

Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion – The Meditation Sutra (10)

Meditating on Water

by T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki, Sensei

"After you have accomplished the first contemplation, next practice visualization of water. Picture the water as clear and pure, and let this vision be distinctly perceived. Keep your thoughts from being distracted. After you have visualized the water, envision it becoming frozen. After you have visualized the ice as transparent to its depth, see it turning into beryl. When you have attained this vision, next imagine that the beryl ground shines brilliantly, inside and out, and that this ground is supported from below by columns, which are made of diamond and the seven jewels and hung with golden banners. These columns have eight sides and eight corners, each side being adorned with a hundred jewels. Each jewel emits a thousand rays of light, each ray in turn having eighty-four thousand colors. As they are reflected on the beryl ground, they look like a thousand kotis of suns, so dazzling that it is impossible to see them in detail.

"On this beryl ground, golden paths intercross like a net of cords. The land is divided into areas made of one or the other of the seven jewels, so the partitions are quite distinct. Each jewel emits a flood of light in five hundred colors. The light appears in the shape of a flower or a star or the moon; suspended in the sky, it turns into a platform of light, on which there are ten million pavilions made of a hundred jewels. Both sides of this platform are adorned with a hundred kotis of flowered banners and innumerable musical instruments. As eight pure breezes arise from the light and play the musical instruments, they proclaim the truth of suffering, emptiness, impermanence and no-self. This is the visualizing of water and is known as the second contemplation.

(“Kanmuryoju-kyo’ translated by Hisao Inagaki)

After the first meditation on the sun, the Buddha taught Queen Vaidehi –and through her all sentient beings - to meditate on water. For me, it is very interesting that sunlight and water come first in Buddha’s instructions on meditation. They are essential for all life on earth. Many of us have plants at home and are very aware that they must have sunlight and water. I feel that meditating on the common essentials of our life teaches us that the world of enlightenment revealed as the Pure Land is not separated from our everyday life. In other words, we can experience enlightenment in our daily living; indeed, enlightenment is deeply related to the essentials of our life.

Why does the Buddha teach us to meditate on water? Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Master Shan-*tao* explained that water is horizontal and evenly flat - without up or down, high or low. Therefore water is similar to the beryl ground in the Buddha-land, where there is no high nor low. We are told to transform the water into ice so that it will correspond to the beryl ground in the Pure Land, which is clear and transparent on the surface as well as inside the ground.

Shan-*tao* explains how a practitioner begins to meditate on water with a calm mind, transforms the water into ice, and transforms the ice into the beryl ground. Sit in a quiet place with the same posture as for meditating on the sun. Fill a cup with water and place it on the ground in front of your seat. Place a white dot as big as a bean on your forehead, then lower your head and see your self on the water. Concentrate on the white spot reflecting on the water. Continue to concentrate on it even if the water became shaky and wavy. A cup represents your body, water represents your mind, and waves represent the blind passions of greed, anger and selfish ignorance. . . How is your water in a cup?

Wavering mind may be difficult to control and make calm

Always moving here and there.

The winds of greed, anger, and ignorance are blowing constantly.

Enlightenment can be found here and now, though.

Realize the clear and even ground of the Buddha in the Nembutsu! (by Kenjitsu)