

Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion—the Meditation Sutra (41)

“To Gain Insight”

by Rev. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki

.....As the Buddha delivered these words, Vaidehi and her five hundred female attendants listened to his teaching. Having envisioned the boundless features of the Land of Utmost Bliss, the Buddha (Amida) and the two bodhisattvas, Vaidehi rejoiced in her heart. Wonder-struck at this revelation, she attained great awakening with clarity of mind and reached the insight into the non-arising of all dharmas. Her five hundred female attendants awakened aspiration for the highest, perfect Enlightenment and desired to be born in that land. The World-Honored One gave all of them assurances that they would be born there and that they would then attain the Samadhi of Being in the Presence of All the Buddhas. Innumerable devas also awakened aspiration for the highest Enlightenment....(translation by Hisao Inagaki [annotation by TK Nakagaki])

After Shakyamuni Buddha finished talking about the thirteen meditative practices and non-meditative practices of nine different grades, Queen Vaidehi and five hundred female attendants gained “mushobonin” -Insight into the non-raising of the Dharma. This is the part about gaining benefit that is one of three sections of the conclusion of the Meditation Sutra, according to Master Shan-tao's commentary.

“Mushobo” means the Dharma (bo) or the truth which is not(mu) raise(sho) and does not disappear. It is the Buddha's true teaching which transcends the world of birth-and-death, and appearing-and-disappearing. “Nin” means recognition, insight or realization. Here it is the virtue of Shinjin-faith which recognizes and understands the depth of Amida Buddha who transforms birth-and-death for those who hear the Nembutsu-Dharma.

Master Shan-tao explains “mushobo-nin” in three ways, called three-fold wisdom. -1) “Ki-nin” – recognition of joy(ki); one hears the Dharma and experience peace and joy. 2) “Go-nin” – recognition of awakening(go); one clearly sees and understands the truth of enlightenment. 3) “Shin-nin” – recognition of faith(shin); one opens his/her mind to Amida Buddha's Vow without any calculation.

Based upon Shan-tao's understanding, Shinran Shonin says in the Shoshinge verses on Shan-tao

*When the practitioner enters the great ocean of wisdom, the Primal Vow,
He/She receives the diamond-like mind
And accords with the one thought-moment of joy; whereupon,
Equally with Vaidehi, he/she acquires the threefold wisdom
And is immediately brought to attain the eternal bliss of dharma-nature.*

Queen Vaidehi's gaining freedom through Amida's Vow is not only for her own benefit but also opens the benefit for many other people, like the five hundred female attendants and innumerable devas (gods) in the Sutra. Awakening to Amida Buddha's Universal Vow to embrace all the beings is the essence of gaining the insight of non-arising Dharma, transforming suffering and bad karmic conditions. So this means that the story of Vaidehi is for “me” to be awakened to the Vow.

Immeasurable ocean-like Dharma of

Non-dualistic wisdom embracing all beings

Surely opens our narrow and self-centered mind to Enlightenment.

It is not the story that happened in India, long long ago, but

Great guidance by the Buddha is happening

Here, now and for me.

“There, then and for them” thinking needs be transformed!

(by Kenjitsu) 