

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

True Benefit

By T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki, Sensei

“...The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, “When the visualization of the water has been accomplished, it is called the general perception of the ground of the Land of Utmost Bliss. If you attain a state of samadhi, you will see this ground so clearly and distinctly that it will be impossible to describe it in detail. This is the visualizing of the ground and is known as the third contemplation.”

The Buddha said to Ananda, “Keep these words of the Buddha in mind, and expound this method of visualizing the ground for the benefit of the multitude of future beings who will seek emancipation from suffering. If one has attained a vision of the ground of that land, the evil karma which one has committed during eighty kotis of kalpas of Samsara will be extinguished, and so one will certainly be born in the Pure Land in the next life. Do not doubt this. To practice in this way is called the correct contemplation, and to practice otherwise is incorrect.”

(“Kanmuryoju-kyo’ translated by Hisao Inagaki)

After the three meditations on the sun, water, and ground, the Buddha seemed to take a little break, during which he explained to Ananda the importance of the Pure Land teachings for all beings and encouraged people to practice meditation on the Pure Land. By taking a break, I sense, the Buddha kindly gave Queen Vaidehi time to digest the teachings on the three meditations.

Chinese Pure Land Master Shan-tao explained four points concerning the Buddha's statement to Ananda. First, the Buddha here calls and declares the Pure Land way widely. Second, the Buddha emphasizes the benefit of meditating on the ground and encourages practice of this path for sentient beings of the future. Third, the Buddha explains that though our life may be full of suffering and pain, the Buddha's land brings real peace and happiness to the life of all living beings. Fourth, the Buddha teaches all beings to focus their mind on the Buddha Land of Amida.

Here I see that Vaidehi really represents all of the people who need to liberate themselves from their suffering and pain. Although the Buddha is talking to Vaidehi and Ananda, the Buddha's teaching is for me and for all of us. “Future beings” are you and I. Why can the teaching of the Pure Land benefit us? It is because the teachings of the Buddha Land are based on the Buddha's profound experience of the universal truth. “Once touched by the Power of Amida's Primal Vow [Pure Land is the manifestation of Amida's Vow], no one spends their life in vain,” said Shinran Shonin in his hymn (Koso Wasan). In other words, for those who have encountered the Pure Land way, their life is fulfilled and becomes fruitful, and is no longer pointless and without value.

Because of THIS, I can live with gratitude; Because of THIS, I can die peacefully! May we all encounter THIS Vow and experience the fulfillment of life!

Being acquainted with the universal truth,
 Each moment becomes a precious moment
 No need to pretend to be anyone or anything!
 Entering the path of Pure Land,
 Fulfillment of life is assured.
 I am grateful for life, which has been
 Transformed into merit and virtue.

(by Kenjitsu)