

## Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion – The Amida Sutra (20)

### "Praising"

by Rev. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki (Sensei)

**"Shariputra, just as I now praise the inconceivable virtue of other Buddhas, they also praise my inconceivable virtue, saying, 'Shakyamuni Buddha, you have accomplished an extremely difficult and unprecedented task. In this Saha world, during the evil period of the five defilements -- those of time, views, passions, sentient beings, and life-span -- you have attained the highest, perfect Enlightenment and, for the sake of sentient beings, have delivered this teaching, which is the most difficult in the world to accept in faith.**

-Amida Sutra (translated by Hisao Inagaki)

When I read the Amida Sutra, I always feel good. In this sutra, all the Buddhas praise each other based on their true understanding of the quality of others. In the beginning section of the sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha praises Amida Buddha's virtue as well as Amida's Land of Enlightenment. In the middle of the sutra all the Buddhas from six directions praise Amida Buddha. In the final section, Shakyamuni Buddha praises all the Buddhas. Then all the Buddhas praise Shakyamuni Buddha's great achievement. As you can see, the entire Amida Sutra is full of praises. The Buddha's have no words of praise for themselves, but all receive admiration from others. There are no words of blame and criticism for others. Isn't it wonderful!

In our daily lives, we hear many criticisms, complaints, and accusations. Delivering them probably gives the critic a kind of self-satisfaction. There is a phrase I read or heard, I don't remember where, that went something like this: "Criticizing and blaming others may be impressive but many times does not create a warm and kind heart in one's readers or listeners." In other words, praising, admiring and respecting others creates a form of warmth, kindness and happiness in readers and listeners; criticism and blame do not. Needless to say, a critical view can be very important in helping one achieve wisdom.

In our everyday life we also hear people who praise themselves. People try to impress others by saying how good they are, or how great their accomplishments are. It is nice to know and recognize a person's achievements, but this kind of talk often becomes boastful talk. Such people tend to admire themselves and look down others.

Even though I say these things, I am not an exception to the common tendency to blame others and praise oneself. At least I can reflect upon myself, which makes me try to live the Buddha's way of praising and respecting others.

Truly praising others may not be as easy as it sounds. It requires true understanding of others, which means having the wisdom to be able to see people as they are. Unless one is fully enlightened, it is impossible to praise others with true quality and virtues. Buddhas can truly praise others, but ordinary people like us cannot really praise others in the true sense. If we admire others too much, it becomes flattery. If we admire them too little, we demean them.

Nembutsu is the word given by the Buddhas to praise their virtue. We don't have any words of our own to praise the Buddha. Saying the Nembutsu has the same meaning as praising the Buddha. As we say the Nembutsu, we are praised by the Buddhas because of the virtue of the Nembutsu.

Placing palms together,

Reciting the Nembutsu, namo amidabu,

At that moment, we meet Amida Buddha, Sakyamuni Buddha and all the Buddhas

It is great to know that we are living the path, admired by all Buddhas

So glad to be with all the Buddhas, I feel

Even if everybody else criticizes me, I am fine now and ready to hear him or her!!!

(by Kenjitsu)