

Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion – The Meditation Sutra (17)**“Meditation on Lotus-Seat ”**

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... After she had this vision of Amitayus, Vaidehi knelt down in worship at Shakyamuni's feet and said to him, "World-Honored One, through your power I have been able to see Amitayus and the two Bodhisattvas, but how can sentient beings of the future see them?" The Buddha said to Vaidehi, "Those who wish to see that Buddha should form an image of a lotus-flower on the seven-jewelled ground. They visualize each petal of this flower as having the colors of a hundred jewels and eighty-four thousand veins like a celestial painting, with eighty-four thousand rays of light issuing forth from each vein. They should visualize all of these clearly and distinctly. Its smaller petals are two hundred and fifty yojanas in both length and breadth. This lotus-flower has eighty-four thousand large petals. Between the petals there are a hundred kotis of king-mani-gems as illuminating adornments. Each mani-gem emits a thousand rays of light which, like canopies of the seven jewels, cover the entire earth.

"The dais is made of Shakra-abhilagna-mani-gems and is decorated with eighty thousand diamonds, kimshuka-gems, brahma-mani-gems and also with exquisite pearl-nets. On the dais four columns with jewelled banners spontaneously arise, each appearing to be as large as a thousand million kotis of Mount Sumerus. On the columns rests a jewelled canopy similar to that in the palace of the Yama Heaven. They are also adorned with five hundred kotis of excellent gems, each emitting eighty-four thousand rays shining in eighty-four thousand different tints of golden color. Each golden light suffuses this jewelled land and transforms itself everywhere into various forms, such as diamond platforms, nets of pearls and nebulous clusters of flowers. In all the ten directions it transforms itself into anything according to one's wishes, and performs the activities of the Buddha. This is the visualizing of the lotus-throne, and is known as the seventh contemplation."

The Buddha further said to Ananda, "This majestic lotus-flower was originally produced by the power of the Bhiksu Dharmakara's Vow. Those who wish to see the Buddha Amitayus should first practice this contemplation of the flower-throne. In doing so, do not contemplate in a disorderly way. Visualize the objects one by one -- each petal, each gem, each ray of light, each dais and each column. See all of these as clearly and distinctly as if you were looking at your own image in a mirror. When this contemplation is accomplished, the evil karma which you have committed during five hundred kotis of kalpas of Samsara will be extinguished, and you will certainly be born in the Land of Utmost Bliss. To practice in this way is called the correct contemplation, and to practice otherwise is incorrect."  
(“Kanmuryoju-kyo’ translated by Hisao Inagaki)

While Shakyamuni Buddha was teaching the sixteen meditations to Queen Vaidehi and Buddha's disciple Ananda, Vaidehi quietly listened to his instructional discourse. The above is the only time during the teaching of the sixteen meditations that Vaidehi said something to the Buddha. So this seventh meditation on the Lotus Seat of Amida Buddha has special importance. Queen Vaidehi simply said, "Thanks to you, fortunately I was able to encounter Amida Buddha with the two Bodhisattvas of Wisdom and Compassion, but how about people in the future?" Here I recognize a big difference in the tone of her voice from when she spoke previously, before the Buddha's instruction. I believe she found true contentment and happiness once she encountered Amida Buddha, and at this point she was no longer a miserable person with pain and suffering in her life. Before, she was only selfishly concerned with her own problems or her own happiness, but now she worried about the happiness of others. As a lotus flower blooms in a muddy swamp, representing transformation as enlightenment in the midst of suffering and pain, Vaidehi was able to transform her life from one of anguish into one of virtue through the guidance of the Buddha. She really became a faithful follower of the Amida-Dharma, a Nembutsu practitioner.

After Vaidehi's question, Shakyamuni Buddha continued the meditation on the Lotus Seat. As the Buddha told Ananda, we need to pay attention to the words, saying, "This majestic lotus-flower was originally produced by the power of the Bhiksu Dharmakara's Vow." Dharmakara is the causal stage of Amida Buddha that was revealed in the Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra, the main sutra in our Pure Land tradition. Here we see the basis of the Meditation Sutra as Amida's Vow. The lotus seat is a form developed by Amida's Vow; it becomes eighty-four thousand lights, and each light transforms various forms, which perform the activities of the Buddha-Dharma throughout the universe.

Suffering and pain are hard to severe, yet

Encountering Amida's Compassionate Vow

A lotus flower can blossom in my life,

Turning them into sources of a flower blooming. (by Kenjitsu)