

Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion –the Meditation Sutra (30)

Deep Mind

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The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "Those born in the Western Land are of nine grades. Those who attain birth on the highest level of the highest grade are sentient beings who resolve to be born in that land, awaken the three kinds of faith[mind] and so are born there. What are the three? They are, first, the sincere faith [mind]; second, the deep faith[mind]; and third, the faith[mind] that seeks birth there by transferring one's merit. Those who have these three kinds of faith[mind] will certainly be born there....." (translation by Hisao Inagaki [added by Rev. Nakagaki])

The second of the three minds in the Meditation Sutra is called, "jin shin" which literally means "deep mind." Deep mind is the deeply entrusting mind to Amida's Vow. It is a decisive and determinate mind. This is the clear mind that firmly settled on one place (of Amida's Vow) without being disturbed by anybody and anything.

In his commentary on the Meditation Sutra, Master Shantao says, "The second is deep mind. Deep mind is the deeply entrusting mind. There are two aspects. One is to believe deeply and decidedly that you are a foolish being of karmic evil caught in birth-and-death, ever sinking and ever wandering in transmigration from innumerable kalpas in the past, with never a condition that would lead to emancipation. The second is to believe deeply and decidedly that Amida Buddha's Forty-eight Vows grasp sentient beings, and that by allowing yourself to be carried by the power of the Vow without any doubt or apprehension, you will attain birth."

This deep mind has two aspects: the awareness of "ki", the finite and limited self which is controlled by blind passions such as greed, anger and ignorance, and cannot liberate oneself by self-benefiting power; and the awareness of "ho," the working of Amida's benefiting-others power, which aims to liberate those who suffer from blind passion. Simply put, attaining this mind means to attain the awareness of truth of yourself, and awareness of truth of the Dharma which is revealed through Amida's Vow.

When the Buddha Sakyamuni was making his last trip, he left the last message to his disciples. The Buddha says, "Make yourself a light. Do not make others a light; Make the Dharma a light. Do not make other teachings a light." In short, the Buddhist teachings are in essence to "know yourself," and to "know the dharma." I find a parallel between two aspects of the deep mind and the last message by the Buddha. The deep mind is not only the essence of the Meditation Sutra, but also the essence of all the teachings of the Buddha.

Understanding the Nembutsu "namo-amidabu" is no other than awareness of your limited self (namo) and awareness of the working of Amida-dharma (amidabu). When we place our palms together, our left hand represents "namo" –to know who we really are, and right hand represents "amidabu" – to know the boundless compassion and wisdom. When the two palms come together, we experience the oneness of delusion and enlightenment, suffering/pain and happiness/peace, myself and Buddha.

Honen wrote a poem to express two aspects of deep mind, "The shadow of a pine tree is dark, because of the light of the moon." Without the light of the moon, we can't see the shadow. Realization of the shadow is to realize the presence of the moon light. In fact, the shadow is not separated from the moon light. In the same way, I (of delusion) am inseparable from Amida Buddha (of enlightenment).

Dark is light, and light is dark.

Enlightenment is endarkenment.

Entering the Amida-Dharma

Provides the sense of oneness of opposites.

(by Kenjitsu) ❁