

Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion – The Amida Sutra (12)

"Togetherness"

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"Shariputra, those sentient beings who hear of that land should aspire to be born there. Why? Because they will be able to meet such sages of supreme virtue [meeting together at one place]. Shariputra, one cannot attain birth in that land with few roots of goodness or a small stock of merit

Amida Sutra, translated by Hisao Inagaki (brackets added)

Although there are a lot of people living in the city, one of the characteristics of city life may be loneliness. In fact, this is true for not only for people living in cities like New York., Tokyo etc, but for all of the people living on earth. The Buddha said, "Humans are living in the world of lust and desire. They are born alone and die alone, go alone and come alone" (Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra). Since we have the nature of "alone-ness," we feel lonely. Though many people live together, we still feel alone.

Let me introduce a poem that I recently read, written by Misuzu Kaneko (1903-1929). The title, "When I am lonely," describes the "com (together)-passion (suffering)" of the Buddha.

When I am lonely , others aren't aware of it.
 When I am lonely, my friends are laughing.
 When I am lonely, my mother is kind and gentle.
 When I am lonely, the Buddha is lonely.

The Vimalakirti Sutra tells us that "the Bodhisattva's sickness is caused by his/her great compassion for all sentient beings," and says, 'Like the loving parents to their children, the Bodhisattvas love all sentient beings as their own children. When the sentient beings are suffering, the Bodhisattvas are suffering. When they are healed, the Bodhisattvas are healed.' Amida Buddha is the one who truly realizes the deep compassion and loving-kindness of all of us, being always with each of us. Once we realize the compassion of the Buddha, we are not alone, as we are living together with the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and together with the Buddha's disciples.

*Though nobody in this world understands me,
 Opening my eyes to the world of the Buddha-Dharma,
 Great Compassion understands me and embraces me in the Nembutsu.
 Encountering the light of the Buddha,
 Takes me to the place where
 Healing and energizing are happening.
 Everywhere and anywhere I am,
 Realizing that I am not alone,
 Never being alone in the Dharma.
 Every time when I say the Nembutsu
 Suffering alone becomes suffering together, and
 Standing alone becomes standing together.*

(By Shaku Kenjitsu)