

The Aspect of Great Compassion



by Kakuyei Tada

Buddhism teaches us how to turn from the world of delusion to the world of enlightenment. It teaches us that as long as we remain in the world of delusion, we live in a world of ignorance from which it is impossible to escape.

We live in a world of ignorance because we are controlled by our *bonno*, our base desires, and it is our bonno that keeps us from the world of enlightenment. Furthermore, at the base of our bonno is our "desire for love," (*tanha*), and that is the cause of our unhappiness. (In Dr. Hajime Nakamura's *Bukkyo-go Daijiten*—Buddhist Terms Dictionary, love is defined using terms such as "to desire," "to be attached to," and "to be fond of.") Conversely, when desire is completely eradicated, the world of enlightenment opens up.

We use the word "love" frequently in our everyday conversation. We speak of "parent's love," "love between husband and wife" (which may not be the same as "love between lovers," but should be), "love of country," and love in many other ways. The purpose of this paper is to examine the Buddhist view of love.

Buddhism approaches the term love from a slightly different point of view. Buddha-dharma considers the existence of love to be due to the existence of a "self," and love to be just another form of desire. Because of love, we take another step astray, and are lead ever farther from the world of enlightenment.

Buddhism looks deeply into the nature of love and points out that there is always the possibility of hate within love because love is ultimately love of self. For this reason it is believed that love and hate are two sides of the same coin.

It may seem from the above that Buddhism looks down on love. I believe it does not, and would like to consider what affirmation of love is in Buddhism.

Buddhism places compassion at the center of its teachings. The word for compassion in Japanese is *jihī*. The *ji* part of *jihī* in the Pali language is *metta*, and in the Sanskrit language it is *marri* or *maitra*. These terms are said to come from the word *mitra*, which originally meant "friend," and a compound that means "friend-pity." The *hi* part of *jihī* in the Pali language is *karuna*, which originally had meanings such as "tender," "sympathy," "pity," "lament," and "regret."

From the above, it is clear that *jihī*, or compassion refers to a feeling of intimacy with others who suffer and are in agony. Those with true compassion consider the suffering of others to be their own suffering. Thus, they walk from the world of delusion to the world of enlightenment hand in hand with those who suffer.

Compassion can also be defined as "removing suffering and giving pleasure." If you really feel compassion, not only will you identify with the suffering of those around you, you will be unable to keep from trying to remove that suffering and bring more happiness into their lives. In other words, compassion can also be defined as striving to make this a world of enlightenment.

In Buddhism there are three types of *jihī*, or compassion. These are:

- Firstly: *Shujo-en no jihī*, "compassion related to all sentient beings." This refers to the compassionate mind that seeks to remove suffering from all living things and to make them happy. It is this mind that causes the suffering and agony of others to arise.
- Secondly: *Ho-en no jihī*, "compassion related to the Dharma." This refers to the compassionate mind that arises from the awareness that "all things are without self-nature." This is the compassionate mind of a Bodhisattva.
- Finally: *Mu-en no jihī*, "compassion of no relation." This is the compassionate mind that strives to bring about the enlightenment of all things without partiality. It asks no questions such as "who," "where," or "how" this enlightenment will be actualized. This is the mind that develops from the desire to cause all things to be happy without condition.

This last type of compassion, the "compassion of no relation," is the Buddha's compassion. In the *Kammuryōjūkyō* (The Meditation Sutra) is the phrase, "The Buddha-mind is the mind of Great Compassion." This pure compassion is referred to as the Great Compassion.

The mind of Great Compassion is limitless and without bounds. It is a dynamic force that literally cannot refrain from bringing about the enlightenment to all sentient beings. This mind of Great Compassion suffers and agonizes with all suffering and agony, and gently leads those who suffer and agonize toward the world of enlightenment.

In Jodo-shinshu we call this mind of Great Compassion Amida Buddha's mind. This mind of Great Compassion is limitless and is considered to be the same as Great Wisdom.

The following passage appears in Shinran Shonin's *Kyōgyōshinshō* (Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Attainment):

The mind (of Amida Buddha) aspiring for Buddhahood is the Mind to Save Sentient Beings. The Mind to Save Sentient Beings is the Mind which embraces sentient

beings to make them attain Birth in the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss. This mind (Faith) is the Great Bodhi Mind; this Mind is the Great Compassionate Mind. This Mind arises from the Wisdom of Infinite Light.
(*Ryukoku Translation Series*)

The sole purpose of Amida Buddha's compassion is to become the cause of enlightenment of all sentient beings. This compassion is infinite life, and also infinite wisdom, which is symbolized by light. This infinite light is constantly shining upon the suffering and agony of all sentient beings and is always there to bring us to enlightenment.

In his *Shoshin-ge* (Gatha of True Faith in the Nembutsu) Shinran Shonin wrote:

Though I cannot see (His Light), my eye being obstructed by evil passion, The Great Compassion always

shines upon me untiringly.

(*Ryukoku Translation Series*)

In this passage, Shinran reveals his great joy at Amida Buddha's mind of Great Compassion, even though, because he is led this way and that by his base desires, he is unable to see the rays of light. For this reason, Shinran Shonin considered reciting the Nembutsu to be the highest form of compassion: "The utterance of the Nembutsu is the only enduring mind of Great Compassion." (*Tannisho, Ryukoku Translation Series*)

Because all of Amida Buddha's Great Compassion is contained within the Nembutsu (when we recite the Nembutsu) we become aware of the depths of our delusion and at the same time we are moved by that mind of Great Compassion. The mind that is brought to recite this true Nembutsu is the "mind of faith"—*Shinjin*.

FROM THE TEACHING OF BUDDHA:

Do not seek to know Buddha by His form or attributes; for neither the form nor the attributes are the real Buddha. The true Buddha is Enlightenment itself. The true way to know Buddha is to realize Enlightenment.

If someone sees some excellent features of Buddha and then thinks he knows Buddha, his is the mistake of an ignorant eye, for the true Buddha can not be embodied in a form or seen by human eyes. Neither can one know Buddha by a faultless description of his attributes. It is not possible to describe His attributes in human words.

Though we speak of His form, the Eternal Buddha has no set form, but can manifest Himself in any form. Though we describe His attributes, yet the Eternal Buddha has no set attributes, but can manifest Himself in any and all excellent attributes.

So, if one sees distinctly the form of Buddha, or perceives His attributes clearly, and yet does not become attached to His form or to His attributes, he has the capacity to see and know Buddha.

Buddha's body is Enlightenment itself! Being formless and without substance, it always has been and always will be. It is not a physical body that must be nourished by food. It is an eternal body whose substance is Wisdom. Buddha, therefore, has neither fear nor disease; He is eternally changeless.

Therefore, Buddha will never disappear as long as Enlightenment exists. Enlightenment appears as the light of Wisdom that awakens people into a newness of life and causes them to be born into the world of Buddha.

Those who realize this, become the children of Buddha; they keep His Dharma, honor His teachings and pass them on to posterity. Nothing can be more miraculous than the power of Buddha.