

————— 高宮祐二 和文英訳サンプル (『お経の基本がわかる小事典』序文) —————

Buddhist Sutra strictly means the teachings of Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, while it also means the theories on His teachings and the way to become like Him. So reading and scripting it are said to awaken and salvage its students. Every sutra speaks of wisdom and mercy to salvage the people in anguish. The numbers of sutras have been increased, since Buddhism has been passed from India to the world, and each sect has defined and chosen its own sutras. Therefore, there is no superiority and inferiority among sutras, and all those should be considered "Buddhist scriptures", as long as those deviate from His teachings.

All Buddhists have admired the sutras and words in this book. Many of those are the teachings of Buddha, the one who is awakened with the truth of Cosmos, while the rest are the writings of representative Buddhists, such as the patriarchs of each sect and famous priests, which clarify His messages. However, unlike the Koran that Muhammad writes under the inspiration of Allah and only Arabic copies are eligible, there is no absolute one sutra. Also unlike the Bible of Christianity and Judaism that is written by the prophets who directly deliver the will of God, each sutra does not have the absolute authority.

The world cannot keep going, if one must beat up others as enemies with oversimplified truth and justice, in the name of the only and absolute God. Such tendency is common among monotheistic religions, and so Europe, the U.S., Israel and Arabic countries have so much conflict and terrorism under

their influences. Of course, such egotistical views are not only for monotheisms, but Buddhism that has rather pantheistic points of view also has such quality. However, Buddhists tend to be tolerant toward pagans, because we are not subject to the Westernized absolutism that deifies one's own thought.

Buddhism recommends you not to consider patriarchs and sutras to be absolute. Instead, it tells you to understand the uncertainty and rise above "self" as the truth of the world. It is to live without insisting on every worldly thing, to help each other as a member of natural world, and to live up precious life that is granted by natural world meaningfully. You may say that the sutras, which are the teachings of Buddha and the Buddhists of later times, are written from such point of view. Accepting others, standing on the common ground of humanity and regarding each other's beliefs are required for the global peace and coexistence.

The teachings of Christianity, Judaism and Islamism can fit into one book, while it is said that there are 84,000 teachings in Buddhism. Those are covered in Tipytaka, the complete collection of Buddhist Scriptures, and only a few scholars may read all through it and summarize it. In Japan, scholars have kept Buddhism unfamiliar to people, even though it has been about one and a half thousand years since Buddhism has come, and people have some knack with it.

For more to say, Japanese Buddhism is called Sect Buddhism. Each sect has succeeded and developed

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its own tradition according to its patriarch. Each has chosen some sutras as its ones from Tipytaka, and the people who belong to it tend to say, "Only our Buddha is precious" to ignore others and the common teachings among all Buddhists. So it is regretful that some sutras have been ignored and forgotten by the people. Sutras are both the world heritage and the bread and butter of life, whether you are a Buddhist or not.

In Kamakura era of Japan, Honen, the patriarch of Jodo Sect who is known as the wisest priest, has studied and trained hard in Mt. Hiei, the Mecca of Japanese Buddhism. However, he leaves the mountain to look for the teachings that suit him, and stays in peace in a deep valley, away from the restless loudness of the city. Then he "Kept lamenting to get into Tipytaka, and kept weeping to face the holy teachings" (SHIJUHAKKANDEN). He has read through the whole sutras for five times, and finally finds the phrase that salvages everyone, which is called "KANMURYOJUKYO" written by Zendo in China. I believe that everyone, living in the modern world, should know the basics of sutras and choose the suitable ones according to his experience, just like Honen has done.

There are also the critics of sutras, which scholars introduce the basic ideas, but those are not written for everyone and are not known commonly. Now information is rampant, so it is possible to gather a huge collection of sutras and their translations in modern Japanese, but such effort costs much and takes time and energy. Also, the people now tend to

disdain letters, and so only a few people have read one sutra thoroughly. It is even harder for them to examine every one sutra.

I already know that showing the outline of sutras, just like this book does, can be scolded as a bad joke. However, if we do not let people know the basics, we will ruin their chance to know sutras, probably for a long time. So I decided to introduce important ones from Tipytaka with my comments, to introduce more people the basic teachings of Buddhism. I wish this book and others I have written, "Dictionary of Buddhist Commonsense" and "Buddhist Sculptures Appreciation" (both from PHP Co., Ltd.) will help you understand Buddhism.

This book is the revised edition of "Understanding Buddhist Sutras" (Kosaido Co., Ltd., 1987). I had to spare references because of space, but hereby I would like to say thanks to the many books that I have referred to and the forerunners who have helped me. I will be grateful if you wish to taste Buddhist Scriptures deeper and read every sutra directly.

Spring, 2004, on Caribbean Sea

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