

## **Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion – The Amida Sutra(6)- Harmony: Mutual Respect and Mutual Understanding**

by Rev. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki (Sensei)

*In the ponds are lotuses as large as chariot-wheels -- the blue ones radiating a blue light, the yellow a yellow light, the red a red light and the white ones a white light. They are marvelous and beautiful, fragrant and pure.*

(Amida Sutra, translated by Hisao Inagaki)

This is one of the famous lines of the Amida Sutra. Each lotus shines with its own color. The blue lotus does not shine with a red light, nor does the yellow lotus shine with a white light. A blue lotus shines with its own blue light, and yellow lotus shines with its own yellow light. In our world, we may want to shine with other colors. I would like to be a great singer like Placido Domingo? Frank Sinatra?, and try to copy him and become the same color as he is. We need to have such ideal figures in our lives, and make an effort to become like them. This effort is very important. But at the same time, we need to realize that I am me, he is he and she is she; I am not him, and he is not her and she is not me. The point is that we need to be ourselves, to truly be ourselves.

Learning the Buddha-Dharma is learning to accept what I am, what you are, and become truly ourselves. We tend to compare ourselves with other people, but the Buddha directs us to see ourselves as we are. After we know who and what we are, then we will know the value of others. We will learn to see that each individual is different and we will be able to respect them for their individuality and their existence in life with us. In an orchestra, violinists do the violin's part, bass players do the bass part, and a pianist does the piano's part and they all keep harmony among themselves. They can create a more powerful and gorgeous sound than each playing their instrument individually. In order to create such a gorgeous sound, each one respects the other players and understands their own uniqueness and contribution, and a great balance is kept as they play together. I believe that this is the spirit of a Buddhist sangha - fellow practitioners balancing each other with respect and understanding.

They are all number one! I am number one as I am. You are number one as you are. Among Buddha's disciples, Shariputra is known as number one in wisdom; Ananda is number one in hearing the teachings many times; Moggallana is number one in supernatural power. Each is different in talent and capacity, and shines with his or her own color. I remember an interesting comment by a mathematician: "A talent needs to be supported by effort and effort needs to be supported by talent. Talent and effort are related not by addition (+), but multiplication (x). Though you have 10 talents, you make 0 (zero) effort, you get 0 result. You may have 8 talents, you make 10 efforts, then you can get 80 result." It means that even though you may have great talent, if you do not make any effort, you get nothing. Although you may have moderate talent, and if you make a great effort, then you can get a very good result. Being ourselves requires us to make a great effort to know ourselves and to live our lives according to our full potential.

When we awaken to the world of Amida Buddha, we realize that each living being is embraced by the compassionate light of Amida, which liberates us from the anguish of delusion. Through the eyes of Enlightenment, each life is precious beyond any conventional measurement and has the potential to become enlightened through encountering the Dharma. Those who attain Shinjin, entrusting their mind to Amida, are praised as "a white lotus flower among people."

May we learn to create a harmony among us with mutual respect and mutual understanding based on the Dharma. May each of us shine with our own unique color!

### **Hearing the Buddha's words**

**All of us have the potentiality to be enlightened.**

**Realize the dignity of all lives!**

**Monkeys are monkeys, and they are great**

**Oxen are oxen, and they are great**

**Not comparing with others,**

**You are you and I am me, and let us be truly ourselves. (by Shaku Kenjitsu)**