

## Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion – The Amida Sutra (10)

### "Path Open to Anyone"

by Rev. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki (Sensei)

**Shariputra, ten kalpas have passed since Amida Buddha attained Enlightenment. Moreover, Shariputra, he has an immeasurable and unlimited number of shravaka disciples, all of them arhats, whose number cannot be reckoned by any means. His assembly of bodhisattvas is similarly vast. Shariputra, that Buddha-land is filled with such splendid adornments.** (Amida Sutra, translated by Hisao Inagaki)

"The door is open to everyone!" "All of you are welcome!" It is important that we open the door. The Buddha set the example. The Buddha's teaching is always open to anyone who wants to learn from it.

When we open the door, we must be prepared to offer and share something substantial. People gather when they find something they believe is attractive and beneficial to them. The other day, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama spoke in Central Park, over 60,000 people gathered to listen to him. Were they all Tibetan Buddhists? The answer is "no." His teaching reaches out not only to Tibetan Buddhists but also to Mahayana and Theravada Buddhists. Moreover, not only Buddhists but also Christian, Jews and those of other religious practices gathered in Central Park. I believe that His Holiness, in his person and in his message, offers teaching of universal value, teaching that anybody can look to for spiritual guidance.

The Amida Sutra says there are immeasurable numbers of disciples and lay followers in Amida's Buddha Land, or Pure Land. What does this mean? I believe it means that Amida's Buddha Land offers the inconceivable value and limitless quality of True Enlightenment. Thus, many people come and try to learn more about it.

I would like to explain a couple of important terms in the above quotation. Arhats are those who are free from all craving and rebirth. Shravakas are those who listen to the Buddha's teaching and attain Enlightenment. The shravaka is an ideal figure of Theravada Buddhism. Bodhisattvas are those who seek Enlightenment not only for themselves but also for others. The bodhisattva is an ideal figure of Mahayana Buddhism. The passage makes it clear that the Pure Land is open to both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists.

Publicity is also important for attracting people. The Dalai Lama's talk was publicized in many places. In Amida Buddha's case, among the 48 vows he established, the 17<sup>th</sup> vow is like the vow of PR. It promises that Amida's name will be known and respected by the innumerable Buddhas of the ten quarters of the universe.

The vastness of the number of bodhisattvas and shravakas in the Pure Land (quantity) reflects the vastness of the teachings (quality). Once we become aware of the true vastness of the Pure Land, we will naturally open ourselves to all people. We will open our doors and share the universal quality of the Nembutsu with others. So let each of us find out the vastness of the Dharma!

**Ocean-like, the Vow of the Buddha Amitabha  
Promises to liberate all beings in the universe.  
Experience the vastness of the Vow!  
Nobody is excluded from it, ...even ME is included.**

**Peaceful and Joyful words that Buddha teaches  
Awaken us to hundreds of ways to Enlightenment  
Try and see what will work for you!  
Here I found myself ....repeating Namu Amitabha,**