

## Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion – The Amida Sutra (7)

### "Forms" – Kindness of the Buddha

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**On hearing them [birds' singing], the people of that land become mindful of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. But, Shariputra, you should not assume that these birds are born as retribution for their evil karma. The reason is that none of the three evil realms exists in that Buddha-land. Shariputra, even the names of the three evil realms do not exist there; how much less the realms themselves? These birds are manifested by Amida Buddha so that their singing can proclaim and spread the Dharma.**

(Amida Sutra translated by Hisao Inagaki)

We live in the world of forms and shapes, and we tend to be attached to them. Buddhism teaches us to go beyond forms or beyond what we see and what we hear. We need to realize the importance of the unseen parts of all forms. In other words, the surface or appearance of the form is one thing and the inside of the form is another. These two aspects of forms need to be balanced.

In general, the inside should manifest the outside, and the outside should refer to the inside. We tend to care for the outside, but not the inside. Suppose you receive a gift, what do you see? Do you see the material content of the gift or do you see the heart of the person who sent the gift to you? Or do you see both the material and the heart? In this case, you can say the gift is the manifestation of the person's heart, their caring, love, thoughtfulness, etc, and through the gift, you may also feel and understand the person's heart.

The teaching of Buddhism is a great gift that leads us to Enlightenment. The Pure Land Sutras are gifts from Amida Buddha. The descriptions of the Pure Land are a manifestation of the Buddha's heart of wisdom and compassion. Through the particular descriptions in the Sutras, we can touch the heart of the Amida Buddha and realize the depth of the Buddha's wisdom and compassion.

People, who are not familiar with the Pure Land teachings, fail to see that the forms and decorations in them are manifestations of the Dharma. Although the Amida Sutra describes various forms such as birds, they are considered to be formless forms, or forms beyond the conventional form, shapeless shapes, or shapes beyond a shape.

Going toward the formless, or beyond form, shows wisdom, and coming back as form shows compassion. Since Amida comes from the words "not" (*A*) and "measurable" (*mita*) or "beyond" (*A*) "measurement" (*mita*), "these birds are manifested by Amida Buddha" should mean that these birds are manifested by the Buddha Beyond Measurement. The forms of the birds are beyond form. They are the entrances to the Nembutsu-Dharma, the Enlightenment world of Amida Buddha, who vows to liberate all beings from suffering and pain. Such entrances are created by the kindness and compassion of the Buddha.

Let the words of the Buddha open your mindful heart to the Dharma-world and enable you to find the path that frees you from anguish.

**For the sake of all beings**

**Out of the kindness and compassion of the Buddha, the**

**Rainbow-like truth and reality of the Dharma was revealed in the Sutras.**

**May you find the path that leads you to the world of going-beyond!**

(by Shaku Kenjitsu)