

Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion – The Amida Sutra (11)
"Settlement"

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"Again, Shariputra, all sentient beings born in the Land of Utmost Bliss dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression. Many of them are in the Stage of Becoming a Buddha After One More Life. Their number is so great that it is beyond reckoning; it can only be described as innumerable, unlimited and incalculable. (Amida Sutra, translated by Hisao Inagaki

Our minds are moving constantly, and sometimes we have difficulty understanding and controlling them. It is crucial, especially in Buddhism, to learn to cultivate and settle our minds and hearts, which eventually will bring us the wisdom and compassion of enlightenment.

Traditionally, Buddhist practitioners aim to attain the stage of "non-retrogression." In Mahayana Buddhism, Bodhisattvas need to go through fifty-two levels or stages to reach enlightenment. There are ten stages of "faith" (ten kinds of minds for practitioners to master, such as faith to fulfill enlightenment, etc.), ten stages of "security" (ten kinds of settling mind for true-reality of suchness, such as secure mind to seek Bodhi, etc.) , ten kinds of "practice"(ten kinds of practice to benefit others, such as the practice of joy without the interruption of false views, etc.), ten stages of "merit-transference" (ten kinds of transferring the benefit you have accumulated to others, such as merit-transference of non-breakable mind etc.) , ten stages of "development"(ten kinds of Bodhisattva stages, such as the stage of joy for partially understand enlightenment, etc.), Lastly, there are the stage of approaching the Buddhahood and the stage of Buddhahood, fulfilling complete wisdom and virtues.

Once the practitioner reaches the first of the "development" stages, he or she will never fall back in pursuit of the remaining stages. Therefore this first of the ten development stages is called the stage of "non-retrogression" or of the "truly settled group." It means that when you achieve the first of the ten development stages, your enlightenment is assured. Shinran says in his poem Wasan,

"Bodhisattva Maitreya must pass 5,670 million years

Before attaining Buddhahood

But the person who realizes true Shinjin, entrusting mind,

Will attain enlightenment with the end of this life"

" The person who attains the stage equal to Perfect Enlightenment

By the working of the Vow of Birth through the Nembutsu,

Being the same as Maitreya Bodhisattva

Will realize great and complete Nirvana"

As we attain Shinjin – our mind open to the Vows of Amida Buddha-, we become settled, not based on egocentric human delusion but based on the grounds of the Enlightenment of the Buddha. Don't be deceived by your own selfish mind. Let the Dharma float into your mindful heart.

Sitting on the Buddha-ground

Experience the world of Amida! -

The boundless compassion as life

The limitless wisdom as light.

Let go of our humane concerns, and

Enter the ocean of the Dharma!

Mindful hearts will be filled with the Dharma-water.

Experience the Oneness

Nobody else but I and Amida

Truly relaxed and balanced in the Dharma,