

Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion – The Amida Sutra (17)

"Witness by the Buddhas"

by Rev. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki (Sensei)

" Shariputra, just as I praise the inconceivable virtue of Amida Buddha, so do the Buddhas in the eastern quarter, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Aksobhya Buddha, Meru-dhvaja Buddha, Mahameru Buddha, Meru-prabhasa Buddha, and Manju-svara Buddha. While dwelling in their own lands, they extend their long, broad tongues and, encompassing with them the universe of a thousand million worlds, pronounce these words of truth: Sentient beings should accept this sutra entitled 'Praise of the Inconceivable Virtue and Protection by All Buddhas.'

"Shariputra, there are in the southern quarter Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Candra-surya-pradipa Buddha, Yashah-prabha Buddha, Maharci-skandha Buddha, Meru-pradipa Buddha, and Ananta-virya Buddha. While dwelling.....'

"Shariputra, there are in the western quarter Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Amitayus Buddha, Amita-ketu Buddha, Amita-dhvaja Buddha,'

"Shariputra, there are in the northern quarter Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Arci-skandha Buddha,'

"Shariputra, there are in the nadir Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Simha Buddha, Yashas Buddha,'

"Shariputra, there are in the zenith Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, such as Brahma-ghosa Buddha, Naksatra-raja Buddha,'

Amida Sutra, translated by Hisao Inagaki (brackets added)

This part of the Amida Sutra is known as the section of Being Praised by the Countless Buddhas from Six Directions. It signifies that the Name of Amida Buddha is praised by all the Buddhas in the universe, as the six directions--east, south, west, north, above and below--represent the entire universe.

I like such expressions as "as numerous as the sands of the Ganges." These words make me really understand the vastness of the "many." They give a much more substantial feeling than "millions and trillions." Just imagining vast numbers of grains of sand makes me feel the inconceivable size of the many.

The Fulfillment section of the 17th Vow summarizes the essence of the above sections of the Amida Sutra. It says, "The Buddha-tathagatas throughout the ten quarters, countless as the sands of Ganges, are one in praising the majestic power and the virtues, inconceivably profound, of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life." Vast numbers of the Buddhas, from all directions, praise the virtue of the Nembutsu. In other words, not only Shakyamuni Buddha but also countless other Buddhas witness the great virtue and merit of the Nembutsu-Dharma, and encourage all beings to follow the path of the Nembutsu.

From this perspective, when we say the Nembutsu, we shall experience the presence of various Buddhas, encouragement of the Buddhas, and protection and security from the Buddhas. Some say, "when I say the Nembutsu once, one lotus flower blossoms in the Buddha-land; when I say it twice, two lotus flowers blossom." I hope that your lotus flowers are blooming fully here as well as in the Buddha-land!

Wind carries a beautiful fragrance of the lotus blossoms
 In the Land of enlightenment and true awakenings.
 That is also true here where I am.
 Namo-amidabu is the phrase given by the Buddha,
 Emancipating us from suffering and pains
 Secure your seat belt in the Nembutsu-vehicle, and now
 Set and go with supporters of various Buddhas for your side! (by Kenjitsu)