

Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion

by Rev. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki (Sensei)

"Rarity of life"

It is, indeed, a rare event, however many lives one may go through, that one happens to find oneself so happily situated as to be taken up in Amida's Prayer for universal deliverance. To attain to the pure faith of truth, however many numberless kalpas one may live, is, indeed, the most difficult thing. If not for the most favorable karmic combination in one's past lives, how could one ever come to cherish a faith in the Pure Land and live it accordingly? If one should miss this opportunity through being beclouded by a veil of doubt, one may have to wait in vain for another numberless kalpas, (Preface of "Kyogyosho-Monrui" by Shinran Shonin, translated by D.T. Suzuki)

Somehow I am here in New York at this time of the 21st Century. How can this be possible?

Somehow I have received a human life, and somehow I live a Buddha-centered life. Somehow I am here and live the path of the Nembutsu-Dharma. How can this be possible?

Learning the Buddha's teaching of interdependence makes us aware of the inconceivable causes and conditions which make us what we are now. In order for me to exist here today, I need both of my parents, as well as my grandparents, great grandparents, great great grandparents, ... all my ancestors. If one was missing, I would not be here today. My existence can go back to human history. It means that my existence is supported by the history of mankind, the history of life forms, and history of the earth and universe, which are beyond my comprehension. It is a simple interdependence from the aspect of "kinship." We are always influenced by our surroundings, by things such as education, culture, society, natural environment etc. Inconceivable factors are part of our existence.

The beginning section of the Three Treasures says, "Rare is it to receive the human form, and now I have received it. Rare is it to hear the Buddha-Dharma, and now I have heard it...." Our realization of the rarity is wisdom from the Buddha's teachings. From this realization, the feeling of gratitude and respect naturally rises within us. This rare experience is happening right now and right here within me, and it applies to others as well.

The following passage from the Nirvana Sutra was quoted in the book entitled "An-Raku-Shu (Collection of the Pure Land) written by the Chinese Pure Land Master Tao-cho. It expresses that our following of the Dharma does not just happen all of a sudden but results from the meeting of millions of various buddhas in the past.

It says, "If the sentient beings raise the Bodhi-mind and practice under the guidance of the Buddhas who are as many as half the Sands of the Ganges River, then, they can hear the Mahayana Buddhism without slandering nor criticizing in this defiled world. If the sentient beings raise the Bodhi-mind and practice under the guidance of the Buddhas who are as many as the Sands of the Ganges River, after that, in this defiled world, they can hear the Mahayana Buddhism without slandering and come to enjoy the teaching deeply. If the sentient beings raise the Bodhi-mind and practice under the guidance of the Buddhas who are as twice as many as the Sands of the Ganges River, then, in this defiled world they can understand, follow, accept and chant the right Dharma without slandering. If the sentient beings raise the Bodhi-mind and practice under the guidance of the Buddhas who are as three times many as the Sands of the Ganges River, after that, in this defiled world they can write and copy the sutras without slandering the Dharma, teach the Dharma for others and chant the right Dharma, yet they are not able to fully understand the depth in true meaning."

Rain falls, and the sun shines.

Amazing! Amazing! Amazing!

Reading Dharma books with joy

Living the life with gratitude

Timeful time, spaceful space, right now, right here

Your life and my life are guided by countless buddhas. (by Shaku Kenjitsu)