

# The Dharma Breeze

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## **The Mind of a Child**

**—The Mind of the Bodhisattva Dharmakara—**

**Nobuo Haneda**

### **Introduction**

In this essay I want to talk about “the mind of great compassion” that buddhas, our historical teachers, embody. I want to call the mind of great compassion “the mind of a child” that is single-mindedly devoted to saving all sentient beings from suffering. When we meet historical teachers who embody this mind, we are deeply shaken by it and we experience the awakening of the same mind in ourselves. Before we meet our teachers, we are not aware of having this mind because it is deeply hidden in us. When we experience its awakening, we learn for the first time that it is there.

Shinran calls “the mind of great compassion” that exists on the side of our teachers “the mind of Bodhisattva Dharmakara” or “Hongan (Innermost Aspiration).” He calls “the mind of great compassion” that exists on our side—the mind that is deeply hidden within us—“shinjin.” He says that the awakening of shinjin is the true starting point on the Buddhist path and is the most important thing in Buddhism. He also tells us that shinjin, the true starting point, contains in itself the ultimate goal—realization of Buddhahood.

### **The Importance of Meeting with a Teacher**

Before I explain the meaning of “the mind of great compassion,” or “the mind of a child,” let me talk about the importance of meeting with a teacher. I want to talk about how Shakyamuni and Shinran met their teachers.

Tradition tells us that when Shakyamuni was a young man, four gates surrounded the palace where he lived. When he went out of the first three gates, he learned that suffering such as aging, sickness, and death was inevitable. Having learned about the reality of human suffering, he became extremely depressed. He felt that everything he was doing was empty; he could not find any meaning in his life. On one of those days, he went out of the fourth gate and met a traveling monk whose face was shining with the brilliance of his wisdom. Shakyamuni was deeply moved by the power of the traveler’s spirit and desired to become a person like him. This way, an aspiration to transcend human suffering and become a buddha was awakened in his mind. Then he left his palace to seek the way. The meeting with the traveling monk changed his life. This was the starting point on his path toward Buddhahood.

Now let me talk about Shinran Shonin (1173-1262, the founder of Shin Buddhism). When Shinran was nine, he went to Mt. Hiei to become a monk. There he spent twenty years in learning various doctrines and performing many practices. In spite of the fact that he tried very hard to attain Buddhahood, he could not attain his goal. Instead, he became more and more confused and frustrated. He could not understand why he could not attain his goal. He felt that all his practices were meaningless. Then, when Shinran was twenty-nine, he met Honen (1133-1212, the founder of Japanese Jodo-shu). When Shinran met him, he was deeply moved by the power of his spirit. This meeting totally changed Shinran’s life. This was the starting point on his path toward Buddhahood.

Now I have said that Shakyamuni and Shinran experienced a total change in their lives by meeting with the powerful spirit of their teachers. Then, what is the powerful spirit that

made them change the entire course of their lives? In order to explain the contents of this spirit, let me cite here a couple of Buddhist fairy tales.

### **The Story of the Parrot Joyneck**

Once upon a time, somewhere in the Snowy Mountains, there was a large bamboo forest. Many birds and animals lived in that forest. There was a parrot called Joyneck. As the wind blew in the forest, two bamboo trees rubbed against each other and started a fire, setting the bamboo forest on fire. The birds and animals feared that they might not be able to escape. When the parrot Joyneck saw the fire, he had deep compassion and felt pity for the birds and animals. So he flew to a lake. He plunged his wings into water, flew back to the forest, and sprinkled water over the fire. He was diligent in his compassion and kept on doing that. Then, his compassionate action shook the whole earth. It shook the palace of the god Indra. The god looked with his divine eyes. He wondered, “Why does my palace shake?” Then he saw that there was a parrot who wanted to rescue others from a fire because of his compassion. The parrot strove to the limits of his strength, but he could not extinguish the fire. The god Indra then turned to the parrot and said, “This bamboo forest is so large, tens of thousands of miles! The water taken up by your wings is so small, just a few drops. How could you extinguish such a big fire? The parrot answered, “If I am diligent and not idle, I shall surely extinguish the fire. I swear I shall surely extinguish it!” Having heard this, the god was so deeply moved by his determination that he let rain come pouring down, and the fire was extinguished.

The parrot was concerned with the welfare of all the animals in the forest. Forgetting his own welfare, he was concerned with the welfare of others. The parrot single-mindedly engaged in extinguishing the fire. His compassionate mind was so powerful that it shook the whole earth. When the god Indra learned that the parrot was trying hard to extinguish the fire by dropping a little water over it, he said to the parrot, “The water taken by your wings is so small, just a few drops. How could you extinguish such a big fire?” To this the parrot answered, “If I am diligent and not idle, I shall surely extinguish the fire.” Having heard this, Indra was deeply moved. The story says, “Having heard this, the god was so deeply moved by his determination that he let rain come pouring down, and the fire was extinguished.” The parrot’s compassionate mind was so powerful that it shook the whole universe and made the god Indra help him to extinguish the fire. I believe that it is this mind of compassion that Shakyamuni and Shinran saw in their teachers.

### **The Story of Prince Mahatyagavat**

Once upon a time there was a prince by the name of Mahatyagavat. He had a desire to help all suffering people to be liberated from their suffering. Then, one day he heard that there was a wish-fulfilling jewel called *cintamani*. He learned that the Dragon King had the jewel and hid it in his hair. Since Prince Mahatyagavat had a strong desire to save all suffering people, he wanted to obtain the wish-fulfilling jewel from the Dragon King; he wanted to save all suffering people with it. But, having learned that the prince was attempting to steal the jewel, the Dragon King hid the jewel at the bottom of the ocean while the prince was sleeping. When the prince woke up and learned that the king hid the jewel in the ocean, he vowed to scoop out the entire ocean with a cup. He started to do it.

When the god Indra saw him, he was deeply moved and sent his deities to help him. Eventually the ocean was totally emptied, and the prince was able to obtain the jewel.

In this story we can see the same mind of great compassion that we saw in the previous story. Since the prince desired to liberate all people from their suffering by obtaining a wish-fulfilling jewel, he could not help trying to empty the ocean with a cup. Being concerned with the welfare of all sentient beings, the prince believed in the possibility of doing this. Forgetting his own welfare, he single-mindedly tried to empty the ocean. His compassionate spirit had such great power that it moved the god Indra. The story says, “When the god Indra saw him, he was deeply moved and sent his deities to help him. Eventually the ocean was totally emptied, and the prince was able to obtain the jewel.”

Now I have cited two stories in order to explain what it was that Shakyamuni and

Shinran saw in their teachers. I believe that Shakyamuni saw in the traveling monk a mind of great compassion—a mind that was simply concerned with the welfare of all humanity. Shinran saw in his teacher Honen the same mind. Since their teachers’ compassionate spirit was so powerful, their lives were totally turned round.

### **The Mind of a child**

Is the mind of the parrot Joyneck, or the prince, not a *naïve* and *innocent* mind? Is his mind not a *foolish* mind? Yes, it is a *naïve*, *innocent*, and *foolish* mind. It is the mind of an innocent child. It is *not* the smart mind of an adult. If the parrot had the *mature* mind of an adult, he would have thought it impossible to extinguish the huge fire. If the prince had a *smart*, *pragmatic*, and *calculating* mind, he would have rationally compared his abilities with the enormity of the task he wanted to accomplish and recognized the futility of emptying the ocean. But, simply being urged by a feeling of deep compassion for all suffering beings, both of them just could not help undertaking an enormous task. They did not stop and think about whether they could accomplish it or not. We are saved by the mind of an innocent child, not by the smart, pragmatic, and calculating mind of an adult.

I have said that the mind that Shakyamuni and Shinran saw in their teachers was the mind of great compassion; simply because the mind was so powerful, their lives were totally changed.

### **The Mind of the Bodhisattva Dharmakara Described in the *Larger Sutra***

Now let me explain the meaning of the mind of great compassion that Shin Buddhism teaches us. Shin Buddhism calls the mind of great compassion “Hongan (the Innermost Aspiration),” one of the most important concepts. (Although the literal and primary meaning of Hongan is “Innermost Aspiration” or “Basic Desire,” Shin Buddhist translators have translated Hongan only as “Primal [or Original] Vow.” Hongan has the meaning of “Primal [or Original] Vow, but translating Hongan only that way contributes to the mystification of Shin Buddhism.)

Now I want to discuss how the *Larger Sutra*, which Shinran considered the textual basis of Shin Buddhism, describes the Innermost Aspiration (or Hongan).

The *Larger Sutra* contains the story of a young seeker by the name of Bodhisattva Dharmakara, who eventually becomes Amida Buddha. In this story Dharmakara is presented as a symbol of the Innermost Aspiration (or Hongan).

When Dharmakara meets his teacher, he awakens his aspiration to save all sentient beings and makes the Forty-eight Vows. The gist of the Forty-eight Vows is: “If all sentient beings do not become buddhas, I will not become a buddha.” In other words, he is saying, “If all sentient beings become buddhas, I will become a buddha.” He vows that until the last suffering person becomes happy, he will not become happy. In short, he is saying, “Others first, me last.” This compassionate mind is called the Innermost Aspiration (or Primal Vow) and is what Dharmakara symbolizes.

After having awakened his Innermost Aspiration to save all sentient beings, Dharmakara asks his teacher to give him instruction concerning how he can fulfill it. Then the teacher teaches him as follows:

If, for example, one keeps on emptying a great ocean with a cup, one will be able to reach the bottom after a long time and then obtain a rare jewel. Likewise, if one sincerely, diligently, and unceasingly seeks Buddhahood, one will be able to reach one’s destination. What Aspiration is there that cannot be fulfilled?

This way, the teacher instructs Dharmakara that if he single-mindedly attempts to fulfill his Aspiration, he will be able to fulfill it. This instruction reminds us of the story of Mahatyagavat that I cited above. Although this story in the *Larger Sutra* does not identify “a rare jewel” as a wish-fulfilling jewel (*cintamani*) that enables Dharmakara to save all sentient beings from their suffering, it is obvious that this is the implication of the words “a rare jewel.”

After having received the teacher’s instruction, Dharmakara makes his Forty-eight Vows. Then, by engaging in a practice called “eternal practice,” he fulfills his vows and becomes a buddha by the name of Amida Buddha—a buddha who embodies limitless wisdom and limitless compassion.

Now we can see what kind of person Dharmakara was. He was a man of single-minded devotion. He was a man who believed in the possibility of emptying the ocean with a cup. When told of the possibility of emptying the ocean, he immediately believed in it.

His mind was the mind of an innocent, naïve, and foolish child. It was not the smart, pragmatic, and calculating mind of an adult. But Dharmakara's mind of great compassion has tremendous power. It is by the power of his mind that we are saved.

This way, the *Larger Sutra* emphasizes the importance of the Innermost Aspiration, the Buddha's (or Dharmakara's) compassionate mind, as the basis of Shin Buddhism.

Here I recollect the words of Rev. Rijin Yasuda (1900-1982, a Japanese Shin teacher) in one of his lectures. He said that nothing is so innocent, naïve, and fresh as the aspiration-mind of Dharmakara. Rev. Yasuda indicated that when we meet a person who embodies the aspiration-mind, the same aspiration is awakened within us. The awakening of this aspiration is the shinjin experience. Shinran emphasized its exclusive importance as the central issue in Buddhism. He called the *smart, pragmatic, and calculating* mind "self-power" and the *naïve, innocent, and foolish* mind (or the mind of great compassion) "Other Power." The former is a cold mind and the latter a warm mind.

### **Shinran's View of the Mind of the Bodhisattva Dharmakara**

Shinran teaches us that when we meet our teachers, we see this powerful mind of Dharmakara (or the innocent, naïve, and foolish mind of a child) in them and we are greatly shaken by it. When we are greatly shaken by it, the same powerful mind of Dharmakara is awakened within us. Shinran calls the mind that is awakened within us "shinjin." When we experience shinjin, we are liberated from suffering—liberated from the basic cause of suffering, our deep self-love. In short, shinjin that is realized within us liberates us.

Here let me quote a passage in which Shinran says that Dharmakara's mind is the true cause of our becoming a buddha (or attaining the fulfilled land):

In all small and foolish beings, at all times, thoughts of greed and desire incessantly defile any goodness of heart; thoughts of anger and hatred constantly consume the Dharma-treasure. Even if one urgently acts and urgently practices as though sweeping fire from one's head, all these acts must be called "poisoned and sundry good," and "false and deceitful practice." They cannot be called "true and real action." To seek to be born in the land of immeasurable light through such false and poisoned good is completely wrong. Why? *Because when the Tathagata [or Dharmakara] was performing bodhisattva practices, there was not a moment—not an instant—when his practice in the three modes of action was tainted by the hindrance of doubt. Because this mind is the Tathagata's mind of great compassion, it necessarily becomes the truly decisive cause of attaining the fulfilled land. The Tathagata, turning with compassion toward the ocean of living beings in pain and affliction, has given unhindered and vast pure shinjin to the ocean of sentient beings. This is called the "true and real shinjin that is [Amida's] benefiting of others.*

*(Collected Works of Shinran, p. 98)*

I have not italicized the first half of the above quote and have italicized the second half of it. In the un-italicized section Shinran talks about our regular (or egocentric) mind—the smart, pragmatic, and calculating mind of an adult—and in the italicized section he talks about Dharmakara's mind of compassion—the innocent, naïve, and foolish mind of a child.

In the first half of the above quote, Shinran says that since our regular (egocentric) mind has become so defiled that no matter how much effort we may make in performing good practices, all our good acts are called "poisoned and sundry good" and "false and deceitful practice." They cannot lead us to true liberation.

In the second half of the above quote, Shinran says that only Dharmakara's mind, which is pure and not tainted, can save us. Shinran says, "*Because when the Tathagata [or Dharmakara] was performing bodhisattva practices, there was not a moment—not an instant—when his practice in the three modes of action was tainted by the hindrance of doubt. Because this mind is the Tathagata's mind of great compassion, it necessarily becomes the truly decisive cause of attaining the fulfilled land.*"

This way, Shinran contrasts two sections: the first section about our regular (or egocentric) mind and the second section about Dharmakara's pure mind. By putting the word "Why?" between these two sections, Shinran explains the reason "the defiled good" (that is based on our regular [or egocentric] mind) cannot save us. He tells us that because of the pure mind of Dharmakara (that is mentioned in the second section) we can clearly see that our efforts based on our regular mind are impure and cannot save us. This is like our being able to clearly see impurity (i.e., our defilement) against the background of a pure mirror (i.e., Dharmakara's mind).

This way, Shinran's words in the second section explain the reason we cannot be liberated by relying on our regular (egocentric) mind. They also explain the reason we can be liberated; the mind of Dharmakara. The mind of Dharmakara that is described in the second section is so powerful that it can become the true cause of liberation—the *truly decisive cause of attaining the fulfilled land*—when it is awakened in us.

The last part of the second section says, “*The Tathagata, turning with compassion toward the ocean of living beings in pain and affliction, has given unhindered and vast pure shinjin to the ocean of sentient beings. This is called the “true and real shinjin that is [Amida’s] benefiting of others.*” Here Shinran indicates that all historical teachers (that the *Tathagata* symbolizes) have given vast shinjin—the Buddha’s compassionate mind—to the latent consciousness of all sentient beings. Shinran teaches us that if we have good conditions, such as meeting with our teachers and hearing their words, we will be able to awaken shinjin that is deeply hidden in our minds. This is just like a sprout’s coming out of a seed when it encounters conditions such as light, air, and moisture. This last part of the above quote is a very important aspect of Shinran’s teaching.

### **King Ajatasatru’s Encounter with Shakyamuni’s Mind of Great Compassion**

Now I want to discuss the story about the spiritual transformation that King Ajatasatru experienced, which is found in the *Nirvana Sutra*. Shinran quotes this story at the end of the Shin Volume, the third volume of his *Kyogyoshinsho*. Shinran probably thought that this story summarized his discussion on shin (or shinjin) as the mind of great compassion.

In this story King Ajatasatru encounters the compassionate mind of Shakyamuni. When the king meets the Buddha, he is deeply moved by his compassionate mind and awakens the same (shinjin) mind in himself. I believe that Shinran honored this story because he identified the king’s awakening of shinjin with his own awakening of shinjin. The king awakened shinjin when he met Shakyamuni and Shinran awakened it when he met his teacher Honen. Thus Shinran identified himself with the king and Honen with Shakyamuni.

Now let me give you an outline of the story. King Ajatasatru is a historical example of the most evil person (*icchantika*). When he was a prince, he killed his father, the king, and usurped his throne. Further, he attempted to kill his mother. Since his ministers admonished him not to, he did not kill her but he imprisoned her instead. Some time later he started to feel tremendous remorse for having committed such hideous actions.

Although six eminent spiritual teachers attempted to save the king from his spiritual agony, his spiritual sickness was not cured. Finally, when Jivaka, a Buddhist physician, advised the king to visit Shakyamuni, the king decided to do so. When the king was traveling with Jivaka to meet Shakyamuni, the king asked Jivaka to ride with him on the same elephant because he feared that he might fall off the elephant, die, and go to hell. The king told Jivaka, “Please hold me and keep me from falling. For I have heard in the past that the person who has attained the way does not fall into hell.”

While the king was traveling, he heard of Shakyamuni’s words, “For the sake of Ajatasatru, I will not enter nirvana.” These words of Shakyamuni mean that although the time of Shakyamuni’s death (or nirvana) has come, he could not die because he is concerned with the king’s spiritual welfare. Then, Jivaka told the king that although Shakyamuni was concerned with the welfare of all sentient beings, he was particularly concerned with people like Ajatasatru, who have committed atrocious actions.

When the king met Shakyamuni and received his teaching, he awakened shinjin and experienced liberation. The king was deeply moved by Shakyamuni’s compassion. Having recognized the remarkable contrast between Shakyamuni’s mind (that was concerned with the welfare of suffering sentient beings) and his own mind (that was concerned only with his personal welfare), the king became ashamed of himself. He said to Shakyamuni,

O World-honored one, observing the world, I see that from the seed of the *eranda* [i.e., a tree with the worst odor] grows the *eranda* tree. I do not see a *candana* tree [i.e., a tree with the most exquisite fragrance] growing from an *eranda* seed. But now for the first time I see a *candana* tree growing from the seed of an *eranda*. The *eranda* seed is myself; the *candana* tree is shinjin that has no root in my heart. “No root” means that at the beginning I did not know to revere the Tathagata, and did not entrust myself to the dharma and sangha.

(*Collected Works of Shinran*, pp. 137-138)

Here the king compares his defiled mind to an *eranda* tree and Shakyamuni’s compassionate mind to a *candana* tree. By meeting Shakyamuni’s compassionate mind (i.e., a *candana* tree), the king (i.e., an *eranda* tree) experiences the awakening of the compassionate mind (i.e., a *candana* tree) in himself. He said, “Now for the first time I see

a *candana* tree growing from an *eranda* seed.” In this way, the king says that the mind of great compassion (or shinjin) has grown from the king’s defiled mind. The king says that he is experiencing a miracle, having met with Shakyamuni.

Then, the sutra says that the king awakens the mind of the bodhisattva (with which “the mind of great compassion” or shinjin is synonymous). The king comes up with the following extraordinary statement,

World-honored one, if I had not encountered the Tathagata, the World-honored one, I would have undergone immeasurable suffering for countless, incalculable kalpas in the great hell. Now I meet the Buddha. With the virtue I have acquired from this meeting, I will destroy the blind passions and evil mind of sentient beings!... World-honored one, if I can clearly destroy sentient beings’ mind of evil, even if I were to dwell in Avici hell [i.e., the worst hell] constantly for innumerable *kalpas*, undergoing pain and suffering for the sake of sentient beings, it would not be painful.

(*Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 138, with modification by N. Haneda)

Before the king met Shakyamuni, he was concerned only with his individual welfare; he was afraid of falling into hell. But, now when he encountered the Buddha’s compassionate spirit and was moved by it, he experienced the awakening of the same spirit in himself. When the king awakened the bodhisattva spirit, he said that he would willingly go to hell if he could save sentient beings.

Shinran just quotes this story and does not comment on it at all. By quoting this story he seems to indicate that it was the mind of great compassion which the king saw in Shakyamuni that liberated him and that it was the mind of great compassion which Shinran saw in Honen that liberated him. For both the king and Shinran the awakening of shinjin was a totally unexpected and inconceivable experience. Thus the king said, “But now for the first time I see a *candana* tree growing from the seed of an *eranda*. The *eranda* seed is myself; the *candana* tree is shinjin that has no root in my heart.” Likewise, Shinran said,

In entrusting ourselves to the Tathagata’s Innermost Aspiration and saying the Name once, necessarily, *without seeking it*, we are made to receive the supreme virtues, and *without knowing it*, we acquire the great and vast benefit.

(*Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 481, with modification by N. Haneda)

### “A *Kalakula* Insect”: We Are What We Meet in Life

Buddhism teaches us that all of us have the potential for shinjin or the Innermost Aspiration; but simply because it is so deeply hidden in us, we are not even aware we have it. Shinran tells us that because it is deeply hidden in us, we cannot awaken it by ourselves. He tells us that if we meet a person of the Innermost Aspiration and hear his words, we are moved by him and awaken the same aspiration (shinjin) in ourselves. Shinran talks about the impossibility of realizing shinjin by ourselves and about the possibility of realizing it only through the help of “the Tathagata’s supportive power”—the power of our historical teachers:

...the genuine difficulty is realizing true and real shinjin. Why? Because this realization takes place through the Tathagata’s supportive power; because it comes about wholly through the power of great compassion and all-embracing wisdom.

(*Collected Works of Shinran*, pp. 79-80)

T’an-luan (476-542, a Chinese Pure Land master) talks about a mythological insect by the name of *kalakula*. This insect changes its form depending on what it encounters. When it encounters a small breeze, its body inflates a little bit. When it encounters a strong wind, its body grows bigger. When it encounters a storm, its body becomes enormously large.

By talking about this insect, T’an-luan tells us that human beings are not different—that what we become is determined by what we meet in our lives. We are usually concerned about what we can accomplish in our lives. But the Pure Land master tells us here that the most important thing in our lives is not what we can accomplish but what we meet. What we are is determined by what we meet.

### Conclusion: A Girl’s Attempt to Remove a Heap of Dirt

Let me finish my essay with a story about a small girl. One day a girl was playing in an open field. This field had been a playground for many children. One day a huge truck came to the field and dumped a large amount of dirt in it. The dirt was as tall as a two-story

building. Now children had lost their playground.

When the small girl saw the large pile of dirt in the field, she picked up a toy shovel. She started to scoop up a small amount of dirt with it, carried it to the other side of the road, and threw it away. An elderly gentleman was watching her. Having seen what she was doing, the gentleman asked her, “O, my dear, what are you doing?” She answered, “We don’t have our playground anymore. So, I am moving the soil with my shovel.” Having listened to her, the gentleman started laughing. He said, “Well, my dear, that pile of soil is so huge. Your shovel is so small. I think it impossible for you to move the dirt.” Then she answered, “No, I can do it. No, I can do it. If I do this a long time, I can do it. If I do this a long time, I can do it.”

Having heard her words, the old gentleman stopped laughing. He realized that there was some truth, some deep truth, in what the girl had just said. He said to himself, “She is right. If she does it a long time, she can do it.” When he thought this way, he became sad, sad about himself, because he realized that he had lost the *naïve* mind, the mind of a child. Then, he remembered the words of Rikyu, a famous tea master in the fifteenth century. Rikyu said, “Don’t forget the beginner’s mind! Don’t forget the beginner’s mind in your old age!”

We are saved *not* by the mind of an adult; we are saved by the mind of a naïve and innocent child. It is the mind of the parrot Joyneck. It is the mind of Prince Mahatyagavat. It is the mind of the Bodhisattva Dharmakara. It is the Innermost Aspiration, or shinjin. Shinran teaches us that it is by the power of the Innermost Aspiration, or shinjin, that we are saved.

Do you say that you have lost the naïve and innocent mind? Why don’t you look deep into your mind? I believe all of us still have it. It is deeply hidden in our minds and hardly recognizable, but it’s still there. Let’s forget about the smart mind of an adult. Let’s recover the naïve and fresh spirit of a child. Let’s recover the simple and foolish mind within us.

We are not moved and saved by a learned scholar. His extensive scholarship may impress us, but it cannot move us. We are not moved and saved by a sophisticated artist. His wonderful artwork may impress us, but it cannot shake us. We are not moved and saved by an ethically good person. His strict observance of discipline may impress us, but it cannot shake us. We are not moved and saved by a person who does deep meditation. His perfect mindfulness may impress us, but it cannot move us.

We are shaken and saved by the Innermost Aspiration, the mind of great compassion. We are moved by the naïve and foolish mind of a child, of the Buddha, who is single-mindedly concerned with the welfare of all sentient beings. If we have the Innermost Aspiration awakened in ourselves, our life becomes very simple. We can live our lives passionately, powerfully, and creatively.

There is something in us that yearns to transcend the pettiness of our being. We yearn to have a rich, full, creative, and powerful lives. We yearn to have one thing to which we can devote our entire lives. We yearn for the complete combustion of our lives. We are not satisfied with a lukewarm life like a smoldering fire. The goal of Buddhism is attaining *parinirvana* (or attaining Buddhahood). *Parinirvana* literally means “perfect extinction” or “perfect combustion.” Attaining *parinirvana* means fulfilling our lives, fully living them. We must live our lives in appreciating the richness and fullness that is contained in the present moments—in a manner we do not have any need to seek another life after our physical death.

I have talked about the importance of meeting with the mind of great compassion, the mind of a child, and having the same mind awakened within us. Honen said, “It is by returning to our foolishness that we are liberated.”

(April 27, 2018)