000 teachings.

Why did He not reveal the truth at first? It was because nobody understood what He was trying to say. It was an era in which people were physically and mentally weak and polluted. The caste system was strongly emphasized, and one's fate was determined by one's birth, and one's fate could not be changed or improve at that time in India. The nobles and ordinary people were fine with this system; however, some women, slaves, and people who were considered non-human beings were never able to get out of this hell. We in the present cannot imagine how strict and discriminatory the society was at that time.

The Buddha wished to speak up, proclaiming "Everyone is equal and able to become a Buddha!" However, nobody would believe Him or listen to Him in that caste system society. Thereupon the Buddha said, "Listen well to my words and get away from your worries and illusions!" This teaching was for the people in the *Shomon (Sravaka-hood)* Vehicle. They exerted themselves to listen to the Buddha and to attain the Universal Truth. They were like students who learned from their teachers.

When they advanced in their studies, the Buddha said, "Only listening to my preaching was not enough. You must learn the Truth by yourselves through your own experiences." These people are part of the *Engaku (Pratyekabuddha-hood)* Vehicle. They learned by themselves without their teachers.

When they advanced some more, the Buddha said to both groups, "It is not true salvation to seek just your own enlightenment! You must save others from suffering, and then you will reach real Buddhahood." This last group is part of the *Bosatsu* (Bodhisattvas) Vehicle.

Thus, the Buddha revealed the three different vehicles. In other words, the Buddha taught at first that the two vehicles of *Shomon* and *Engaku* were not able to become Buddhas. This teaching was appropriate in the society of the strict cast system in India. It took 42 years for Him to reverse the truth, "*Everyone is able to become a Buddha.*"

Chapter Two of the Lotus Sutra says, "All the Buddhas in the past expounded various teachings to all living beings with innumerable expedients. Those expedients arose from the purpose of revealing the One Buddha-Vehicle" or "*Everyone is able to become a Buddha.*" "The living beings in that kalpa are so full of illusions, so greedy, and so jealous that they plant many roots of evil. Therefore, the Buddhas divided the One Buddha-Vehicle into three as an expedient."

With the teaching of the One Vehicle, they obtained the knowledge of the equality that everyone was able to become a Buddha even though they held different levels of status such as priests, nobles, merchants, slaves, and non-human beings. It further states, that those who offer flowers to a Buddha statue, who offer incense to a Buddhist monument, who erect a *stupa*, or who, by playing, drawing a picture of the Buddha or chant "Namu Buddha" just once have already attained the enlightenment of the Buddha.

Thus, the sole reason for which the Buddhas appeared in this world was to reveal that everyone was able to equally become Buddhas regardless of one's race, status, sex, and background. The *Lotus Sutra* teaches that all living beings are equal because they are able to become Buddhas someday.



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