

## Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion—the Meditation Sutra (37)

### “Bad People”

#### High Birth of Low Grade

by Rev. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "Those who attain birth on the highest level of the lowest grade are the sentient beings who commit various evil acts but do not slander the Mahayana sutras of greater scope. When a foolish person such as this, who has committed much evil but feels no remorse, is about to die, he may meet a good teacher, who praises the titles of the twelve divisions of the Mahayana scriptures. By hearing these sutra-titles, he is released from the burden of evil karma which he has accumulated during a thousand kalpas. Furthermore, this wise teacher advises him to join his palms and call, 'Homage to Amitayus[Amida] Buddha.' Calling the name of the Buddha extinguishes the evil karma that the dying person has committed during fifty kotis of kalpas of Samsara. The Buddha then sends his transformed body and those of Avalokiteshvara and Mahasthamaprapta to the aspirant; they praise him, saying, 'Well done, man of good deeds! By calling the Name of the Buddha your evil karma has been extinguished, and so we have come to welcome you.' When these words are uttered, the aspirant sees a flood of light from that transformed Buddha fill his room. Having seen this, he rejoices and dies. Seated on a jewelled lotus-flower, he follows the transformed Buddha and is born on a jewelled pond. In seven weeks the lotus-bud opens and Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, and Mahasthamaprapta appear before him, releasing great floods of light, and explain to him the extremely profound teachings of the twelve divisions of the scriptures. Having heard these, the aspirant accepts them in faith, and awakens aspiration for the highest Enlightenment. After ten smaller kalpas, he acquires clear understanding of the one hundred dharmas and enters the First Stage of Bodhisattvahood. Such a person is called one who attains birth on the highest level of the lowest grade. Thus he is born by hearing the Name of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha -- that is, the Three Treasures."

...(translation by Hisao Inagaki [annotation by TK Nakagaki])

People of the Low Grades are so-called “bad people” or “evil people” in contrast with the “good people” of the High and Middle Grades. But notice that the Meditation Sutra is trying to reach out here to the worst people who cannot do good at all.

A real compassionate person is one who helps others when they have problems and difficulties. Many times, what happens in our life is that we avoid those who have problems, instead of helping them. When one is well, people may be kind and compassionate. But once a person falls into a bad condition –e.g. job lost, sick in bed, etc, they may become cold and even turn against him or her. It is definitely true that you can tell who is really your friend and who is not when you have problems.

The compassion of the Buddha becomes stronger toward the ones who have problems and difficulties. The Buddha is seen as if he is a skillful teacher who teaches children, or a skillful doctor who treats patients. It must be easier to teach children who are wise and study hard, and easier to treat the patients who are not seriously ill. The ability of good teacher is measured by how much they can help the students who don't do well, and the ability of good doctors seen when they successfully treat those who have a serious illness.

Who really needs the Buddha's teachings? Though everyone receives benefit from the Buddha-Dharma, the focus of the Buddha's compassion is toward those who are the furthest from the dharma. From the viewpoint of the compassion of the Buddha, the Low Grades are the focus of this sutra.

Being blinded by selfish desire and anger and

Addicted to evil action, the

Dharma is still available for them, specially for them. (by Kenjitsu) 