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A Vision of Jōdo Shinshū: Fulfilling the Primal Vow in History

by Alfred Bloom

We are fast approaching the threshold of the twenty-first century and the third millennium in Western civilization. In our tangled world of military, economic and social struggle, such rare turning points take on symbolic significance as they point to new possibilities for humanity. New turning points offer challenging prospects for the Hongwanji in Hawaii, Canada, Europe and the Buddhist Churches of America as each of us looks forward to our respective centennials and pauses to reflect on the future of Jōdo Shinshū as it begins its second century in American society.

Such threshold junctures of history force all of us to contemplate the future, particularly as followers of Shinran and participants in the heritage of Jōdo Shinshū. While we cannot *predict* the actual future that will unfold before us, we can *project* a future that will inspire us to work to fulfill our deepest ideals.

We cannot review in this short space our lengthy and complex history which brings us to our present condition. However, whatever its character and problems, it represents the continuing unfolding of Shinran's vision reported in the *Godenshō* in which he saw the masses of suffering and yearning people of his time and was commissioned by the Bodhisattva Kannon to marry and live among the people, working with them to fulfill the Vow to save all beings.

At a later time, Shinran was to employ as a motto for his life Zendō's words in his *Jishin Kyōninshin*: "We teach others the faith which we have received." Essentially, it means we share our faith with others. Thus, the *vision* and *mission* of all of us as followers of Jōdo Shinshū is to carry

on the fulfillment of the Primal Vow in history.

I believe that in order for Jōdo Shinshū to meet the second century in America with vitality and commitment, we must view ourselves not merely as a Japanese religious tradition bound by ethnic and family ties, or as a community of specific beliefs, but as a living embodiment of the ongoing process of the realization of Amida Buddha's compassion and wisdom. This has passed from Amida to Sakyamuni, through the seven great teachers to Shinran, and eventually through Shin history to ourselves.

With this self-understanding motivating and shaping our sangha, Jōdo Shinshū can truly become a world faith, opening the horizons of Amida Buddha's compassion to all beings. We must transcend ethnic and national boundaries that are simply the karmic result of historical conditions. In line, then, with the mission of the Primal Vow, we will become *mission-oriented* in the deepest meaning of the word.

What is it that we have to share with our fellow human beings? It is clear that Jōdo Shinshū is eminently equipped to bring the message of Buddhism to the ordinary people of modern society through its understanding of the value of the householder life. The recognition of lay life and the affirmation of the everyday world that is the Jōdo Shinshū faith makes it exceptionally adaptable to the life of modern society.

Viewed through the perspective of religious history, Jōdo Shinshū can be seen as the fulfillment of the ideals of liberal religion in the West. Yet it maintains a basis for lively devotion. It

affords the profound experience of *shinjin*. It avoids the excesses of rationalistic criticism of religion. Thus, Jōdo Shinshū spirituality is at once affirmative of human life and critical of human attachments and extremes.

Further, Jōdo Shinshū avoids both the uncritical adulation of leaders and the spiritual and social dependency the “guru” phenomenon frequently produces in popular “isms.” It also avoids the exclusivism and dogmatism found in Western religions. There is, in Jōdo Shinshū, a foundation for deep personal religious commitment and the awareness of all-embracing reality; a foundation and awareness that permit a critical, intellectual approach to religious phenomena.

Jōdo Shinshū affirms the wholeness of the person: physically, emotionally and intellectually. The vision of our destiny within the fulfillment of the Primal Vow draws us together as a true sangha, bound by a common purpose, activated by compassion, and guided by the wisdom of the Vow.

Inspired by the vision of the Vow’s fulfillment in history, we can set ourselves to address the application of Jōdo Shinshū to the many personal, social, intellectual and spiritual issues of our age.

In this second century, the 21st century, Jōdo Shinshū can project a globally embracing future to all beings everywhere. Instead of being pawns of the future, with such a vision we can be dynamic participants in ongoing dialogues concerning the future.

Despite our small size within the totality of world society, I believe that, inspired by such visions and mission, we can and shall become a significant voice constantly witnessing to the compassion and wisdom of the Primal Vow of Amida, which embraces all beings without distinction and never abandons anyone to despair of hopelessness. This is my personal vision and my hope for Jōdo Shinshū fulfilling the Primal Vow in the history of the future.

Future Challenge for Shinshū Followers in America

by Kenkō Futaba, translated by Shoji Oi

As the twentieth century is nearing an end, what is in store for mankind in the 21st century? There are wishful visions being projected by many people from many circles. I can foresee that there will be two dominating issues: the continued development of science and technology, and the enforcement and expansion of state authority. What the world will be like when these two forces confront themselves concerns me.

Presently we witness a situation wherein the expansion of state authority seems to be taking the lead, of which the Soviet Union is representative. The political movement of Marxism, initiated to liberate man from state authority, has actually developed into an unprecedented force.

This situation has become a formidable threat on an international level, extending a tight grip on its people and reducing them to the manipulation of tools. It has deprived them of all liberty in speech and religious beliefs and it has denied existence itself to those who have opposed this system. Isn't this the very thing they had opposed as being the cause of all evil and had branded as the power of capitalism; the very thing into which they are transforming themselves?

What about the countries of the free world? I am inclined to believe that they, too, are pursuing a way to gain more power by the state and are getting closer to that which they have opposed; that which is called the "Soviet threat." Such an unusual expansion of state power and the resulting confrontation among countries, coupled with the rapid development of science and technology, has brought about an unprecedented potential for warfare based on nuclear weapons and has fostered

intense fearfulness among the peoples of the world.

Under the pretense of protection, countries have come to regard themselves as enemies, making every effort, literally, to crush the opposition. From the time when prehistoric man used rocks to kill to the present day when battles are fought with nuclear weapons, I truly wonder whether, in the "wisdom" of man, he has ever reached for a higher objective. I regret to say that this defective cognancy can lead only to impure deeds. Such impure knowledge is borne of egoism: the inferior mind that rejects others and is devoid of the warmth and friendliness to embrace others.

The core of the problem is not only the expansion of national egoism. Moreover, it is the sum total of individual, group and national egoisms which tends to keep on expanding and developing into an imperfect wisdom that has no bounds, which is nothing more than a total lack of universal wisdom and total absence of real human love and compassion. In this situation there remains no trace of the sincere wish to see a world where every person will be respected as an equal. Inevitably, all hope is shattered.

It is striking to note that this same adverse attitude of human egoism is seen as mankind confronts nature and it is now taking its toll. The air, water, land and seas are so polluted that they, too, have turned against man and are threatening his very existence. If we allow this horrible trend to continue its course, mankind's existence will definitely be hastened toward hell by the turn of the new century.

This being the case, I wish to pose a question: What role can religion play at this critical period in time? Further, is it possible that religion will enable mankind to overcome national egoism and bring about a peaceful world where an individual's dignity is upheld, a world where racial prejudice and other injustices are overcome?

In clarifying religion, we find that there are many definitions which may be broadly classified into two categories. One is religion that cultivates self-love and the other is religion that teaches the overcoming of self-love and strives to realize universal wisdom and universal love for humanity.

Mankind has exhibited a religious attitude, cultivated over a long period of time, in the pursuit of his basic desires. In order to realize the more noble of his desires, he has conceived the existence of that which surpasses all human power and he has developed prayer for the realization of it. Calamities due to natural causes have been weeded out and, in turn, "blessings" of nature are looked upon with great expectation. Man has prayed for release from poverty and sickness, adverse conditions which tend to obstruct his way to prosperity have been shunned, and "enemies" who have caused anxiety to man have been destroyed.

History has provided many instances of this self-love, from the most primitive time to this modern day and age. The religions borne from this attitude of self-love are none other than the religions of the cultists. This religiosity seeks to pursue benefits for a particular group, people or country and to establish supremacy over all others.

Oftentimes, this leads man to cultivate his own consciousness of supremacy and it even, on occasion, leads to a desire to rule the world. Within the group, the inclination to divinify the ruling power exists while, on the other hand, the personal integrity of the ruler is lowered. In this unequal relationship, respect for man's dignity is denied.

A religion based on self-love can never be expected to lead to the cultivation of universal

wisdom, nor can there be a realization of the realm of universal love for mankind. What actually emerges from such a relationship is simply the egoism of the group or people, a condition which is far from equality of personality and is definitely discriminatory and resistive. Unfortunately, such a religious attitude seems now to be the order of the day and gaining momentum.

The other category of religion is based on an absolute, universal truth and aspires to establish man and society in a world based on this truth. It further aspires to overcome egoism by universal wisdom and universal, all embracing, love. Both Christianity and Buddhism were originally structured to have these basic characteristics. It is truly universal religions such as these which nurture wisdom, give guidance to universal judgment and actions, and have provided a firm foundation for the future.

However, can we say with sincere conviction that either Buddhism or Christianity are fulfilling these roles so desired by mankind? As we reflect upon the history of religions throughout the world, we regretfully find that Buddhism as well as Christianity has been applied as a tool for man's attempt to realize his desires, degenerating into prayer merely for the purpose of satisfying man's egoism, both individually and nationalistically.

Historical instances appear where individual gains were put before consideration for others and acts of human discrimination were executed with no self-reflection at all. Even wars have been religiously justified when tied to state authority; the annihilation of the enemy has been prayed for and the people have been drafted into battle. Christian organizations have fought among themselves and Buddhists have fought against Christians, each praying for victory for his side.

Even in the daily lives of Buddhists and Christians, we see evidence of religious attitudes which reveal the manner in which they have pursued their own welfare and happiness. Even if they have not prayed for the misfortune of others, there have been many who have attempted to

escape from society to pursue their individual spiritual peace and happiness. Such attitudes of Buddhists and Christians, regardless of what labels they may be given, are indications that these religions have fallen from the heights of universal religion into the depths of self-love.

The critical question must now be asked: What kind of religion should Jōdo Shinshū be if it hopes to react effectively against these changes throughout the world? According to Shinran Shōnin, we are told that it is by the workings of Amida Buddha's Primal Vow that individuals may be given trusting faith (*shinjin*) and a truly pure mind (*shinjitsu shin*). The name Amida Buddha, which means unlimited light and life, is expressive of unlimited compassion and wisdom. The activity of Amida Buddha, which transcends all limitations, works on all that is basic to existence. It is characterized by the nature of being inconceivable and absolute and appears in the minds of sentient beings as the aspiration to seek purest wisdom and compassion.

It is only when one is able to overcome ego-centric views and attachments to self-power that one becomes aware of the absolute and unlimited power which transcends human capacities. This, in turn, enables the individual to overcome self-love and self-centeredness and finally come to have the pure mind of absolute trust. In actuality, all value judgments and practices, if they apply only to the individual's convenience, cannot be considered true and real. It is only when wisdom and compassion become applicable to all beings that they may be appreciated as being true and real.

The Primal Vow of Amida Buddha promises that all sentient beings may equally realize Buddhahood. It is, indeed, by the working of this Primal Vow that the mind of Buddha, which aspires to enable all sentient beings to realize the same level of wisdom and compassion, becomes manifest as the absolute trust (*shinjin*) and mind that is true and real (*shinjitsu shin*) on the part of the individual. When this occurs, the mind of the sentient being is then sustained by the Primal Vow.

It is through the Primal Vow that this trusting mind (*shinjin*) is made to exist in Jōdo Shinshū, and sentient beings actually exist in this total embrace of the Primal Vow. In the *Kyōgyōshinshō* we can find Shinran's belief stated as follows:

The True Faith is the Adamantine Mind. The Adamantine Mind is the Mind Aspiring for Buddhahood. The Mind 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.

The Ocean-like Vow being equal, our aspiration is equal. The aspiration being equal, the Bodhi is equal. The Bodhi being equal, the Great Compassion is equal. The Great Compassion is the right cause for the attainment of Buddha's Enlightenment.¹

As Shinran indicated, it is truly by the wisdom of Amida Buddha, which is light unlimited, that we may all become persons with minds aspiring to realize birth in the Pure Land. Equally, the great compassionate mind of Buddha vows to enable all sentient beings to realize birth in the Land of Amida Buddha. For all of us to realize wisdom and compassion at this same level and to pursue the path of purity, truth and reality is also our own basic desire and aspiration. Thus, for those who are able to receive such faith, both true and real, it means to live as human beings who keep in their minds the highest, ultimate aspiration: birth in the Pure Land.

Revealing the spiritual foundation which enables one to convert self-love based on ego-consciousness into universal love, along with the path to do so, is Shinran Shōnin's Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism. In this sense, Jōdo Shinshū is the true and real system of the Buddha's teaching. Once we become aware that the absolute trust presented in the Primal Vow is the mind which sustains the

basic core of human existence and its meaning, then the harmfulness and impurities which are brought about through mankind's ego consciousness and the pursuit of selfishness and well-being are brought clearly into focus.

In our self-reflection as Shinshū followers of today, can we sincerely say that we are bearers who hold this ultimate aspiration based on the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha? Shouldn't we consider whether we have become beings who pursue only our own spiritual peace, or who have become self-love pursuers who think only of our spiritual well-being in our next existence? Or, have we resigned ourselves to the thought that we are "only" sentient beings and thus it would be natural that we would not have any trace of great compassion in our hearts and, for this reason, we have abandoned all efforts to realize the goals of man's ultimate aspiration?

If we once again stand with Shinran's absolute faith in our minds, we can become the human lights in the world which originate in the wisdom of Amida Buddha's unlimited light and wisdom. However, if this trusting mind is allowed to degenerate into self-love, it then becomes a trusting mind completely different from the mind Shinran

showed us. This degenerated mind becomes one which accepts self-attachment and direct opposition with others and can no longer become a human light to be shared with others.

If the religions of the world do not stand up for or emphasize the faith based on the wisdom of the unlimited light of Amida Buddha as indicated in the Primal Vow, and as shown us by Shinran Shōnin, then it becomes impossible to hope to realize a world based on true and real wisdom and compassion transcending all human self-attachments. If Shinshū followers in America will once again study the significance of Shinshū trust (*shinjin*) from social and world-wide perspectives, aspire to enable all sentient beings to realize ultimate wisdom and compassion (the attainment of Buddhahood), and strive to realize true harmony throughout the whole world, they will be presenting to the world a religion which still has true meaning for all the peoples of the world.

FOOTNOTE:

1. *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Ryūkoku Translation Series (1966), Vol. Shin ("True Faith"), pp. 123-24.

My Hope for American Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism

by Takamaro Shigaraki, translated by Nobuo Haneda

TRANSPLANTATION OF A RELIGION INTO FOREIGN SOIL

It is with considerable difficulty that a culture or religious thought is transplanted from its indigenous soil into a foreign soil which is significantly different from its own and begins to take root. This is particularly so with a religion that is usually characterized by abstract ideas.

For example, many centuries ago Buddhism was transmitted to Japan from China and Korea, but a long time passed before it became "Buddhism for the Japanese people," before it came to be truly appreciated by the Japanese people. From its entry into Japan to its eventual blossoming as Japanese Buddhism by the twelfth century, about six hundred years were necessary. Historically, it is not until this period of Kamakura Buddhism that we see the emergence of such individuals as Hōnen, Shinran and Dōgen.

Keeping this in mind, we must accept that it will take considerable time and effort before Buddhism, specifically Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism, is completely transmitted to the United States and becomes an integral part of its culture. About a century has already passed since Shinshū was first brought to America, and the introduction has just begun. Furthermore, it is crucial that the real essence of Shinshū be correctly transmitted to the United States. If we make a mistake at the outset of this process, American Shinshū will deviate completely from its proper direction.

How Buddhism correctly developed in Japan is exemplified by Shinran Shōnin's understanding that "all things [in this world] are empty, non-

sense and false. Only the nembutsu is true" (*Tan-nishō*). The precursor for this concept is seen in the words of Prince Shōtoku, one of the earliest individuals who studied Buddhism in Japan, who said that "this secular world is empty and false. Only the Buddha is true" (*Jōgū-hōō-tei-setsu*).

Prince Shōtoku introduced Japan to Buddhism through his grasp of its true essence, which allowed it to reach maturity and fruition in the thoughts of Shinran even after considerable time had passed. Having been rightly started, it was possible for the Japanese to have the birth of a tremendous Buddhist tradition by the Kamakura Period.

Hopefully, years from now, we will be able to say that the true essence of Shinshū was planted in American soil, unrecognizable as it seemed in the beginning, and it grew to be beautiful and lasting. Conversely, if Shinshū is not set into the right direction at the outset, it will never properly take root, no matter how popular it may be in the immediate future. Thus, it must again be stressed that this is the most essential point for Shinshū followers in the United States.

"TRUSTING AMIDA BUDDHA" REFERS TO "AWAKENING"

Various interpretations of Buddhist doctrine are possible, but the most fundamental teaching in Buddhism is the following verse of "Common Admonishments by All Buddhas" (*Shichibutsu-tsūkai-ge*), which is frequently described in sūtras such as the *Dhammapada*.

Refrain from all evil.
Do all good.

Purify one's mind [*kokoro*].
This is the teaching of all Buddhas.

According to these words, we should not commit any evil deeds in our daily activities and we should perform all kinds of good deeds. By doing so, we should be able to make our *kokoro* pure. And, as Jōdo Shinshū is Buddhism, its basic teaching cannot be otherwise. This is to say, the Buddhist path of Shinshū lies in one-mindedly purifying our own *kokoro* as we cease evil deeds and desire to do good deeds.

What does *kokoro* mean? English words such as "spirit" or "mind" cannot accurately express the meaning of *kokoro*, for it refers to something far deeper. This human psychological functioning is more descriptively presented by these Sanskrit terms: *citta* (mind), *manas* (mind) and *viññāna* (consciousness). These terms are the *kokoro* to which I refer. It is sometimes inclusively called "spirituality" (*reisei*) and, as such, the Buddhist focus is on the deepest part of this concept of spirituality.

In Shinshū, we often speak of *shinjin* (the trusting mind) in regard to our trust in Amida Buddha. When we investigate the Sanskrit word for *shinjin* in the *Sukhāvatīyūha-sūtra*, specifically the section describing Dharmākara's Eighteenth Vow, we find *citta-prasāda*. This term refers to our mind becoming pure and serene and it is synonymous with the purification of the mind, or *kokoro*.

As one's mind becomes pure and serene, there is a development of new insight and wisdom. According to Nāgārjuna, this is the religious experience of "meeting with a Buddha." Moreover, what is meant in Shinshū as "trusting Amida Buddha" is the experiencing of such a new "awakening" in our minds and living a new life based on this "awakening" experience. Shinran explained this by saying that *shinjin* refers to obtaining the wisdom (*prajñā*) wherein all things come to be seen in a new light.

Regarding the concept of trust, people generally use words such as "belief" (*shin'yō*) and

"faith" (*shinkō*). These words presuppose a relationship between the believer and the believed. Here the believer recognizes the truthfulness of the believed in spite of the latter's truthfulness having been unconfirmed. Relatively speaking, we can say that "faith" is higher and firmer than "belief."

When we examine the Sanskrit term for *shin* (trust), we see that the most commonly utilized word is *śraddhā*. But there are additional words which give us a more concrete meaning of the term: *adhimukti* and *abhisampratya*. These refer to one's trustful understanding or recognition of the Buddhist teaching and the people who are living the Buddhist teaching. They correspond to the meaning of the word "belief," and also have the meaning of "faith."

Another Sanskrit word for *shin* is the previously mentioned *citta-prasāda*, the mind which is pure and serene. Chinese Buddhists translated this word as *shen-hsin* (later to become *shinjin* in Japanese). "Trusting Amida Buddha" refers to this *citta-prasāda*. It also refers to having the previously mentioned "awakening" experience in our minds.

Hence, there is a clear distinction between Christian faith (the faith in God), and Jōdo Shinshū *shinjin* (the trusting in Amida Buddha), as the latter is synonymous with an "awakening" experience. An accurate understanding of this concept of *shinjin* is critical to the transmission of Shinshū teachings to the United States.

PRACTICE IN SHINSHŪ IS CHANTING THE NAME OF AMIDA BUDDHA (NAMU AMIDABUTSU)

As *shinjin* in Shinshū refers to an "awakening" experience, the question arises as to how an individual can have such an experience. If we follow the "Common Admonishments by All Buddhas," we are told to stop evil deeds and perform good deeds in order to have a pure and serene mind, in order to have *shinjin*. These admonishments teach us that a practice is necessary because, in

Buddhism, it is by performing certain types of practice that we experience *shinjin*. In this manner, Buddhism is different from Christianity.

There are two types of paths in Buddhist practice: 1) the path of the monk, and 2) the path of the lay person. In the former, as did Sakyamuni, one leaves one's family and wealth, detaches from all worldly desires, and lives a life of meditation and isolation. The path of the lay person, on the other hand, is one approachable by all people. Within this path one can study and practice Buddhism while engaged in an occupation and maintaining a family life.

The practice of the Shinshū lay path refers to single-mindedly chanting the name of Amida Buddha. This arose because Shinran came to the understanding that it is impossible for an individual to take the path of the monk in this time so far removed from Sakyamuni's presence. It can be further stated that the path of the lay person is now the only effectual Buddhism, and Shinshū is the path of the lay person. This path teaches us that we can experience *shinjin* through the single practice of chanting the name of Amida Buddha with a mind-heart of true gratitude for the deep meaning within the Name.

As Shinshū practice is the chanting of the Name, and although it is through this chanting practice that we obtain *shinjin*, it must be clearly stated that it is not sufficient to mechanically repeat the Name. Shinran harshly criticized such chanting and called it "Name chanting of expe-

diency" (*hōben no shōmyō nembutsu*). According to Shinran, real Name chanting has two aspects. It is an expression of our taking refuge in what is true and it is our hearing the Name as Amida's invitational voice directed toward us.

In other words, true Name chanting must be something like this: it is my calling voice directed toward Amida Buddha. Simultaneously, this calling voice of mine comes to be heard by me as Amida's calling voice, which is always directed toward me. When our daily chanting of the Name simultaneously becomes our hearing the Name, the *shinjin* experience becomes reality for us.

FORMATION OF AMERICAN JŌDO SHINSHŪ BUDDHISM

In order to have true Shinshū grow and develop in America, people must not think merely of importing Japanese Jōdo Shinshū to the United States. There must be serious confrontation between the Buddhist teachings of Shinran Shonin and the thoughts of the people of the United States.

What we need in the future is American Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism, not some form of Jōdo Shinshū in America. It is my fervent wish that Shinshū followers in the United States will continue their untiring efforts toward this goal and we who are in Japan will do our utmost to work together with Americans to establish American Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism.

What is Lacking in "American Buddhism"

by Nobuo Haneda

Japanese Buddhism has been introduced to Americans at a rapidly increasing pace since the end of World War II. And, unfortunately, what has taken shape as "American Buddhism" generally fails to emphasize the most essential point of Buddhism: self-examination. If "American Buddhism" lacks the focus of self-examination, it will be, to use the words of William Shakespeare, much ado about nothing.

American Buddhists who advocate an American style of Buddhism should additionally be criticized for choosing to overemphasize matters of secondary importance. Furthermore, some say they want to create a new type of Buddhism by combining the spiritual traditions of Japan with the spiritual traditions of America and they are looking forward to this creation.

The naiveté of this attitude reminds me of two stories. I begin with the tale of the ambitious farmer who was eager to develop a new type of vegetable. He had the idea that if he were to cross a Japanese *daikon* radish with an American lettuce plant he could get an ideal vegetable; one that would have both the root of the *daikon* plant and the leaves of the lettuce plant. This would enable him to utilize his land more effectively and to substantially increase his profits. He was very happy with his idea and proceeded to cross the two plants and wait rather impatiently for harvest time. Did he get his dream vegetable? Of course not. He produced a vegetable which had the thorny leaves of the *daikon* and the small hairy root of the American lettuce.

In a similar vein, there is the familiar story of a famous playwright, George Bernard Shaw, and

a young and beautiful actress. The young actress told the old and not very handsome playwright that it would be wonderful if they could get married. When Mr. Shaw asked the reason why, she replied that the two of them, together, would create a child that had the excellent brain of Shaw and the beautiful face of the actress. Mr. Shaw smiled and told her that she was, indeed, an optimist, for the child from a union of the two of them might, in fact, have the brain of the actress and the face of the playwright.

"American Buddhists" are much like this. They optimistically believe that the mixture of two spiritual traditions will automatically bring about a wonderful result. Merely mixing the two does not guarantee an improved product. Chances are great that the mixture will produce something deficient in character, something unimaginably poor in content. On the other hand, if the essence of Buddhism is brought intact into the cultural environment of this country, we will have a vital and dynamic form of Buddhism.

As the core of Buddhism is self-examination, Buddhism simply cannot exist without it. The Japanese Zen Master Dōgen (1200-1253) said that "learning Buddhism is learning the self." And it is only through self-examination that we can understand the truths taught in Buddhism and awaken to our ignorance. This true "awakening" is called *shinjin* in Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism and *satori* in Zen.

Importantly, one must keep in mind that if self-examination is not taught as the essence of Buddhism, whatever is taught in the name of Buddhism is not actually Buddhism; whatever

activity is performed in the name of Buddhism is not true Buddhist activity. Both are merely means to an end which have a religious facade.

For clarification, there are three aspects of "American Buddhism" which I consider to be means to an end. The first is "American Buddhism" as an identity. It caters to the need for religious identity felt by some Japanese-Americans who live in the midst of a mostly Christian population and desire a religious affiliation which reflects their ethno-cultural background. This type of attachment to a religious identity, however, is strange when we remember that Buddhism, probably more than any other religion in the world, strongly opposes such an attachment to a fixed label or identity.

The second aspect is "American Buddhism" as a means to obtain culture. It caters to the cultural interests of some Americans and a general focus on the mysteries of the Orient by many Americans may have spurred this movement. Many Buddhist temples teach tea ceremony, flower arrangement, calligraphy, etc., in the belief that such arts can lead an individual to understand the truths of Buddhism. But these arts were developed and maintained for the most part by leisure-class aristocrats throughout Japanese history. Although many of these aristocrats claimed to be Buddhists, their religiosity can be questioned because true Buddhists have always been, in my opinion, serious about sharing Buddhism with all types of people, including the uneducated and the poor, and many Buddhists were not interested, or had the time, for such leisurely and indulgent forms of activities.

The third aspect is "American Buddhism" as a means to mental health. Some individuals search for a religious environment wherein their emotional or substance abuse problems can be cured. Zen, for example, has become particularly popular among these people. While a Buddhist environment may, indeed, provide peace and tranquility, the environment is only a temporary escape for the self. It does not provide the means for the necessary thorough examination of the self. This

is because the "cure" must come from within the individual. In Buddhism, the lack of examination of the self is the basic cause of all one's problems.

The famous modern Buddhist thinker, Manshi Kiyozawa (1903-1963) said that "Buddhism is not a path for us to become good men in this world. It is a path reaching beyond man" ("The Indispensable Conditions for Religious Conviction"). When we take these words as a definition of true Buddhism, we can only say that "American Buddhism" as a provider of peace and tranquility, is a "path to become good men in the world." It is not a "path to reach beyond man."

Now that I have discussed examples of what I refer to as "American Buddhism," I wish to clarify that I am not saying that these activities I have mentioned are useless. Rather, it is a matter of priority. I am saying that we should consider self-examination to be the most important issue in Buddhism. Compared with self-examination, other activities such as tea ceremony are superficial and insignificant.

I recently heard the following, which aptly describes the basic rationale underlying the "means to an end" type of Buddhism: "Buddhism has some negative elements and Americans don't like negative things. If we emphasize those elements in Buddhism, Americans will not understand them. We must accommodate Buddhist teachings to the American way of thinking. We must talk about positive teachings to them."

If people believe such a statement, it is a pitiful reflection of their misunderstanding of Buddhism. The statement is ridiculous since these "negative elements" are indispensable to Buddhism and we cannot eliminate them. True Buddhist "awakening" is often compared to the beautiful water lotus which grows up from the mud and into the sunlight. This analogy is made because Buddhist insight comes only from the "negative elements" of the human experience of suffering and struggle.

As religion contains the destruction of old values and the creation of new ones, the destruc-

tion of old values is certainly negative. Yet it is only after the destruction of these values that we have new ones. How can we create new values without ridding ourselves of the old ones? As the positive can come only after the negative, similarly, it is only after the negation of the self that we can experience liberation from the self. Truth first challenges and then denies us, and in doing so, liberates us. If a teaching is modified to fit selfish human needs, it no longer has truth; if a doctrine is tailor-made to fit the liking of the self and starts to affirm the self and make it comfortable, it no longer has truth.

As an analogy, good medicine is bitter on the tongue. If we eliminate what has caused the bitterness it may be easier to swallow, but by doing so we lose the effectuality of the medicine. Do those "Buddhists" I have previously mentioned still have Buddhism after they have extracted the "negative elements" and created an "American Buddhism" which is sugar coated? No. I do not believe they do. Furthermore, if the great Buddhists such as

Hōnen (1133-1212), Shinran (1173-1262), and Dōgen had taught only positive teachings, catering to the wants of the general public of their times, they would not have been persecuted. It is because they spoke of the negative truths which challenged the people that they were persecuted.

Historically speaking, it was inevitable for Buddhism to be introduced to America together with various cultural elements. But it is time we recognize that Buddhism is, first and foremost, a religion for serious self-examination. It is time we identify the real essence of Buddhism by separating the matters of secondary importance that have intermingled with it. Buddhism challenges us; it attacks, negates and obliterates the self. Most importantly, it does not serve any of our selfish human wants, whether ethnical, cultural, or otherwise. Thus, the time has come for us to move from a cultural appreciation of Buddhism to a more serious, truly religious appreciation of the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha.

How is Shinjin to be Realized?

by Yoshifumi Ueda, translated by Dennis Hirota

I THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRACTICE AND *SHINJIN*

When we study Shinran Shōnin's thought—not from the perspective of the various disciplines, but out of the aspiration to enter the world of religious awakening that he attained—then we are immediately confronted with the crucial problem of method: how is *shinjin*, or true entrusting, to be realized?¹ Shinran speaks often of the nature and significance of his religious awakening, so even those who have not experienced that realm as deeply can have some grasp of it. But as for the precise process by which he attained it, he is almost totally silent. In this, he differs remarkably from the founders of other Buddhist traditions.

When we look to such representative Mahāyāna masters as Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, Chih-i and Fa-ts'ang, we find that the central issues of their teachings revolve around the nature of the world of *satori* that they attained and the practices that should be performed in order to reach it.

Thus, if we are able to understand the practices in detail, we can accept that to the extent we carry them out, we can attain the same realization. For these founders, the question of method—how a person should practice—is extremely clear-cut, and the basic problem for us is whether we follow their methods or not.

All this is different with Shinran. His Buddhism shares with all other Buddhist paths the structure of “teaching, practice, and enlightenment.” In his case, however, “practice” is not an act that, if

we devote ourselves intensively to performing it in accord with the “teaching,” will enable us to attain “enlightenment.”

Practice is not something that we do through our own efforts and abilities, but is given to us by Amida; hence, Shinran terms it “great practice.” As long as we have not received practice from Amida, however much we may exert ourselves, what we do is not “practice” in Shinran's sense. The problem, then, becomes how we can receive great practice from Amida.

Shinran states: “The great practice is to say the Name of the Tathāgata of Unhindered Light” (*Kyōgyōshinshō*, Chapter on Practice, Passage 1). It is, in other words, for us to say, “Namu Amida-butsu.” But why is this something received from Amida? If to say, “Namu Amida-butsu,” is something received from Amida, then it is not said out of our own intents, but through Amida's working.

We can, of course, recite “Namu Amida-butsu” if it occurs to us to do so. But even though we say it, it is not great practice, for it is not received from Amida. In the saying of the nembutsu, there is a distinction between that which is great practice—utterance of the Name received from Amida—and that which is not. How does this distinction arise? Here, we encounter the problem of *shinjin*.

For the nembutsu we say to be great practice given to us by Amida and not recitation through our own will, our utterance must be based on the Primal Vow. We must have entered the ocean of the Vow, so that the Buddha's mind and our foolish minds have become one. This is for *shinjin* to have become settled in us. Hence, if we pursue

our inquiry into the reason our saying the Name—our “practice”—is great practice, we inevitably arrive at the realization of *shinjin*.

Thus, the fundamental problem of Buddhism—how one should practice in order to attain enlightenment—becomes in Shin not “How should I say the name?” but “How do I realize *shinjin*?” Practice is to say the Name of the Buddha of Unhindered Light, but merely saying it cannot be the cause of enlightenment. What leads to enlightenment is great practice, and great practice is utterance of the Name rooted in entrusting to the Primal Vow. Hence, fulfillment of great practice lies in the realization of *shinjin*.

In Shin Buddhism, the significance that practice holds in Buddhism in general—the cause that leads to enlightenment—lies in *shinjin* rather than in practice. For this reason, Shinran calls saying the Name “practice,” but for the person studying the Shin teaching, “How should I say the Name?” is not a problem. The frequency, manner, occasion, intonation—none of these are at issue. But for practice to be “great practice,” it must be practice-and-*shinjin*: practice is inseparable from *shinjin*.

In reality, however, it is perfectly possible for a person who has not realized *shinjin* to say the Name. There are any number of people who say the Name without a clear idea of what Amida's Vow is. And it is often the case that one has every intention of saying the Name with *shinjin*, but the question of whether one has really realized *shinjin* remains.

Shinran speaks of *shinjin* becoming settled, or becoming true *shinjin*, or becoming the diamond-like mind. From this we know that his usage of the term “*shinjin*” includes a stage before it becomes settled. Though at first *shinjin* is not true, there is a point at which it becomes true.

Since practice is inseparable from *shinjin*, this means that there is a point when the merely human act of saying the Name becomes great practice. This happens at the moment that person's *shinjin* becomes settled, when he is grasped by Amida. At

that moment, the Buddha's mind and the mind of the foolish being become one; the person's mind of good and evil is transformed into the mind of great compassion, and his utterance of the Name comes to arise from the mind of the Vow.

From that time on, utterance of the nembutsu possesses power as the cause for attaining enlightenment. Since the utterance of the person who has not realized *shinjin* is not great practice, however many times he may say the Name out of his own efforts, it cannot become the cause resulting in birth in the Pure Land (i.e., attainment of Buddhahood or enlightenment). Neither can it be an expression of gratitude, as Rennyo teaches, for it can have this significance only when *shinjin* has been realized.

Since the mind of a person who has not realized *shinjin* is not one with the Buddha's mind, he does not yet fully grasp the Vow; accordingly, it is impossible for him truly to appreciate Amida's compassion and benevolence, and genuine feelings of gratitude do not arise. Though such a person is taught that saying the Name is an expression of gratitude, it is surely hard for him to understand why it should be so.

How, then, should utterance of the Name before the settlement of *shinjin* be considered? Since it is not great practice that will lead to birth in the Pure Land, what significance does it hold? In a letter, Shinran states:

The person who feels that his attainment of birth is not settled should, to begin with, say the nembutsu in aspiration for birth. The person who feels that his attainment of birth is definitely settled should, thinking of the Buddha's benevolence, devote himself to the nembutsu in order to respond with gratitude for that benevolence, and should hope for peace in the world and the spread of the Buddha Dharma. (*Goshōsokushū*, *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* II, p. 697)

A person who feels that his attainment of birth is uncertain has clearly not realized *shinjin*.

Accordingly, his utterance of the Name is not great practice. Thus, however much he devotes to saying the Name, he cannot attain birth in the Pure Land through such effort. Nevertheless, he is urged to say the Name. Shinran's meaning here is not, of course, that through the merit accrued from saying the Name thus one can attain birth. But if one says the Name aspiring to attain Buddhahood, then since verbal expression (saying the Name) and thought (right-mindedness) are inseparable, *shinjin* will naturally become settled.

Shinran seeks to guide the person in the direction of such a settlement of *shinjin*. Saying the Name is not a means for realizing *shinjin*; *shinjin* will not become settled just because one says the Name. Nevertheless, there is no question, I think, that earnest saying of the Name naturally brings a person's heart closer to the Buddha's. Here, the words of *Tannishō* 11 are illuminating:

Even though a person does not entrust himself, he will be born in the borderland, the land of sloth, the castle of doubt, or the womb palace and, by virtue of Amida's Vow of ultimate attainment for those who say the Name in self-power, in the end will attain birth in the fulfilled land. This is the inconceivable power of the Name.

A person may encounter the Shin teaching and earnestly say the nembutsu, but doubts may remain so that he does not realize true *shinjin*. Nevertheless, the compassion of the Vow (*jinen*) never abandons such a person. It works to guide him to the transformed realms, to nurture him and await the maturation of conditions by which he will realize *shinjin*; it then brings him to birth into the true fulfilled land. This too is none other than the inconceivable working of the power of the Primal Vow, which is also the power of the Name.

Shinran states:

To say Namu Amidabutsu is to repent all the karmic evil one has committed since the beginningless past . . . Know that the

Buddha has gathered all roots of good into the three syllables, A-mi-da, so that to say the Name, Namu Amidabutsu, is to adorn the Pure Land. (*Inscriptions*)

The saying of the Name discussed in this passage is, of course, great practice, but surely Shinran is not questioning here whether the person's *shinjin* is settled or not. If *shinjin* has become settled, there is in general a personal awareness of it, but there is a danger of self-deception in deciding oneself that one has realized *shinjin*. In a letter addressed to his disciple Shinjō, Shinran states:

That the people have been shaken in their long-held *shinjin* because of what Jishin-bō has said reveals, in short, that their *shinjin* has not been true, and so is a good thing. (*Goshōsokushū, Shinshū shōgyō zensho* II, p. 709)

That people have been shaken is ultimately for the best because through such an experience the way for their *shinjin* to become true and real is opened up. Though ordinarily one may assume that one's *shinjin* has been settled, if it is not true *shinjin*, in a time of personal crisis this will inevitably become manifest.

What Shinran calls *shinjin* is not merely personal and individual; while it is opened forth within a person, there is an aspect in which it transcends the individual. It is the mind that has attained the stage of nonretrogression, and as we see from Shinran's labeling of it as "equal of perfect enlightenment," it is a kind of realization. Hence, it shares with enlightenment in Buddhism in general the character of "wisdom of awakening to self" (*pratyātmaśāntāna*). Since it is completely different from personal conviction, however firmly one may intend to entrust, such firmness is no proof of authenticity.

To summarize, with regard to our subjective feelings, the person who feels uncertain about his attainment of birth says the Name aspiring for birth, and the person who feels that his birth is wholly settled says it out of gratitude. In the latter

case, hopes emerge for peace in the world and for the spread of the dharma—that is, for the benefit of all living things. It is useless for us to ponder whether the nembutsu said with these feelings is great practice or not—that is, whether our *shinjin* is truly settled or not. What we should do—what we can do—is simply devote ourselves to entrusting totally, deeply, to the Primal Vow and say the Name.

II THE PROCESS OF REALIZING *SHINJIN*

It is probably the actual situation for most of us that although we wish to cast off the pain and self-attachments of our lives, and though we entrust ourselves to the Vow and say the nembutsu, we do not sense that our salvation is settled. We have no intention of being doubtful of the Vow, but it remains somehow alien to us. We are told to eliminate all our desperate clinging to the goodness and worth of our selves, but even while we wish to do so, we have no precise idea of how to go about it. Shinran tells us, “Give yourselves up to Amida’s entrusting with sincere mind” (*Inscriptions*), or “Simply entrust to the Tathāgata” (*Letters*), or “Simply entrust to the power of the Vow” (*Letters*), but what, concretely, is it to entrust?

“Amida” or “the power of the Vow” cannot be seen or grasped through our senses, so though we may wish simply to entrust ourselves, it is impossible for us. Shinran gives no concrete advice, and since there are no written sources to depend on, Shin scholars have no basis for teaching us how to consider the question of method directly. As mentioned at the outset, this problem represents a special characteristic of Shinran’s thought—a difficulty not encountered in other forms of Buddhism, in which the practitioner need simply endeavor in the prescribed way.

Actually carrying out the practice is extremely difficult, but the method is clear. In the case of Zen, which does not set forth a concrete method as a teaching (does not rely on words), the *roshi* gives individual instruction and guidance to each practitioner. Shinran, however, merely states, “Deeply

entrust yourself to the Vow,” or “Free yourself of self-power calculation,” or “Free yourself of doubt.”

Thus, it is unclear what we must do to rid ourselves of calculation or doubt. This is a difficult problem. But even if a perfectly adequate answer cannot be given, surely Shin scholars should seek to deal with it. Merely saying that it is important to listen to the teaching is not enough.

When we look to Shinran’s writings, we find that there is a distinction between settled and unsettled *shinjin*—that is, true *shinjin* and that which is not yet true. There are scholars who say that since *shinjin* is given to beings by Other Power, it is true and sincere, and *shinjin* that is not true and real is a contradiction in terms. This is, however, only a partial understanding.

The distinction in *shinjin* arises because there is a point—a time—at which *shinjin* becomes settled. As we have seen, Shinran states that for people to be shaken in *shinjin* means that their *shinjin* is not true. The *shinjin* of such people has yet to become true. Concerning the point at which this happens, Shinran states, “Since true *shinjin* is awakened through the working of the two honored ones, Śākyamuni and Amida, it is when one is grasped that the settling of *shinjin* occurs” (*Letters*).

The point of receiving Amida’s grasp is the point of entering the ocean of the Primal Vow, the point at which the mind of the foolish person and the mind of Amida become one. At this point, “the waters of foolish beings’ minds, both good and evil, are transformed into the mind of great compassion” (*Shōzōmatsu wasan* 40). Shinran explains, “To be transformed means that the mind of evil [i.e., our blind passions] becomes good [Amida’s mind].” What becomes good through being transformed previously was evil; good becoming a higher form of good is not “transformation.” The point of receiving Amida’s grasp forms a boundary, and after it there is true and real *shinjin*.

Though we enter upon a life of listening to the Dharma and seeking the way, of entrusting to the Primal Vow and saying the nembutsu, such a process is roughly divided in two—the process up to the point at which *shinjin* becomes settled, and the process after settlement. Shinran distinguishes “the person who feels that his attainment of birth is uncertain” and “the person who realizes that his attainment of birth is settled” based on the actual possibility of distinguishing before and after in the process of seeking the way, with the point of the settling of *shinjin* as the boundary. As we tread the path of listening to and studying the teaching, we must keep this in mind.

In the process before reaching the point at which *shinjin* is realized, though we entrust to the Primal Vow and say the nembutsu, that entrusting is still not given to us by Other Power. Although Amida has turned to us, on our part our hearts are closed. Concerning this process, Shinran is silent, and in the long tradition of Shin Buddhism, discussions of it are rare. One example, however, is the following passage by Ikeyama Eikichi:

Entrusting begins with knowing oneself. The deeper self-knowledge goes, the closer absolute Other Power approaches, and thereby little by little the self becomes clearly visible. Then, self and Other Power encounter each other in a perfect fit, like box and lid: this is the most thoroughgoing point of *shinjin*. Here, for the first time, one grasps the nature of oneself and the nature of Other Power. (*Shin o yuku tabibito*)

“Self and Other Power encounter each other in a perfect fit, like box and lid,” speaks of the point when Amida grasps us. Here, the mind of the foolish person and the mind of Amida become one, and we come to know both the true nature of the self as deeply-rooted karmic evil and also the mind of Amida. The process up to this point is described by the unusual expression, “absolute Other Power approaches.” Without the process of this “approach” it is impossible for the encounter of self and Other Power—and their becoming

one—to take place.

In this stage of coming nearer, one has not yet been grasped; hence, *shinjin* is not yet settled. Whether Other Power is approaching or not we cannot know, but it is impossible to be grasped by Amida without this approach. The *shinjin* of this stage is not yet true *shinjin*, and accordingly the saying of the Name has not yet become great practice. Nevertheless, such *shinjin* and nembutsu are inseparable from true *shinjin* and great practice and indispensable to their realization; hence, they may be considered elements of them.

In other words, the nembutsu said in aspiration for birth and the nembutsu said in gratitude for the Buddha’s benevolence are, as the nembutsu (great practice), indistinguishable. The term *shin* (信) in Shinran’s writings refers basically to true *shinjin*. But there are also cases in which it is impossible to limit the meaning to *shinjin* after the point of having become settled; *shinjin* up to the point of realization is included.

The question of the self-consciousness of *shinjin* often arises here. As stated before, if *shinjin* has become settled, there is commonly personal awareness of it, but finally it is not a problem that one determines oneself. Hence, *shinjin* must hold a broad meaning. As we have seen from Shinran’s letter to Shinjō quoted above, it may be dangerous for one to decide that one has realized *shinjin*.

The process of Other Power approaching is accompanied by deepening self-knowledge. If we desire that Other Power approach us, we must strive for awareness of ourselves. Concerning this, Ikeyama states:

How is it for you? Do you have a genuine and immediate sense of yourself as one in whom “karmic evil is deep-rooted”? Without such self-awareness, it is impossible to encounter Other Power perfectly. Without it, there is no link between the mind of Amida and our minds. Where we realize that through our own efforts and abilities there is not a thing we can do to save ourselves,

there is need for the Primal Vow, for absolute Other Power . . . To listen to talk of entrusting and yet not respond in our hearts means that since we have not grasped ourselves as we are, the words naturally do not touch us; our listening is absent-minded.

To know the self is a fundamental problem not only in Buddhism, but in Western philosophy and religion as well. In Shin Buddhism, one comes to know one's true self at the point *shinjin* is realized, and at the same time comes to know the Buddha (as the power of the Vow). Ikeyama states, "Where we realize that through our own efforts and abilities there is not a thing we can do to save ourselves, there is the need for the Primal Vow." This expresses the mode of self-knowing in Shinran.

For such realization, abstract reflection by itself is of no avail. It is through earnestly confronting the serious problems that arise in the course of our lives and exerting all our efforts that we come to realize the nature of our abilities as human beings and our limitations. When the work that has given our life meaning ends in failure, or the love that has absorbed us is not fulfilled, or the hopes and efforts we have turned toward an unfortunate child have been in vain, so that the child is doomed to a life of defeat—through such agonizing experiences, we come to know our own powerlessness.

The problems that confront us are varied, but the condition of coming up against our limitations and being rendered completely helpless is surely the same for all of us. By being brought to this limit, we come to know directly and acutely our own true powerlessness. Any problem, when faced in earnest, becomes an opportunity for knowing ourselves.

Section 4 of the *Tannishō* deals with the compassion awakened through our own powers, but may be taken as applying broadly to the limits of human love: "Compassion in the Path of Sages is to pity, sympathize with, and care for beings, but the desire to save others from suffering is vastly

difficult to fulfill." This speaks of the keenly-felt limitations of parental love also. In cases where we cannot but feel transfixed by such feelings, if we do not turn to religion, there is nothing for us but to pass dark and isolated days of unreconcilable pain.

Shinran's path does not, like other forms of Buddhism, prescribe certain practices, for any problem in human life can lead toward the realization of *shinjin*. The important thing is our attitude. It is when we have exerted all our efforts and our powers have been expended that for the first time it becomes possible to "know ourselves" to the very limits of our existence. At this point, the call of the Primal Vow can sound in our hearts. In Ikeyama's words, "The deeper self-knowledge goes, the closer absolute Other Power approaches." Self-knowledge here refers to the deepening awareness of the powerlessness of the self.

When we stand in such self-realization, it is impossible for us to depend on our own wisdom, or love, or goodness—in Shinran's term, our self-power. Where we become incapable of such reliance, we cannot but quit the designs and calculative thinking (*hakarai*) of self-power. We have striven with all our intellectual and moral capacities, and yet our efforts have been in vain. We need something beyond our own powers. Here, if there occurs a transformation in which we have no alternative but to abandon the powers that have ceased to be reliable and to give ourselves over to the power of the Primal Vow, then our *shinjin* becomes settled, and we become completely free of self-power. It is perfectly possible to stand at the limits of self-power without having followed a religious life. But for that awareness to hold religious significance, it is necessary for us to have listened earnestly to the teaching up to that point. Without such a process of earnest listening, it is impossible for Other Power to approach us, and hence for transformation to occur. When we are forced to face our helplessness and seek to rise again, if we have already encountered the Buddha's teaching and listened thoroughly to it, the answer emerges from it, bringing about transformation. It is in this sense

that *shinjin* and nembutsu that are not yet true are structural elements of true *shinjin* and great practice.

Nishida Kitarō, in his essay "Gutoku Shinran," describes this entrance into Other Power, when our powers are abandoned at the point of their failure:

Among people there are the wise and the foolish, the virtuous and the immoral. But however great it may be, human wisdom is human wisdom, human virtue human virtue . . . Yet when a person has simply turned completely about and abandoned such wisdom and virtue, he can attain new wisdom, and take on new virtue, and enter into new life. This is the living marrow of religion.

Shinran's well-known confessions of moral ignorance ("I know nothing of what is good or evil") and his stance beyond morality ("Entrusting yourself to the Primal Vow requires no performance of good . . . nor is there need to despair of the evil you commit") do not mean that morality should be rejected as meaningless. They are expressions of one who has come to the very limits of human intellect and moral goodness, and has passed beyond, entering the mind of Amida. Hence, they include the meaning of having desperately striven with all one's powers.

Without having exerted ourselves thus, it is impossible to come to our limits and, through abandoning our own powers, to pass beyond them and enter the mind of Amida. Here, one naturally comes to receive Amida's wisdom and virtue: "Because one entrusts to the power of Amida's Vow, one is brought to receive the Tathāgata's virtues" (*Essentials*).

Shinran's religious experience of the settling of *shinjin*, often expressed in the simple phrase "receiving *shinjin*," is thus a decisive transformation of human life. Nishida states that herein lies the living marrow of religion. Shinran's teaching of the "attainment of Buddhahood by the person who is evil" holds at its core a transformation that

cannot be understood conceptually. He states that "the mind of evil becomes good": one is given Amida's mind of wisdom and compassion, which reveals the fundamental emptiness of human judgments, and is filled with the great ocean of Amida's virtues.

How is *shinjin* to be realized? This question of method is inevitably linked with the problem of what realization of *shinjin* is, and of the nature of *shinjin* itself. "To receive *shinjin*" suggests an image of acquiring something, some adjunct to the self, without undergoing any personal change. And this something is often thought of as a kind of ticket that enables one to enter the Pure Land.

But Shinran's teaching is altogether different. For him, to realize *shinjin* is as expressed in Nishida's words, a radical transformation in which we abandon all our previous life—all human knowledge and wisdom and goodness—and enter into new life, the realm of Amida's love and wisdom. Thus he states: "When we entrust ourselves to the Tathāgata's Primal Vow, we, who are like bits of tile and pebbles, are turned into gold" (*Essentials*).

There are many who consider morality the supreme good and who feel satisfied in their efforts to live a moral life, but such an attitude is described in the Postscript to *Tannishō*, "In truth, myself and others concern ourselves only about being 'good' or 'evil,' leaving Amida's benevolence out of consideration." This is to stand utterly apart from the world of Shinran's *shinjin*. He states:

The gods of heaven and the deities of earth bow in homage to a practitioner of *shinjin* and those of the world of demons or of non-Buddhist ways never hinder him. Moreover, the evil he has done cannot bring forth its karmic results, nor can any good act equal in virtue to his saying of the Name. (*Tannishō* 7)

This remarkable world of unobstructed freedom is no mere ideal, no exaggeration of religious expression; it was, I think, Shinran's actuality, an actuality that he teaches can be realized by each

of us. An excellent modern example of such religious realization may be seen in Asahara Saichi (1850-1932), a poor maker of wooden clogs who could scarcely write the Japanese syllabary. By ordinary standards, his was certainly a humble status in society, but his daily life was lived in the unhinderedness described in *Tannishō*. D.T. Suzuki collected and published Saichi's poems, and in his Preface states: "Saichi is truly a *myōkōnin* (wondrous, excellent person) among *myōkōnin*, an extraordinary human being who possesses what it means to be a 'wondrous, excellent person' not in Shin Buddhism alone, but in any school of Buddhism." Saichi surely manifests for us what Shinran speaks of as the transformation of tiles and rubble into gold.

NOTE:

This is a translation of "Shinjin o uru ni wa dō subeki ka," which is included in *Jōdokyō*

no kenkyū, (Kyoto, 1982), a festschrift in honor of Dr. Mitsuyuki Ishida, pp. 613-631. References are made to English translations of Shinran's writings appearing in the Shin Buddhism Translation Series published by the Hongwanji International Center, Kyoto: *Letters* (*Letters of Shinran*, a translation of *Mattōshō*, 1978), *Inscriptions* (*Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls*, a translation of *Songō shinzō meimon*, 1981), and *Essentials* (*Notes on "Essentials of Faith Alone,"* a translation of *Yuishinshō-mon'i*, 1979).

FOOTNOTE:

1. *Shinjin* 信心 is the mind of Amida Buddha given to and realized in a person. Shinran interprets *shin* 信 to mean "truth, reality, sincerity"; *jin* 心 means "mind." When *shinjin* is realized, Amida's mind (wisdom and compassion) and the practitioner's mind of blind passions become one. See my article, "The Mahayana Structure of Shinran's Thought," in *The Eastern Buddhist*, Volume XVII, Nos. 1 and 2 (Spring and Autumn 1984).

The Concept of Gratitude in Shin Buddhism

by Taitetsu Unno

At the heart of Shin Buddhism (Jōdo Shinshū) is a radical transformative experience, consistent with the goal of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which converts a being, bound to the infinite burden of saṃsāra, into a free liberated person who, willingly taking on the responsibilities of his karmic existence, manifests wisdom and compassion in relation to the world. This positive affirmation of life comes from a deep sense of gratitude to all forms of existence, a gratitude rooted in being itself and permeating one's every thought, speech, and action. Gratitude, in this profound sense, is not simply a mere attitude, a deep feeling, or even a desirable virtue; it is as elemental as life itself.

The original term for "gratitude" in Sino-Japanese is *en* (in Chinese) or *on* (in Japanese). This term connotes kindness, goodness, favor, blessing, benevolence, and grace which make possible one's life and existence. Later, with the strong influence of Buddhism, it took on the additional meaning of the feeling of gratefulness or thankfulness, as well as the deep wish to repay or reciprocate for a salutary act.¹ The two connotations, however, are inseparable, since the latter is the natural reaction to the former, and the former cannot be talked about without some sense of the latter. The English word "gratitude" fails to adequately convey this twofold sense but since there are no other equivalents in Western languages, it must suffice for now to convey the dual meaning of the original term.

Although the profound sense of gratitude is brought to awareness in the person who has been touched deeply by life, it has been the fundamental ethos of East Asian people and permeates

their attitude to the world even without such an awareness. The Japanese idiomatic expression, *Okage-sama*, is a case in point. Whatever one's present circumstances, he or she lives by virtue of the workings and sacrifices of countless others, including nature. (*Kage* means "shade," protection, assistance, beneficence, kindness; and *o* and *sama* are honorifics.) Thus, *Okage-sama* prefaces the words of gratitude expressed by a person recovering from illness, a man beginning anew after a failure in business, a scholar publishing a book, a woman who has raised fine children, an artist who has achieved success—in none of these cases does an individual claim to have made it on his own. In fact, just to be alive is *Okage-sama*—our life is a gift of nature and all the hidden forces contained therein.

Such an appreciation for life comes from a humble sense of self. From gratitude is born this sense of natural humility which, in turn, deepens one's gratefulness to all things. Both continue to grow with maturity and age; they are the qualities of a truly wise, humane person. The consequence of humility and gratitude is compassion, a compassion that is unforced and free flowing. These manifestations of what it means to be truly human—gratefulness, humbleness and compassion—are the natural flowerings of life, free of any will, purpose, judgment, or discrimination.

The concept of gratitude has deep roots in Indian Buddhism in which recognition or awareness of favors (*kṛtajña*, *kataññū*) is not only essential to the religious life but, more fundamentally, to human life itself. It even becomes the propelling force behind acts of compassion, even though one is not the recipient of any favor or kindness. This

is because life is a vast network of interdependence and mutuality that constitutes being. In early Buddhism this appears in the affirmation of daily life, as exemplified in the Eightfold Noble Path, based on the principle of the Middle Way and negating any concept of an absolute. In Mahāyāna Buddhism Nāgārjuna gave it a fuller expression in his philosophy of dependent co-origination. The basic motivation behind the bodhisattva's six *pāramitā* is said to be a sense of gratefulness, the crucial component being *kṣānti* with its dual connotation of "tolerance" and "wisdom." Through the practice of tolerance one is able to become cognizant of the standpoint of others, as well as of favors or blessings received; hence, it makes possible the birth of wisdom.²

Chinese Buddhism, in spite of its variegated expression, inherits this understanding of life and enriches it with some basic assumptions of its own. They may be summarized in the assertion that "the genuine Chinese cosmogony is that of organismic process, meaning that all of the parts of the entire cosmos belong to one organic whole and that they all interact as participants in one spontaneously self-generating life process."³

The concept of gratitude which evolved in East Asia, thus, is a deepening appreciation for the interdependency and interpenetration of life as it is. It rejects any kind of a supreme being or power that rules over human destiny, as well as any nihilistic and fatalistic acceptance of things. Gratitude is an essential and integral part of the ecology of life.

The first formulation of Four Gratuities, reflecting the original connotation of *en* or *on* as blessing, caring, kindness, and benevolence, was used to translate the Four Embracing Acts (*catvāri samgrahavastūni*) taught in Indian Buddhism.⁴ The four are generosity, loving words, beneficial acts, and empathy, all highly acclaimed qualities of a bodhisattva. But this was a special usage, quite different in contents from what was later to become widely associated with the popular understanding of the Four Gratuities.

One of the first examples of the more standard form appears in the *Sūtra on the Meditation on the True Dharma*, translated in A.D. 359.⁵ The four objects of gratitude, enabling one to come into contact with the Buddha Dharma, are mother, father, Tathāgata, and teacher of dharma. They are considered to be "fields of merit" (*punya-kṣetra*), any devotional acts to them being considered meritorious for advancing on the religious path. Among them, the fourth, the teacher of dharma, was considered to be crucial.

In the ninth century different formulations of the Four Gratuities appear in sūtras translated during this period. In the *Mahāyāna Sūtra on Meditation of the Mind of Original Birth* the four are listed as 1) father and mother, 2) sentient beings, 3) king, and 4) Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.⁶ Among these the gratitude to sentient beings reflects the interdependent nature of existence, and the inclusion of king or ruler is thought to reflect certain periods of Indian Buddhism. In another version, *Sūtra on Embracing Truth in Various Buddha Realms*, the Four Gratuities are given as 1) king, 2) father and mother, 3) benefactors of the dharma, and 4) sentient beings in all the universes.⁷

In contrasting the fourth century and the ninth century formulations scholars have pointed out that the latter show accommodation to Chinese values, exemplified in patriarchal Confucian ethics, listing the father first as the primary object of filial piety and the ruler as the exclusive object of loyalty. The religious dimensions are found in the reverence for the Three Treasures and for sentient beings. The former, on the other hand, still retains remnants of matriarchal Indian society with the mother given priority and the religious components, the Tathāgata and teacher of dharma, maintaining their central place.

The patriarchal nature of Confucian hierarchical ethics can be summarized, for example, in the following statement found in the *Classic of Filial Piety*:

The connecting link between serving one's

father and serving one's mother is love. The connecting link between serving one's father and serving one's prince is reverence. Thus, the mother elicits love, while the prince calls forth reverence; but to the father belongs both—love and reverence.⁸

This great tradition of filial piety directly countered the central practice of the Buddhist tradition—renunciation of the family and the worldly life. This conflict ultimately forced the Buddhists to justify their ways by making accommodations to the prevailing family ethics. This they did by arguing that renunciation itself was the highest form of filial piety, since the forsaking of worldly life for supreme enlightenment meant that ultimately one would return to save all beings, including one's own parents. Moreover, filial piety should not be solely a matter of the present but of past and future lives; the entry into religious life meant that seven generations of ancestors would also be saved.⁹

The sacrosanct nature of familial ethics led the Buddhists to forge several apocryphal sūtras, two of the most famous and important being the so-called *Ullambana Sūtra*, composed around A.D. 510,¹⁰ and the *Sūtra on the Heavy Indebtedness to Parents*, probably compiled around the same period.¹¹ Several versions of both sūtras exist, but the first stresses the gratitude owed to ancestors, especially to fathers and mothers for seven generations past, and the second focuses on the gift of human life received from parents to whom children are deeply indebted.

These accommodations made in the course of Sinicization, however, did not mean the outright capitulation to secular ethics. A common refrain in Buddhist liturgy, frequently chanted in ordination ceremony, states: "To abandon gratitude [based upon human ties] and to enter the realm of the uncreated (*asaṃskṛta*) is the true and real expression of gratitude."¹² Here we see a clear rejection of particularistic ethics and an affirmation of universal ethics. Among Buddhists, then, a clear distinction existed between gratitude in the social context, expressed to parents or rulers,

and gratitude in the religious sense which ultimately expresses thankfulness for this human life, the vehicle through which one realizes supreme enlightenment. While the horizontal and vertical relationships are inseparable, the basis for gratitude is clearly the vertical one between the Buddha and oneself.

This rejection of particularistic ethics on the horizontal plane is characteristic of Japanese Buddhism in the Kamakura Period (1185-1333). In spite of the fact that Buddhism was intimately bound to the state from the time of its introduction into Japan in the sixth century and that filial piety was an accepted social and ethical norm, the leaders of Kamakura Buddhism, such as Hōnen, Shinran, Dōgen, and Nichiren, were adamant in claiming the superiority of the Buddha Dharma over all secular allegiances.

Both Hōnen and Shinran, affirming the exclusive reliance upon the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha, negated the conventional social norms. According to the *Tract Lamenting the Deviations*, Shinran states unequivocally:

I, Shinran, have never even once pronounced the nembutsu for the sake of my father and mother.¹³

This did not mean that Shinran had no concern for the welfare of his parents; what he negated was a particularistic ethics centered on family ties. His parents, naturally, would be included in his universal concern for the happiness of all beings, the solidarity of all forms of life being expressed in the statement immediately following the above quotation: "The reason is that all beings have been fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, in the timeless process of birth-and-death."

Shinran's rejection of filial piety also appears in his advice to Shōshin, who was among those followers in the Kantō district being persecuted for following the nembutsu path. In short, he suggests that Shōshin disregard his mother's criticism of his activity:

It is extremely wrong for people to place the responsibility for the nembutsu persecution on you alone. Those who uphold the nembutsu should be on your side and should be helping you. That your mother and younger and older sisters criticize you is simply behind the times. [You should disregard their criticisms.]¹⁴

The life of nembutsu, in accord with the Primal Vow of Amida, takes priority over all conventional social and ethical practices, including filial piety.

Nichiren, Shinran's younger contemporary, expresses the religious standpoint even more clearly when he writes: "In general, it is the son's duty to obey his parents, yet on the path to Buddhahood, *not* following one's parents may ultimately bring them to good fortune . . . That is, in order to enter the true way, one leaves his home against his parents' wishes and attains Buddhahood. Then he can truly repay his debt of gratitude to them."¹⁵ Another contemporary, Dōgen of Sōtō Zen, echoes this rejection of particularistic ethics and advocates the Buddhist ideal of liberation for all beings. In the *Record of Things Heard* Dōgen states:

Because renunciants abandon the debt of gratitude and enter the uncreated, the proper act of a renunciant regarding the payment of gratitude is not limited to one person. Thinking with deep gratitude to all sentient beings alike as fathers and mothers, he returns the roots of goodness he creates back to the universe. If one were to limit it specially to his parents in this life's single generation alone, he would be going against the path of the uncreated.¹⁶

The unequivocal negation of hierarchical ethics also meant the negation of the ruler, whether king or emperor, as the object of gratitude which was an essential component of the Four Gratuities. Prior to the Kamakura Period, Japanese Buddhism had flourished by virtue of imperial and aristocratic patronage. Buddhism was a *de facto* state religion, regulated and controlled

by government authorities. The rejection of the emperor and state as paramount is found in common in Shinran, Nichiren, and Dōgen, and we can cite many instances to demonstrate this fact, but suffice it to say that the traditional notion of Four Gratuities was undermined by these religious thinkers. What was central was the deep and profound gratitude to the Buddha and dharma through which the Four Gratuities become truly meaningful.

A standard recitation in Buddhist liturgy begins with the reading of the "Refuge in the Three Treasures"—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha—which begins with the lines:

Difficult is it to be born into human life;
Now we are living it.
Difficult is it to hear the teachings of the
Buddha;
Now we hear it.

In order to truly realize the sacrosanct nature of human life, one must first be awakened by the teachings of Buddha. This awakening enables us to see the boundless compassion that constantly works in our life, liberating us from karmic bondage. When liberation is experienced, then we become truly grateful for life itself. Although it is, indeed, difficult to comprehend and manifest the teachings in one's being to the point of ultimate liberation, that is the *raison d'être* of human existence.

That one can awaken to the teaching and become liberated from *saṃsāra* is a momentous event that comes not from will power or rational decision but from the sole working of the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha. The gratitude thus born directed to the compassion of Amida is immeasurable. Shinran praised the working of the Vow until the very end of his earthly life:

Those who truly entrust [*shinjin*],
Saying Amida's Name,
Are constantly mindful of Buddha
And wish to repay the Tathāgata's
benevolence.¹⁷

The Buddha's protection and testimony
Are due to the fulfillment of the
compassionate Vow;
Those who have attained the diamond-like
mind [*shinjin*]
Should repay Amida's benevolence.¹⁸

Those who lack full awareness of all that has been done for the self (that is, those who lack *kṛtajña*, *kataññū*) will remain forever unenlightened and will continue wandering aimlessly in *samsāra*. In other words, people who cling to self-centered calculations (*hakarai*) and rely upon their own powers in the religious quest can never know liberation and what it means to be truly grateful. According to Shinran,

Doubting the inconceivable wisdom of the
Buddha
And favoring the recitation of nembutsu
by self-power,
One remains within the borderland, the
realm of sloth and indolence,
And has no gratitude for the Buddha's
benevolence.¹⁹

Our gratitude to the Buddha is made real for us through our *kalyanamitra*—good friends, spiritual guides on the way to enlightenment. For Shinran such a person was his teacher Hōnen to whom he expressed everlasting affection and gratefulness:

Even within countless lives,
Never would I have known the good
fortune of liberation,
If I had not met my teacher Genkū
[Hōnen],
This life, too, would have passed in vain.²⁰

The deep sense of gratitude to the Buddha and to the teacher are inseparable. Both are connected to a historical legacy, a legacy that extends back through history and beyond it to the Primal Vow of Amida, the home-ground of existence itself. The infinite gratitude expressed to this historical legacy—the seven patriarchs enumerated by Shinran—knows no end:

The benevolence of the Buddha's
compassion,
Even if our bodies are crushed must be
returned in gratitude.
The benevolence of masters and teachers,
Even if our bones are broken should be
returned in thankfulness.²¹

Since gratitude is such a concrete experience, it is also expressed not in euphoria but in practical terms of everyday life. As one of the ten qualities or benefits of the nembutsu, "Knowing gratitude and repaying benevolence,"²² it is manifested in 1) the constant saying of the nembutsu in the midst of daily living, 2) the sharing of the joy of nembutsu with others, 3) the communal expression of gratitude in worship, and 4) the concern for the well being of all life.

A central characteristic of Shinran's teaching is that the nembutsu, the saying of *Namu Amida-butsu*, is not a petitionary act leading to a desired goal but a confirmation of having been liberated from *samsāra*, of having arrived. Moreover, the saying of nembutsu expresses profound gratitude for having attained the ultimate realization. Both confirmation and gratitude come from a source deeper than the mind or heart of an individual; they come from the very source of true compassion, the Primal Vow of Amida.

This means that the virtue of nembutsu does not depend on the subjective feelings of a person, whether grateful or ungrateful, nor upon the circumstances of one's life, whether fortunate or unfortunate. The nembutsu is the most concrete manifestation of our profound appreciation for life that can be expressed by anyone, any time, and anywhere. In the words of Shinran,

We should know that all the nembutsu said
throughout our lifetime expresses gratitude
to the benevolence and give thanks to the
true compassion of the Tathagata.²³

In sum, the saying of nembutsu is an unconditional celebration of life and an unqualified affirmation of its essential meaningfulness. It

clearly recognizes evil and sin, tragedy and suffering, but no matter how tragic they may be, they are completely transformed by the power of Amida's Primal Vow into joy and thanksgiving. "Broken tiles and rocks are transmuted into gold," so says Shinran, by virtue of true compassion.

Such a radical sense of gratitude naturally leads to the wish to expand the circle of joy to share the teachings with others. "To believe oneself and to make others believe—this is the most difficult of all difficulties in the world. That great compassion is spread widely and brings benefits to all beings—this is the true way of repaying the Buddha's benevolence."²⁴ This was the powerful motivation in Shinran's life that lead to the prolific output of numerous treatises, commentaries, religious poetry, and letters in his eighties, the most productive years of his life. He states this explicitly at the end of his major work, the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.

Now, having entered the ocean of Amida's vow, I have come to know deeply the Buddha's benevolence. In order to repay the teaching of highest virtue, I have selected the essential passages concerning the true teaching to forever praise the inconceivable ocean of merit. I rejoice in the Primal Vow and humbly receive the dharma.²⁵

All the religious rituals in Shin Buddhism are expressions of gratitude to the salvific powers of the Primal Vow which becomes an occasion to deepen one's awareness of true compassion. Whether it is a daily home ritual, a temple service, even a memorial or funeral gathering, they are all directed to praising and expressing thanks to Amida Buddha. The most important among the religious observances is the communal worship of Hōonkō or the "Service to Express Gratitude" which commemorates the passing of Shinran on the 28th day of the 11th month in the year 1262. Patterned after the memorial service honoring Hōnen, held by Shinran for his teacher on the 25th of each month (also called Hōonkō), it was observed monthly on the day of Shinran's death. However, as the Hongwanji became institution-

alized, Hōonkō was held at all Shin temples for seven days and nights during the month of November or January, according to the calendar used.

The Hōonkō is more than a memorial service, for it is an occasion for people to deepen their understanding of the teaching by devoting the whole week to immersing themselves in the dharma. Thus, they took off from work, closed their shops, observed vegetarian diets, discussed questions of faith, shared their meals, and enjoyed spiritual fellowship. As part of the formal ritual, the biography of Shinran, written by Kakunyo, the third head of Hongwanji, is read and received by the congregation in all Shin temples. In some areas of Japan Hōonkō is held in every home of the faithful where the teachings are heard, discussed, remembered and celebrated.

Finally, gratitude is expanded into compassionate concern for the welfare of all beings. The ultimate manifestation of compassion occurs when one becomes part of the working of Amida's Primal Vow—called *gensō-ekō* or returning to samsaric existence. This completes the progression on the path to enlightenment—called *ōsō-ekō* or going to the Pure Land. Both the going and returning are the workings of the Primal Vow, the whole process infused with the human feeling of boundless gratitude for the gift that is life itself. It is the propelling force behind the deep wish to actualize reality, to make real the complete enlightenment of self and the world:

For the sake of repaying benevolence, we say the nembutsu with the thought: may peace abound in the world and may the Buddha Dharma become spread evermore.²⁶

FOOTNOTES:

1. Nakamura Hajime, "On no shishō," in *On* (Gratitude), edited by Bukkyō shisō kenkyū kai (Kyoto: Heirakuji, 1979), pp. 3-4. I am indebted to this volume,

- the fourth of a series of studies on Buddhist thought, for the preparation of this article.
2. Nakamura, *Ibid.*, p. 32.
 3. Frederick W. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China* (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 1971), p. 19.
 4. See, for example, *P'u-yao-ching*, Taishō 3.495c.
 5. *Ch'eng-fa nien-ch'u-ching*, Taishō 17.359b.
 6. *Ta-ch'eng pen-sheng hsin-ti kuan-ching*, Taishō 3.297a.
 7. *Chu-fa-ching-chieh she-chen-shih ching*, Taishō 18.284b.
 8. *The Hsiao Ching*, translated by Mary L. Makra (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961), p. 11.
 9. For a discussion, see Kenneth Ch'en, "Filial Piety in Chinese Buddhism," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 28, (1968), pp. 81-97.
 10. *Yü-lan-pen ching*, Taishō 16.779a-c.
 11. *Fu-mu-en-chung ching*, Taishō 85.1403b-1404a.
 12. *Chu-ching yao-chi*, Taishō 54.29b.
 13. *Tannishō: A Shin Buddhist Classic*, translated by Taitetsu Unno (Honolulu: Buddhist Study Center Press, 1984), p. 10.
 14. *Goshōsokushū, Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, Vol. II (Kyoto, 1957), p. 696.
 15. "Letter to the Brothers," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishōnin*, Vol. I (Tokyo: Nichiren Shōshu International Center, 1979), p. 141. See also, *Nichiren: Selected Writings*, translated by Laurel Rasplica Rodd (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1980), p. 124.
 16. *Record of Things Heard from the Treasury of the Eye of the True Teachings*, translated by Thomas Cleary (Boulder: Prajna Press, 1980), p. 45.
 17. *Jōdo wasan*, Ryūkoku Translation Series IV (Kyoto, 1965), p. 26.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
 19. *Shōzōmatsu wasan*, Ryūkoku Translation Series VII (Kyoto, 1980), p. 61.
 20. *Kōsō wasan*, Ryūkoku Translation Series VI (Kyoto, 1974), p. 126.
 21. *Shōzōmatsu wasan*, p. 59.
 22. *Kyōgyōshinshō, Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, Vol. II, p. 72.
 23. *Tannishō: A Shin Buddhist Classic*, p. 26.
 24. *Kyōgyōshinshō*, p. 165.
 25. p. 166.
 26. *Goshōsokushū*, p. 697.

Religions Derive Their Power from Authentic Spiritual Depth

by Tetsuo Unno

Early in his career, Zen Master Yamamoto Gempo was sent to the countryside to restore a once flourishing Zen temple. When he arrived there, he found a temple with tattered *shoji*, missing roof tiles, and *tatami* covered over with dust. Only the framework was intact. In the Zen tradition, he had been given no money or other material resources. Zen Master Yamamoto decided to restore the temple on the strength of his practice of *zazen*. Night and day, rain or shine, he sat in the middle of the broken down *hondo* (main hall), wearing only his straw raincoat to shield himself from the elements. At first the villagers were puzzled by his action; they thought he had lost his mind. Later, however, impressed with the force of his *zazen*, they began to offer him tea and food. In the end, they helped him to restore that temple to its former splendor. In this manner, he restored a number of famous temples: Shojuan, Shoinji, Zuizenji, etc. Moving from *satori*, Zen Master Yamamoto made enormous contributions to modern Rinzai Zen; in his lifetime, he was regarded as a reincarnation of Hakuin.¹

The Tendai priest Hagami Shocho is a younger contemporary of Zen Master Yamamoto. Immediately after World War II, Hagami happened to be standing on a platform at the San-no-miya Station. Just then a train pulled up and, out of the window, American soldiers tossed out packs of cigarettes. As he watched, men, women and even children scrambled frantically on all fours for the cigarettes. For Hagami, this scene symbolized the physical as well as the spiritual devastation of his beloved country. At this moment, he also recalled General MacArthur's humiliating comment that the Japanese as a race had the

mentality of a twelve-year-old. Hagami Shocho, who was then in his mid-forties and working as a journalist, vowed to do something that would contribute to the restoration of Japan. He then chose to shave his head and began his training as a Tendai monk. Eventually he was one of the very few Tendai monks who successfully completed the practice known as *kaihogyo* or "the spiritual practice of circumambulating the mountain peak." For one thousand days, he was required to walk around Mt. Hiei and its surroundings for distances up to forty-five miles per day. During the last nine days, he was not allowed to drink water, eat food, or sleep while he chanted sutras, drew water and burned firewood, symbolic of defilement (*bonno*). At the end of nine days, attending physicians could not detect any pupil reaction, which is a sign of death. Later in an interview, the priest Hagami confessed that he was able to accomplish this training not because of physical strength but through the sustaining power of the Other Power (*Tariki*). Through the years (he is now eighty-two), the priest Hagami has made immeasurable contrib-

utions to the spiritual recovery of the Japanese. (When asked, he often assists various projects of the Nishi Hongwanji.)²

In the Meiji Period, there is the example of the Jodo Shinshu priest, Kiyozawa Manshi. Often called the Shinran of the Meiji Period, his influence was so great he is one of the very few Jodo Shinshu priests to be named in secular histories of Japan. He grew up at a time when Jodo Shinshu had largely remained stagnant for nearly three hundred years of the Tokugawa Period. On top of that, in the Meiji Period, Buddhism faced a crisis of major proportions: the active suppression of

Buddhism by the emerging nationalistic government which was interested only in promoting Shintoism and reverence for the emperor. At this particular juncture, the priest Kiyozawa Manshi dedicated his life to the restoration of Jodo Shinshu to its original depth and power. He moved from a profound religious conviction that any religious reform must be preceded by the establishment of an authentic inward faith on the part of each Jodo Shinshuist. It must be remembered that Kiyozawa Manshi was not an imposing figure; to the contrary he bordered on the pathetic (by worldly standards): he was short even for a Japanese; he had a dark complexion, wore glasses, and suffered from tuberculosis (cancer of that period). He was decidedly ineloquent and on top of that, poor. And yet, he embodied faith in his very being, life, and thought and exerted unparalleled influence on the young students who came to him. Many of the great Jodo Shinshu priests, thinkers, scholars and laymen of later years regard him as their teacher. It is my own belief that Kiyozawa Manshi's legacy will be most profoundly felt in the years yet to come, especially in the West.³

Finally, there is the great Zennist Daisetz Suzuki ("Great Stupidity"). By general consensus, most trace the proliferation of Zen in American culture back to one man: Daisetz Suzuki. And yet his arrival on the American scene was inauspicious. In his late twenties, he was invited by Paul Carus, ostensibly to aid in the translation of Buddhist texts. In reality, much of his time was spent chopping wood, doing the laundry, shopping for groceries, cooking, doing the typesetting, and so forth. Isolated for ten long years in La Salle, Illinois, he carried on without complaining. Before that, in Japan, he sat in *zazen* and eventually attained *satori* under Zen Masters Imakita Kosen and Shaku Soen. Like Kiyozawa Manshi, outwardly, Daisetz Suzuki was not an imposing man: he was short, frail, almost impish; there were others who surpassed him in scholarly knowledge. He was not especially eloquent, often mumbling his words. The power of Daisetz Suzuki to move people originated not in the brilliance of his

scholarship nor his material wealth (he was not rich), but rather in the depth of his spirituality; i.e., his *satori* or the void (*sunyata*). Numerous men have attested to this: from the Buddhist scholar Conze to the Cistercian monk Thomas Merton to the psychoanalyst Jung and most important perhaps, numerous others who were led to the dharma and a resolution of their suffering through this great Buddhist.⁴

Ultimately, then, religions derive their power from the depth of their spirituality. The power of Zen, for example, flows out of Tokusan's "Thirty Blows" or Rinzai's "Katsu!!" or Joshu's "Mu" ("Emptiness"). The power of Jodo Shinshu also originates from one single point of absolute depth: from the nembutsu. From true faith (*shinjin*). From the power of the Original Vow (*Honganriki*). From the Other Power (*Tariki*). From the one dharma phrase (*ippoku*). From the one mind (*isshin*). From the utterance of the Name (*shomyo*).

There are no barriers that can hold back the emerging force of an authentic spirituality. If authentic spirituality is not present, then all else, ultimately, is in vain. That which issues forth from self-power (*jiriki*) and delusive calculations of the ego (*hakarai*), in the end, has no meaning, value or permanence.

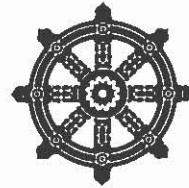
In these times when, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,/The bold-dimmed tide is loosed. . ."⁵ and in which, ". . . overhead . . . hung over/Those thousands of white faces, those dazed eyes,/. . . There in the sudden blackness the black pall/Of nothing, nothing, nothing . . . nothing at all"⁶ and in which only "Purposeless matter hovers in the dark,"⁷ the urgency to move from a standpoint of authentic spirituality is infinite. In these times, Jodo Shinshu Buddhism must move from its deepest essence, its quintessence; that which is one with the Amida Buddha Himself. That need, I believe, is absolute.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Gempo Yamamoto, *Mumonkan Teisho* (Zen Sermons on the Gateless Gate). (Tokyo: Daihorinkaku, 1983).
2. Shocho Hagami, *Doshin* (The Mind that Aspires to the Way). (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1981).
3. Kiyozawa Manshi, "The Great Path of Absolute Other Power and My Faith," in *The Eastern Buddhist*, translated by Bando Shojun, New Series, Vol. V, No. 2.
4. "In Memoriam Daisetz Suzuki" issue,

The Eastern Buddhist, New Series, Vol. II, No. 1.

5. Yeats: "The Second Coming."
6. MacLeish: "The End of the World."
7. Gunn: "The Annihilation of Nothing."



BOOK REVIEW

by Elson Snow

THE SUTRA OF CONTEMPLATION ON THE BUDDHA OF IMMEASURABLE LIFE AS EXPOUNDED BY ŚĀKYAMUNI BUDDHA, Translated and Annotated by the Ryūkoku University Translation Center, under the direction of Meiji Yamada; Ryūkoku University, Kyoto, 1984.

The Translation Center has again published a work that will become indispensable to the private and religious libraries of Buddhists living in Europe and the Americas. The introductory essay to this translated sūtra is interesting and especially important to Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists who have limited knowledge of the classical Japanese and Chinese languages. The brief and abbreviated historical explanations in the Introduction are merely meant to probe why the sūtra was originally composed and why the sūtra is so popular in the Buddhist-Chinese sphere of influence.

The translators and compilers of this volume have been clear on the scope of their work and have carefully annotated their text with glossary terms necessary to the understanding of the particular line of Pure Land Buddhism experienced by Shinran Shōnin. For this reason, it was necessary to make certain references to the kind of thinking represented in the non-meditative practices advocated by Shinran's teacher, Hōnen Shōnin, and formulated by Zendō (Shan-tao). More detail of the doctrine of the "three minds" and some remarks on comparative ideas would have been helpful, however, and would not have overloaded the Introduction with too much detail. Yet we should not expect more of this translation. It provides us with cross-references of various kinds and a rich Glossary.

The Devadatta story in the *Meditation Sūtra* is an attractive study of ethics, but we are reminded by Shinran that the drama of conspiracy and royal betrayal played out for us in the sūtra is really an expediency. If we are to know more of the Devadatta theme of Buddha and Queen Vaidehi, we can go outside this sūtra as well as read Shinran's interpretation in the volume of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. The doctrinal interpretation of the sūtra is deeper than the obvious karmic plot and the religious significance points directly to practice and its source: the Vow Power of the Buddha.

The reader is benefited by the bi-lingual design of this book and its competency of organization is the same as seen in previous projects of the Translation Center. Misprints, however, are far too numerous and oversights in the editing process are barely tolerable. A cleaner typographical text is needed to match the fine scholarship of this volume.

It is an advantage to the student to have before him the Japanese form of the romanized Chinese text. Further, the short paragraph on *Romanization* could have been expanded to better explain how the Japanese are able to grammaticize Chinese original literature to come close to their own literary language, for the more linguistic knowledge we have about the work that goes on in translating a text, the better we are at capturing its religious nuances.

BOOK REVIEW

by Elson Snow

SEVEN WORKS OF VASUBANDHU: THE BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGICAL DOCTOR, by Stefan Anacker; Motilal Banarsidass, 1984, Delhi, India.

The religious person knows he is constantly contradicted in his persistent allegiance to a given spirituality, but there are ways to prepare oneself to illuminate a reality that is recognized as being incomprehensible. As a translator and commentator, Stefan Anacker prefers a psychological interpretation over a philosophical one. This certainly avoids the clumsiness of depicting the Yogācāra system as idealistic, or characterizing this tradition as "realistic pluralism."

Mystical and meditative traditions are not always embarrassed by religious silence, but there are voices unsatisfied at hiding behind a meditative mask of acceptance and submission to the organized world. The Mahāyāna tradition appears to recognize that demystifying religion is also a blind scheme that will eventually diminish spiritual life.

This is illustrated by intellectual history discernible by three distinct revolutions, commonly referred to as the "Three Swingings of the Wheel of Dharma": 1) the historical Śākyamuni Buddha's organizing of the sangha, his preparing its members for the ideal community, and his gaining the validity of Enlightenment; 2) the śūnyatā doctrine as elaborated by followers of Nāgārjuna to emphasize the ineffable (*anabhilāpya*) nature of things; and 3) the final preparation of a "therapeutic course of action (*ācāra*) rooted in meditation."

Today, the tendency is stronger to consider these three fundamental interpretations of dharmic law as sharing the same ground and differing only in their illustrative approach to reality. Stefan Anacker also blurs the distinction between Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu and compares these two thinkers as propagating two radically different methodologies rather than as originators of an entirely different philosophical system vying with each other:

Nāgārjuna wishes to demonstrate the inadequacy of all conventional statements . . . Vasubandhu is interested in showing a path conceived in conventional terms, which leads to the abandonment of all mental constructions.

Vasubandhu's method is not characterized by the dialectical emphasis of reality as seen from the two-fold perspective of Nāgārjuna, but is analyzed within the framework of a three-fold division. Both thinkers share rejection of duality and both expound the doctrine of śūnyatā, the religious philosophy of Emptiness.

Modern scholarship of Buddhism has sometimes taken the simplest method of treating problems by reducing religious practices to "therapy." This has been an easy and less exhausting task for popularizers

and scholars alike who first tried to reduce contemporary Zen to depth psychology and who later treated Tibetan Buddhism as some form of psychoanalysis, using it as a minute examination of the mind to discover personal causes and behavioral effects. The abhidharmic quality of Yogācāra lends itself to an overpowering interest in the contents of consciousness.

In the meditative and non-meditative context, Buddhism also encourages a transcendental distinction between “this world” and the “other world.” Overattentive Western interpreters of Buddhism misconstrued this phenomenological aspect of the dharma, reducing it to either a psychological doctrine or a philosophical system. Anacker also sees a personalized transformation of the individual by following tenets originating in Vasubandhu’s writings; hence, the subtitle of his work is “The Buddhist Psychological Doctor.”

Anacker’s excellent volume contains a little over 100 pages of *Glossary and Index of Key Terms*. His introduction to each text is clear and the notes at the end of each chapter are helpful. There is a *devanagari* text for each of the four Sanskrit works translated. The book is also introduced with an excellent chapter entitled, “Vasubandhu, His Life and Times.”

The following four works are easily grouped together, not simply because they survive in Sanskrit but because they offer a natural, unified approach to the Yogācāra perspective. This study of Vasubandhu and his works looks upon the literature as so many therapeutic layers, suggesting that one text will erase the effects of an earlier age. The study also favors this kind of “psychology” over the dual formation of Jung and Freud, for the unconscious cannot reveal what must be rectified and will judge illusive intentions rather than actually change the behavior of the practitioner.

FOUR EXTANT TEXTS IN SANSKRIT

I The Twenty Verses and Their Commentary (*Vimśatikā-kārikā*)

A theory of knowledge and criticism of the realist’s argument for a correspondence theory are presented here. According to Thomas Kochumuttom, the critique is not against realism but against that theory of knowledge. Vasubandhu is really supporting a theory of the “self-transformation of consciousness which carries within it the seeds of subjectivity and objectivity.”

II The Thirty Verses (*Triṃśikā-kārikā*)

This is a brief summary of Asanga’s doctrine and it presents a view of life. In Anacker’s perspective, it teaches that in the non-meditative state everything is merely a construction and all of consciousness is undergoing a revolution as a psychological process which is the very heart of a therapeutic theory.

III The Teachings of the Three Own-Beings (*Tri-Svabhāva-nirdeśa*)

This is a view of reality with reference to subject-object duality. Leo Pruden, Ph.D., has written in a note of a yet unpublished translation that “the theory of the three natures (*svabhāva*) or characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) is one of the most important parts of the philosophical system of Asanga and Vasubandhu.” The three are 1) *kalpita*: that which has no reality, is the imagined, and is the manifestation of the other-dependent and the state of existence wherein the individual is seen as subjective or objective; 2) *paratantra*: where the dependent manifest forms of subjectivity and objectivity are constructs and not real; and 3) *pariniṣpanna*: seen as the total absence of dependent causes and this “fulfilled” or

“perfect” mode has no subject-object distinction or application.

IV Commentary on the Separation of the Middle From Extremes (*Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya*)

These verses are ascribed to Maitreyanatha and are thought to have been given to Vasubandhu by Asanga. The commentary represents a central position between the extremity of *sarvastivāda* realism and the radical relativism of *Madhyamika*. It clearly avoids the traditional opinions concerning what is false and true and states how things are to be *seen as they really exist*. This text not only describes the phenomenal and absolute aspects of reality but its aims are to void uncertainty, fear, indolence and doubt, thereby serving Anacker’s program for the “meditational therapy” of Vasubandhu.

THREE TEXTS WITH NO FULL SANSKRIT ORIGINALS

V A Method for Argumentation (*Vāda-vidhi*)

This version is an account of Vasubandhu’s logic that has been previously collected and arranged, representing the fullest restoration we have of the lost text in Sanskrit. Two other works of logic are attributed to Vasubandhu but are lost.

The intent of this work is to achieve “correct knowledge.” It was not motivated by the formality found in previous logical systems to sustain a naive realism. Instead, it became a reform of inference and syllogism necessary to carry out epistemological investigations. Buddhist logic is a logic of particulars in contrast to the speculative interest of universals, and Vasubandhu’s “art of disputation” aimed to see through all spurious reasoning.

VI A Discussion of the Five Aggregates (*Pañcaskandhaka-prakaraṇa*)

The rendering of this “Discussion” is based on a Tibetan translation. It is an analysis of the entire “bundle” of the psycho-physical phenomena, or five *skandhas*. It is in this way that individuals are experienced.

The *skandhas* collection are momentary elements. Instead of categorizing the individual as possessing fixed tendencies, the scheme of the five aggregates describes the process of materialities, feelings, dispositions and consciousness. The principle of cessation is the sensible way to study the arising and passing away of positive, negative and neutral behavior rather than categorizing an individual for his undesirable traits for the purpose of modifying personal and social behavior.

VII A Discussion for the Demonstration of Action (*Karma-siddhi-prakaraṇa*)

This treatise of moral retribution is translated mostly from the Tibetan. As karma is action and filled with ethical importance, the “time-interval” is of particular concern to the Buddhist theory of momentariness. A series of moments gives way to previous ones, a specific problem for Buddhists. The solution to the mystery of continuity, applicable to all events, is of primary importance in morality that is governed by the psychic process. As practical experience, Buddhists emphasize the three-fold division of action (karma) into bodily, verbal and mental acts.

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