

Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion – The Meditation Sutra (7) “Pure karma”

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Whoever wishes to be born there should practice three acts of merit: first, caring for one's parents, attending to one's teachers and elders, compassionately refraining from killing, and doing the ten good deeds; second, taking the three refuges, keeping the various precepts and refraining from breaking the rules of conduct; and third, awakening aspiration for Enlightenment, believing deeply in the law of causality, chanting the Mahayana sutras and encouraging people to follow their teachings. These three are called the pure karma."

The Buddha further said to Vaidehi, "Do you know that these three acts are the pure karma practiced by all the Buddhas of the past, present and future as the right cause of Enlightenment?"

(“Kanmuryoju-kyo’ translated by Hisao Inagaki)

The Buddha explained to Queen Vaidehi how one who wishes to be born in the Buddha land should live their lives. One should practice three kinds of pure karma, which are the guidelines that Pure Land practitioners should try to follow.

Nowadays, “karma” has become a common word in the English language. But the use of karma may not necessarily be practiced as its original meaning. Karma is defined as the results from past life (lives), destiny, fate, or something beyond our ability. The Original premise of karma meant simply “action, deed, and conducts” which determine what you are, instead of birth determining what you are in a cast system. Therefore, karma is free choice of action and responsibilities of your own action. Whatever karma one initiates and creates, that is what he/she gets. What we are is a result of our own karma or actions. No gods nor births to determine what we are, and by our actions, we also can change our lives.

What kind of karma should we engage in? First pure karma is a category of morality or everyday conduct as the basis of social rule. They are to care for one’s parents; to respect one’s teachers: to keep the mind of compassion; and to do ten good acts which are not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, not to use immoral language, not to slander, not to equivocate, not to covet, not to give a way to anger, and not to hold false view.

The second pure karma is the action following the Buddhist rules. They are to keep refuge in three treasures which are the Buddha (awakened one), Dharma (the teaching of the Buddha) and Sangha (peaceful community who follow the Buddha-Dharma); to follow the various precepts such as the above ten good acts (ten precepts), five precepts, eight precepts, 250 precepts, 500 precepts, etc, and refraining from breaking the rules of conduct in body, mouth and mind.

The third karma is the actions of the bodhisattva practice. They are to raise the Bodhi Mind, which directs the mind to aspire toward great enlightenment and to liberate all beings from sufferings; to deeply believe the law of causation; to chant Mahayana Sutras to gain eyes of wisdom; and to encourage others to practice the Dharma.

The three karmas are considered to be skillful means by the Buddha, which guide Vaidehi to the path of Amida’s Vow, or true cause of enlightenment in the Buddha Land. Maybe the Buddha wanted to encourage Vaidehi to change her way of live toward the path of centering on a practice of a wholesome pure karma from now on, and to help her to reflect upon herself through knowing the Buddha’s pure karma.

Know oneself deeply, being

Aware of the law of cause, condition and effect.

Realize one’s limitation through the Buddha’s teachings

Making us jump into freedom and joy.

Act with responsibility is a way of Buddhism. (by Kenjitsu)