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## ***Sati* (Mindfulness) and the Structure of the Mind in Early Buddhism**

by Madawala Seelawimala and Arnold McKinley

### INTRODUCTION

Meditational practice, of one sort or another, plays an essential role in the daily life of Buddhists. Indeed, the meditational practices available are as varied as the Asian cultures from which they sprang. Unfortunately, most of them appear rather odd when seen from a non-Buddhist, American point of view. Americans wonder, for example, what Buddhists do when they sit still for countless hours or what they intend to gain by moving ever so slowly, as those of the Theravadan tradition do while walking in *vipassanā* meditation. The answers to questions like these lie in the Buddhist scriptures, the *suttas*—the discourses of the Buddha. There the original methods of *sati* (mindfulness), from which all later Buddhist meditational practices developed, are described.

"There is this one way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and grief, for the ending of suffering and misery, for winning the right path, for realising *nibbāna*, that is to say, the four practices of *sati* (mindfulness)."<sup>1</sup>

The development of *sati*, therefore, is considered to be absolutely essential for the realization of *nibbāna*, ultimate peace of mind. Indeed, the Buddha placed *sammā-sati* (right mindfulness) among the practices of the Noble Eightfold Path. In essence, *sati* development forms one cornerstone of Buddha's method. He calls *sati* an '*indriya*', a faculty which gives the aspirant of *nibbāna*

control over his own development. *Sati* shares this distinction with four other faculties.<sup>2</sup> In Early Buddhist thought, one's further progress toward *nibbāna* sprang from *sati* development and upon it one's future practice depended.

So if Americans are to understand Buddhist forms of meditation and if Buddhism is to be transferred successfully to America, Americans must understand *sati* development correctly. Unfortunately, such understanding is difficult to attain because of the great differences in language, philosophy and "worldview" which exist between the American and Asian cultures in which Buddhism developed. In fact, the task is difficult even for Indian, Sri Lankan, Thai, Burmese and Tibetan Buddhists who share their cultural roots with the Buddha. Subtleties of the teachings have been lost over the centuries, tending to separate them from the Buddha.

Indian monks arrived in China in the first century A.D. and translated some of the Indian *suttas* and commentaries by the second century, but definitive translations, which successfully overcame the cultural differences and thus prepared the foundation for a critical analysis of Buddha's teaching from a Chinese perspective, did not appear for another 300 years. The American experience of Buddhism is just beginning.

One of the significant barriers to the

transfer of Buddhism presently is the lack of proper English words which carry the subtle meanings intended by Buddhist technical terms. The problems are usually avoided by translators; English words are used as if they captured the full meaning of the technical terms. A continued practice of this sort, without adjacent textual explanations of the nuances, confuses rather than clarifies. Some terms such as 'mental objects' (for *saṅkhāra*) or 'emptiness' (for *śūnyatā*) are utterly foreign and vacuous in meaning to most Americans, since commensurate notions do not exist in Western culture.

We expect this paper to do no more, therefore, than to continue the scholarly discussion on the proper interpretation of *sati* for Americans using metaphors and models which Americans can understand. We are inferring our interpretations of *sati* and of the structure of the mind from the Pali Text Society's translations, except where we believe the translations are better rendered elsewhere. The massive work of retranslating all of the pertinent passages with matured interpretations has yet to be done; for now, we are making a first attempt at organizing these passages and forming a usable model which can be tested against future translations and interpretations.

We are guided by two principles in our endeavor: first, that the Buddha seems to have chosen his words very carefully, inasmuch as he strove for clarity in the presentation of his teachings; and second, that much of modern *vipassanā* meditation practice reasonably reflects the ancient practice itself. Under the first principle, for example, we would not expect a regular appearance in the canon of two different Pali words to refer to the same concept. We feel that the use of the English word 'mind' to translate both *citta* and *mano*, as is often done today, is not admissible. Under the second, we would expect modern practice to suggest insights into the more subtle aspects of the translations and thus of the teaching on

*sati* and the structure of the mind.

Our goal is to find a clear interpretation of the word *sati* so that the English word 'mindfulness', which has become the standard translation, will carry significantly more meaning for the average American student of Buddhism than it does now.<sup>3</sup> To do so we will examine some textual material in the canon, identify key concepts, describe the processes which *sati*, as an *indriya*, controls, and present a graphical model of these processes. The model in conjunction with our knowledge of *vipassanā* practice will suggest an interpretation of *sati*.

### SATI IN THE PALI CANON

The canon, itself, consists of three parts: the *Sutta Piṭaka* (The Basket of Teachings) by the Buddha; the *Vinaya Piṭaka* (The Basket of Rules) by which the followers were to live; and the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* (The Basket of Philosophical Treatments of the *Suttas*). The major discourse on *sati* occurs twice, once as the tenth discourse in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (The Medium Length Sayings) where it is called *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, and once as the twenty-second discourse of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (The Long Sayings) where it is called *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.<sup>4</sup>

The word *sati* (or *smṛti*, in Sanskrit) originally carried the meaning 'memory' or 'remembrance', but in Buddhist usage in the canon it refers to the present, perhaps a 'remembrance of the present' and therefore, carries a meaning closer to 'attention' or 'awareness'. It refers particularly to an awareness which is well-placed, good, right, 'skillful' (*kusala*). *Paṭṭhāna*, from *ṭhā*, means 'placing right next to, or right in front of'. It is sometimes translated 'arousing' or 'establishment'. The complete title of the *sutta* may, therefore, be rendered "The Discourse on the Immediate Presence or Establishment of *Sati*".<sup>5</sup>

*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* gives four *Paṭṭhānas* of *sati*: "A person lives contemplating the *kāya* in the *kāya* . . . he lives contemplating *vedanā* in the *vedanā* . . . he lives contemplating *citta* in the *citta* . . . he lives contemplating *dhmma* in the *dhmma*".<sup>6</sup> "Lives contemplating ..'x'.. in the ..'x'.." translates . . . *anupassī viharati* which refers to a very conscious, present abiding and observing awareness or consciousness. The phrase is repeated over and over again as if to emphasize its importance with respect to *sati*. The *sutta* follows with a large number of examples as if to explain what "lives contemplating ..'x'.. in the ..'x'.." means in actual practice. These provide some meaning to the terms *kāya*, *vedanā*, *citta*, and *dhmma*. The examples provide the basis of *vipassanā* meditational practice, as well as describing the awareness of the one who has developed *sati* perfectly.

In these examples, *kāya* seems to refer to the body, but in a special way: no reference to an individual is implied anywhere. Rather, *kāya* is referred to as a kind of agglomeration of parts. *Vedanā*, in the examples, seems to refer to 'feelings' or 'sensations'; pleasure, pain, and neither-pleasure-nor-pain are mentioned. Although 'feelings' is its usual translation, we find difficulty with it and will amend it later. *Citta* and *dhmma* are more difficult to determine from the readings.

With regard to the last two words, the examples use terms referring to psychological "states", maybe thoughts, and perhaps processes, such as lust, hate, distraction, anger, sloth, and their opposites, but details are missing. Usual translations equate *citta* with 'mind' and *dhmma* with 'elements-of-reality', but 'mind' in English has a specific connotation which only partially reflects the entire meaning of the word *citta*, and 'elements-of-reality' is an ambiguous term given the centuries of Western debate concerning the nature of 'reality'. We therefore, must search other *suttas* for uses of these terms

which may help clarify them.

## THE SALĀYATANĀ (THE SIX 'FIELDS' OR 'SPHERES')

The concepts *kāya*, *vedanā*, *citta*, and *dhmma* are defined more clearly in several *suttas* elsewhere in the *piṭaka*, particularly in *Majjhima Nikāya* and in *Saṃyutta nikāya*.<sup>7</sup>

The Lord spoke thus: 'Six internal *āyatana* are to be understood, six external *āyatana*, six of *viññāṇa*, six of *phassa*, six of *vedanā*, . . . '.

*Āyatana* is used to refer to a 'realm', 'field' or 'sphere' of activity. The internal *āyatanas* include: first, the 'five senses', namely *chakkhu* (the visual sense), *sota* (the aural sense), *ghāṇa* (the smelling sense), and *jivhā* (the tasting sense) and *kāya* (the feeling sense), the last of which is usually translated 'body' but now is seen to be narrower in meaning than that; and second, *mano*, an *āyatana* for which Westerners do not have a 'sense' counterpart. The external *āyatanas* refer to the objects sensed: *rūpa* (visible object), *sadda* (sound), *gandha* (odor), *phoṭṭhabba* (touched object), and *dhmma* (the additional sense object related to *mano*). With each of the six *āyatanas* come related *viññāṇa*, *phassa*, and *vedanā* in that order (see Figures 1 and 2).

The text of *Majjhima* III. 281 indicates that a *viññāṇa* related to a particular sense (let's call it a 'sensory'-*vedanā*) arises from a dependence on the internal and external sensory-*āyatanas*, that the 'meeting' of these three is sensory-*phassa* and that from sensory-*phassa* arises sensory-*vedanā*. So that, for example, the *chakkhu* (eye-sense), meeting with *rūpa* (the visible object) generates *chakkhu-viññāṇa*. These three give rise to *chakkhu-phassa*, where *phassa* means 'contact' and, in this context, is usually translated 'visual sensory-impingement'. From such impinge-

ment arises *chakkhu-vedanā*. Sensory-*vedanā*, therefore, is the result of a long line of dependencies. Throughout the *suttas* the phrase, “pleasure, pain, and neither-pleasure-nor-pain”, is used to ascribe some meaning to the term *vedanā*.

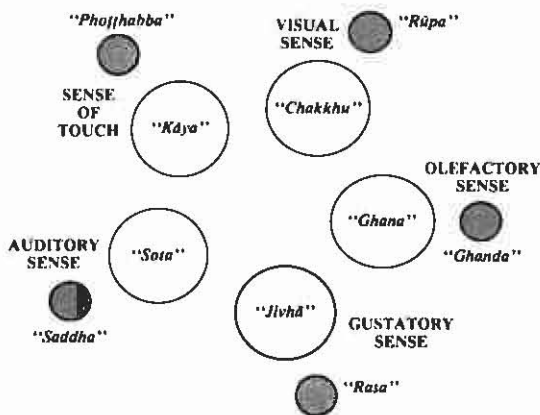


Figure 1  
The First Five Internal and External Ayatanas

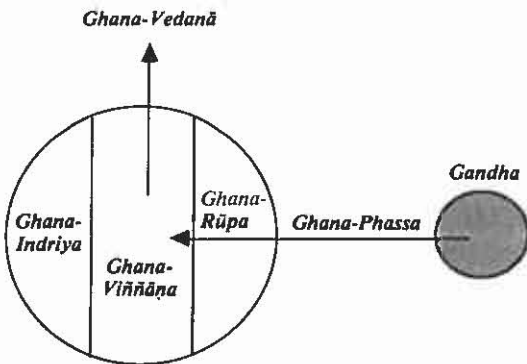


Figure 2  
The Processes of the Internal Ayatana  
Example: The Olfactory Sense

Also associated with the senses are six *indriyas*.<sup>9</sup> The word comes from the old vedic reference to *Indra*, the highest God of the Vedic system. Therefore, *indriya*, ‘of or pertaining to *Indra*’, may be thought of as a ‘controlling faculty’. It is often translated ‘sense-organ’, but *Majjhima* III. 298 is entitled *Indriyabhāvanāsutta* (Discourse on the Development of the *Indriya*) and it seems a more potent concept to develop a ‘controlling faculty’ than an ‘organ’.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the texts (both here and in *Samyutta* v. 73) indicate that control is to be established over what arises *after* the object sensed is judged likable, dislikable, or both. Such judgment occurs further down the road of awareness and perception, rather than at the organ where awareness begins.

Important discussions associated with the relationship of the six *indriyas* and *āyatanas* occur in *Samyutta* v. 217 and *Majjhima* I. 294:<sup>11</sup>

There are . . . these five *indriyas* of different scope and different range, and they do not mutually enjoy each other’s scope and range. *Mano-indriya* (the sixth *indriya*) is their *paṭisaraṇa* (refuge, shelter, resort). It is *mano-indriya* that profits by their scope and range.

This text is pivotal in understanding Buddha’s structure of the human organism. It suggests that the sixth *āyatana* synthesizes the results of the other five *āyatanas*. It develops concepts, thoughts and ideas from a hodgepodge of sensory data and, as shall be shown in the discussion on *vipassanā* meditation, provides the basis for mental awareness (see Figure 3).

A clue as to how this synthetic processing occurs appears in Buddha’s alternative description of the human organism as an agglomeration of ‘five *khandhas*’. In particular, he warns the monks of the danger of identifying any one of the *khandhas*, or all of them taken together, with a ‘self’. These are *rūpa*,

*vedanā*, *saṃkhāra*, and *viññāṇa*. The scripture gives the following explanations for the etymology of these terms.

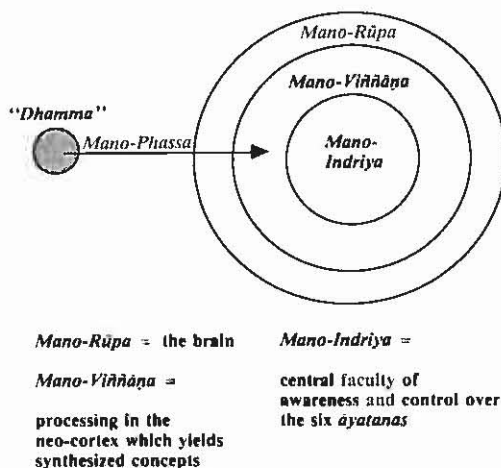


Figure 3  
The Sixth Internal and External Ayatana

"*Rūpa* (form) is used," says the scripture, "because one is affected by the touch of cold and heat, hunger and thirst, gnats and mosquitoes, wind and sun and snakes."<sup>12</sup> *Rūpa* refers to the form constituted by the four essential natural elements, air, heat, water, and earth. It is derived from the root *rup* (to break). "*Rūpa* breaks, monks; therefore it is called *rūpa*."<sup>13</sup> Used with the senses, *rūpa* would refer to the organ itself. For example, *ghāṇa-rūpa* would refer to the organ of the olfactory sense. Note that the word *rūpa* is also used for the external *āyatana* of the eye-sense, that is, for 'that which is seen'. This strengthens our interpretation of its use in reference to that part of an internal *āyatana* which can be seen, the organ itself.

*Vedanā* is used "because one feels pleasure, pain and neither-pleasure-

nor-pain." The root is *vid* (to know). When used in conjunction with the senses, the term implies 'perception as the experience of the senses'.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the term implies more than just sensation or feeling; there is a knowledge associated with it. Recall that the sensory-*vedanās* arise last in a line of dependencies on other sensory-characteristics. These *vedanās*, therefore, are the results of sensory processing. We believe that the term *vedanā*, used singularly without a sensory prefix, refers to the six *vedanās* taken together.

*Saññā* is used "because one 'perceives' (*saṃjānāti*) blue-green, yellow, red or white." The translation does not get to the heart of the matter.<sup>15</sup> The passage seems to express a recognition (of some aspects of outside objects) which are more complicated than the 'pleasure, pain and neither-pleasure-nor-pain' of the sensory-*vedanās*. *Saññā* refers to a processing of *vedanā* which distinguishes characteristics of the external object against its background.

The Pali Text Society's translation of the text concerning *saṃkhāra* (activities-compound) holds little meaning in English. Another translation proposes, "they are called *saṃkhāra* because they renew what had been undergoing renewal in the past."<sup>16</sup> We prefer a meaning which points to an activity by which concepts, acquired in the past (brown, purple, red, etc.), are brought to the fore for comparison with the present recognitions made during *saññā* processing (blue-green, yellow, red, etc.). In a broader context we would have it refer to the rapid, ongoing flow of comparisons required to make correct pattern matches with patterns already stored. We are not aware of a word for this in English, so we prefer to keep *saṃkhāra* without translation.

*Viññāṇa* is used "because one is conscious . . . of sour or bitter, acrid or sweet, alkaline or non-alkaline, saline or



non-saline.” The translation seems to confuse *saññā* with *viññāṇa*. One translator equates *viññāṇa* with ‘passive consciousness’.<sup>17</sup> For us, the six sense-*viññāṇas* refer to the processes which complete the recognition of those aspects of the external object which relate to the specific sense. For example, the *chakku-viññāṇa* refers to the visual processing which recognizes the visual aspects of the external object. *Chakkhu-vedanā* is the result.

Most of the terms which have been introduced so far from the *suttas* have been assigned some meaning; *dhamma*, *citta*, *mano*, and of course, *sati*, still remain undefined.

### THE GRAPHICAL MODEL

The texts discussed above hint at a rather sophisticated model of human psychological processes which the Buddha seems to have explained only to the extent of supporting his teaching concerning the need to abandon all attachments and repulsions which these processes might engender.<sup>18</sup> In summary, the texts suggest that mental processes involve six internal and external *āyatana*s (six spheres related to the six senses), six *indriya*s (controlling faculties), six *viññāṇa*s, and six *phassa*s; the result of the processing of all these is the six *vedanā*s. The texts say that five *khandhas*, namely, *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saṃkhāra* and *viññāṇa*, generate full concepts from initial sensory contact with the sense objects. They say that five *indriya*s do not overlap or share their region of control or operation, but rather share common ground with a sixth *indriya*; that is, that *mano-indriya* controls the common concerns of the other five. The structural model which we believe synthesizes these ideas appears in Figure 4.

The internal and external *āyatana*s (spheres) are identifiable, as are the *rūpa*, *viññāṇa* and *indriya* of each sense sphere. The six *phassas* are represented by long, thin arrows piercing the external and internal

*āyatana*s. The six *vedanā*s are represented by short, thin arrows. *Dhamma*, the sixth external *āyatana*, appears ‘external’ to *mano*. *Dhamma* will be discussed shortly.

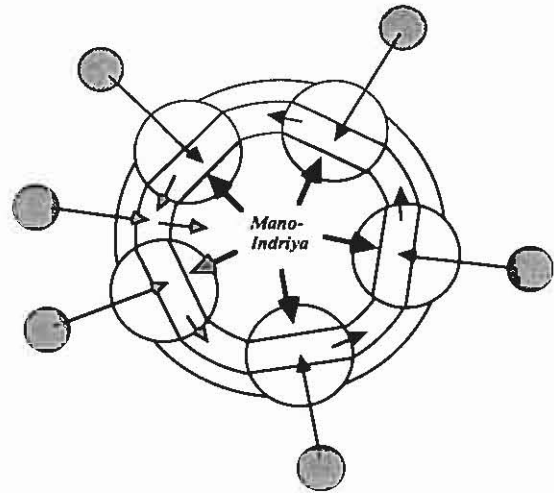


Figure 4  
The Graphical Representation of the Citta

Modern science has illuminated the details of the sensory processes, making a direct comparison with the *āyatana*s possible. In the sense of smell, for example, odor molecules (*gandha*, the external *āyatana*) bind to receptors on the surface of the olfactory epithelium in the nose. Chemical changes stimulate these neurons to send electrical impulses to the brain's olfactory bulbs. Mitral neurons send information directly into the limbic system of the brain which, in turn, activates the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland. The limbic system also reaches into the neocortex, site of the brain's higher processes, to stimulate conscious thoughts and reactions.<sup>19</sup>

*Ghāna-rūpa* refers to the material parts of the sense in the above example. *Ghāna-viññāṇa* refers to the chemical and electrical processing and depends upon the conjunction of the odor molecules and the in-

ternal *āyatana* (*ghāna*). *Ghāna-phassa* refers to the 'meeting' of *gandha*, *ghāna*, and *ghāna-viññāṇa*. *Ghāna-vedanā* refers to the messages sent to the limbic system, the pituitary gland and the neocortex. Here *saññā* processing combines these *vedanās* with the *vedanā* of the other senses and distinguishes characteristics of the external object from the background. *Samkhāra* processing compares these characteristics with others already stored in memory so that the object can be identified.

Similarly, *mano*, the sixth *āyatana* for which no "sense" counterpart exists in English, has an organ, the *mano-rūpa*, which we believe must refer to the brain. We suggest that the five *vedanās* share their common ground in the processing called *mano-viññāṇa*; the processes, *saññā* and *saṃkhāra*, are prior to *mano-viññāṇa* processing. Therefore, when the term *viññāṇa* appears alone, without a sensory prefix, it refers to *mano-viññāṇa* processing. The end result is a concept of the external object called *mano-vedanā*. *Samkhāra* also refers to memory processes.

In summary, the model works like this: The *saññā* process draws together the various sensory-*vedanās* to form a primitive notion of the sensed object. *Samkhāra* recalls concepts already stored in memory and compares them with the results of *saññā*. *Mano-viññāṇa* puts them all together to produce, eventually, a conception of the external object, *mano-vedanā*.

Recall that the text of *Samyutta* v. 217 indicates that *mano-indriya* is the *paṭisaraṇa* (refuge, shelter, resort) of the other five sensory *indriyas*. Therefore, the task of the *mano-indriya* is to share in the control of the other senses. Each of the sensory *indriyas* has some control over its native *viññāṇa* processing, but *mano-indriya* steps in from time to time to exercise a more central control. We learn from a study of *vipassanā* meditation just what *mano-indriya* is, experientially, and

just how it exercises central control.

As with the other five *āyatanas*, *mano-viññāṇa* arises due to a dependence on the internal sixth *āyatana*, *mano*, and the external sixth *āyatana*, *dharmma*. *Mano-phassa* arises from the meeting of these three and from this *mano-vedanā* arises. But what is *dharmma*? What is its source? What sort of an external *āyatana* is it? Our studies have not yet provided a clear answer; we are still working with the text.

*Dhamma* may refer to the commands sent from *mano-indriya* to the *mano-viññāṇa* and to the other sensory *indriyas* and in this way may be the principle vehicle of control over the entire system. There are two problems with this: 1) such commands do not appear to be "external" to *mano*, and 2) we would also expect to see terms which refer to the commands generated by the other sensory *indriyas* as well, but we do not.

*Dhamma* may refer to the concepts, ideas and thoughts which *mano-indriya* works with and creates. This makes *mano-indriya* the 'presently aware consciousness' and *dhamma* the moment-to-moment focus of its operation. But this idea also suffers from the same two criticisms.

Or, *dhamma* may refer to the six *vedanās* taken together; some textual material seems to justify this notion. In this case then, *mano-vedanās* may be injected into the *mano-indriya* whence they become *dhammas*; but not all *mano-vedanās* are *dhammas* since some are immediately stored in memory (*saṃkhāra*) without ever entering *mano-indriya*. This distinguishes the *mano-vedanās* from *dhammas*.

Therefore, our model of human psychological processes, as we believe it appears textually in the *Nikāyas* of the Pali Canon, consists of Figure 4 and the accompanying description given above. We believe

that the Buddha referred to the entire model by the term *citta*. This may be seen particularly in *Samyutta* ii. 2. The English term 'mind', therefore, refers in its technical meaning to the same processes referred to by *citta* but, in its common usage, only to *mano*; thus the confusion over the translation of these two terms.

It is important to note that great difficulties exist in English because of the Western tradition of assigning 'places' to the processing. 'The consciousness', for example, is spoken of as if it were a place where awareness abides. In the *suttas*, we find *viññāṇas* to be processes, not places or processors; *indriyas* are faculties of control, not places, as terms like 'consciousness' tend to imply. The subtleties are important, but it is difficult to remain faithful to them in every instance of translation or explanation.

#### VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION AND THE MODEL

Recalling the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*'s four *paṭṭhānas* of *sati*: "A person lives contemplating the *kāya* in the *kāya* . . . he lives contemplating *vedanā* in the *vedanā* . . . he lives contemplating *citta* in the *citta* . . . he lives contemplating the *citta* . . . he lives contemplating *dharmā* in the *dharmā*". Using the four *paṭṭhānas* one peers inward (*anupassī viharati*—a very conscious, present abiding and observing) toward finer and finer activities of the human organism, first toward the *kāya* (the feeling sense), then the *vedanā* (the sense-*vedanā*), then the *citta* (the activity of the 'mind' as represented by the model given above), and lastly toward the *dharmā*. This is the essence of *vipassanā* practice.

In common practice today, the beginner is introduced to *vipassanā* with two meditations—a 'walking meditation' and a 'sitting meditation'. In the first, one moves the feet very, very slowly, keeping track of four parts

to the movement—a lifting, a moving, a setting down and a shifting of weight into the next step. One is told to look carefully at the 'mind's activity' during this walking. Soon after starting practice, the meditator realizes that before each part there come several preludes. Let us say for argument that these are: a motivation to move, a desire to move, a choice, an intention, and finally the issuance of a command to move. Meditators soon realize that in order to *really* watch these 'preludes of the mind' between parts of the walking movement, they must deliberately move their feet very slowly; the watching is not easy. Serious beginners move slowly because they do not 'observe' these preludes when these preludes first occur and therefore must 'request' a replay of them a second and perhaps a third or more times in order to observe them clearly.

Interestingly enough, just as the beginners start to observe these preludes and begin to move faster as a result, they discover that each of the four parts consists of a very large number of 'sub-parts'. The 'lifting part', for example, consists of a large number of lifting parts and each of these has associated motivations, desires, choices, intentions, and commands. This is indeed a very large number of activities to watch, so the beginners, who are now more advanced in the practice, must move even more slowly. Continued practice of this leads the beginners to . . . *anupassī viharati* (careful observing) of the body at every instant of time in all of their daily routine.

In sitting meditation, *sati* development begins in a similar fashion; here, however, the beginners first observe the passage of the breath in and out of the body. They soon discover that the lessons learned while walking apply equally well to breathing. Soon the teachers suggest different foci for bodily attention, and the beginners learn that they can interrupt the flow of desires, choices, intentions, etc., *at will*. They learn to interject



alternative desires, choices, intentions, etc., *at will*.

In terms of our model, what seems to be happening may be described in the following way: *Mano-indriya*, the faculty of direct control over the entire *citta*, seems capable of acting on only one *dharmā* at a time; moreover, comprehension of that *dharmā* seems to be relatively slow—slow in comparison to the generation of other activities (desire, choice, etc.). Indeed, much parallel processing occurs in the *citta* simultaneously, because each of the sensory-*viññāṇa* operates independently of the others, feeding their resulting *vedanā* to the central processing of *mano-viññāṇa*. While the *mano-indriya* abides with one *dharmā* at a time, much complex *mano-viññāṇa* (and five sensory-*viññāṇa*) processing occurs simultaneously. *Mano-viññāṇa* processing is done very rapidly.

*Mano-indriya*, being a 'faculty of control', can intervene during *mano-viññāṇa* processing, registering any command it wishes. The same may be said of each of the independent sensory-*indriya* with respect to their *viññāṇa*. In this way the *indriyas* interrupt the normal proceedings of their respective *viññāṇa*. This is the means by which meditators directly control the walking or the breathing movement *at will*.

This latter part of the model suggests several very interesting phenomena which must be occurring in the *citta*.

First, the six sensory-*viññāṇas* (including the *mano-viññāṇa*) must be the center of some 'automatic' activities of their own. In the case of the *chakkhu* (visual sense) this would be the movement of the muscles during focusing, or of the lens in inverting the image onto the retina and similar processes. The *chakkhu-indriya* is not normally involved in issuing commands for the performance of these actions; they occur 'automatically' and come

from the *chakkhu-viññāṇa*. On the other hand, *chakkhu-indriya* does issue commands such as moving the eyeball to the left or to the right when the organism (the person) makes a conscious decision to do so; this conscious decision is put into effect through a request by the *mano-indriya* to the *chakkhu-indriya*. These requests are shown in Figure 4 as thick arrows.

In the case of the *mano-viññāṇa*, such 'automatic' behavior is evidenced when, for example, the entire organism walks. In walking, there is no need for a direct command to be issued by the central *mano-indriya* to all the other five *indriyas* in order to effect a step forward. The motions are already prescribed and embedded in the *mano-viññāṇa* for fast, effective dispersal to the important centers of control without the need for that sort of central intervention. A 'lifting of the arm' is a similar motion.

Where might these 'automatic' activities come from? Some are clearly **learned**. For example, a baby must move very slowly when learning to walk. Each step is repeated over and over again until certain patterns are established so that walking via *mano-viññāṇa* processing can become automatic. The processes *saññā* and *saṃkhāra* are involved in forming these patterns in memory. The same may be said of many patterns which we recognize as **learned** patterns. The word *saṅkhata*, a past participle, refers to these automatic 'instructions'; we might use the English word 'pre-programmed', drawn from computer language, in translating it. The tradition teaches that **all**, not just some, of these patterns are learned.

Second, one part of *mano-viññāṇa* activity is the feeding of information to *mano-indriya* periodically; this keeps *mano-indriya* informed of the organism's activities. There seems to be no clear-cut rule for the type of information passed. One experiences this periodic flow of information directly as an in-

coming flow of *mano-vedanā*, an 'on-going flow' of *dharmā*, which seems to overtake and sometimes dominate one's attention without clear direction. The English term for this is 'day-dreaming'. Sometimes these *dharmas* seem to clamor for attention. The *Mandupindika Sutta* uses the term *Papañca-saññā-saṅkhā* to refer to this continual flow of *dharmas* to the extent of causing conflict. If some purposeful direction exists to the flow, the English term used is 'thinking'.

This implies that one *mano-viññāṇa* activity is the instigation of creative endeavor in the *citta*; as *mano-indriya* controls the flow of these *dharmas*, it relates them in odd ways depending upon how they are received, and fashions new *dharmā*, then sends these results back to storage for future use by *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *mano-viññāṇa*.

Third, *mano-indriya* can explicitly direct *mano-viññāṇa* and other *viññāṇa* processing of the senses. It can initiate the flow of *mano-vedanā* and of *dharmā*, prevent the sending of *dharmā*, or request *mano-viññāṇa* to pre-filter the *dharmā* before sending them. It may, for example, request only certain types of *dharmā* (let's call them 'messages') having to do with sounds, or having to do with walking actions.

So, in walking meditation what happens is this: *mano-indriya* requests no interruptions with messages from *mano-viññāṇa* processing, except those having to do with the four parts of the walking movement. It then issues a command for the foot to move a short distance. The activity of the body required for this short movement is already pre-programmed (*saṅkhata*), so there is no problem in carrying out the request. However, *mano-viññāṇa* processing is so rapid that the creative process begins anew while the foot carries out the instructions. If *sati* is not well developed, the request for no interruptions is not obeyed, and *dharmas* are again injected into *mano-indriya*. Without persistent con-

trol, *mano-indriya* loses track of the moving foot and the foot continues along its pre-appointed path while the *mano-indriya* remains so preoccupied. It is one purpose of *vipassanā* meditation to recognize this interruption and to bring the *mano-indriya* back to its focus, the foot. *Sati* refers to the faculty of control which is improved by this recognition.

It appears to be the case that pre-programmed instructions are exercised by *mano-viññāṇa* processing until deflected by direct request of the *mano-indriya*.

### SATI

With this teaching on the structure of the *citta*, Buddha prepared the foundation for his teachings concerning the nature of mental suffering and of the path toward ending that suffering. These *citta* processes, he says, form the whole world as we know it:

The [*āyatana*s] are transitory by nature . . . the [various *viññāṇas*] are transitory . . . [so is] *mano-viññāṇa* . . . whatsoever pleasure or pain or neutral experience which arises . . . all are transitory by nature. What is thus transitory is called 'the world'.<sup>20</sup>

He says that one must investigate so that the *viññāṇa* is not confused.

Monks, a monk should investigate so that, as he investigates, his *viññāṇa* . . . may be undistracted, not confused . . . for him who is thus undisturbed by grasping there is in the future no . . . anguish.<sup>21</sup>

Buddha's point is that the results of the *citta* processes may or may not be an accurate representation of the external object. Indeed none of the *vedanās* carries an accurate representation of the external object unless the sensory-*indriyas* and the sensory-*viññāṇas*

have been developed, through, for example, the *paññānas* (the practices) of *sati*. Grasping after these *vedanās*, or being repulsed by them, as if they represented the external object accurately, would be tantamount to living in fantasy. The result of such graspings and repulsions is suffering.

It is the business of *sati* (and the other four *indriyas*) to develop the *citta* processes so that this does not occur. With their development, one has complete and correct knowledge (*abhiññā* and *pariññā*), not only of external objects, but also of the sources of one's attachment to, or repugnance for, those objects. One also has the knowledge that suffering, which arises from these attachments and repugnances, can cease and that the eightfold path is the method for doing this. This is the core of Buddhist teaching.

## CONCLUSIONS

We have presented a model of the structure of the mind as we believe it appears in the Pali *suttas* and have explained some important points concerning *sati*. Several Pali terms were given clearer connotations, and several details concerning their interaction were suggested based on the model. The English term traditionally used to translate *sati*, 'mindfulness', is not completely accurate, because *sati* is an *indriya*, not a state. It is noted that the text implies *processes* of the organism, not places in the organism where activities occur as the English translations tend to do. Finally, some aspects of *vipassanā* meditation were described using the model.

It is interesting to report that the model has similarities to modern computer architecture. Just how far the analogy may be taken has yet to be studied.

## FOOTNOTES:

1. *Majjhima Nikāya*, (The Collection of the Middle-Length Sayings) trans. I.B. Horner for the Pali Text Society, vol. 1-3 (London: Luzac and Company, 1954-59). See *Majjhima* 55.

2. *Samyutta Nikāya*, (The Book of the Kindred Sayings), vol. 1 trans. Mrs. Rhys Davids and vol. 2-5 trans. F.H. Woodward for the Pali Text Society. (London: Luzac and Company, 1950-80). See *Samyutta* v. 229 and 230; we shall have more to say about the word *indriya* later. The other four *indriyas* are *saddhā* (confidence), *virīya* (effort), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (full and complete wisdom).

3. Sometimes *sati* is translated 'awareness' or 'introspective awareness'.

4. Also see Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (London: Rider and Company, 1962), p. 9.

5. *Ibid.*

6. The translation is by Soma Thera, *The Way of Mindfulness* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: The Buddhist Publication Society, 1975), p. 16.

7. *Majjhima* I. 294-295, III. 137 in the Pali Text Society's work, III. 148 281, III. 287 and *Samyutta* v. 217. When the Buddha taught, he answered question which were asked by the people present before him, and he spoke with words and stories which they understood. As with all great teachers, there is reason to believe that he spoke according to the capacity of those listening to understand. One finds that one teaching which is presented sketchily in one place in the canon can be found in another place in greater detail.

8. *Majjhima* III. 281.

9. *Majjhima* III. 298-299 and *Samyutta* v. 205.

10. Contrary to footnote 1, p. 346 of the Pali Text translation of *Majjhima* III 298-299.

11. p. 192 and p. 355, respectively, of the

Pali Text Society's translation.

12. *Samyutta* iii. 87; this translation is from the Pali Text Society's work as are the first translations in each of the next paragraphs.

13. From the same text in the canon, but translated by Dickwela Piyananda. *The Concept of Mind in Early Buddhism*. A dissertation. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, The Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, 1974), p. 89.

14. Also see Piyananda, p. 93.

15. As Piyananda notes, p. 97.

16. Piyananda, p. 104.

17. Piyananda, p. 105.

18. See *Samyutta* iv. 52, 86-87 and *Maj-*

*jhima* I. 260-261; "Even so, Bikkhus, of what I have known I have told you only a little, what I have not told you is very much more. And why have I not told you [those things]? Because that is not useful . . . not leading to *nibbāna*." *Samyutta* v. 437 quoted from Sri Rahula Walpola. *What the Buddha Taught* (N.Y.: Grove Press, 1959), p. 12.

19. See "Sensory Reception", *Macropaedia*, Vol. 27 (London: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1987), p. 114-221 and Boyd Gibbons, "The Intimate Sense of Smell", *National Geographic*, 170, no. 3. (Sept. 1986), p. 324 for straightforward descriptions of the processes involved.

20. *Samyutta* iv. 53.

21. *Majjhima* III. 223-225.

# Nāgārjuna's Concept of *Śūnyatā*

by Diane Ames

## INTRODUCTION

Nāgārjuna was the first and, arguably, the most brilliant, Buddhist philosopher known to have written systematic expositions of the theory of *śūnyatā*.<sup>1</sup> In fact, he seems to have practically devoted his life to explaining and elaborating this concept. For the naive Buddhist seminarian struggling through abstruse passages which debate whether fire is really different from firewood, this raises the question: Why? Why did one of the great founding thinkers of the Mahayana tradition spend his time trying to prove that the firewood he was discussing could not burn if it really "existed"? What is the point?

## THE CONCEPT OF *ŚŪNYATĀ*

One thing is certain: Nāgārjuna and the other Madhyamaka philosophers who came after him were *not* simply playing a game of erudition. It is clear from their writings that they were very serious, practicing Buddhists and that developing their philosophy was part of their practice. Their goal was nothing less than the goal of all their co-religionists: liberation. Why they believed that a real grasp of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) was crucial to attaining that goal is spelled out in Chapter 18, verse 5 of the *Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikās*:

Liberation is due to the cessation of  
karma and passions  
Karma and passions are due to concepts.  
These are due to conceptualization  
(*prapañca*)  
But conceptualization is stopped by  
emptiness.<sup>2</sup>

Of course the most pernicious "conceptualization" of all is the belief in the self:

"I am not, I will not be.  
I have not, I will not have,"  
That frightens all children  
And kills fear in the wise.

By him who speaks only to help  
Beings, it was said that they all  
Have arisen from the conception of "I"  
And are enveloped with the conception  
of "mine."

(*Ratnāvalī* 26-27)

And, above all, it is this concept which ought to be undermined by a correct understanding of *śūnyatā*:

Having thus seen the aggregates as  
untrue,  
The conception of "I" is abandoned  
And due to this abandonment  
The aggregates arise no more.  
(*Ratnāvalī* 30)<sup>3</sup>

But how are we to develop such a genuine grasp of the theory of *śūnyatā*? The question brings us to a key Madhyamaka concept: *svabhāva*, usually translated "intrinsic nature" or, more literally, "own-nature." It may be fairly called "key concept" because it is the central task of a Madhyamaka philosopher to demonstrate that no thing possesses *svabhāva*. Or, as one of the great classic commentaries on the *Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikās* puts it:

Question: what is the real state of entities [*dharmā*]?  
Answer: Their lack of intrinsic nature [*svabhāva*].<sup>4</sup>

### THE COMMONSENSE VIEW OF THE PHENOMENAL WORLD

But, of course, it is hardly possible to disprove the existence of something without defining it first. As far as I can tell, the idea that things have *svabhāva* is simply our commonsense conviction (deeply embedded in our thinking because we never examine it) that the world is made up of real, solid, independent entities which would exist even if the rest of the world did not and which have certain definite, unchanging properties. We believe, in Lindtner's words, that it is possible for "an entity which makes sense independently of a correlate to exist."<sup>5</sup> Above all, we believe ourselves to exist as independent persons, separated from the rest of the world by our skins and our skulls and retaining the same "personalities" from one day to the next. But Nāgārjuna painstakingly demonstrates that when these assumptions are for once examined closely, they prove to be logically impossible.

For one thing, we think of entities, especially ourselves, as having certain fixed properties. But how does this harmonize with the easily observed fact that everything in the world, certainly including ourselves, changes constantly? Thus the *Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikās*, Chapter 13, verse 3:

Things are without own-nature  
Because they are seen to alter.<sup>6</sup>

Likewise, we think that all the entities we perceive in the world, notably ourselves, are independent even though they are always interacting with each other and affecting each other. But how could this be logically possible? If "the fire," say, is an independent entity, why is it that it cannot exist without fuel?

If the one were different [that is, truly separate] from the other,  
It would be so even without the other.<sup>7</sup>  
(*Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikās* 14:6,  
lines 1-2)

### DEPENDENT CO-ORIGINATION

The point is that nothing is really separate from everything else. A rigorous logical analysis bears out the Buddhist doctrine of dependent co-origination. Everything exists interdependently with everything else. And that brings us to the heart of the matter: that in Nāgārjuna's opinion (though not necessarily the opinion of all the other Buddhists in his own day or ours), dependent co-origination and *sūnyatā* were one and the same.

That nature of things which is dependent is called voidness [*sūnyatā*] for that nature which is dependent is devoid of an intrinsic nature . . . Those things which are dependently originated are not, indeed, endowed with an intrinsic nature; for they have no intrinsic nature.<sup>8</sup>

(*Vigrahavyāvartanī*, Section 22)

He states in no uncertain terms that when he says that all entities are "empty" or "void", he does *not* mean that they are non-existent. It is the incurably dense "opponent" who falls into that misunderstanding in the *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, arguing that Nāgārjuna's statement that all things are void must mean that the statement is void, since the statement is a thing, is it not? And if that means that the statement does not exist, how can the statement assert anything?

. . . your statement that all things are void, must also be void . . . it is devoid of an intrinsic nature [and] since it is devoid of an intrinsic nature, it is void. For this reason, it is incapable of denying the intrinsic nature of all things. A



fire that does not exist cannot burn, a weapon that does not exist cannot cut, water that does not exist cannot moisten; similarly a statement that does not exist cannot deny the intrinsic nature of all things. In these circumstances, your statement that the intrinsic nature of things has been denied, is not valid.' (Section I)

To this Nāgārjuna bluntly replies:

You have not understood the meaning of the voidness of things . . . That nature of the things which is dependent is voidness.<sup>10</sup>

(Section 22)

His position is that neither "existence" nor "non-existence" are valid categories.

Those who perceive self-existence and other-existence, and and existent thing and a non-existent thing, Do not perceive the true nature of the Buddha's teaching.<sup>11</sup>

(*Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikās*, 15:6)

Neither applies to things which are dependently originated (which means that they do not apply to anything, since everything is, in Nāgārjuna's view, dependently originated). In the words of Buddhapaṇita's classic commentary:

How is it logically possible . . . to say that what is dependently originated exists or does not exist?<sup>12</sup>

Here we have come to a problem—Nāgārjuna's use of the term "existence"—that has been and remains the source of endless confusion for readers of his philosophic works. My own opinion<sup>13</sup> is that in most cases this confusion vanishes if you read "has *svabhāva*" for "exists".

## THE TRUE NATURE OF PHENOMENA

If dependently originated things neither "exist" nor "do not exist," what is their nature? In the first place, all phenomena are, upon analysis, not solid entities but composites of many parts. Nāgārjuna may well have been familiar with the *Milindapañha* and its famous example of the chariot which turns out upon examination to be not any one thing but a complicated combination of wheels, axles, reins and so on. It is only when these components are assembled in a certain way that we say that there is a chariot there. Likewise, what we call the "self" or "the mind" is only a certain combination of psychological elements, such as sensations, emotions, thoughts and so forth.<sup>14</sup> Nor can any of these parts exist apart from the whole; it is, for example, scarcely possible for an emotion like anger to exist apart from somebody who has gotten angry. The *Ratnāvalī* makes a similar argument in verse 71:

Due to having many parts "one" does not exist,  
There is not anything which is without parts,  
Further without "one" "many" does not exist  
And without existence there is no non-existence.<sup>15</sup>

Just as the "chariot" disappears when the parts are disassembled, the so-called self vanishes when it is analyzed into its psychological components.

Just as there is nothing when  
A banana agree with all its parts  
Is torn apart, it is the same when a person  
Is divided into the [six] constituents.<sup>16</sup>  
(*Ratnāvalī*, verse 101)

If you search through the component parts of the self, the *skandhas*, looking for the

self, you will no more find it than you will find a chariot by sorting through a pile of spare parts in the chariot-dealer's shop.

If a sentient being is said to trans-  
migrate,  
He, sought in the five ways, does not  
exist  
In aggregates, sense-fields, and realms.  
Who then will transmigrate?"  
(*Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikās*, 16:2)

But no matter how carefully you examine the self (or the chariot), you will find nothing other than its component parts. So, if it is not simply the sum of its parts, it is nothing other than its parts either. There is nothing else there.

Thus [the self] is not different from the  
appropriation,  
Nor is it simply the appropriation.  
The self is not non-appropriation  
And it is certainly not non-existing."  
(*Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikās*, 27:8)

Everything exists only in dependence on everything else, like a reflection in the mirror which can exist only when there is a mirror, something to reflect, enough light to cause the reflection, enough cleaning fluid in the house to keep the mirror clean, and so forth.

Just as without depending on a mirror  
The image of one's face is not seen,  
So too, the "I" does not exist  
Without depending on the aggregates."<sup>9</sup>  
(*Ratnāvalī*, Verse 33)

Nāgārjuna would have liked Lewis Carroll's story of the Cheshire Cat because it expresses the same point:

"All right," said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.

"Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin," thought Alice, "but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in my life!"<sup>20</sup>

The reason for Alice's bemusement is that outside of Wonderland, a grin can no more exist outside of the context of a face than a person can exist outside of the context of the rest of the world.

Nāgārjuna mentions many metaphors for the real nature of all entities: echoes, which exist only in dependence on a sound wave, something off which to bounce, and a hearer in a certain position; dreams, which exist only in dependence on a dreamer and often on the state of his digestion; and mirages, which exist only in dependence on hot sand, the sun, the position of the observer, and so forth. While on one level the mirage is an illusion and an ephemeral one at that, it is in some sense real. It is, after all, seen. If Nāgārjuna lived today, he would point out that a mirage will even show up on a color photograph.

Having thought a mirage to be  
Water and then having gone there,  
He would just be stupid to surmise  
"That water does not exist."

One who conceives of the mirage-like  
World that it does or does not exist  
Is consequently ignorant. When there is  
Ignorance, one is not liberated."<sup>21</sup>  
(*Ratnāvalī*, Verses 55-56)

My own favorite metaphor is that of the rainbow. I and all other phenomena exist in the same way that a rainbow exists. Given a complex set of causes and conditions—light shining at a certain angle, water droplets in the atmosphere, an observer in a certain position—a rainbow will be seen for a few minutes. It is really there; you can even take a picture of it. But the phenomenon is inseparable from the conditions that give rise to it, and it is very fleeting. If I try to take the



rainbow away and put it in a bank vault, I am a fool. Likewise I am a fool if I thing myself at odds with the rest of the world, or try to make myself immortal.<sup>22</sup>

Now, if we apply this kind of logic to our bodies, it is not difficult to concede the point. It is obvious that our continued physical existence is dependent on the air around us, on our surroundings being within a certain temperature range, on our being able to get food and water, and so on. But it is harder to admit this about our minds. We cherish the illusion that we have independent thoughts, independent wills, independent consciousness. But do we really think that we do not get our most deeply held ideas, our cultural frame of reference, the very language in which we think, from the outside world? As for our consciousness, most of what we are conscious of is our sensory impressions, which are dependent on our sense organs and on (presumably) the outside world. The *Sūnyatāsaptati-kārikā* makes just this point:

Consciousness (*viññāna*) occurs dependent upon the internal and external sense fields (*āyatana*). Therefore consciousness (*viññāna*) is empty (*sūnya*), like mirages and illusions (*marīcimāyāvat*).<sup>23</sup>

(Verse 56)

If it therefore follows that I do not have *svabhāva*, then how can other people have *svabhāva*? The *Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikās* explains that:

The own-nature of another thing  
Is called "other-nature."

(15:3, lines 3-4)

It then points out that

If own-nature does not exist  
How will there be other-nature?

(15:3, lines 1-2)

It also states that if things—and beings—exist in dependence on each other (as a reflection, for example, exists only in dependence on a mirror), it is illogical to think of them as truly separate from one another:

If this is dependent upon that,  
This cannot be different from that.<sup>24</sup>

(14:5, lines 3-4)

And if there is no rigid dichotomy between "self" and "other", no invisible brick wall separating "me", the independent entity, from "my neighbor" the independent entity, what does that mean? It means that my interests are not really more important than somebody else's, that I should not make a distinction between somebody else's pain and my own. Only when I truly realize this, does it become possible to develop compassion.

## THE TWO TRUTHS

But if all beings are "void", how can one have compassion on them? Here Nāgārjuna has recourse to the famous doctrine of Absolute and Relative Truth, a concept that he did not invent but for which he is nonetheless famous.<sup>25</sup> The Absolute Truth is, in brief, that all things are void. The Relative Truth is that since "void" does *not* mean "non-existent," it is necessary to regard the world as in some sense real and to relate to the world accordingly. Both truths have to be regarded as equally valid.

The teaching of the Dharma by the various Buddhas is based on the two truths; namely, the relative (worldly) truth and the absolute (supreme) truth.

Those who do not know the distinction between the two truths cannot understand the profound nature of the Buddha's teaching.

Without relying on everyday common practices (i.e. relative truths), the ab-

solite truth cannot be expressed. Without approaching the absolute truth, nirvana cannot be attained.<sup>26</sup>

(*Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikās*, 24:8-10)

This is where we finally come to the answer to the question of how a "void" statement can assert anything. The world does not disappear in a puff of Madhyamaka smoke or dissolve into a mass of amorphous goo when we realize that it is "empty." The world is still there, operating in much the same way that it operated before; we simply perceive its true nature for the first time. The *Heart Sutra* was to restate this in its famous words:

Form is emptiness, and the very emptiness is form; emptiness is no other than form, form is no other than emptiness; whatever is form that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness that is form.<sup>27</sup>

Again, saying that the world is "empty"—that is, dependently co-originated—does not annihilate the world, it merely describes the same old world in more accurate terms than the ones in which we are accustomed to thinking. The world does not change at all; only our perception of the world changes. The fact that Nāgārjuna said that, in an ultimate sense, a fire is not different from a stack of firewood does not mean that Nāgārjuna lost his mind and tried to cook curry on a stove full of cold firewood. It means that he saw the fire and the firewood as two aspects of the great organic whole that is the world in which we live. They exist; that is Absolute Truth. Relative Truth is the act of preparing the curry on a hot stove as before. Both the Absolute Truth and Relative Truth are, therefore, indispensable for understanding the dealing with the world. Thus:

But things like a cart, a pot, a cloth, etc., though devoid of an intrinsic nature . . . because of being dependently originated, are occupied with their respective functions, e.g. carrying wood,

grass and earth, containing honey, water and milk, and protecting from cold, wind and heat. Similarly this statement of mine, though devoid of an intrinsic nature because of being dependently originated, is engaged in the task of establishing the being-devoid-of-an-intrinsic-nature of the things . . . In these circumstances, your statement: "Your statement, being devoid of an intrinsic nature, is void, and being void, it cannot negate the intrinsic nature of all things," is not valid.<sup>28</sup>

(*Vigrahavyāvartanī*, Section 22)

## UNDERSTANDING REALITY

Again, Madhyamaka philosophy was anything but the rather dry and outdated intellectual game that Western philosophy has now become. The Mādhyamikas assumed, not unreasonably, that the intellect had to play a role in one's religious practice. And the goal of their practice was nothing less than the attainment of an understanding of the true nature of reality—enlightenment, in other words. In the words of Buddhapaṇita's classic commentary to the *Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikās*:

If to see entities and nonentities were to see reality, there would be no one who would not see reality; therefore that is not the vision of reality. Therefore entities' lack of intrinsic nature is reality, and only by seeing that will one be liberated.<sup>29</sup>

By perceiving the emptiness of the concepts to which they were attached, the Mādhyamikas hoped to fulfill the promise of the Third Noble Truth, or the cessation of attachment. Again Buddhapaṇita:

When the unwise, whose intellectual eye is obscured by the darkness of confusion, conceptually construct intrinsic nature in entities, desire and hatred is

produced in them. When the light of the knowledge of dependent origination has dispelled the darkness of confusion and one sees with the eye of discernment (*prajñā*) entities' lack of intrinsic nature, then that [person's] desire and hatred do not arise in regard to [something] without a basis.<sup>30</sup>

In other words, we cling to things because we believe that they are "real" in the ordinary sense. We believe that they have an independent, substantial, and intrinsic nature of their own, that there is something solid and permanent to which we can cling. Instead, all phenomena are impermanent, unsubstantial, and dependent on causes and conditions. Therefore, as I have already explained, being attached to worldly phenomena is like wanting to hang on to rainbows.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPASSION

And there is another reason to develop a grasp of *sūnyatā*: the development of compassion. Compassion is only truly possible when you understand two things: the voidness of the distinction between self and other, and the fact that both self and other are neither existent nor non-existent. For example, if you see a discharged mental patient eating out of a garbage can, you should not think of him and his hunger as unreal; his hunger is real enough to make him miserable. What you ought to realize is that there is no reason to make such a sharp distinction between his hunger and your own that you will not give him any of the contents of your precious ego's wallet. Nāgārjuna realized all this quite clearly. That is why his manual of advice to a king, the *Ratnāvalī*, first explains the doctrine of *sūnyatā* in great detail and only then gives equally detailed advice about how the king should care for the poor, the disabled, disaster victims, and even prisoners. The king is explicitly urged to treat others as himself, something that is only possible if he stops making the usual distinction between others and himself:

Just as you love to think  
What could be done to help yourself,  
So should you love to think  
What could be done to help others.<sup>31</sup>  
(Verse 256)

No, the Mādhyamikas were not only concerned with discussions of whether the firewood was the same as or different from the fire; they recognized the importance of compassion. They recognized it, in fact, as being the only legitimate reason for teaching Buddhism.

The teacher [Nāgārjuna], having a compassionate nature and seeing that beings are afflicted by various sufferings, wished to teach the real state (*yāthātathya*) of entities (*bhāva*) in order to liberate them. Therefore he undertook the teaching of dependent origination, because it has been said, "One who sees the unreal in bound; one who sees the real is liberated."<sup>32</sup>

#### THE FIRST PURE LAND PATRIARCH

In addition to being one of the greatest of all Buddhist philosophers, Nāgārjuna also happens to be considered the first Pure Land master; therefore a Shin footnote seems in order. Long before the Shinshu existed, Nāgārjuna the philosopher understood the basic Shin insight that the ego cannot and will not liberate itself because the ego will not self-destruct. If it tries, it only forges itself more powerful attachments than ever: pride in its own spirituality and desire for spiritual achievement.

"[May] I enter into Nirvana without  
clinging,  
May Nirvana be mine."  
Those who hold thus  
Do not well understand "clinging."<sup>33</sup>  
(*Mūlamadhyamaka Kārikās* 16:9)

Was there ever a more succinct statement of the futility of *jiriki* (self-power)? There is debate over whether or not Nāgārjuna actually wrote any Pure Land treatises, but there is no doubt that he wrote that verse. And it is my humble opinion that he deserves his place on Shinshu altars for that reason alone.

## CONCLUSION

So what was Nāgārjuna's conception of *śūnyatā*? It emphatically was not the idea that nothing exists. He believed that *śūnyatā* was dependent co-origination:

That nature of things which is dependent is called voidness, for that nature which is dependent is devoid of an intrinsic nature . . . Those things which are dependently originated are not, indeed, endowed with an intrinsic nature; for they have no intrinsic nature.

(*Vigrahavyāvartanī*, Section 22)

For Nāgārjuna, all else follows.

## FOOTNOTES:

1. David Seyfort Ruegg, *the Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Vol. VII of *A History of Indian Literature*, ed. Jan Gonda (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981), pp. 5-6.

2. Christian Lindtner, "Buddhapālita On Emptiness," *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 23 (1981), p. 203.

3. Nāgārjuna and Kaysang Gyatso, *The Seventh Dalai Lama, The Precious Garland and the Song of the Four Mindfulnesses*, trans., Jeffrey Hopkins and Lati Rinpoche with Anne Klein, (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 20-21.

4. William L. Ames, "Buddhapālita's Exposition of the Madhyamaka," to appear in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy*. The

brackets are mine.

5. Lindtner, "Buddhapālita," p. 187.

6. Akira Saito, "A Study of the *Buddhapālita-Mūlamadhyamaka-Vṛtti*," Diss. Australian National University 1984, p. 181.

7. Saito, p. 190. The brackets are mine.

8. Nāgārjuna, *The Dialectical Method of Nāgārjuna (Vigrahavyāvartanī)*, trans. Kamaleswar Bhattacharya, ed. E.D. Johnston and Arnold Kunst (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), p. 17. The brackets are mine.

9. *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, pp. 5-6.

10. *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, p. 17.

11. Frederick J. Streng, *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning* (New York: Abington Press, 1967), p. 199.

12. William L. Ames, An unpublished translation of Chapter 23 of the *Buddhapālita-Mūlamadhyamaka-Vṛtti*, p. 31.

13. Which, not surprisingly, is also the opinion of my husband, William L. Ames, two of whose works I have cited.

14. Henry Clarke Warren (trans.), *Buddhism In Translations* (1896; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1973), pp. 129-146.

15. Nāgārjuna and Kaysang Gyatso, p. 27.

16. Nāgārjuna and Kaysang Gyatso, p. 32.

17. Saito, p. 209.

18. Lindtner, "Buddhapālita," p. 204.

19. Nāgārjuna and Kaysang Gyatso, p. 21.

20. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, (New York: The New American Library, 1960), p. 65.

21. Nāgārjuna and Kaysang Gyatso, p. 25.

22. So far as I know, the Mādhyamikas never actually used rainbows as an example. But I have suggested the idea to my husband, William L. Ames and to Dr. Christian Lindtner, both of whose works I have cited. They agree that it is an appropriate illustration.

23. Christian Lindtner, *Nagarjuniana: Studies In the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1982), p. 59.

24. Saito, pp. 171, 200.

25. Lindtner, *Nagarjuniana*, pp. 275-276.

26. Kenneth K. Inada, *Nāgārjuna: A Translation of his Mūlamadhyamakakārikā with an Introductory Essay* (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1970), p. 146.

27. Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966), p. 81.

28. *Vigrahavyāvartani*, p. 18.

29. Ames, "Buddhapālita."

30. Ames, "Buddhapālita."

31. Nāgārjuna and Kaysang Gyatso, p. 55.

32. Ames, "Buddhapālita."

33. Saito, p. 218. I added both the first set of quotation marks and the brackets at the suggestion of my husband, William L. Ames.

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#### WORKS IN WHICH SHINRAN QUOTES OR DISCUSSES NAGARJUNA

Shinran, *The Jōdo Wasan: The Hymns On the Pure Land*, Ryukoku Translation Series, Vol. IV, (Kyoto, Ryukoku Translation Center, Ryukoku University, 1965).

Shinran, *The Kōsō Wasan: The Hymns on the Patriarchs by Shinran*, Ryukoku Translation Series, Vol. VI, (Kyoto, Ryukoku Translation Center, Ryukoku University, 1974).

Shinran, *Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone': A Translation of Shinran's Yuishinshōmon'i*, Shin Buddhism Translation Series, ed. Yoshifumi Ueda

(Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1979).

Shinran, *Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls: A Translation of Shinran's Songō shinzō meimon*, Shin Buddhism Translation Series, ed. Yoshifumi Ueda (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1981).

Shinran, *Passages on the Pure Land Way: A Translation of Shinran's Jōdo monrui joshō*, Shin Buddhism Translation Series, ed. Yoshifumi Ueda (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1982).

Shinran, *The Shōshin Ge: The Gāthā of True Faith in the Nembutsu*, Ryukoku Translation Series, Vol. I (Kyoto, Ryukoku Translation Center, Ryukoku University, 1966).

Shinran, *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way: A Translation of Shinran's Kyōgyōshinshō, Volume I*, Shin Buddhism Translation Series, ed. Yoshifumi Ueda, (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1983). Sections 13, 14, 15.

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#### OTHER BOOKS CONSULTED ON NĀGĀRJUNA

Alfred Bloom, *Tannishō: A Resource For Modern Living*, (Honolulu: The Buddhist Study Center, 1981).

Nāgārjuna and Lama Mipham, *Golden Zephyr: Instructions From a Spiritual Friend*, trans. Leslie Kawamura (Emeryville, California: Dharma Publishing, 1975).

# The Easy Method of Entering the Stage of Non-Retrogression

by Hisao Inagaki

## INTRODUCTION

Nāgārjuna, the First Patriarch of Pure Land Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism's greatest philosopher, presents the "Easy Method" of entering *avaivartika-bhūmi* in his reputed commentary on the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (*Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā*).

*Avaivartika-bhūmi* is the stage at which bodhisattvas are assured of reaching enlightenment and never thereafter falling out of it, that is, retrogressively. Until they reach this stage, they are liable to regress to the self-satisfied stage of *śrāvaka* or *pratyekabuddha* which Nāgārjuna rates as worse than falling into hell.<sup>1</sup> Mahayana scriptures often divide bodhisattvas into two classes: those liable to regression and those firmly set for enlightenment without regression. In the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, there is a chapter entitled "Regression and Non-regression", in which it is explained that the bodhisattvas of non-regression are those who will not fall back to the stage of a *śrāvaka* or *pratyekabuddha* and will certainly reach the highest, perfect enlightenment.<sup>2</sup>

The *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā* is intended primarily to present the essentials of bodhisattva practice based on the 'Ten Stages' of the *Garland Sutra*, but Nāgārjuna is seen in the Chapter on "Easy Practice" as an advocate of an easy method of entering the First Bhūmi, the Stage of Non-Retrogression. While recommending reciting the names of the Buddhas, especially Amitābha, as the easy method of entering the Stage of Non-Retrogression, he

professes his reverence for Amitābha and other Buddhas of the past, present and future. Furthermore, at the end of this chapter, he mentions 143 bodhisattvas and urges us to worship and remember them in order to reach the Stage of Non-Retrogression.

## NON-RETROGRESSION IN EARLY BUDDHISM

The concept of non-regression is not restricted to Mahayana Buddhism. For instance, Abhidharma discourses, such as *Abhidharmakośa* and *Mahāvibhāṣā*,<sup>3</sup> state that when practitioners reach the Stage of *Kṣānti* (Insightful Patience), or the third of the four stages before that of Śrotāpanna Stream Winner, they are no longer liable to commit the grave offenses called '*ānantarya karma*' and so will not fall into those evil realms of samsara to which those offenses would consign them. Hence, the Stage of *Kṣānti* is also 'unretrogressive'.

Further, the *Mahāvastu*, a discourse of the *Lokottaravāda* school which entertained certain Mahayanistic ideas, divides the careers of bodhisattvas into four stages:<sup>4</sup>

1. *prakṛti-caryā* (nature-based practice),
2. *pranidhāna-caryā* (resolution practice),
3. *anuloma-caryā* (conforming practice),
4. *avivarta-caryā* (perseverance practice).



This last is explained thus:

“*Vivarta-caryā* means that bodhisattvas fall away and go again through the round of rebirths. *Avivarta-caryā* means that they are unwaveringly set for enlightenment.”

### NON-RETROGRESSION IN MAHAYANA

In Mahayana Buddhism, the Stage of Non-Retrogression is usually identified with the First *Bhūmi*. Before reaching the First *Bhūmi*, bodhisattvas have imperfect and ‘defiled’ wisdom and so they are not basically different from ordinary people. Entering the First *Bhūmi* after a long period of practice marks the transformation of bodhisattvas into sages. They are now rid of the nature of ordinary people (*prthagjanatva*) and have acquired the nature of righteous people (*samyaktva*). For this reason, they are called ‘those who are firmly set for righteousness’ (*samyaktvaniyatarāṣī*); ‘righteousness’ here means Nirvana or Bodhi. They are also called ‘those who have been born into the Tathāgata family’ for it is certain that they will reach the highest, perfect enlightenment.

In the ordinary course of bodhisattvahood, a bodhisattva must work diligently for a long time to reach the Stage of Non-Retrogression. Nāgārjuna says in the *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā*, Chapter on ‘Easy Practice’:

“If a bodhisattva has not yet entered the Stage of Non-Retrogression,  
He should always strive and be diligent  
as if putting out a fire on his head.”

According to a widely accepted view, it takes one *asamkhyā kalpa* of practice for a bodhisattva to reach this stage. It is hardly possible for ordinary people to keep on practicing over many lives.

### BUDDHA-VISUALIZATION AS A METHOD OF ATTAINING THE STAGE OF NON-RETROGRESSION

However, in the *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā*, we find much easier methods of reaching this stage. In Chapter 5,<sup>8</sup> Nāgārjuna explains that the Stage of Non-Retrogression is attainable by visualizing a Buddha or by hearing a Buddha’s Name. Buddha-visualizing, as explained in later chapters, refers particularly to two *Samādhis*: 1. the *Buddha-Manifestation-Samādhi* (*Pratyutpanna Samādhi*) and 2. the *Buddha-Remembering-Samādhi* (*Buddha-anusmṛti samādhi*).

The first entails concentrating on a particular Buddha, especially on Amitābha. According to the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi Sūtra* which explains this practice, if we perform it single-heartedly for one to seven days, we shall see the Buddha, thus entering this *Samādhi*. The same sutra explains that the practice of concentrating on the Buddha for three months enables us to enter this *samādhi*. Since we enter this *samādhi* by the Buddha’s power (*adhiṣṭhāna*), it is much easier to then practice the usual bodhisattva practices which are based on our own power. Nāgārjuna explains this *samādhi* fully in Chapters 20 and 25.

The Buddha-Remembering *Samādhi* is threefold:<sup>9</sup> (a) meditation on the Buddha’s glorious physical characteristics; (b) (for advanced bodhisattvas) meditation on the Buddha’s 40 special qualities, and (c) meditation on Thusness (*tathatā*) which only the most capable bodhisattvas can practice. The first part of the Buddha-Remembering *Samādhi*, therefore, is basically the same as the Buddha-Manifestation *Samādhi* and is distinguished from the latter in that in the former the practitioner contemplates the Buddha’s thirty-two major physical characteristics and eighty minor ones. Further, it is taught that when the Buddha-Manifestation *Samādhi* is ac-

complished, one sees all the Buddhas, as indicated by the full Sanskrit name of this sutra, '*pratyutpanna-buddha-sammukha-avasthita-samādhi*' (Samādhi in which one stands in the presence of the Buddhas of the present).

### RECITATION OF THE HOLY NAME AS THE EASIEST METHOD

The method described in Chapter 9 of the *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā*, entitled "Easy Practice", is more important than the Buddha-visualisation practices because it is much easier and more practicable for ordinary people. The "Easy Practice" entails reciting the Name of any Buddha or Great Bodhisattva<sup>10</sup> with firm faith, although Amitābha's Name is specially mentioned together with his Original Vow. A 32-stanza hymn in his praise is added, in which Nāgārjuna professes his faith in the adoration of Amitābha. It is clear that Nāgārjuna's intention was to present Amitābha's salvation as the most relevant path of "Easy Practice" for all who seek a quick way to the Stage of Non-Retrogression and subsequently to the Stage of Buddhahood.

Although he does not mention it, presumably Nāgārjuna based his recitation practice exposition on the Pure Land (*Sukhāvatīvyūha*) group of sutras, because most of the 107 Buddhas mentioned in the text<sup>11</sup> appear in the Sanskrit *Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* and several verses in this chapter suggest strong connections with it.<sup>12</sup>

It should be noted that reciting the Names of the Buddhas is not supposed to be a mere oral practice or mechanical repetition without heartfelt awareness or mindfulness but should be based on 'faith' and accompanied by reverential acts such as 'joining one's hands,' 'bowing down,' 'prostrating oneself' and 'worshipping.' The relation between 'faith' and recitation may be gauged from the following quotations:

"The practitioner should reverentially hold the Name close to the heart and recite it."

"He should recite the Name with singleness of heart."

"He should recite the Name and remember it single-heartedly."

"He should remember me (i.e., Amitābha), recite my Name and take refuge in me."

Deep and continuous Buddha-remembering as the basis of reciting is mentioned by Nāgārjuna to be the cause of reaching the Stage of Non-Retrogression:

"Therefore, you should always remember (Amitābha)."

"If anyone remembers this Buddha's (i.e., Amitābha's) infinite power and merit, he will instantly enter the Stage of Assurance."

"You should remember all (these bodhisattvas), revere and worship them and thereby seek to reach the Stage of Non-Retrogression."

The act of Hearing the Name, or the explanation of its merit etc., naturally precedes its recitation or remembrance and so the merit of hearing the Name is often mentioned. Nāgārjuna even asserts that hearing the Name ensures that the aspirants will reach the Stage of Non-Retrogression:

"If a man is able to hear the exposition of the Name of these Buddhas, he will acquire immeasurable merit."

"If a man hears the Buddha's Name, he will become unretrogressive."

"Those who hear the Buddha's Name will attain the Stage of Non-Retrogression."

### CONCLUSION

The 'Easy Practice' for entering the Stage of Non-Retrogression may be summarized



from the foregoing as embracing two aspects:

1. Name- or sound-based practice which consists of hearing and reciting the Name of Buddhas and bodhisattvas while continuously remembering them.

2. Image- or form-based practice which consists of visualizing the Buddha's physical characteristics or 40 special qualities or meditating on True Thusness. The first is fully discussed in Chapter 9 of the *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā* and the second, which includes the Buddha-Manifestation *Samādhi* and Buddha-Remembering *Samādhi*, is presented in other chapters.

In the later development of Pure Land thought in China, the first is called '*nien-fo*' (*nembutsu*, remembering the Buddha) and the second is called '*kuan-fo*' (*kanbutsu*, visualising the Buddha). Nāgārjuna uses the term 'Buddha-Remembering *Samādhi*' for the second but '*nien-fo*' in its wide sense includes both recitation and meditation practices.

Visualising Amitābha creates a strong bond between Amitābha and us which keeps us from falling back to lower and less secure states, but what assurance is given to those who just recite the Name, and when does it occur? In the Chapter on 'Easy Practice,' Nāgārjuna says that 'as soon as' (*chi* or *chi-shih*; Skt. *tāvat*) we hear or recite the Buddha's Name, we enter the Stage of Non-Retrogression which means we need not wait until we die and are born in the Pure Land to become a non-retrogressive bodhisattva. Nāgārjuna's reference to 'faith' indicates that the firm and pure faith that comes in the course of, and as a result of, hearing and reciting the Buddha's Name sure evidence that we have reached this stage. Faith awakened by spiritual contact with the Buddha through hearing his Name, opens up the treasury of merit and power that it embodies and enables us to proceed towards Buddhahood

unretrogressively. This faith places us under the influence of the Buddha from which there is no falling back.

Speaking in terms of temporal sequence in our spiritual experience of the Nembutsu, hearing the Name comes first, then accepting it in deep faith, and finally reciting it. Since these three are joined in an organic whole, one cannot be taken up separately from the rest. 'Hearing' in the true sense of the term is, as Shinran explains throughout his writings, nothing but 'true faith', i.e., acceptance of the Name. When accepted in us, the Name expresses itself as the Nembutsu recitation.

To repeat, the Stage of Non-Retrogression is the most important turning point in the bodhisattva's career. Before we enter this Stage, our practice is based on our limited power and imperfect insight. At that point, self-attachment is discarded along with our 'defiled' and discriminative wisdom. Our spiritual eye is opened to the Buddha's boundless merit and to his universal and eternal activity. Therefore, Nāgārjuna describes this spiritual change as "birth into the Tathāgāta family." As this change can be brought about quickly and safely by the *nien-fo* (*nembutsu*) practice, it is called the "Easy Practice."

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#### FOOTNOTES:

1. *Taishō Tripitaka* (abbreviated *TT*) 26, 41a.

2. *TT*. 7, 264.

3. *Mahāvibhāṣā*, *TT*. 27, 30c; *Abhidharma-kośa*, *TT*. 29, 120b.

4. *Mahāvastu*, Vol. I, 46-63. J.J. Jones translated the terms as follows: (1) natural practices, (2) resolving career, (3) conforming career and (4) persevering career.

5. *Ibid.*, I, 63.

6. For example, Vasubandhu's commen-

tary on the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, *TT*. 31, 229c.

7. *TT*. 26, 41a: for an English translation, H. Inagaki, "The Path of Easy Practice," *Ryūkokudaigaku ronshū*, No. 422, 1983, p. 38.

8. *TT*. 26, 32c.

9. *TT*. 26, 68c, ff., 86a, and 71c, ff.

10. H. Inagaki, "The Path of Easy Practice," pp. 54-55. 143 Bodhisattvas' names are presented, of which the last 49 correspond very closely to the Bodhisattvas mentioned in the opening part of the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra*.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47. For a study on Chinese and Sanskrit correspondents of the

proper names which appear in the Chapter "The Easy Practice," see H. Inagaki, "A Glossary of the Proper Names which Appear in the Chapter on Easy Practice of the *Jūjūbibasharon*," *Jōdokyō no kenkyū*, Kyoto, 1982, pp. 43-71.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-50.

13. Tsung-mi (780-840), for example, distinguished four types of *nien-fo*: (1) *shōmyō nembutsu*, recitation of the Buddha's name, (2) *kanzō nembutsu*, contemplation of the Buddha's statue, picture, etc., (3) *kansō nembutsu*, visualization of the Buddha's figure and (4) *jissō nembutsu*, meditation on True Thusness.

## Pure Land Systematics in India: The *Buddhabhūmisūtra* and the *Trikāya* Doctrine

by John P. Keenan

### INTRODUCTION

When tracing the lines of Indian Buddhist doctrinal development, Buddhologists most often portray Pure Land teaching as cultic in focus and devotional in impact. The principal Pure Land scriptures do indeed aim at an inculcation of faith and practice, and do not evidence any intent toward systematic explication of the meaning of the doctrine presented.

There are Indian Buddhist thinkers who deliteralize and deconstruct Pure Land. However, these thinkers are not, so it would appear, themselves Pure Land adherents, but rather philosophers from the Śāstra schools. Asaṅga argues that pure Buddha fields are ideas flowing from wisdom.<sup>1</sup> Vasubandhu interprets Pure Land as pure mind.<sup>2</sup> Śīlabhadra and Bandhuprabha see Pure Land as a symbol for wisdom focused on the pure Dharma realm.<sup>3</sup> But nowhere, it would appear, is there any evidence of Indian Pure Land thinkers who themselves focus upon the doctrinal content of Pure Land and attempt to deliteralize its message.

The intent of this paper is to argue for the opposite thesis: That there is indeed a record of systematic and reflective thinking in India on the meaning of Pure Land and that this is the *Buddhabhūmisūtra*, *The Scripture on the Buddha Land*.

### THE TEXT AND ITS PROBLEMATIC

The *Buddhabhūmisūtra* is a short text

(one *chuan* in Chinese) which systematically interprets the constituent factors of the Pure Land, which is understood to be the realm of awakening and of the four wisdoms. The original Sanskrit of this scripture is not extant, but two translations remain. A Tibetan version is entitled '*phags-pa sangs-rgyas kyi sa zhes-bya ba theg-pa chen-po'i mdo*.' The Chinese version is entitled simply *Fo-ti-ching*.<sup>4</sup>

The text opens with an introduction which describes the Buddha, the Pure Land in which he preaches this scripture, and the gathered assembly of bodhisattvas, *mahāśrāvakas*, and *mahāsattvas*. The body of the work treats the five factors which constitute the Buddha land: the pure Dharma realm, Mirror wisdom, Equality wisdom, Discernment wisdom, and Duty-Fulfillment wisdom. Each of these factors is described by a series of ten descriptions or similes. The Pure Dharma realm is compared to empty space, which pervades all places without itself being in any way delimited. Mirror wisdom is likened to a round mirror which reflects all images without discrimination. Equality wisdom is simply described in ten statements on the equality of all things. Discernment wisdom is described by drawing comparisons from the world and its contents. Duty-Fulfillment wisdom is understood through analogy with the actions of sentient beings in the world. In effect, the first two wisdoms correspond to the Yogācāra notion of Non-discriminative wisdom (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*) and the last two to subsequently attain-

ed wisdom (*prṣṭalabhā-jñāna*). Both focus on the pure Dharma realm as the space of emptiness and the sphere of compassion.

The concluding section of this scripture offers two similes to illustrate the nature of the wisdom described, now identified as a phenomenal wisdom all of one unified taste. The first simile depicts the luxurious grove of the gods wherein they lose any sense of their individual identities, drawing the analogy that entry into the Dharma realm of emptiness leads to the wisdom insight into the equality of all beings. The second simile notes the same point by describing the flow of all rivers and streams to the oneness of the great ocean.

Four verses then summarize the meaning of the entire text.

The *Buddhabhūmisūtra* does not, however, come to us on its own merits and present itself for our consideration as an independent text. Rather, it is embedded within a Yogācāra discourse on the nature of ultimate reality and wisdom. It is the source text for an extensive and important Yogācāra commentary, the *Buddhabhūmivivākhyāna* by Śīlabhadra or its much-expanded Chinese version, the *Buddhabhūmyupadeśa* of Bandhuprabha.<sup>4</sup> Given this contextual web, the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* has come to be considered as itself a Yogācāra composition. Questions arise, however, when one attempts to identify its place in Yogācāra thinking, for while there is evidence that it is a very early text, it is never mentioned by Yogācāra writers before Asvabhāva (ca. 450-550). The evidence is as follows:

1) One of the concluding similes of the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* (that all rivers flow into the oneness of the great ocean) and its concluding verses in their entirety are found also in the Bodhi chapter of the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra*, thus showing a clear interdependence between these texts, in one direction or the other.<sup>7</sup>

2) Both Asvabhāva in his *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāraṭīkā* and Sthiramati in his *Sūtrālaṃkāra-vṛttibhāṣya* identify the source of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* passage as the *Buddhabhūmisūtra*.

... the following part is based on the *Buddhabhūmisūtra*. This sutra declared: "The Buddha land is comprised of five factors, viz., the Pure Dharma realm, Mirror wisdom, Equality wisdom, Discernment wisdom, and Duty-fulfillment wisdom." Hence the topic of this section [of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*] should be considered according to the order of the five factors in this [*Buddhabhūmi*] sutra.<sup>8</sup>

This reference witnesses to the fact that these Yogācāra thinkers were of the opinion that the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* preceded the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*.

3) The initial section of the introduction of the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* which describes the merits of the Buddha is also found in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* in almost identical terms.<sup>9</sup> It also appears in Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasamgraha*, where Paramārtha identifies its source as "The Scripture in a Hundred Thousand [Verses] of the Bodhisattva Canon,"<sup>10</sup> an unknown text. The absence of any reference to the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* on the part of Paramārtha here seems to suggest that he had no knowledge of it.

This evidence, scanty as it is, can lead to two opposite conclusions. Nishio Kyoo and Hakamaya Noriaki argue that the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* is indeed the source for the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* and at least older than that text.<sup>11</sup> Their principal evidence is the citations in the commentaries of Asvabhāva and Sthiramati.

More recently Takasaki Jikido has presented an opposing view, that the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* is in fact a comparatively late

composition and draws on the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālamkāra*.<sup>12</sup> Chief among his arguments is the absence of any reference to it by Yogācāra prior to Asvabhāva. By this reason, it would have been composed somewhere around 400 CE, before Asvabhāva but after Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. He would hold that Asvabhāva and Sthiramati, who follows his lead, simply mistake the direction of dependence.

In both opinions, scant attention is paid to the relationship between the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* and the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* (or the *Mahāyānasamgraha*), for the evidence there is not conclusive and the place of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* as a, if not the, foundational Yogācāra scripture is attested by a host of later references.

#### THE PRESENT THESIS

The present thesis attempts to do justice to the above evidence by maintaining that the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* is indeed early and is the source for the parallel passages in both the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, as indicated by Asvabhāva and Sthiramati, and for the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, but that it was not originally a Yogācāra composition. This would account for the failure of the early Yogācāra masters to mention it. Rather it is an attempt by a person cognizant of the burgeoning Pure Land cults with their many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to systematize and interpret the meaning of those Pure Land cults and practices within an overall Mahayana understanding. The argument is as follows:

1) The *Buddhabhūmisūtra* does not mention the basic Yogācāra themes. There is no reference to the container consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) or to the development of consciousness (*vijñānapariṇāma*). There is no account of the three patterns/natures of consciousness (*trilakṣaṇatrisvabhāva*). In its concluding verses, the wisdom of suchness (*ta-*

*thatā-jñāna*) is differentiated into essence, dharma-enjoyment, and transformation, but these differentiations are not identified as Buddha bodies and the Three Body theme (*trikāya*) remains undeveloped. These are the most central themes of Asaṅga in his *Mahāyānasamgraha*,<sup>13</sup> and their absence strongly suggests that the text in question is not a Yogācāra work. The themes on the four wisdoms and the pure Dharma realm loom large in later Yogācāra commentaries, especially the *Ch'eng Wei-shih lun*.<sup>14</sup> But this is probably the direct result of the adoption of this Pure Land text by Śīlabhadra and Bandhuprabha, a disciple of Dharmapāla, and its introduction into later Yogācāra discourse on wisdom and the Dharma Realm. It was probably so adopted by Yogācāra thinkers, because it admirably served the purpose of presenting a well-developed and systematic understanding of awakening—a theme to which no other Yogācāra text was specifically devoted. The absence of reference to it by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu results from the fact that the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* was not within their doctrinal lineage, at least not yet. One can then conclude with Asvabhāva and Sthiramati that it is the source for the parallel passages in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*.

2) Furthermore, there is then no improbability of its being also the source for the introduction to the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, for, since it was not originally a Yogācāra text, it would not in any way supplant that text as the foundational Yogācāra scripture. It would then appear that the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* predates the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*. It might be thought that Paramārtha's commentary argues against this contention:

In the Bodhisattva canon there is a particular Pure Land Scripture. This scripture has one hundred thousand verses. Thus it is called "The Scripture in One Hundred Thousand [Verses]."<sup>15</sup>

Étienne Lamotte presents evidence that this

"scripture in one hundred verses" is an alternate title for the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*,<sup>16</sup> and thus Paramārtha's witness shows that he was aware both that the *Mahāyānasamgraha* passage was not original and that a parallel passage was present in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*.

If indeed there once was a version of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* in a hundred thousand verses, Paramārtha may have been referring to it. Yet he clearly identifies the source of the *Mayāyānasamgraha* passage as "a Pure Land scripture." He seems to have combined his awareness that the passage is both present in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* and that its source is a Pure Land text. It is, however, more probable that the introductory passage was borrowed from the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* by the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, because its rhetoric fits perfectly in the context of the *Buddhabhūmisūtra*. It describes the qualities of Pure Land, the merits of the Buddha dwelling there, and the good qualities of this assembled community. It is then a perfect lead-in to the main theme of the *Buddhabhūmisūtra*, i.e., the reality of Pure Land. But it does not harmonize so closely with the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, for the body of this latter text begins not with any disquisition on Pure Land, but with a discourse on the unconditioned in Prajñāpāramitā style.

The *Buddhabhūmisūtra* would then be earlier than the source for the parallel passages in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* and probably earlier than the source for the parallel introduction in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*. Read on its own merits and apart from the later commentaries, this scripture would appear to be an Indian attempt to understand the Buddha land by going beyond its imagery and systematically interpreting it as wisdom (in four aspects) focused on the pure Dharma realm.

3) The specific *sitz im leben* of the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* is then not Yogācāra

philosophy. Rather, its context is to be sought within Pure Land devotional practices. The *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka* witnesses to the presence of a host of Pure Land cults and practices directed to a number of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.<sup>17</sup> Yamada Isshi dates this text between 200 and 400 CE, and specifies its intent as an apologetic for the Buddha Śākyamuni, who, it is argued, is superior in compassion to the host of Pure Land Buddhas, precisely because his vows (*praṇidhāna*) have led him to take birth in this Sāhā world of suffering, rather than in a pure land.

For the purpose at hand, this text demonstrates both the prevalence of Pure Land devotional cults and the felt need to interpret them within the overall Mahayana tradition. It is then not difficult to suppose that the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* was also composed within this living context, not so much with the aim of bolstering flagging devotion to Śākyamuni, but rather of answering the more doctrinal question of how one was to understand Pure Land Buddhas, whoever they might be.

### TRIKĀYA

Because of its co-option by later Yogācāra thinkers, the place of the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* within its own contextual web of ideas and its own problematic has been obscured. If, however, one can read it in its proper context as an attempt to interpret Pure Land practices within an overall Mahayana understanding of emptiness and Buddhahood, then a number of interesting conclusions follow in regard to the development of Yogācāra doctrine.

The *Buddhabhūmivivākhyāna* and the *Buddhabhūmyupadeśa* are prime sources for investigating the Yogācāra teaching on the Three Bodies of Buddha. Indeed Bandhu-prabha's Chinese text adds a full chapter specifically to the theme.<sup>18</sup> However, if it is true that the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* predates



both the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* and the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, then its doctrinal understanding of Buddha bodies stands at the beginning of this particular doctrinal tradition.

Buddhologists have long tried to uncover the lines of development for the *trikāya* theme within its apparent Yogācāra context. They have often seen the Enjoyment Body (*sambhoga-kāya*) as an intermediate body between the Dharma Body and the Transformation Body. If, however, the initial presentation of the *trikāya*, in fact, occurred in the *Buddhabhūmisūtra*, then the original form of this doctrine was not Yogācāra at all. Rather, it reflected the concern of a Pure Land *Mahāyāna* thinker to understand the Pure Land Buddhas, who are the direct referent for the Enjoyment Bodies, having created pure lands of untold bliss through their past actions and vows wherein both they and their devotees enjoy the one taste of the doctrine.<sup>19</sup> This supposition is further bolstered by Asaṅga who in his *Mahāyānasamgraha* characterizes the Enjoyment body by its assemblies, its pure lands, and its enjoyment of doctrine.<sup>20</sup> The point to stress, however, is that these Pure Land Buddhas, such as Amitābha and Akṣobhya, are not merely case examples of Enjoyment bodies, but the source for later Yogācāra thinking of Buddha bodies. They are the prototypes, whose existence in devotional practice led the author of the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* to present his threefold distinction, and the later Yogācāra masters to develop the theme more fully in their many treatises.

The Introduction to the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* has two phrases that relate to Buddha bodies: 1) "His body issues forth to all worlds,"<sup>21</sup> and "all the bodies which he manifests cannot be differentiated."<sup>22</sup> The first sentence is interpreted by Śīlabhadra to refer to the Transformation body and is explained as referring to the descent of the Buddha from the Tuṣita heaven.<sup>23</sup> The second passage is interpreted as referring to the

undefiled Buddha bodies of golden hue, which do not arise from "unreal imagining."<sup>24</sup> Thus these bodies indicate the Pure Land Buddhas encountered in concentration and recitation practices. Their appearance is due to the vows of the Pure Land Buddhas and is not imagined, although they take on a golden hue in those concentrated visualization practices.

But the most important passage by far is found in the concluding verses. As it is embedded within these verses, the entire section is given here:

The suchness of all things is characterized by purity from the obstacles (1a).  
Mastery in reality wisdom and its object is characterized by inexhaustibility (1b).  
Because of the cultivation of the wisdom of suchness in all respects, full perfection is realized (2a).  
[That wisdom] establishes the two (i.e., benefit and happiness) for all sentient beings and brings about inexhaustible results in all respects (2b).  
[That wisdom] has the activity of a very skillful method in the transformations of body, speech, and mind (3a).  
[That wisdom] is fully endowed with the two limitless doors of concentration and mystic formulas (3b).  
[That wisdom] displays the differentiations of essence, the enjoyment of doctrine, and transformation (4a).<sup>25</sup>  
This Pure Dharma Realm is enunciated by all Buddhas (4b).<sup>26</sup>

The subject described in verse 1 is "the suchness of all things" (*chos rnam kun gyi de bzhin nyid*), which is further identified in the last verse as the Dharma realm (*chos cyi dbyings*). The point in these summary verses is apparently to understand all Buddha bodies within the overall theme of suchness and the Dharma realm, i.e., within an overall Mahāyāna understanding.

The subject of verses 2 through 4a, however, appears to be "the wisdom of suchness," i.e., wisdom not only enables one to become a Buddha by realizing the reality of suchness, but also serves to provide sentient beings with both benefit and happiness through its skillful transformations and its limitless practices of concentration and mystic formulas. It is precisely such practices of concentration and mystic formulas that most probably constituted the central focus of the Pure Land cults, wherein one entered into a state of concentrated visualization of Buddhas and recited formulas in their praise. Thus verse 4a presents the differentiations of this wisdom not only by referring to essence and transformation, but also by including the enjoyment of doctrine as the content of Pure Land devotional practice. This enjoyment receives no extended treatment, because it is not as yet a fully articulated factor in a consciously developed doctrine of the Three Bodies, but simply a reference to wisdom as practiced by Pure Land devotees.

### CONCLUSION

The above thesis is that the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* is an early Pure Land text and that source for both the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* and the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*. If this conclusion is accepted, then its doctrine of the three differentiations, of the wisdom of suchness as including both the transformations of "historical" Buddhas and the enjoyment of doctrine that characterize Pure Land concentration and recitation practices, is the earliest form of the doctrine of Three Buddha bodies. There is, as a result, no need to interpret the origin of the Enjoyment Body as some kind of intermediary between the Dharma Body and the Transformation Body. One need only identify its living context within Pure Land practice.

From the extant references to Pure Land practice by *Asaṅga* and *Vasubandhu*, it may also be the case that they themselves, as sug-

gested by *Vasubandhu's* authorship of the *Sukhāvatīvyūhopadeśa*,<sup>27</sup> may have been Pure Land practitioners with the full awareness that they were engaged in symbolic liturgies.

### FOOTNOTES:

1. *Trīṣatikāyāḥ Prajñāpāramitāyāḥ Kārikāsaptaiḥ*: "[Buddha] lands cannot be grasped because they are nothing but conscious constructs flowing from wisdom (*jñānanīṣyañḍavijñaptimātratvāt*).'" In Guiseppe Tucci, *Minor Buddhist Texts*, Part I, 1956: Roma: Serie Orientale Roma IX, Istituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (Kyoto: Rinsen, 1978 reprint), p. 63.

2. In his *Sukhāvatīvyūhopadeśa*. See Minoru Kiyota, "Buddhist Devotional Meditation," in *Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation*, ed., M. Kiyota (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978).

3. For *Śīlabhadra's* text see Nishio Kyoo, *The Buddhābhūmisūtra and the Buddhābhūmivyākhyāna* (Nagoya: Kakinkaku Shobo, 1939) and his Japanese study and translation, *Bucchikyōron no kenkyū* (Nagoya: 1940). Both recently reprinted by the Suzuki Research Foundation. For *Bandhuprabha's* text, see John Keenan, *A Study of the Buddhābhūmyupadeśa: The Doctrinal Development of the Notion of Wisdom in Yogācāra Thought* (unpub. Ph.d. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980).

4. For the Tibetan text, see Nishio, *The Buddhābhūmisūtra and the Buddhābhūmivyākhyāna*.

5. T. 16. pp. 720-724.

6. The Chinese text of *Bandhuprabha*, *Fo-ti ching-lun*, here restored as the *Buddhābhūmyupadeśa*, is based on the earlier version of *Śīlabhadra*, preserved in Tibetan and restored as the *Buddhābhūmivyākhyāna*. *Bandhuprabha's* version is twice as long as



Śīlabhadra's, because Bandhuprabha (or possibly its translator *Hsüan Tsang*) had incorporated much material from the *Dharmapāla/Fa-hsiang* tradition of Yogācāra. An English translation of the Chinese text, which marks the divergences, is given in Keenan, *A Study of the Buddhābhūmyupadeśa*.

7. Sylvain Levi, *Mahāyāna sūtrālaṃkāra, Exposé de la Doctrine du Grand Véhicule* (2 vols.; Paris: Librairie Honore Champion, 1907), p. 149.

8. Asvabhāva's passage on these verses is found in *Theg pa chen pa'i mdo sde'i rgyan gyi rgya cher bshad pa*. P. ed., #5530, pp. 80b.5-83b.8. Sthiramati's passage is in *mdo sde rgyan gyi 'grel bshad*, P. ed., #5531, pp. 149b.1-160a.2. The above translation is drawn from Hakamaya Noriaki, "Asvabhāva's Commentary on the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* IX.56-76," in *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku*, (December 1971) 20.1: 472-471.

9. For Bodhirucci's translation, see T. 16, p. 665c. For Hsuan Tsang's translation, see T. 16, p. 688b. Also confer Étienne Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocanasūtra: L'Explication des Mystères*, (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, p. 167).

10. T. 31, p. 263a.

11. Hakamaya Noriaki, "Shōjō kokkai kō," *Nantō Bukkyō*, 37.1.n3 (November, 1976). Kyoo Nishio, *Bucchikyoron no kenkyū*, pp. 1-32.

12. In his *A Study of the Ratnagotravibhāga*, pp. 403-404, Takasaki agrees with Nishio's opinion, but he alters his view in "Hōsshin no ichigenron: Nyoraizō shisō no hō kannen," *Hirakawa Akira Hakase Kanreki Kinen ronshū: Bukkyō ni okeru hō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1975-76), p. 239, n. 38; and in his *Nyoraizō shisō no keiseki* (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1974), pp. 346-347, he presents the opinion that the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* depends upon the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*.

13. Asaṅga summarizes Yogācāra in

these terms in his *Mahāyānasamgraha*. See Lamotte, *La Somme*, pp. 132-133.

14. *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: La Siddhi de Hiuan-Tsang*, de La Vallée Poussin (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1929), pp. 681-692.

15. T. 31, p. 263a.

16. Lamotte, *La Somme*, p. 62\*.

17. Isshi Yamada, *Karuṇapūṇḍarīka: Edited with Introduction and Notes*, I (London: University of London, 1968), pp. 121-140.

18. Keenan, *A Study of the Buddhābhūmyupadeśa*, pp. 850-891.

19. From the *Buddhabhūmisūtra*, Keenan, *A Study*, pp. 786-787.

20. Lamotte, *La Somme*, p. 267, and 266, n.2.

21. Keenan, *A Study of the Buddhābhūmyupadeśa*, p. 470.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 470.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 478 and p. 489.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 479 and p. 490.

25. The text reads: *svabhāvadharmaśāmbhoganirmāṇairbhinnavṛttikaḥ*. In Tibetan: rang-bzhin chos rdzogs-long-spyod dang sprui-pas tha-dad 'hun-pa-can.

26. Nishio, *The Buddhābhūmisūtra and the Buddhābhūmivyākhyāna*, pp. 22-23 and p. 132, n.66.

27. In his "Ryūju Seishin ni okeru Jōdo shisō," in *Bukkyō no konpon shinri*, ed. and com. by Mimamoto Shoson (Tokyo: 1955), Yamaguchi Susumu presents the opinion that Vasubandhu, after being won over to Mahayana (in its Yogācāra reading) by his brother Asaṅga, in fact experienced yet another conversion to Pure Land. In the above understanding, no such conversion would be necessary for a Yogācāra scholar to engage in liturgical Pure Land practice, as long as the meditative images were understood to be, in Asaṅga's words, "conscious constructs flowing from wisdom," as long as the Buddha Land was understood to be comprised of the Pure Dharma Realm and the four wisdoms.

## Where is the Pure Land?: Controversy in Chinese Buddhism on the Nature of Pure Land

by Kenneth K. Tanaka

### BACKGROUND

According to the Pure Land sutras, Sukhāvati Pure Land is a realm located billions of Buddha lands to the west, established by Amitābha (Ch. O-mi-t'o; Jpn. Amida) Buddha as a result of his compassionate bodhisattva vows to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> The sutras depict Sukhāvati in glorious splendor, describing the bejewelled ground, trees, lakes and palaces, where mellifluous music is heard, and where the majestic appearances of Amitābha (or Amitāyus) and his attendant bodhisattvas can be seen.<sup>2</sup> Appealing to both monks and laity alike, the sutras exhort aspirants for rebirth in the Pure Land to engage in a broad range of practices which include meditation, precepts, virtuous acts, *stūpa* building and contemplation. Those reborn in the Pure Land, an ideal environment in contrast to this world for consummating their practices, are assured of not retrogressing to lower spiritual levels and of realizing the ultimate Mahayana goal of perfect enlightenment (*saṃyaksambodhi*).

In China from the mid-sixth to early ninth century, known as the "golden age" of Pure Land Buddhist doctrinal development, the idea of rebirth in the Pure Land came under attack from other Buddhist schools, notably by Ch'an (Jpn. Zen) and Maitreya (Jpn. Mikoku) followers. The Pure Land proponents vigorously defended its position by referring to earlier Indian Mahayana concepts and scriptural authority. These controversies afford us with a glimpse at the process of refining and clarification that the early Pure

Land Buddhists went through in their own understanding of the nature of Pure Land. Some of the issues are just as alive today as they were 1,400 years ago, particularly the question concerning the location of the Pure Land to which this paper is devoted.

The polemics as to "where is the Pure Land?" centered upon two conflicting interpretations of the Pure Land, which this paper will refer to as "objective" and "subjective." There are other related sets of terms that characterize this relationship, for example, form and formless, mythological and demythological, celestial and psychological, futuristic and present, transcendent and immanent, phenomenal and noumenal, prescriptive and descriptive, poetic and philosophical, ontic and epistemological, and hypostatized and non-substantial. Each of these carry varying shades of meaning and perspective to express a particular dimension of the relationship between the two interpretations of Pure Land. I have, however, for this paper chosen "objective" and "subjective" on account of their comprehensive character and relevancy to the subject matter at hand.

The objective position, based on a *literal* reading of the Pure Land sutras, sees Sukhāvati as an independent realm outside the mind, epitomized by the stock phrase, "There exists a realm called Sukhāvati billions of Buddha lands to the west."<sup>3</sup> It denotes a specific location in the universe where practitioners actually go to be reborn upon death.

Sukhāvātī is just one of the billions of such lands that fill the universe in the ten directions, among which are included other Buddha lands such as Buddha Akṣobhya's Abhiratī and Buddha Bhaisajyaguru's Vaidūryanirbhāsā. The subjective interpretation, in contrast, regards Pure Land as an analogical expression of the purified or enlightened mind of the bodhisattvas and rejects the idea that it has an independent existence outside the mind. The scriptural authority most often cited in support of this view as noted also below, is the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*.

### CH'AN (ZEN) CRITICISM

In the *Platform Sutra*, a major Ch'an text attributed to Hui-nêng (638-713), is the following dialogue between a Ch'an master and his disciple:

The prefect bowed deeply and asked, "I notice that some monks and laymen always invoke the Buddha Amitābha and desire to be reborn in the West. I beg of you to explain whether one can be born there or not, and thus resolve my doubts."

The Master said: "Prefect, listen and I shall explain things for you. At Śrāvastī the World-Honored One preached of the Western Land in order to convert people, and it is clearly stated in the sutra, '(The Western Land) is not far.' It was only for the sake of people of inferior capacity that the Buddha spoke of farness; to speak of nearness is only for those of superior attainments. . . . The deluded person concentrates on Buddha and wishes to be born in the other land; the awakened person makes pure his own mind. Therefore the Buddha said: 'In accordance with the purity of the mind is the Buddha land pure.'"<sup>4</sup>

Based on the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*, a

non-Pure Land but a major Mahayana scripture, this position regards Pure Land as none other than an expression of the enlightened state, and refutes the assertion that Pure Land has an ontic existence in the distant corner of the universe. This finds full support as we read the entire section of the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra* passage cited by the Ch'an master, "If a Bodhisattva desires to obtain Pure Land, he must purify his mind. In accordance with the purity of the mind, the Buddha Land is pure."<sup>5</sup> The Master in the *Platform Sutra* proceeds to elaborate, "There is no doubt that the Western [Pure] Land can be seen here in China."<sup>6</sup> D.T. Suzuki, perhaps the most famous modern Zen interpreter in the West, echoes the same view:

The Pure Land is not many millions and millions of miles away to the west. According to my explanation, the Pure Land is right here, even in this very hall (New York Buddhist Academy in the Spring of 1958). Amida is not presiding over a Pure Land beyond our reach. His Pure Land is this dirty earth itself.<sup>7</sup>

Also, for the Ch'an master, the objective Pure Land that existed "far to the West" was a provisional teaching meant to convert people of inferior capacity. Such a view of Pure Land from the Ch'an position was acceptable only as a provisional position but not as the ultimate teaching. The Pure Land proponents did not object to this. Concreteness, they would assert, was the very hallmark of the Pure Land teaching. The anonymous Pure Land Buddhist author of the *Ten Doubts Concerning the Pure Land*, compiled in the late eighth century, expresses this in the metaphor of constructing a house, a favorite among Pure Land advocates. The metaphor extolls the effectiveness of a tangible example that rests firmly on the ground but not in thin air.

The *Vimalakīrti-sūtra* states, "Even though the Buddha knows that the Bud-

dha Land and sentient beings are empty, he perpetually establishes the Pure Land in order to convert the multitude." Also, the [*Ta-chih tu-lun*] says, "A man who in constructing a mansion is successful when he builds it on a vacant ground, but fails when he tries to build it in space."

In the same way, the [Buddhas] always rely on the two truths to explain ultimate reality without destroying the provisional name.<sup>8</sup>

However, the subjective Ch'an interpretation of the Pure Land did not go unchallenged. One of the influential Pure Land figures of the mid T'ang was Hui-jih or T'zū-min (d. 748), whose faith was strengthened by a revelation of sorts in Gandhara during his thirteen years in India.<sup>9</sup> In his only surviving work *A Collection of Scriptural Passages on the Pure Land Teaching*, Hui-jih responds to a host of Ch'an criticisms by citing an array of sutras and commentaries in support of the Pure Land position. In it, presumably a Ch'an antagonist is quoted:

There is a group of monks and nuns and laymen and lay women who truly believe that the Pure Land really exists. The Pure Land is none other than the time when the mind is pure. There does the Western Pure Land exist separate [from the mind]?<sup>10</sup>

Hui-jih refutes the criticism by reminding the antagonist of the traditional Buddhist acceptance of 84,000 equally legitimate paths for attaining the Buddhist goal. The Pure Land path is not only one of them but also a superb and important one at that. Hui-jih continues the argument primarily on the basis of the swiftness of Pure Land teaching in leading all beings to Bodhi, thereby enlisting a common Pure Land theme of universal salvation and speedy attainment frequently cited by the Pure Land proponents.<sup>11</sup>

A more convincing rebuttal than Hui-jih's is found in the second of the 10 doubts, cast presumably by a Ch'an adherent, in the *Ten Doubts Concerning the Pure Land*:

Since *dharma*s (fundamental psycho-philosophical elements that constitute human experience) are by nature empty and essentially do not arise, they are equanimous and tranquil. But now you have abandoned this and seek rebirth in the Western Pure Land of Amitabha; how could it not go against the truth? Moreover, the [*Vimalakīrti-sūtra*] says, "if one seeks the Pure Land, first purify the mind because when the mind is pure the Buddha Land is pure." How do you reconcile this?<sup>12</sup>

To this, the Pure Land author responds:

You claim we are not in accord with the truth when we seek the Western Land of Amitābha's Pure Land since we seek one [position] while abandoning another. But you also are at fault for not being in keeping with the truth, for in adhering to your position of not seeking the Western Land, you have abandoned one position while becoming attached to another position.<sup>13</sup>

In the classic Mādhyamika mode of reasoning that rejects any and all positions (*dr̥ṣṭi*) as ultimately not real, he attempts to disqualify the Ch'an argument by rendering it simply another self-serving, limited position. As one limited position among equals, the Ch'an position lacks the authority and justification for nullifying the Pure Land position. Then he proceeds to say, in so many words, that his position transcends all positions in the same manner expounded in the *Diamond Sutra*; when one aspires to be reborn in the Pure Land, he understands the essence of rebirth to be "non-birth," which is another way of expressing the extraordinary nature of rebirth in the Pure Land.<sup>14</sup> His argu-

ment does not appear convincing, for he unilaterally elevated his position to a level which only those with wisdom are capable of comprehending but not the ordinary unenlightened beings, the very audience of Pure Land teaching.

While we must reserve judgement, for another occasion, on the effectiveness of the refutations against Ch'an criticism, it is clear that the Pure Land apologists did not subscribe to the subjective interpretation of the Pure Land as advocated by the Ch'an proponents. However, this did not then imply that the Pure Land advocates subscribed to the opposite view of an objective Pure Land. This becomes more evident as we now look at their controversy with the followers of Maitreya Buddha.

#### AMITABHA'S SUKHĀVATĪ VERSUS MAITREYA'S TUṢITA

Until the early T'ang period, Maitreya worship—at least in North China—had competed and even exceeded Amitābha worship in popularity. This observation rests primarily on tabulations of dated Buddha images found in the caves of North China, such as Lung-mên. They revealed that images of Maitreya far exceeded those of Amitābha during the Six Dynasties and Sui periods (ca. 386?-618). Not until well into the T'ang period (ca. 700) did the number of Amitābha images come to surpass those of Maitreya.<sup>15</sup>

The competition was fueled partly by the tendency during this period, despite the distinct historical and doctrinal background of the two traditions, to regard both Maitreya and Amitābha worship as one and the same practice. The syncretic tendency is supported by numerous inscriptions on stone images that express concurrently salutations to Maitreya and the desire to be reborn in Amitābha's Land.<sup>16</sup> The rivalry was intensified in part to the elevation, by some, of Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven to the status of a Pure Land, though

this deviated from the Indian Understanding.<sup>17</sup> According to the original Indian Buddhist cosmology, Tuṣita is one of the heavens of the Desire Realm within the Sahā World-Realm (*lokadhātu*), the "galaxy" in which we dwell. However, Sukhavatī Pure Land exists far beyond the Sahā World-Realm.

During the seventh century, Pure Land advocates such as Tao-ch'ô (Jpn. Dôshaku, 562-645), Chia-tsai (Jpn. Kazai, ca. seventh century), and Huai-kan (Jpn. Ekan, d. 701) asserted the superiority of Sukhāvātī over Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven. Their arguments relative to the present discussion can be summarized as follows:

1) While Sukhāvātī transcends the Sahā World-Realm, Tuṣita (as one of the heavens of the Desire Realm) still lies within the Sahā World-Realm.

2) While the life span in the Sukhāvātī is limitless like that of the Buddhas and transcends *samsāra* (realm of births and deaths), life span in Tuṣita lasts 4,000 heaven years and at the end of that time, one is forced back into the stream of *samsāra*.

3) While Sukhāvātī is a realm of non-retrogression, Tuṣita is not. Rebirth in Sukhāvātī assures not only attainment of Buddhahood but also no retrogression to lower levels on the cultivational path (*mārga*).<sup>18</sup>

The argument for the superiority of Sukhāvātī rested primarily on the Sukhāvātī's transcendence of Sahā World-Realm in contrast to Tuṣita Heaven which occupied a specific locus within the Sahā World-Realm. The Pure Land proponents stressed Tuṣita's proximity and affinity to the human realm in order to point out Tuṣita's ties to *samsāra*. Chia-ts'ai, for example, claims in an interesting analogy that in Tuṣita, boys are reborn on the laps of their fathers and girls on the laps of their mothers, while in the



Sukhāvātī one is reborn among the lotus flowers.<sup>19</sup> The symbolism of mother and father was intended to strengthen the fact that life in Tuṣita does not differ qualitatively from the human realm.

## RECONCILIATION OF THE EXTREMES

We have seen the Pure Land proponents reject what they perceive to be two extreme views of Pure Land: the subjective and the objective. If the Pure Land is neither, how was it understood? One of the principle heuristic methods was to employ a major Mahayana concept of the two-fold truths: ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*) and conventional truth (*saṃvṛti-satya*). In this scheme, the Pure Land possessed both an ultimate as well as a conventional dimension. The ultimate dimension was none other than the ultimate realm (*tathatā, dharmatā*), which was absent in Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven as we examined above. On the other hand, the conventional dimension proved to be the objective Pure Land, the very interpretation which the Ch'an Buddhists criticized.

The Pure Land commentators expended much energy in trying to reconcile these two dimensions. T'an-luan expressed this mode of existence as "subtle" (*wei*) and explained, "Though it is extra-phenomenal, it exists."<sup>20</sup> The question that now demands asking concerns the manner in which the Pure Land exists extra-phenomenally. Shan-tao expressed this relationship in the concept of "Giving Direction and Establishing Form" (*shih-fang li-hsiang*; Jpn. *shihō rissō*).<sup>21</sup> T'an-luan called it the "Interpenetration of the Expanded and the Essential" (*kuang-lüeh hsiang-ju*; Jpn. *kōryaku sōnyū*). The expanded refers to the 17 decorated forms of the Pure Land, Amitabha and the two Bodhisattvas described in the *Treatise on the Pure Land* attributed to Vasubandhu. These are of forms that are in accord with the emotional and intellectual comprehensive ability of the unenlightened.

The essential refers to "One Dharma Phrase" (*i-fa-chu*; Jpn. *ichihokku*), which constitutes another term for the ultimate truth. The two are mutually dependent. The decorated forms of Pure Land (expanded) and the ultimate truth (essential) are mutually dependent. The former emerges based on the latter, while the latter is expressed through the former.<sup>22</sup>

From the ultimate standpoint, the Pure Land is not to be taken as an existent place, in the way ordinary beings are predisposed to understanding it. The admonition against such a view of the Pure Land is found in the following passage:

A foolish person in hearing "birth" [in the Pure Land] understands it as "birth" and in hearing "non-birth" understands it as "non-birth." He, thus, fails to realize the identity of "birth" and "non-birth" and of "non-birth" and "birth."<sup>23</sup>

T'an-luan, almost two centuries earlier, similarly described, "That [Pure] Land is the Realm of Non-birth."<sup>24</sup>

Having said that, however, the Pure Land proponents acknowledge that the capacity of ordinary, unenlightened people is such that they have no choice but to regard the Pure Land as ontically existent, namely, to take a literal reading of the *Larger* and *Smaller Sukhāvātī Sutra*. Tao-ch'o, for example, asked rhetorically:

If those of the lowest grade attain rebirth through reciting [the name of Amitabha] ten times, how can they possibly not grasp it as real birth?<sup>25</sup>

The objective presentation of the Pure Land accords with the emotional and intellectual make-up of ordinary beings whose capacity affords only a literal understanding of the sutra description. What is often ignored is that for these seekers, initially at least, the ob-



jective Pure Land as described in the sutras was taken literally at face value as an absolute; for them there is no ultimate reality to be found "lurking behind" the Pure Land of cool breezes and bejewelled palaces. Direct insight into ultimate truth for them is beyond their ability, and only through their relationship with the Pure Land of form can the ultimate reality be realized.

But the question remains as to how beings are able to realize enlightenment through "grasping at forms" of Pure Land, which strikes as being antithetical to the fundamental Buddhist practice. Tao-ch'o again argues:

Therefore, although this is grasping onto form, such grasping does not constitute binding attachment. In addition, the form of the Pure Land being discussed here is identical to form without defilements, form that is true form. . . .<sup>26</sup>

T'an-luan had earlier explained that, based on the theory of the "arising of *dharmatā*" as taught in the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*, the Pure Land is a manifestation commensurate with ultimate reality, the *dharmatā*.<sup>27</sup> The Pure Land emerges based on ultimate reality, while the latter is expressed through the former. Hence, the "grasping at form" is permitted on the strength of the form being "form that is true form".

The mechanism of the soteriological process is explained by Tao-ch'o in an ingenious metaphor of fire and ice:

It is like lighting fire on top of ice. As the fire intensifies, the ice melts. When the ice melts, then the fire goes out.

Those of the lowest grade of rebirth who are intent on attaining rebirth based solely on the power of reciting the Buddha's name with the resolve to be reborn in his land, even though they do not

understand the birthlessness of the dharma nature, will attain the realm of birthlessness and will see the fire of rebirth spontaneously disappear at that time.<sup>28</sup>

The fire and ice refer to the ignorant, passion-ridden people who aspire to be reborn in an existent, objective Pure Land. The melting of the ice refers to the soteriological process of their single-minded resolve to be reborn in Sukhāvati, which eventually leads them to the attainment of wisdom. This attainment automatically extinguishes the fire of the false notion that the aspirant actually is reborn in an objective Pure Land.

According to this explanation, an ordinary being is able to engage the ultimate realm without that person fully understanding the ultimate nature. This process skillfully utilizes the form (rooted in truth) to transcend form in order to enter the formless. When the formless is attained, the previous attachment to form disappears. The form is skillfully utilized so that the beings of low ability are catapulted to attain the realm of ultimate even though they themselves do not possess the wisdom about the nature of reality. The eminent Buddhist scholar Edward Conze has aptly described this process in terms of faith and wisdom:

As soon as we judge it by the standard of self-extinction, the "Buddhism of Faith" is in the direct line of Buddhist orthodoxy. Surrender in faith involves a high degree of extinction of separate selfhood, partly because one does not rely on oneself, or one's own power, partly because one sees the futility of all conscious and personal efforts and allows oneself to be 'carried' to salvation, and partly due to superior merit or wisdom. . . . For it must never be forgotten that that which is represented to the relatively ignorant in the form of a personal savior and of a paradise is exactly the same thing as that which is taught to the

relatively learned as the Absolute itself. . . . A sincere heart and belief, unaware of the merit of its sincerity, is all that is needed. The Buddha's demand that, in order to be saved, one should learn to do nothing in particular, is fulfilled in this way as perfectly as in any other."<sup>9</sup>

In a sense the Pure Land proponents steered a middle path to advocate that Sukhāvātī Pure Land was not simply subjective (Zen position) or simply objective (Tuṣita Heaven). It could not simply be subjective because the Pure Land teaching was directed to those incapable of realizing enlightenment in the present life. Their aim in the Pure Land was the attainment of Buddhahood and was not an escape to an eternal paradise to enjoy the extension of pleasures of this life. In this respect, Pure Land Buddhists made no false claims of enlightenment in the present life and thus remained faithful to the Mahayana Buddhist goal. But at the same time, the Pure Land was more than just another celestial body for it was rooted and enveloped in ultimate reality. Thus, It was quality not found in Maitreya's Tuṣita, that allowed those reborn to transcend the cycle of births and deaths and be guaranteed Buddhahood.

#### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND THE ORIGIN OF THE TERM "PURE LAND"

These controversies in China were occasioned because each school assumed that their own version of the Pure Land was more authentic than the others', when in fact we now know that, besides those expounded by Amitābha, Ch'an and Maitreya advocates, other kinds of Pure Land also generated their followings in Mahayana Buddhism, particularly in East Asia. First, some have regarded Grdhrākūṭa (the Vulture Peak where the Buddha preached in the *Lotus Sutra*) as a Pure Land. Second, the Pure Land that the Chinese Hua-yen and Japanese Kegon schools advocated is the Vairocana Buddha's Padmagarbha, in which the entire world is

enveloped in a lotus flower. Third, the Japanese Shingon school regarded the Gaṇḍhavyūha realm that appear in the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* as Buddha Mahāvairocana's Pure Land that was none other than our present Sahā realm. Fourth, Potalaka Mountain, where Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara dwells, is sometimes referred to as Pure Land. Unlike Sukhāvātī and other objective Pure Lands, all five are Pure Lands that are located primarily in the Sahā world.<sup>10</sup>

The term "Pure Land" is an English rendering of a Chinese term "ching-t'u" (Jpn. *jōdo*), which has no one determinative Sanskrit original. The Chinese translators, including Kumārajīva (344-413), are believed to have coined the term based on the concept of "purification of the land," which found expression in such Sanskrit terms as *buddhakṣetra-parisuddhi* (the purification of the Buddha land), *parisuddham buddhakṣetram* (purified Buddha land) and *kṣetram parisodhayati* (to purify the land). The concept of the purification of the Buddha is found in the earliest Mahayana sutras including the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (in 8,000 verses) and *Lotus Sutra*. As an integral element in the bodhisattva practice, "purification" was achieved when a bodhisattva had expounded the teaching to lead all beings in his land (*kṣetra*) to enlightenment.<sup>11</sup>

It is often taken for granted that Amitābha's Sukhāvātī was a Pure Land from its origin, but the earliest Pure Land sutras do not refer to Sukhāvātī as a Pure Land. Apparently the identification of a Buddha land, Sukhāvātī, and Pure Land began in China among commentators of Pure Land scriptures. One of the earliest textual evidence for this occurs in T'an-luan's commentary, *Wang-shêng lun-chu* (Jpn. *Ōjōron-chu, Commentary on the Treatise on Rebirth*) which speaks of a "Pure Land of Sukhāvātī" (*an-lo ching-t'u*; Jpn. *anraku jōdo*).<sup>12</sup> This identification constituted a significant step in the development of the idea of Sukhāvātī, since

Buddha lands (*Buddha-kṣetra*) and Pure Land were two independent ideas.

Through this assimilation the Amitābha's Sukhāvātī gained depth and broadened its scope; for example, an idea originally relevant only in the Saha World-Realm context was applied to a transcendent, celestial body. However, it also, as we witnessed in this paper, invited inevitable clashes with other Buddhist schools which had similarly integrated the idea of Pure Land into their own doctrinal framework. In essence, Amitābha's Pure Land was one of many forms of Pure Land that competed in China for acceptance and, supremacy at times, around the early T'ang period.

#### POSTSCRIPT: SHINRAN'S VIEWS IN THE MODERN CONTEXT

From the standpoint of presenting the Pure Land as a soteriological concept in the modern Western context, new approaches and adaptations will undoubtedly become increasingly necessary. In order for the Pure Land to be a viable religious idea, I believe it must have the following qualities: 1) it maintains the objective dimension as a realm that transcends the present life, 2) it provides symbols and imagery that appeal to the modern mind, 3) it offers the subjective dimension so that the Pure Land can be identified in one form or another with the present life, and 4) it contains values that transcend individual needs to play a role for the collective good.

All four points are found, albeit in varying degrees, in the position reached by Shinran (1173-1261), the founder of Jōdo Shinshū of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. Shinran arrived at a radical interpretation in the historical process of reconciliation and synthesis that was initiated by his Chinese predecessors some 600 years earlier. According to his view, Pure Land is identified with the ultimate reality itself, for he calls it the "Land of Immeasurable Light" and cites

passages that describe it as the "Land of Uncreated Nirvana."<sup>33</sup> While his Chinese predecessors had identified Sukhāvātī Pure Land with the nirvana on the level of ultimate truth, it took Shinran to present "Pure Land as nirvana" on the level of conventional truth for the benefit of ordinary, unenlightened beings.

The identification of the Pure Land with nirvana poses a challenge to the second point alluded above concerning the need for appropriate imagery and symbolism. It opens up more possibilities for presenting the Pure Land, unshackled by traditional scenes of Pure Land sutras. One such possibility would be to simply depict the Pure Land as a "realm of uncreated nirvana" in accord with Shinran's understanding, especially now that "nirvana" has earned its status as a standard English term and some understanding within the religious and learned circles in the West. I believe "nirvana" carries sufficient meaning for generating positive responses as a religious symbol, just as the mythic adornments had, in Shan-tao's words, "met the emotional and intellectual needs of the aspirants" of the traditional, largely agricultural Asian societies.

It must be qualified here that in presenting the Pure Land as a "realm of uncreated nirvana," it in no way implies that the modern aspirants realize nirvana or enlightenment in the *present* life. The aspirants continue to be "passion-filled, ignorant foolish beings" (*bonnō guzoku no bonbu*) while alive, until they enter Pure Land upon death.

There will be those who find this rationalized presentation emotionally unsatisfying and thus prefer the traditional presentation rich in imagery. For such people, Pure Land as nirvana can be presented, for example, as a "realm of ideal relationship." Pure Land Buddhism has regarded the Pure Land as an ideal forum for hearing the teaching and cultivating practices. Hence, rather than emphasizing its physical features, we may focus

on the supportive relationship among those reborn in the transcendent sangha. Liberated from the demands of self-preservation, physical needs and familial and social responsibilities, one overcomes self-centeredness in the Pure Land. Based on the absolute trust and respect for one another based on the newly-acquired other-centeredness, total harmony and mutual support prevail. Everyone works sincerely and earnestly for the enlightenment of all in accord with the yearning to liberate all beings, which is none other than the dynamic compassionate dimension of nirvana.

Needless to say, the Pure Land cannot fully be appreciated or understood apart from the soteriological process of a Jōdo Shinshū seeker. The Pure Land comes to hold a deep personal meaning only within the deep self-introspection and struggles of a sincere religious search, not as an outcome of a detached intellectual inquiry. In this context, Shinran advocated that with the realization in this life of *shinjin* (the mind of true faith and insight), the aspirants, upon death, no longer spent any time in the Pure Land for cultivation but immediately attain perfect enlightenment:

There is no discrimination based on hierarchical grades of rebirths in the purified recompensed land, established by [Amida's] great vow. In the moment [of rebirth] one immediately attains the highest true path.<sup>34</sup>

His position, in one sense, can be interpreted to mean that for a person with *shinjin* the Pure Land *begins in this life*:

[The passage "Then they attain rebirth in the Pure Land"] means that when a person realizes *shinjin*, he is born immediately. To be born immediately is to dwell in the stage of non-retrogression. To dwell in the stage of non-retrogression is to become established in the stage of the truly settled.

This is also called the attainment of the equal of perfect enlightenment.<sup>35</sup>

Further, for Shinran, the Pure Land is not an end in itself or an abode of eternal rest, but part of an universal process of saving all other sentient beings in the transmigratory cycle of birth and death. Although he does not describe in detail the mechanism of this process of returning from the Pure Land to the Saha World-Realm, Shinran speaks of the dynamics of the "phase of returning" (*gensō*) to fulfill the Mahayana ideal of working to benefit others. The Pure Land is, thus, the dynamic realm of enlightenment that encompasses both the present life and realm as well as the other realm in which the reborn become part of the compassionate primal vow (*hongan*) that not only originally established the Pure Land, but now relentlessly aspires to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. The primary Pure Land sutras are the so-called *Larger Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sutra*, *Smaller Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sutra* and *Meditation Sutra*. Their Chinese translations are in *Taishō shinshū saizōkyō* Vol. 12, no. 360-367. Originally in these sutras, Sukhāvātī as a Buddha land (*buddha-kṣetra*) is not regarded as a "Pure Land"; it is only in the hands of the commentators, beginning with T'an-luan (ca. mid-sixth century) that the two came to be identified. See below in the text for section "Historical Perspective and the Origin of the Term Pure Land" for detail. The use of the phrase "Sukhāvātī Pure Land" thus follows the practice of the commentators. For best English translation of all three sutras, see F. Max Müller ed. *Buddhist Mahayana Texts* (1894. Reprint. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), Sacred Books of the East Series Vol. 49, pp. Part II, 1-107 and 161-201.

2. See Fujita Kotatsu, *Genshi Jōdoshishō*

*no Kenkyū*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), pp. 307-309. These two names "Amitābha" (immeasurable light) and "Amitāyus" (immeasurable life) are used interchangeably to refer to the one and the same Buddha.

3. In the *Larger Sukhāvativyūha Sutra*, *Taishō*. 12.270a5-6 and in *Smaller Sutra*, *Taishō*. 12.346c10-11.

4. Philip Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 156-157.

5. *Taishō*. 14.538c5.

6. Yampolsky, p. 158.

7. Daisetz Suzuki, "Shin Buddhism: Part 1," *The Eastern Buddhist* 17-1 (Spring, 1985): 2.

8. *Taishō*. 47.78a22-26.

9. Mochizuki Shinko, *Chūgoku Jōdo Kyōrishi* (1942. Reprint. Kyoto: Hozokan, 1964), pp. 260-261.

10. *Taishō*, 85.1236-1242.

11. For example, see *Taishō* 47.122c21-123a2; 128b12-c28.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 78a2-4.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 78a7-9.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 78a26-27.

15. Tsukamoto Zenryū, *Shina-bukkyō-shi Kenkyū: Hokugi-hen*, (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1942), pp. 564-595.

16. Matsumoto Bunzaburo, *Shina-bukkyō Ibutsu*, (Tokyo: Daichokoku, 1911), pp. 286-299. He cites numerous examples of stone engravings that reflect the syncretic view.

17. Ching-ying Hui-yūan, for example, in his encyclopedic *Ta-ch'êng I-chang* includes

the heavens (Tuṣita being one of the heavens) among the pure lands. *Taishō*, 44.834b5.

18. *Taishō*, 47.9bff; 100a-b; 53b.

19. *Ibid.*, 47.100b14-15.

20. *Ibid.*, 40.830a20.

21. *Ibid.*, 37.267b10.

22. *Ibid.*, 40.841b10-15.

23. *Ibid.*, 47.78a27-29.

24. *Ibid.*, 40.839b6.

25. *Ibid.*, 47.11c16-17.

26. *Ibid.*, 47.18c15-17.

27. *Ibid.*, 40.828cb27.

28. *Ibid.*, 47.11c27-12a2.

29. Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*, (1951, Reprint. New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 159-160.

30. Kotatsu Fujita, "Pure and Impure Lands," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 12 (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1987), p. 91.

31. Fujita, "Pure and Impure Lands," p. 90; see also his *Genshi jōdoshisō no kenkyū*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), pp. 506-511.

32. *Taishō*. 40.829a24. See Fujita, *Genshi jōdoshisō*, p. 507.

33. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* Vol. 2, pp. 120:4 & 139:14; Shinran elsewhere states, "In arriving in the land of immeasurable light, one attains complete nirvana," pp. 35:5.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 73:13.

35. Yoshifumi Ueda, general editor, *Notes on "Essentials of Faith Alone"*, Shin Buddhism Translation Series. (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1979), pp. 34-35.



## The Madman and Fool in Buddhism

by Joan Silver

"Craziness is good. Crazy people are happy, free, they have no hindrance. But since you have many attachments, you are only a little crazy. This is not crazy enough. You must become *completely* crazy. Then you will understand.<sup>1</sup>

Such is the advice of a modern Zen Master to his Zen student. The tradition of "madness," the teacher or student who is also a "fool," is most pronounced in Zen, but is found throughout Buddhism.

When we first look at these "madmen," we observe that their actions confound the normal divisions that we make between the moral and the immoral, good and bad, the sacred and the profane. The "madmen" and "fools" seem often to be contrary beings—to knock down whatever they find standing up. They are fiercely iconoclastic. Part of this iconoclasm involves shattering the normal sorts of oppositions we set up in our speech, bringing to mind Mircea Eliade's description of the dialectic of one pair of opposites: the sacred and the profane.

In *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Eliade says that "in every religious framework there have always been profane things beside the sacred," but he goes on to insist that "the *dialectic* of Hierophanies [emphasis mine], of the manifestation of the sacred in material things . . . remains the cardinal problem of any religion."<sup>2</sup> He develops this idea more fully near the end of the book: "The dialectic of Hierophanies tends endlessly to reduce the spheres that are profane and eventually to abolish them."<sup>3</sup>

To trace the course of this dialectic in Buddhism (or to discover whether it in fact exists) would be more than I could hope to accomplish. However, we can take Eliade's dichotomy of the sacred and the profane and his characterization of their dialectic as a model for the "dialectic" of other opposites. Just as the profane disappears in the sacred, does the immoral also disappear in the moral or the "bad" in the "good"? Furthermore, if one side of an opposition ceases to be, can the other side still be said to exist? Such questions concerning the sacred and the profane, and opposition as such, will serve as a lens through which we may provisionally view these "madmen" and their actions. Let us now turn to the "madmen" themselves.

The descriptions of Buddhist "madmen" and "fools" are strikingly similar. Wŏnhyo, a seventh century monk, is perhaps the most renowned "madman" within the Korean Buddhist tradition. The authenticity of certain stories about Wŏnhyo may be in doubt, but, whatever their authenticity, they teach us something about Buddhism in general and Korean Buddhism in particular. Robert Buswell notes:

As a didactic tool, the hagiography also offered for consideration a spiritual exemplar—a model of conduct, morality and religious understanding for the entire community. . . . Hence, a study of Wŏnhyo's biographies should also give implicit indications about the character of Korean Buddhism as a whole: for, Wŏnhyo was a cultural archetype of the Korean tradition. . . .<sup>4</sup>

One story about Wŏnhyo is universal: he



is said to have attained his enlightenment after spending the night in a tomb (which he had taken for a cave). During the night Wŏnhyo became very thirsty. Groping around in his search for water, he found what he took to be a cup and drank from it:

Ah, how delicious! Then he bowed deeply, in gratitude to Buddha for the gift of water. The next morning, Wŏn Hyo woke up and saw beside him what he had taken for a cup. It was a shattered skull, blood-caked and with shreds of meat still stuck to the cheekbones. Strange insects crawled or floated on the surface of the filthy rain-water inside it. Wŏn Hyo looked at the skull and felt a wave of nausea. He opened his mouth. As soon as the vomit poured out, his mind opened and he understood. Last night, since he hadn't seen and hadn't thought, the water was delicious. This morning, seeing and thinking made him vomit. Ah, he said to himself, thinking makes good and bad, life and death. It creates the whole universe. It is the universal master. And without thinking, there is no universe, no Buddha, no Dharma. All is one and this one is empty.<sup>5</sup>

But Wŏnhyo's spiritual journey did not end here. Years later he met a Zen Master whom he asked to teach him. The master responded by taking him to the red light district of the town:

The Master said to Wŏn Hyo, "For twenty years you've kept company with kings and princes and monks. It's not good for a monk to live in heaven all the time. He must also visit hell and save the people there who are wallowing in their desires. Hell too is 'like this.' So tonight you will ride this wine straight to hell." . . . So Wŏn Hyo stayed the night, and broke more than one Precept. The next morning he took off his elegant robes

and went dancing through the streets, barefoot and in tatters. *'De-an, de-an, de-an!* The whole universe is like this! What are you?'

Wŏnhyo's departure from the conventional life of a monk is described similarly elsewhere: "His utterances were mad and outrageous and his conduct perverted and remiss. Together with householders, he entered bars and brothels."

Wŏnhyo is the spiritual ancestor of the modern Korean monk and artist, Jung-kwang, who claims to practice "unlimited action". Jung-kwang says of "unlimited action": "If the one who practices it is dead, there is reverence; if he is alive, there is bound to be trouble."<sup>6</sup> Jung-kwang, "a controversial figure, engaged in unorthodox activities of concern to the more restrained members of the Buddhist community,"<sup>7</sup> has twice been expelled from the Chogyŏ Order of Buddhism. He "refers to himself as a 'mad monk'" and describes his life thus:

"Finally came the day when the difference between meditating and not meditating disappeared. Every act, every word was meditation. From that time on, I have practiced 'unlimited action.' Sometimes I sleep—sometimes not. When I am hungry I eat, and sometimes for days I eat nothing. I sometimes drink only water, and other times bottles of wine or whiskey. I have slept with a thousand women; one was hunchback and no one wanted her, but to me she was the same as the most beautiful women, and I gave her love and she became a happier person. I never hurt anyone by my actions. I am a 'Buddhist mop.' A mop is something that gets dirty itself but makes everything it touches clean. I *have* to act this way, I have to live the Buddhist doctrine that there are no distinctions, that right and wrong are projections of our mind. By living

'unlimited action' I daily teach the message of Buddhism."<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Lewis Lancaster, who has travelled with Jung-kwang and published several books of his paintings, says that "Jung-kwang's statements echo the texts of Buddhism,"<sup>11</sup> and notes the tradition which Wŏnhyo helped to establish and within which Jung-kwang acts:

Korean Buddhist history is filled with the stories of such monks and nuns, who, having achieved a high state of insight, turn away from the limiting social rules to live according to an internalized order. These individuals often exhibit extraordinary behavior, including uninhibited actions often labeled "immoral."<sup>12</sup>

Jung-kwang relates his life of "unlimited action" to his painting: "When I paint a picture, my brush must move without hesitation. There can be no mistakes to be corrected. Only when there is unlimited action can the brush move with force and power."<sup>13</sup> Not only do Jung-kwang's actions challenge what is sacred and what is profane (or what is moral and what immoral), but his paintings "are iconoclastic, poking fun at individuals or sacred objects."<sup>14</sup> Conrad Hyers notes that such iconoclasm is essential to Zen:

There has probably never been a religious movement more sweepingly iconoclastic than Zen. Idols of every sort are relentlessly and mercilessly smashed: not only the ego and its desires and attachments, but scripture, doctrine, tradition, meritorious works, liturgy, prayer, gods, miracles, Bodhisattvas, and even the Buddha himself. . . . before true liberation can occur, all idols must be overturned, or stood upside down.<sup>15</sup>

It must be remembered, however, that such "madmen" are not limited to Zen.

James Steinberg has researched such "crazy adepts" within the entire Eastern tradition:

The highest Enlightened Beings, live spontaneously, in the moment, and no convention binds them. . . . Because the Adepts are moved to illumine and instruct whatever is brought before them, they may appear wild. They may appear self-indulgent, seem mad with powers, or act like fools.<sup>16</sup>

The meaning of "Avadhoot" (from the Sanskrit), one name for such "madmen" notes Steinberg, is significant: "it means 'shaken off,' 'detached,' or 'naked.' It is a term used to describe one who is not shackled in any way. He or she is fully Awakened and free of any secular or even sacred attachments."<sup>17</sup>

Steinberg tells one story that illustrates especially well this freedom from sacred attachments. Dropakula of Bhutan, known as "the mad Lama," was a wanderer. On one journey he met a man carrying a painting to the Karmapa Rinpoche (the head of a certain Buddhist sect) for a blessing. Dropakula "asked to look at the painting. He opened the rolled painting on the ground and crouched on it as if he were defecating."<sup>18</sup> Rolling the scroll back up, he pronounced it blessed. The owner of the painting was furious. When he reached his destination, however, the Karmapa, seeing that the images had been transformed, declared that the scroll had already been blessed. This story reveals a delightful confounding of the sacred and the profane. As Steinberg notes elsewhere, "Nothing is sacred to him who moves in, and is moved by, the Sacred itself."<sup>19</sup>

Clearly these spiritual "madmen" are teachers. Hyers has characterized this sort of teaching as "Zen Midwifery":

The master functions as a midwife of truth in the true Socratic sense. . . . The master does not and cannot teach the

Truth in the sense of indoctrinations; for the Truth to be realised—an inward, intuitive, non-discursive truth—cannot be dispensed in this way. It cannot, in fact, be dispensed in any way.<sup>20</sup>

We remember the first “transmission” that is said to be the beginning of the Zen line in Buddhism. The Buddha once sat, ready to preach to the assembled people. He sat for a long time in silence. Then, he held up a flower. Mahakasyapa smiled. To him the Buddha transmitted his Dharma. The first moment of Zen was wordless. No “truth” was “dispensed.”

John Martinek, in his fascinating study, “Language and Mysticism: The ‘Holy Madman,’” speaks of Zen’s outright hostility to words: “The student was always warned to shun words as ‘perils to his life’.”<sup>21</sup> Martinek examines the teaching methods of certain Tibetan “Holy Madmen.” Their communication is highly contradictory and confusing. According to Martinek, the Buddhist “teacher,” when asked to describe the “mystic state,” encounters a dilemma: “If he doesn’t talk he violates, or abandons, the questioner, and if he does talk he violates the goal (the mystic state).”<sup>22</sup> So the question must be thrown back to the questioner; the questioner must also be presented with a dilemma—really the same dilemma which he or she presented to the Master. How can we “say” what cannot be “said”? How can we “know” what cannot be “known”? Thus, the apparently “mad” or “foolish” actions of the Buddhist teacher. “Sanity,” with the concomitant distinctions we comfortably make in speech, is not the teaching of Buddhism.

The Third Zen Patriarch wrote:

The Great Way is not difficult if you do not make distinctions.

Form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ

from form; whatever is form is emptiness, whatever is emptiness that is form.<sup>24</sup>

Briefly stated, form refers to things as being materially in the world, and emptiness to the “true nature” of ourselves and “things”—being without self and separate reality. Form is the manifestation of things; emptiness is their essence. Edward Conze points out that the statements from the *Heart Sutra* are a logical contradiction: “‘Emptiness’ [as referring to our own ‘realization’ of emptiness] is a state which results from complete self-denial, and from the renunciation of all things,” but here “all things” are identified with this very “emptiness.” Thus he says that “The identity of Yes and No is the secret of emptiness.”<sup>25</sup> Such an identity, however, is antithetical to the nature of speech—opposites are essential to language: “yes,” “no”; “is,” “is not”; “good,” “bad”; “form,” and “emptiness.” But the Third Zen Patriarch has told us that the Oppositions contained in speech are not in the nature of things, and the *Heart Sutra* annuls such distinctions. In light of this, Conze introduces the notion of a “‘dialectical’ conception of emptiness”: “The emptiness which is envisaged here is not empty of that which it excludes, but it includes it, is identical with it, is full of it. It is therefore a ‘Full Emptiness’.”<sup>26</sup>

Conze comments that the identity of form and emptiness stated above is the same as “the identity of Nirvana and Samsara.”<sup>27</sup> Nirvana and Samsara are another pair of opposites which must be annulled. Wonhyo himself wrote, “It becomes clear to all who are initiated into the truth that this world and the world yonder are the same, the befouled land and the pure land all spring from One mind, and life or death and Nirvana are not two.”<sup>28</sup> No attachment is acceptable in Buddhism, not even one to that which is at first said to be the “truth,” i.e., emptiness. If we look to “enlightenment” as something to be attained, we will be creating an “other,” making a distinction that will not help us.

Wŏnhyo, like the other "madmen" we have seen, chose to live very much in the world, not to stand apart as a "monk." One who does this, and who does not accept other ordinary distinctions that are made in the world (who sees, as Conze said, "that the identity of Yes and No is the secret of emptiness"), will be considered eccentric or foolish, if not "mad."

Another text that speaks to the issue of form and emptiness, the pure and the impure, is the *Platform Scripture* of Hui-neng, the Sixth Zen Patriarch. The story is told that the Fifth Patriarch called his disciples together and asked them to write verses showing their understanding of "how to escape from the bitter sea of birth and death."<sup>38</sup> The head monk was the only one who dared to write a verse:

The body is the Bodhi tree,  
The mind is like a clear mirror.  
At all times we must strive to polish it,  
And must not let the dust collect.<sup>39</sup>

Hui-neng, an uneducated rice-pounder in the monastery, composed a response:

Bodhi originally has no tree,  
The mirror has no stand.  
Buddha nature is always clean and pure;  
Where is there room for dust?

Just as "form is emptiness and emptiness is form," the pure and the impure are coincidental; there is no impurity to be done away with. Hui-neng will not allow an opposition to be set up with respect to our "Original Mind"; it is, as it is, "pure," with no opposing impurity to trouble it. Later Hui-neng says "If you activate your mind to view purity without realizing that your own nature is originally pure, delusions of purity will be produced."<sup>40</sup> Delusions of purity produce delusion of impurity. Language is confounded by this—according to the logic of speech, if pure exists, impure must exist too. Hui-neng's insight is that the

impure does not exist. He says that those people who think that purity *is* something, that it "has a form," will "end up being bound by purity."<sup>41</sup> Purity, like anything else, can be confining; in one's "Buddha nature" one is confined by nothing.

These reflections on "dust" and "purity" can help us to understand Jung-kwang's description of himself as a "Buddhist mop." He describes himself as getting dirty, but leaving all that he touches clean. If Jung-kwang has realized his "already clean and pure" mind, he can see the "purity" of all else and can share this vision with others. Similarly, Hui-neng tells us that just as there is no "stain" in our original nature, so "the very passions are themselves enlightenment."<sup>42</sup> We are reminded of the lives of Wŏnhyo and Jung-kwang. They live their "enlightenment" in the midst of the passions. Hui-neng asks us not to be attached to the emptiness that can be contrasted with the life of the passions and the things of the world:

Do not sit with a mind fixed on emptiness. If you do this you will fall into a neutral kind of emptiness. Emptiness includes the sun the moon, the stars, and planets, the great earth, mountains and rivers, all trees and grasses, bad men and good men, bad things and good things, heaven and hell; they are all in the midst of emptiness. The emptiness of human nature is also like this.<sup>43</sup>

Wŏnhyo says of emptiness in his commentaries on the *Awakening Faith in Mahayana*: "But this emptiness is also to be emptied; . . . Such emptiness does not have the nature of emptiness; therefore, it can create something."<sup>44</sup> This emptiness *contains* existence.

In Hui-neng's catalogue of all that exists within emptiness are "bad men and good men, bad things and good things." Good and bad are a pair of opposites, a distinction

created by our thinking; in themselves they are empty, illusory. We have noted that some of the actions of the "madmen" and "fools" are actions that might be considered "immoral." Holy "madmen" are free of ideas of right and wrong. They recognize, as Jung-kwang said, that "right and wrong are projections of our mind," and act only to open the minds of those they meet. This is Jung-kwang's "unlimited action." The truth can be seen only beyond distinctions; all oppositions must be shattered.

Zen (or Buddhism) is not "moral"; it is not set up in opposition to the passions. For to be "moral" is to reject something "immoral." We must see fully, and to see fully is to see beyond good and evil. We are "in the midst" of good and evil and yet we are free, for good and evil are both "empty." Zen Master Sengai wrote the following poem:

Amidst the reeds [good and evil]  
Runs  
The pure spring water.<sup>36</sup>

The "absolute," to which we belong and who we really are, "the pure spring water," is not "stained" by its intimate involvement with "phenomena," "the reeds of good and evil," among which are our passions.

Hyers points out that Zen must not get caught up in dualities while overcoming them.<sup>37</sup> Dropakula was thus giving a profound teaching to the man who sought to have his painting "blessed." This man, thinking that there was something sacred and that it could be "defiled" by the profane, became so angry that, as he ran away from Dropakula, "he called loudly, 'I would beat you to death if you were not a so-called "mad lama"!' "<sup>38</sup> Dropakula's action showed that the man had an "attachment" to the sacred, to what he thought was pure, whereas "Zen [or Buddhism] resists the temptation to be attached to anything, however consequential or sacred."<sup>39</sup> As Zen Master Kuei-shan noted,

"When all feelings of saintly and profane have been wiped out, there will be exposed the body of true eternity." "<sup>40</sup> We recall the tenth picture in the ox-herding sequence, where, as Jon Carter Covell observes, we see "the enlightened one mingling with people in the world in a casual way. He is totally free, and thus doesn't distinguish between the sacred and the secular."<sup>41</sup>

What we find in Buddhism, then, is the "dialectic" of Hierophanies and of all oppositions at its end: if there is no longer anything "profane"; neither is there anything "sacred." By going beyond this opposition we find what is truly sacred; we cannot name it, but those who know it are free to "play" with (or without) words in order to help others find it. And as the dialectic is complete, we are asked to go beyond all opposition—even the opposition created by no opposition. "Emptiness" is not the end of the journey. We must come to live comfortably in the world as it is. The "madmen" and "fools" do this. They live in the world participating in the life that has death as its opposite, yet asking us to go beyond this opposition to every moment of their lives. Their eccentric behavior is necessary because we are asleep to what is really so. We think that the Karmapa can bless our scroll; we take seriously the distinctions and oppositions that our thinking creates. We may want even to kill if we think these distinctions are violated. Therefore we need to be shocked—challenged to see what might be beyond these distinctions.

The "fool" or "madman" in Buddhism reminds us of our essential foolishness: "Verily it maketh one smile/ To hear of a fish in water athirst."<sup>42</sup>

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2. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1963), p. 12, p. 29.

3. Eliade, p. 459.

4. Robert Buswell, "The Biographies of the Korean Monk, Wonhyo (617-686): A Study in Buddhist Hagiography," (TS), forthcoming in *Biography as a Genre in Korean History*, ed. John Jamieson and Peter H. Lee (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 5-6.

5. Seung Sahn, pp. 60-1.

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7. Buswell, p. 10.

8. Jung-kwang, *The Mad Monk: Paintings of Unlimited Action*, introd. Lewis R. Lancaster (Berkeley: Lancaster-Miller Publishers, 1979), p. 11.

9. Jung-kwang, p. 3.

10. Jung-kwang, p. c., p. 6.

11. Jung-kwang, p. 6.

12. Jung-kwang, p. 6.

13. Jung-kwang, p. 10.

14. Jung-kwang, p. 11.

15. Conrad M. Hyers, *Zen and the Comic Spirit*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), p. 103.

16. James Steinberg, "Avadhoots, Mad Lamas, and Fools," *The Laughing Man*, III, No. 1 (1982), p. 88.

17. Steinberg, "Avadhoots," p. 90.

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29. Hui-neng, *The Platform Scripture of the Sixth Patriarch*, trans. Philip Yampolsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 128.

30. Hui-neng, p. 130.

31. Hui-neng, p. 139.

32. Hui-neng, pp. 139-40.

33. Hui-neng, p. 146.

34. Hui-neng, p. 146.

35. Sung-bae Park, *Wonhyo's Commentaries on 'The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana'*, Dissertation. University of California at Berkeley 1979, pp. 184-5.

36. Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Sengai: The Zen Master* (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphics Society, Ltd., 1971), p. 114; the bracketed words are Suzuki's interpolation.

37. Hyers, p. 31

38. Steinberg, "Avadhoots," p. 97.

39. Hyers, p. 20.

40. Hyers, p. 70.

41. Jon Carter Covell and Sobin Yamada, *Unraveling Zen's Red Thread: Ikkyu's Controversial Way*, (Elizabeth, New Jersey: Hollym International Corp., 1980), p. 49.

42. Hyers, p. 138.



## Standing Fast: Fudō Myōō in Japanese Literature

by Richard K. Payne

**F**udō Myōō (Sanskrit: Acalanatha Vidyārāja) is a Tantric Buddhist deity who is very popular throughout Japan. His wrathful appearance, black body, crossed eyes and flaming aura make him readily recognized and easily remembered. One description of Fudō is found in the Japanese Tantric Buddhist (Shingon) fire sacrifice (*goma*), where the practitioner performs the following visualization:

Visualize a lotus blossom seat above the heart's moon *cakra*; above the seat is the syllable *ham*; it changes becoming a sharp sword. The sharp sword changes, becoming the Great Sage Fudō Myōō, having a body blue-black in color and very wrathful appearance. He resides in the fire producing samadhi. On his head are seven tufted hair knots, and on the left hangs one braid. His forehead is wrinkled like waves. His right hand holds a sharp sword and his left hand holds a snare (*pāśa*). His entire body emits flames, burning every kind of obscuration and affliction of oneself and others throughout the whole of the *Dharmadhātu*.<sup>1</sup>

This visualization is based on the descriptions of Fudō found in such works as the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (T. 848), the *Trisamayārāja Sūtra* (T. 1200), and the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra Explaining How Benevolent Kings May Protect Their Countries* (T. 245 and T. 246).

Although texts mentioning Fudō were present in Japan from the Nara period, his

popularity began only after Kūkai—founder of the Shingon sect in Japan—brought artistic representations back from China to Japan. As Fudō became increasingly popular, his presence began to be found in Japanese literature. The characteristics attributed to Fudō in literature reflect the popular conception of him, and examination of this material can reveal aspects of Japanese popular religion.

One of the earliest literary references to Fudō is found in the *Genji Monogatari*, which was written by Murasaki Shikibu at the beginning of the eleventh century.<sup>2</sup> It is considered to be one of the greatest works of literature in the world, and as a novel, it predates Cervantes' *Don Quixote* by six hundred years. Set in the Heian court, the work is a lengthy romance and tells the story of Prince Genji, who is one of the emperor's sons. After several liaisons, Genji meets Lady Murasaki, who quickly becomes his favorite.

Later in the tale, however, Lady Murasaki falls ill. Suddenly, she seems to be dying. This is a shock, since she had appeared to be improving for a few days prior to this. Genji is called, and when he arrives, the household is in a uproar:

The confusion was enormous. The women were wailing and asking her (Lady Murasaki) to take them with her (into death). The altars had been dismantled and the priests were leaving, only the ones nearest the family remaining behind. For Genji, it was like the end of the world.<sup>3</sup>

In the extremity of his desperation, Genji calls exorcists (ascetics known to have worked wonders) to the home and reminds them of Fudō's vow. The vow attributed to Fudō is that he would give six more months of life to any devotee of his who had reached the end of his lifespan. Fudō must have more than lived up to his vow, for the vindictive spirit of Lady Rokujō reveals herself. She has been plaguing Lady Murasaki—Genji's favorite—in order to avenge herself on Genji. Although never in truly good health from that time on, Lady Murasaki survives about a year longer, taking another five chapters.

Edward G. Seidensticker, translator of *The Tale of Genji*, notes in connection with this section: "Early commentaries say that Acala (i.e., Fudō) vowed to give six more months of life to those of the faithful who wished it, but the source in the writ is not known."<sup>4</sup> In other words, the origin of the tradition of Fudō's vow is uncertain.

The *Genji Monogatari* reveals one aspect of Fudō's popularity: he was thought to be able to grant an additional six months of life to his devotees. In the *Heike Monogatari*, a more personal, devotional connection to Fudō is revealed. The novel tells the story of the decline of the Heike clan and their almost total destruction at the hands of the Minamoto. The authorship and date of the work are obscure, but it seems to have been initially composed about fifty years after the battle of Dan no ura in 1185, the climactic battle which finally broke the strength of the Heike. The story then circulated orally until a definitive text was composed by Kakuichi before his death in 1371.

According to the seventh chapter of the *Heike Monogatari*, entitled the "Austerities of Mongaku," when Mongaku was nineteen years old, he decided to leave behind the life of a warrior and become a priest. Mongaku sets off to practice austerities in midwinter: "Deep snow lay upon the ground, and icicles hung thickly from the trees. Freezing blasts

swept down from the mountain tops. The waterfall's white threads were frozen into crystalline cluster . . .". Mongaku immerses himself up to his neck in the pool beneath the waterfall, vowing "to stand under the waterfall for twenty-one days and repeat the magic incantation to Fudō-myōō three hundred thousand times." On the brink of death after eight days of this austerity, two divine youths rescue Mongaku. Mongaku asks who they are.

"We are Kangara and Seitaka, the messengers of Fudō-myōō, replied the two youths. "We have come here by the command of Fudō-myōō, 'Mongaku has made a fervent vow. He has determined to undertake the most severe austerities. Go and help him.' "

Then Mongaku asked in a loud voice: "Tell me where I can find Fudō-myōō."

"His abode is in the Tusita Heaven." Having spoken these words, the two youths ascended into the sky and disappeared among the clouds. Mongaku, joining his palms, gazed toward heaven and exclaimed: "Now my austerities are known even to Fudō-myōō!"

His heart made light with hope, he again plunged into the pool of the waterfall and resumed his vigil. And now that the god watched over him, the freezing winds no longer pierced his body and the water that fell upon him felt warm and soothing. This time Mongaku completed the twenty-one days as he had vowed.<sup>6</sup>

In counterpoint to Fudō's assistance to this warrior-turned-ascetic is the assistance he provides to women suffering from difficult childbirth. Another part of the *Heike Monogatari* tells such a story.

The Emperor's consort is pregnant, but

the text tells us that she "suffered as the dying flowers of the passing seasons. And she was possessed by evil spirits. The secret invocation of Fudō-myōō was performed by the priests, and children were used as mediums, the evil spirits being invited to take possession of their bodies so that they could be identified."<sup>7</sup> Although the pregnancy and labor were difficult, the consort does give birth to the Emperor's first male heir.

Other references to Fudō in the *Heike Monogatari* are for divination<sup>8</sup> and for bringing peace to the country—the populace carving images of Fudō as offerings for the pacification of revels.<sup>9</sup>

Fudō's assistance to women in labor is also found in *The Confessions of Lady Nijō*, which was written about 1307 by one of the Emperor's concubines. In passing, Lady Nijō recalls the following story concerning a particular temple image of *Fudō*:

There is a tale told about the god Fudō of the Jōjō Hall in Mii Temple. When the priest Chiko was at death's door, his disciple Shokū prayed: "My debt to my master is heavy. Please take my humble life instead of his." When Shokū offered his life for his teacher's, Fudō intervened: "Since you would give your life for your teacher's, I will give mine for yours." Chiko recovered from his illness, and Shokū also lived a long life.<sup>10</sup>

Lady Nijō surmises that this same picture of Fudō was brought by an exorcist when, in the eighth month of 1271, the Empress Higa-shi-Nijō was about to give birth. According to Lady Nijō, the exorcist recited a phrase from the *Fudō Sūtra*: "He who serves Fudō will have the virtues of a Buddha; he who utters a single secret incantation will have Fudō's protection forever."<sup>11</sup>

According to Richard Dorson,<sup>12</sup> there is a folktale version of this story about the image

of Fudō. In this version, "the painting of Fudō, the God of Fire, shed bloody tears and took to itself the sickness of his young worshiper Shokū, in the thirteenth century; the painting was later placed in Mii-dera, Otsu, Shiga-ken."<sup>13</sup> Both versions point to a folktale motif of divine beings substituting for humans in distress.

Fudō has also found his way into Japanese drama. The Nō play *Funa-Benkei* by Kwanze Kojirō Nobumitsu (1435 to 1516) draws on another portion of the *Heike Monogatari*, supplemented by the *Gempei Seisuiiki*. The play refers to the flight of Yoshitsune to escape the suspicions of his brother Yoritomo, who has become Shogun only through the assistance of his brother Yoshitsune, who led the forces which finally crushed the Heike. Yoshitsune is accompanied in his flight by the famous, giant warrior monk, Benkei.<sup>14</sup>

In the second part of the play, Yoshitsune and Benkei are aboard a boat crossing Dai-motsu Bay.<sup>15</sup> The ghost of Tomomori—one of the drowned Heike chiefs—attacks the boat, seeking revenge on Yoshitsune for his role in the defeat of the Heike. Yoshitsune, drawing his sword, engages the ghost as if he were a man.

... but Benkei thrusts between, saying:  
"Swords are of no avail,"

And rubs the beads between his hands.  
From the east he evokes Gozanze Myōō,  
From the south Gundari Yasha Myōō,  
From the west Dai Itoku Myōō,  
From the north Kongō Yasha Myōō,  
And in the center Fudō Myōō  
And he calls upon that Great King  
To bind the evil spirits with his sacred  
rope.

As one by one they all fall back,  
Benkei aids the rowers  
To speed his master's boat  
And bring it safe to shore.  
The still-pursuing spirits are put to flight  
By Benkei's prayers;  
Then on the tide they drift away

Leaving no trace upon the foaming waves.<sup>16</sup>

The breadth of Fudō's popularity has given him a permanent place in Kabuki as well. In 1832 Ichikawa Danjūrō VII compiled a collection of the eighteen most popular Kabuki plays of his lineage. With only one exception, all of these plays have humans as their heroes. The sole exception is a play called simply "*Fudō*."<sup>17</sup> In the play, Prince Hayakumo attempts to usurp the throne. Fudō appears and, restraining the prince, restores peace.

Since the time of their founder (Danjūrō I, who established the line during the Genroku Period, 1688-1704), the Danjūrō line have been particularly devoted to Fudō, going so far as to use the name of the Narita Fudō temple as their stage name—Naritaya. Even the exaggerated style (*ara-goto*) of performance, make-up and costume of this line may have its origin in the iconography of Fudō, for Danjūrō I is said to have spent a week at the Narita Temple in order to acquire the same facial expression as that of Fudō.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, one element of this exaggerated style is a cross-eyed glare (*niramī*) very reminiscent of Fudō.

The term for the exaggerated style—"*ara-goto*"—is also known as "*aragami-goto*," meaning fierce deity, and as "*arahitogami-goto*" which means a deity appearing in human form.<sup>19</sup> These concepts, which are central motifs in many of the plays, together with Danjūrō I's apparent attempts to identify with Fudō, in order to properly portray him on stage, demonstrate a point of interaction between the practices of Tantric Buddhism, which employ the identification (Skt., *adhiṣṭhāna*) of the practitioner with the deity, and popular religious concepts of possession.

Fudō continues to play an important role in Japanese religion. Almost any tourist in Japan is likely to have seen Fudō at one time

or another, particularly since the main international airport has been established at Narita where a major temple is devoted to Fudō. The temple there dates from the revolt of Masakado in 940.<sup>20</sup> The Heian court sent troops and a Shingon priest against the rebellious Masakado, the priest carrying with him a famous sword called Amakuni no Tsurugi and an image of Fudō. Two stories are related about the image. One says that Kūkai, the founder of Japanese Shingon, carved the image from an oar during his return voyage from China. The other story is that the image had been transported to China from India. When Kūkai was studying in China, the image informed him by means of a dream that it desired to travel farther east. In either case the image was brought to Japan and enshrined in a temple near Heian Kyō.

The image's desire to travel east, however, seems not to have been quite fulfilled. Having assisted in the suppression of the rebels, it was to be returned to Heian Kyō. But it had become so heavy that it could not be moved. By means of another dream, it announced its desire to remain in the eastern provinces, helping to civilize them. At the emperor's direction, the image was then enshrined at Narita.<sup>21</sup>

The popular conceptions of Fudō found in Japanese literature include a wide variety of benefits to humans. Fudō's assistance in times of illness and childbirth, and his role in divination and in dispelling vengeful spirits reveal an aspect of Japanese thought. Illness, including difficulties in childbirth, was considered in many cases to be produced by vengeful spirits. Divination was needed in order to determine the identity and motivation of the spirit, thereby leading to a cure. In addition, Fudō is thought to prolong the life of a devotee by six months, assist a devotee with successfully completing a vow to austerities, pacify the country—suppressing rebels, and he will substitute himself for a human being who is in distress.

Other figures in the Buddhist pantheon have the same powers attributed to them. For example, Yakushi Nyorai is specifically known as the Healing Buddha, Kanzeon Bosatsu is known as the Bodhisattva of Compassion, appealed to by expectant mothers, and Jizō Bosatsu is thought to protect small children and travellers. So why should Fudō have become so popular? Three factors appear to have been particularly important in Fudō's rise in popularity. First, his associations with fire and water—his flaming aura and the cold water austerities of his devotees—made Fudō a favorite with Shugendō practitioners. Shugendō, with its close tie to the ancient Japanese reverence for mountains, spread widely throughout Japan. As it did so, the cult of Fudō would have spread with it. Second, since Fudō is not one of the high Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, he may be felt to be much more approachable. Ordinary people need not feel as much awe and fear in coming to him with their requests. And third, he has the appearance of someone you can really count on to succeed when events have reached a crisis. Vigorous, strong, young, wreathed in flames, carrying a dragon sword—these all give clear, tangible evidence of his power.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. Iwahara Taishin, *Private Directions for the Śāntika Homa, Offered to Acala*, p. 25. For a full discussion of the *goma* ritual, see Richard K. Payne, "Feeding the Gods, The Shingon Fire Ritual," *passim*.
2. Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji*, 1:vii.
3. *Ibid.*, 2:617. Parenthetical notes added.
4. *Ibid.*, note.
5. *The Tale of the Heike*, 1:xv-xvii.
6. *Ibid.*, 1:312-4.
7. *Ibid.*, 1:158.
8. *Ibid.*, 1:388.
9. *Ibid.*, 1:365.

10. *The Confessions of Lady Nijō*, pp. 246-7.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 13, and p. 17. At the same time rituals directed toward the Seven Healing Buddhas, the Five Great Guardian Kings, Fugen Bodhisattva, *Kongō Dōji*, and *Aizen-ō* were also being performed.

12. Dorson cites Mock Joya, "Weeping Buddha," *Japan Times*, March 9, 1957.

13. Richard Dorson, *Folk Legends of Japan*, p. 38.

14. Kuwai Genyoku, et al., *The Noh Drama*, pp. 163-5.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 164, n. 3. Daimotsu Bay is to the southwest of Amagasaki, Settsu Province.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

17. Kawatake Toshi, *Kabuki*, p. 4.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

20. George Sansom, *A History of Japan, to 1334*, p. 145.

21. Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince*, p. 101.

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# The Nature of Practice in Jodo Shinshu

by Jerry L. Bolick

## INTRODUCTION

There is considerable confusion in the Jodo Shinshu community regarding the notion of practice in terms of what we should or should not do, and what is acceptable and what is unacceptable as followers of Shinran. This is not surprising, for the teachings are not easily understood. Nevertheless, I believe it is important to examine this confusion. The prevailing attitude seems to be based on the notion that Jodo Shinshu is, in some fundamental way, apart or different from other Buddhist traditions, and any attempt to bridge the gap will run counter to the teachings of Shinran.

I am concerned with this unnecessary sectarianism, not only because I see it as an outgrowth of an inaccurate understanding of Shinran's teaching, but because it tends to cut us off from what we and other traditions have to offer each other. Thus, the opportunity for a fuller, richer appreciation of the many faces of Buddhism is lost to an untold number of fellow travellers on the Path.

"If the Original Vow of Amida is true, then Śākyamuni's sermons cannot be untrue..."<sup>1</sup>

Jodo Shinshu is Buddhism. Jodo Shinshu begins and ends with Amida's 18th Vow—testimony that its roots go deep and true to the very heart of the Dharma. The Vow represents the power of Enlightenment that shall bring all sentient beings across the ocean of birth and death. Thus, my purpose here is to show that the content and nature of

*shinjin*—the religious experience in Jodo Shinshu which emanates from the Vow—is none other than emptiness. Also, I will examine the implications of emptiness with respect to the nature of practice in Jodo Shinshu. I believe that the concept of emptiness is both the source of our confusion and the key to our understanding.

## THE MEANING OF EMPTINESS

Emptiness, or Voidness, is the central underlying principle of existence in Buddhism, which denotes the Ultimate Reality, or the Absolute Truth of the universe. It is not an emptiness devoid of everything; it is a "full" emptiness. Its formless, non-substantial activity gives rise to all forms of existence, but never itself takes any form. It is not, therefore, the emptiness of no possibilities, but the emptiness wherein all is possible, the only constant being change. It consistently and truthfully reflects, as changing conditions dictate, the unceasing moment to moment flux and flow of our universe.

In Buddhism, emptiness is called "Dharma itself" or "Truth itself." "Wisdom," which acts in the universe through Compassion, is achieved when one understands emptiness as the reality of our individual and collective existence. But it is important to note that we are not speaking of mere concepts or static symbols, but the dynamic, active power of life. Wisdom transcends our ordinary understanding, it is not simply knowledge or intellect. It is both intuitive and existential at

the same time, and manifests a fundamental change in our perception of our self and of our engagement with the universe. The "experience" of Wisdom, of course, is Enlightenment; and the fundamental change is from a self — or ego-centered perspective to one of selflessness.

## VOIDNESS AND AMIDA BUDDHA

For the individual, voidness is the crux of it all. The ego-centered life is a life of suffering and bondage grounded in the fundamental delusion that the self, my self, is somehow, somewhere, fixed, permanent, even eternal. Belief in the permanence of the self creates a universe of others (separate), as well as further ramifications of this basic dualistic view, which serves to bolster, support and protect the self, over and above (and often at the expense of) all others.

The Buddha taught that this fundamental ignorance, or wrong view, is the cause of our individual human suffering. This wrong view posits permanence where all things are temporary; structure, where there is only flow and movement, and fixed selfhood, where there is no fixed self. In short, The Buddha taught that we suffer because we resist life "as it is." The Buddha's Enlightenment was an awakening to this Truth, as well as an awareness that the real nature of existence is voidness, or emptiness, and a life grounded in the Truth of emptiness is a Life of Absolute freedom.

In Jodo Shinshu, the Dharma itself is identified as Amida Buddha. This is because the Dharma itself is beyond our comprehension:

"the supreme Buddha is formless, and because of being formless is called *jinen*. When this Buddha is shown as being with form...it is expressly called Amida Buddha...the medium through which we are made to realize *jinen*."<sup>1</sup>

Amida and his Primal Vow are the symbolic expressions of the Absolute Truth of emptiness moving and working in the universe. Amida Buddha is Wisdom, and the natural Power of Amida works through his Vow in the purely selfless activity of Absolute Compassion. The purpose of the Vow, therefore, is the salvation of all living beings, "to make us all attain the supreme Buddhahood."<sup>2</sup>

Amida's Vow Power, then, underlies the reality of our very existence. As such, Amida is seen as constantly calling, urging us to give up our ignorance and realize the Truth of the Vow. This realization is *shinjin*, the moment when we respond to the call by fully entrusting ourselves, with Sincere Mind, to the power of the Vow. At this moment we let go of our dependency on the idea of a fixed self to trust, without hesitation, the reality of the Vow, the reality of emptiness. The Absolute Power of the Vow bursts the bonds of individual delusion, expressing itself in the here and now through the utterance of the Name, *Namu Amida Butsu*. "Hence, it is clear that the auspicious Name...is the True Wisdom which turns evil to merit and that the Adamantine Serene Faith ... is the Truth which removes doubt and enables us to realize Enlightenment."<sup>3</sup> (emphasis mine). Furthermore, "The substance of this *Sincere Mind* is the *Blessed Name* of the supreme virtue"<sup>4</sup> (emphasis mine).

As noted above, "the Adamantine Serene Faith" is that which "enables us to realize Enlightenment."<sup>5</sup> In *shinjin*, that moment of emptiness, we experience total freedom. The source of that moment is the Great Practice of the Vow, expressed in and through the individual as the utterance of the Nembutsu. The only real or effective Practice (i.e., the cause of our enlightenment) is that which emanates from, or is grounded in, emptiness. Thus the Great Practice exists only where there is emptiness; and the Great Practice is *shinjin*. "The Great Practice is to utter the

Name of the Tathagata of Unhindered Light...This Practice originates from the Vow of Great Compassion.”

What this means to a Jodo Shinshu follower is that the practice that will save us is pure selflessness. Shinran states in his *Kyōgyōshinshō*, “I know clearly that this Nembutsu practice is not the practice of self-power by common men and sages.”<sup>8</sup> This realization was essential for Shinran, and he took great pains to emphasize that his *shinjin* had nothing at all to do with his thoughts, his contrivances, his self-power. Even further, we are shown that Shinran’s efforts had nothing at all to do with anyone else’s *shinjin*:

It is utterly unreasonable for those who are devoted solely to the Nembutsu to quarrel, saying, ‘These are my disciples’, ‘those are others’ disciples.’ I, Shinran, do not have even one disciple of my own. The reason is, if I should lead others to utter the Nembutsu by my own efforts, I might call them my disciples. But it is truly ridiculous to call them my disciples, when they utter the Nembutsu through the working of Amida Buddha.<sup>9</sup>

#### TRUE SELF UNDERSTANDING

For Shinran, only the power other than self-power can effect our Birth, and “the ‘Other Power’ is the Tathāgata’s Power of the Original Vow.”<sup>10</sup> According to him, no one’s efforts are, or even can be, involved in the activity of complete selflessness. The *Tannishō* states that “in regard to Faith for Birth, there is no difference at all [between Shinran’s faith and Hōnen’s], and his faith and mine are one...[Hōnen’s] faith is the Faith given by the Tathāgata, and [Shinran’s] faith is also the Faith given by the Tathāgata. Hence, they are one.”<sup>11</sup>

In my mind, this is where the confusion arises. What does all this mean? What does “emptiness” or “no self” mean for me? If the

only effective practice is Amida’s, why do we listen? Why do we recite the Nembutsu? What is it that we must do?

The answers lie, I believe, in a closer look at emptiness and at the full nature and content of *shinjin*. Without a real understanding of emptiness, we would despair; it is clear that Shinran was not a man lost in the depths of despair. His *wasan* and many other writings attest to this:

If one utters “Namu Amida Butsu:  
Which surpasses all other virtues,  
All of his heavy sins of the three periods  
Will surely be altered and become light.

*Jodo Wasan #98 12*

“What a joy it is that I place my mind in the soil of the Buddha’s Universal Vow and I let my thoughts flow into the sea of the Inconceivable Dharma.”<sup>12</sup> said Shinran. He was a man whose life was filled with gratitude and hope, because emptiness in Buddhism represents transcendence, not annihilation. It embraces all of life and rejects nothing, including the self:

The Exquisite Land vast and immense,  
Has arisen from the glory of the Original  
Vow.

Bow to and take refuge in  
The Pure, Magnanimous Embracer.

*Jodo Wasan #36 14*

The ego-centered life is a life of ignorance, rooted in our attachment to, and dependence upon, the deluded notion of a fixed self. For most of us, however, even the most elementary understanding of this fact is lacking, even less do we possess the discipline or the virtues required to sever our ignorant attachments.

Shinran clearly numbered himself among us and not among the great teachers and sages of our tradition. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Wisdom and Compassion of Amida

entered Shinran's life. It is important to note that Shinran's *shinjin* included both the darkness of his ignorant self and his suffering, as well as the saving Light of Amida's Compassion. Shinran's *shinjin* gave him unshakeable trust in the all-embracing, non-forsaking power of the Vow, and simultaneously revealed to him the inconceivable depth of his own karmic bondage.

We should know that Amida's Original Vow does not discriminate whether one is young or old, good or evil and that Faith alone is of supreme importance, for it is the vow that seeks to save the sentient beings burdened with grave sins and fiery passions. therefore, if we have Faith in the Original Vow, no other good is needed because there is no good surpassing the Nembutsu.<sup>19</sup>

Shinran's "deluded self" did not go away; he simply and clearly no longer depended upon it. That is, although his ignorance still existed, Shinran's attachment and dependence on his ignorant views ceased. In the face of Absolute Mercy and Compassion, in the Light of Wisdom, the total undependability of the power of the self to clear away its own ignorance came through with absolute, undeniable clarity and he was able to place his total trust in Amida's Power.

#### TRUE ENTRUSTING: *SHINJIN*

In the face of Wisdom, our deepest karmic ignorance is not denied; it is Absolutely confirmed in its limited, undependable, totally selfish nature. Consequently, we can, for the first time, truly let go of our attachment to the idea of self power and realize the fruitlessness of it all. This is the moment of *shinjin*. This is the moment of selflessness. This is the moment of detachment from the self of ignorance by fully recognizing it, embracing it, and thereby transcending our dependency upon the self and, simultaneously, the Absolute confirmation of the self as-it-

is. therein lies the deepest meaning and significance of Buddhism for the individual. In that moment of *shinjin*, we experience freedom from bondage and suffering even while in the midst of our bondage and suffering.

It is because Amida's Absolute Mercy and Compassion enters our life that we can see the relative self for what it really is and transcend it by fully accepting it. In the Light of Wisdom, our relative world is not denied, nor is it made better; rather, it is embraced in its Absolute significance with respect to our individual human struggle for peace and fulfillment. It is all ultimately sanctified, just as-it-is, for *samsāra* is Nirvana.

Again we can ask, "what does this mean for me?" This means that, in our present deluded view of the world, it is difficult, if not impossible, for us not to want to do something, to ensure our spiritual fulfillment. The desire is there despite the fact that we are taught that our salvation has nothing to do with our efforts. This, I believe, defines the human predicament for all of us.

#### THE NATURE OF PRACTICE

From the Awakened view, fulfillment is in the here and now. The work has already been done; therefore, there is nothing more to be done, nothing more for us to do. When the relative view falls away, the Absolute, the Other Power, reveals itself as having always been there, undetected, unrecognized by our own ignorance. But it must be remembered that the Other Power as understood from the Awakened point of view is not differentiated from self power. From the Awakened point of view, from the heart of emptiness, Other Power embraces self power. Ultimately then, it is not a matter of practice or no practice, since it is all the working of the Other Power. It is all Amida's Great Practice; thus, accept all just as-it-is.

This tells us what it is we are to do, without specifically telling us what it is we are to do step by step. Every moment of our individual lives is an expression of the working of Amida and his Vow and each and every moment holds the full potential for *shinjin*. The only acceptable directive is that if we desire to fulfill our human potential, we must then try to understand that this is so. We must observe life, listen, and be attentive to our lives to discover, that this is so. Shinran's life itself reveals tremendous effort and struggle to understand despite, and perhaps even because of, his *shinjin* experience.

It is especially clear in his explanation of the two aspects of *shinjin*, as discussed above and in the Chapter on Faith in his *Kyōgyō Shinshō*, wherein he quotes the Master Zendo:

. . . The Deep Mind is the mind of Deep Faith. It has . . . two aspects . . . [belief that] we are really sinful ordinary human beings, fettered to Birth-and-Death, continuously drowning and transmigrating . . . [and belief that] the Forty-eight Vows of Amida embrace the sentient beings . . .<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, our lives of struggle and suffering, our lives of ignorant dependence on self power, are embraced and confirmed by the Mind of *shinjin*. If we examine Zendo's Parable of the White Path, which Shinran used to describe how an individual comes to *shinjin*, it also encompasses both the calling voice and the ignorant efforts of deluded beings. As stated in the explanatory note relating to this parable, we see that

the aspirant of the Pure Land at the outset tries to get there [to the other side] by performing various practices. But perverted by wrong views from without and evil passions from within, he soon realizes the inability to attain Birth by his power.<sup>17</sup>

## THE PARADOX OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

Shinran's entire life as a teacher is grounded in his insight into the paradoxical nature of religious life and practice. He considered this insight as the gift of Amida, received in his *shinjin* experience. Shinran's work can be understood as the effort to clearly articulate the essence and content of that experience for the benefit of others.

Shinran's sectarianism was only with respect to himself, not others. He was clear and certain with respect to the nature of his religious experience and the source of his salvation. He was unwavering in his insistence that it be articulated accurately. An unmistakable attitude and purpose of clarification can be seen throughout the entire body of his written work. His interpretation of the writings of the Seven Patriarchs, the doctrines of *tariki* and *jiriki*, Amida's vows, and his classifications of practice were all developed and presented in relation to, or in contrast with, his *shinjin* experience.

In keeping with the nature of his experience, Shinran's explicit approach with his followers and students was to transmit only what he knew to be true through his own experience and nothing more. This is most clearly seen in the following passage from the *Tannishō*:

. . . if you find something unfathomable in me and suppose that I know a way to Birth other than the Nembutsu . . . it is a grave mistake on your part.<sup>18</sup>

Shinran saw all self-power practices as not only useless and pointless, but as direct hindrances to our salvation. However, although he urged his followers to trust only in Amida, through the explication of his own experience, he nevertheless did not presume to tell others what they should or should not do to gain spiritual peace. Knowing that his



salvation was not the result of his own efforts or knowledge, he truly felt he was in no position to lead others to salvation. Shinran knew that the religious path is not one of knowledge or intellectual confirmation, but one of direct, therefore undeniable, life experience for each individual. Ultimately, each of us must make our own way.

With this in mind, it is my opinion that in terms of our individual path effort, Shinran felt that we really have no choice regarding the avoidance of self-power practices which we do, despite ourselves. In light of Shinran's own experience with self-power practices and his deep understanding of human nature and the religious quest, it seems clear that he did not see the Nembutsu path as rejecting either self-power practices or those who have chosen to pursue them. I do not mean to say that self-power practices are doctrinally "optional," in Shinshu. However, I do believe that Shinran understood and accepted the existential struggle for spiritual understanding as embracing all self-effort, all the same.

For Shinran, the condition of the mind behind an act, not the act itself, matters most. So, for those of us so inclined, investigation of practices generally classified as "self-power" might very well be pursued from a particularly Jodo Shinshu perspective; we should simply *not* be attached to the idea that our actions will necessarily lead to our Birth. Our acts are insignificant with respect to Birth in the Pure Land. Shinran's admonishments serve as a constant warning as to the pervasive nature of our ignorance in any practice, be it the simple act of *gasshō* or 100,000 prostrations.

*Shinjin* alone is significant for Birth; but *shinjin* is not mine. This does not mean that our acts are unimportant in other respects. Practices and their attendant efforts act as mirrors, reflecting our true selves and serving as a tool for self-reflection. All our acts are absolutely insignificant from an Awakened

point of view, as discussed above, because from the Awakened view there is no delusion as to whose practice is being used. Consequently, "the Nembutsu is non-practice and non-good for those who practice it . . . It is entirely due to the Other-Power and is free from self-power."<sup>19</sup>

We can see that there are no "musts" and "must nots" concerning the form our efforts to understand may take. Clearly, the Nembutsu Path is not any particular way. To the extent that there is a doctrinal directive that does not specifically direct, we should try to conduct our lives selflessly, and try to base our lives and our activities on emptiness according to our own inclinations and abilities. We should attempt to live unattached to the idea that what we are doing from moment to moment is inherently or permanently good or evil. As Shinran stated: "[W]hen our minds are good, we think it is good (for Birth), and when our minds are bad we think it is bad, thus failing to realize that we are saved by the . . . Vow."<sup>20</sup> This means that we should attempt not to judge or evaluate others or ourselves from any fixed notion of right or wrong, good or bad. Rather, the Nembutsu as "non-practice and non-good" for the practitioner implies that the practitioner has no where to stand, no fixed notion that can be depended upon, and hence the Nembutsu recognizes the transient, changing, undependable nature of human existence.

## THE LIFE OF GRATITUDE

Rev. Kakue Miyaji, an eminent Jodo Shinshu scholar, suggests an ethic based upon the rule "do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you."<sup>21</sup> This reversed "Golden Rule" (do unto others as you would have them do unto you) removes the implication that "I" know what is right as well as the corresponding judgment of others' actions that do not correspond with mine. The responsibility here belongs to the individual: one must watch his own, and only his own, ac-



tions. Rev. Miyaji further suggests that we can practice selflessness in our relationships with others by trying to manifest an attitude of doing "the least I can do for you." This attitude clearly exhibits Jodo Shinshu's understanding of selflessness in that there is no purity implied on "my" part. "The least I can do for you" implies that my selfishness is still fully intact, but, for the moment, I will set aside my selfish interests, my real self, and do what I can for you. The essential corollary to this is to do our best to act this way in every situation, to do our best to act selflessly in each moment; and then, whether successful in our effort or not, to leave that moment and move unattached to the next. It is easy to see that a constant result of this kind of effort will be a clearer focus on our underlying true self and our real capabilities. For, despite our efforts and desires, each moment as it unfolds is the truth of our life at that moment.

So it is not our success or failure that is important. Instead, it is our effort to understand the true nature of our selves and our universe, intellectually, experientially, any way we can. If it is truly our wish to understand, I believe it is important to take advantage of every opportunity that unfolds in our lives and to listen and reflect and share what limited understanding we may have. This may include looking into the teachings and practices of traditions other than Jodo Shinshu. For, despite outer differences to which we tend to attach ourselves, it is clear that sectarian lines have no absolute significance in the Nembutsu Path, and the familiar echos within our respective traditions can only help each of us broaden and deepen our understanding of our common humanity.

In Jodo Shinshu, we distinguish between Nishi and Higashi, but no one can deny there are great teachers in both these lines. The writings of Haya Akegarasu have been very helpful in my efforts to bring the teachings into my daily life. Also, not surprisingly, I find strong similarities between Akegarasu's and

Prof. Miyaji's approaches to individual effort in the present moment, as seen in the following passage:

Life is always being itself. Living in the Eternal Now (Absolute), I praise the past life that it hold, follow the future life contained in it. So my life moves from decision to decision, from deepest truth to deepest truth, always obeying the changes of time. I concentrate my power on living life.<sup>22</sup>

And,

Don't attach to anything; don't be bounded by anything . . . Facing one's present life squarely and trying to live a sincere, true life—there is the life of Shakamuni, the spirit of Buddhism, the life of Shinran Shonin.<sup>23</sup>

I believe this is not much different, if at all, from the words of Zen Master Taishen Deshimaru, when he says "only concentrate here and now . . . There can be no choice in seeking the Way . . . In everyday life . . . what counts is making choices. But it is bad to be attached to one's choices, to limit them."<sup>24</sup> Nor different from Deshimaru's description of *zazen* as a process of self-reflection: "During deep *zazen* . . . We can realize that we are not so wonderful, sometimes we're even worse than other people, because in deep *zazen* our true desires are revealed and we can see them fully."<sup>25</sup> His view of the awakened mind is stated thusly: "The objective ego is the . . . spirit of Buddha, the one that sees. We can observe ourselves in depth, and wake up and reflect. At that moment we become pure,"<sup>26</sup> not by elimination of the ego-centered self, but by finally being able to see it. Further, his admonition to avoid what in Jodo Shinshu we refer to as the practice of self power is that: "During *zazen* you must not want to grasp something—illumination, satori, good health . . ."<sup>27</sup>

I believe we can hear a recurring echo in the Shambhala teachings from Tibet that espouse "whatever we perceive, whether internal or external, should be seen as sacred;" that "sacredness (the Dharma), is the actual thread of experience . . . is all pervasive and continuous . . . is the actual ground of what we are and who we are. In that way the notion of potentiality is a very immediate experience."<sup>28</sup>

A passage which quite accurately points to the unique position we are in as Westerners and which we might draw upon, is from Rene Pitter's comments on Vacaspathimiśra's commentary on Vyāsa's interpretation of Patañjali's Yoga Aphorisms:

The beginning of yogic technique, . . . seems to center on this "cessation of the pairs of opposites." In a causal interpretation, this is the root of beginning practice in all the variously held and interpreted techniques disseminated throughout Asia, China, and Japan and finally to Europe and the Americas. One could go so far as to ascribe to it the threshold of all the world's religions on the most personal level. The Paths to awareness of this inborn possibility come to us by the various lines of Patriarchs, Peoples, and Languages involved. In a relative sense, this eaching comes to us within the pairs of opposites as the basic ground of everyday experience.<sup>29</sup>

As an appropriate closing to these passages for those of us in a Christian culture and society, I submit the following for your consideration: "As the whole world is the body of Christ . . . it is the water of our deliverance."<sup>30</sup>

I have offered these last passages as examples of the richness available to us, the unlimited possibilities for understanding and awakening that exist in each and every mo-

ment. The choice you make is your own, just as my choice is my own. In the final analysis, neither is absolutely right, and one choice does not negate the significance of the other. The Life of Nembutsu is grounded in the Dharma itself, which transcends and embraces all human distinctions, all human desires, and all human endeavors. We can share with our fellow human beings the knowledge that all of our individual efforts are in fact expressions of True Wisdom and Compassion and are, therefore, inherently blessed—there is truly nothing to fear.

Therefore, leave off hoping to attain enlightenment through your own limited self power, but at the same time, please continue the practice of Nembutsu, meditation, listening, etc. and do so diligently, because it is the Realized Great Practice of Enlightenment-as-it-is.<sup>31</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

1. *The Tannisho, Notes Lamenting Differences*, Ryukoku Translation Series II, Ryukoku Translation Center, Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan, 1980, p. 21.

2. *Letters of Shinran, A Translation of Mattōshō*, Vol. I, Shin Buddhism Translation Series I, Hongwanji International Center, Kyoto, Japan, 1978, p. 30. "Jinen" is reality, or things-as-they-are, beyond form and time.

3. *Letters of Shinran*, p. 29.

4. *Kyōgyōshinshō, The Teaching, Practice and Enlightenment*, Ryukoku Translation Series V. Ryukoku Translation Center, Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan, 1983, p.20.

5. *Kyōgyōshinshō*, p. 105.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 39-40.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

9. *Tannishō*, p. 28.
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12. *Jodo Wasan*, Ryukoku Translation Series IV, Ryukoku Translation Center, Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan, 1965, p. 132.
13. *Kyōgyōshinshō*, p. 211.
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15. *Tannishō*, p. 16.
16. *Kyōgyōshinshō*, p. 91.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 94, fn.1.
18. *Tannishō*, p. 18.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
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29. *Cloud-Hidden Friends Letter*, Issue #19, 1986, "Tablets for the Ancestors" by Rene Pittet, San Francisco, Calif.
30. "Tablets for the Ancestors", Pittet.
31. *Ibid.*, "On Practice" by Shaku Hozen Hardiman.

## Pure Land Buddhism and Modernization in Japan and the United States

Buddhist Churches of America National Council Meeting  
21 February 1987

by Robert N. Bellah

It is a great honor to be asked to give an address to the National Council of the Buddhist Churches of America. I have long been associated with the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, working with both faculty and students, and have also enjoyed a wonderful visit to Ryukoku University in Japan several years ago. So I do not really feel a stranger to this group. While in my studies of Japanese religion I have never specialized in Jodo Shinshu, I have been constantly aware of its importance and its religious profundity.

I would like to consider tonight a theme I have long been preoccupied with, both in Japan and the United States, namely, the relation between religion and modernization. Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* argues that Protestantism had significantly contributed to the creation of what we have come to call a "work ethic" that was highly favorable to economic development. In *Tokugawa Religion* I argue that there were similar developments in Tokugawa Japan. I discuss such paradigmatic figures as Ishida Baigan and Ninomiya Sontoku, but I also look at tendencies within Jodo Shinshu. A whole section of my book is devoted to the effect of Shinshu teachings on the prosperous merchants of Omi Province. I quoted an Omi Shinshu priest, among others, as follows:

. . . externally to obey the government laws and not forget the way of the five (Confucian) virtues, internally to believe deeply in the original vow (of Amida), to

entrust the good and evil of this world to the causes of the past, whether *samurai*, peasant, merchant or artisan, each to have his family occupation as his highest intention, then they will be called good pilgrims of the Pure Land.')

There is every reason to believe that similar attitudes continued to be significant among Japanese immigrants to the United States. They are part of the explanation of the capacity of members of the Buddhist Churches of America to prosper and contribute significantly to American society.

Let me sum up my argument. I am trying to suggest that one of the reasons that Japan and the United States are relatively successful modern societies with strong economies is that aspects of their traditional religious, ethical and social practices have not only reinforced economic development but also contained its destructive consequences, and that these practices have survived even in the midst of the rapid changes of our recent history.

Many theorists have argued that modernity inevitably leads to secularization and they have predicted and even discerned the dissolution of religion or at least its grave weakening in modern society. Certainly, religion is not a very strong force among intellectuals in both Japan and the United States. But often their own theories have prevented intellectuals from seeing how religion is alive in the larger society and among the common people. In

both Japan and the United States, there are countless formal and informal religious groups. In the midst of Japan's post-war boom, the new religions grew so rapidly that they have been recognized all over the world. In America today, religious vitality is so evident that if one has eyes to see, one can discover it even a block away from the campus of any of our great research universities.

Modern society is supposed to liberate the individual and undermine the family. Yet in most of Japan's modern history the divorce rate had fallen and it is only now very modestly rising. In America where the divorce rate is high, people still desire to marry and most divorced persons remarry. Family size has declined in both societies and yet most people want children and have children. This is not to say that all is well with the family, but it is certainly not the case that the family is dead in either society.

In short, the moral texture of social life continues to exist with remarkable resilience in both societies. Both Americans and Japanese work hard, though sometimes in different ways not recognized by the other, and that work continues to have a moral meaning in terms of religious, ethical and social ideas that have some continuity with earlier stages of our history. Religion in both societies has played the role of keeping the individual from being completely isolated, has checked an unprincipled pursuit of self-interest, and has reinforced a whole pattern of ethical practices which have made for a viable and effective society. In these ways religion has counteracted the materialistic and individualistic implications of our modern economy. Religion has, indeed, helped keep alive the impetus toward economic growth by helping to prevent the economy from destroying the social ecology necessary for even the economy to operate.

At least it has done so in part. Perhaps better in Japan than in the United States. But even in our two relatively successful societies there are everywhere signs of unease. Will

economic growth never end? Will we be pressed into ever harsher competition just to survive? Will the natural resources of our planet sustain unending economic growth? Is the meaning of life to be found in making more and more money and buying more and more things? Even if in a few societies economic growth and social vitality have gone hand in hand, are there not signs of danger? Are technical advance and economic growth finally monsters that will consume everything they touch? Some science fiction writers have imagined that we will create computerized robots that will finally be smarter than we are and so they will end up keeping us human beings as pets. This is a kind of nightmare, but it may have a symbolic truth.

It is here that we have to face the technological revolution that seems to be rapidly overtaking us. Japan and America, relatively uniquely in an unhappy world, have done remarkably well up until now, even though signs of strain are everywhere in evidence. But now the rules of the game are rapidly changing. Technological advance, computerization and robotization are creating new conditions in our economic and occupational life that require massive adjustments. At the beginning of the industrial revolution, we had much of our religious and moral heritage intact and they have stood us in good stead subsequently. But now we may be at the beginning of an even greater transition with a heritage that is much more battered and uncertain than once it was.

For one thing, American religious life has lost its traditional center. The great traditional Protestant denominations and even the Catholic Church are having difficulty maintaining the loyalty of their members, particularly in attracting the younger generations to full and active participation, something not unknown even in the Buddhist Churches of America. Among better educated and more affluent Americans, there has been a falling away from religion to some extent. Some of these people are largely secular in outlook. Others are sensitive to a wide array of spiritual



currents, some of them quite bizarre. But while the liberal churches that have been so close to the heart of American culture and society are weakening, a militant conservative piety is making itself felt. Based on social classes and sections of the country that have long felt excluded from power, these newly expanding, conservative religious groups are anxious to be heard. Their point of view is not very sophisticated and consists of a severe critique of some aspects of modernity and an uncritical acceptance of others. In any case they are more a sign of the deep unease about where our society is going than an answer to it.

Together with religion, work has long been a key element in American identity. But although Americans still work hard and still have one of the world's most productive economies (it is only compared to Japan that we do badly) there is a growing sense of dissatisfaction with work. As many as 75% of Americans are dissatisfied with their work and the chief complaint is that it is not "meaningful".

With respect to family life the legitimacy of traditional obligations has been undercut by an ethic of self-expression and self-fulfillment. This contains in part a wish for a more intense and intimate form of marriage and family but it often places such a burden on relationships that it leads to separation and divorce. Many Americans are not sure what it is fair to ask of others and how much they should think first about themselves.

Disillusion with the political process is widespread and many Americans have withdrawn from public participation, even the minimal act of voting. Others continue to maintain what is, compared to most countries, a vigorous voluntary associational life. Yet discouragement and withdrawal among those who have been most active are widespread.

I do not wish to paint a picture of breakdown. That would be untrue. But widespread uncertainty, unease and a certain

anxiety characterize American society today. Our conservative leadership has been asserting loudly that our period of national doubt is over, but the sound is very hollow, particularly of late when doubts about our present leadership have become troubling indeed. Just beneath the surface we see the continuous erosion of all those social practices, and the religious and ethical ideas that informed them, upon which the success of American society has been based. Declining productivity, declining investment, high indebtedness, lack of confidence in our foreign policy, all of these things are mere surface indicators of deeper problems. They do not bode well for our making a creative response to a major new challenge, the technological revolution.

Can we say that the Japanese are better prepared to meet this new challenge? Certainly the doubts and uncertainties that afflict most of the advanced nations are muted and hard to detect in Japan. Japan has experienced forty years of astounding success. From the rubble and ashes of total military defeat in 1945, Japan has become by the eighties the most economically dynamic and successful nation in the world, viewed by many, certainly in the United States, as the very standard of modernity. Comparative statistics prove that Ezra Vogel's claim that Japan is No. 1 is not in vain. Yet as usual in history, that very success is not without its ironies. There is, of course, the obvious economic danger in being too successful. No nation is more dependent on foreign trade than Japan. In a period of great economic uncertainty around the world, there is a danger that a new economic protectionism might arise. Even if this does not materialize, competition coming from the more recently developing Pacific rim economies is growing. Japanese profit margins are falling. A sense that an already heavily mobilized nation must mobilize still more has appeared.

Even now, work discipline and hours are excessive by the standards of most other nations. Unions are in collusion with management (unions are organized by company



rather than by industry and leaders sometimes sit on boards of directors) to increase output even when pressures on workers become inhuman. Genuine opposition in a Japanese union is virtually impossible. Under these circumstances, we may understand why Lech Walesa, leader of Solidarity and spokesman for Polish workers, said of Japan that it may be a spiritual dead end. And Ronald Dore reports that British workers when they learn that Japanese workers work on the average two- or three-hundred hours more per year than they do, tend to say that they don't want to compete with Japan.

A second source of strain is the educational system and the way young people are inducted into the Japanese economy. Certainly this must be the most demanding and competitive educational system in the world. It produces public and private bureaucracies staffed by the best and the brightest, but the human cost is high. Winston Davis has recently described the cost in vivid terms:

No better example of the triumph of economic goals and values could be given than contemporary Japanese education. The costs of development, initially borne by women and peasants, now rest most heavily on school-age children. Over the years, the Japanese have developed an examination-based meritocracy to supply industry with the kind of "human capital" it needs . . . To realize the bureaucrats' dream of making the twenty-first century the "century of Japan," the Japanese have, in effect, chained their own children to the walls of Weber's "iron cage." Some children spend as much time at their desks at school and in *juku* (after-school tutoring or "cram" schools) as English children did at their workbenches in the early nineteenth century. This system of "education" is probably the main cause of one of the country's most serious problems, violence in the home and at school.<sup>2)</sup>

In short, the Japanese response to the challenge of the technological revolution and the new competitive pressures in the world economy is not to innovate but to redouble the efforts that have been so successful in the past. Strains that are already very apparent in the United States, such as technological unemployment and job polarization, are appearing in Japan as well. If the children of the American middle class begin to wonder if they will ever attain their parents' standard of living, so is it the case in Japan. Japan is one of the few other countries where the single-family home is of great symbolic importance to the middle class, if anything even more so than in the United States, yet the relative cost of housing in Japan is far more prohibitive for the average salaried employee than here. We are beginning to see an economy divided between a few good jobs and many low-paying jobs going nowhere, but the Japanese economy shows the same bifurcation. The problem of job polarization in our own society is summed up in the vivid image of the upscale shopping malls where affluent young professionals buy incredibly expensive goods from other young persons who are making four or five dollars an hour. This suggests modern feudalism with a few lords and ladies and many serfs. In view of the American dream and the American hope one can only see that scenario as a recipe for profound social and political unrest, and the Japanese parallels are striking.

Yet we can glimpse possibilities quite different from those that seem to be closing in on us. A society in which robots working 24-hours-a-day seven-days-a-week can produce with little human effort goods that used to take thousands of man-hours of blood, sweat and toil to produce is a potentially liberating society, not one that must produce job polarization, impoverishment and despair among most of its citizens. A shorter work week, sabbaticals for everyone in which people could not only "retrain" but also grow intellectually and spiritually, a revival of craft skills that are inherently fulfilling, a public life rich in amenities that would encourage public

happiness and public friendliness, these are among the possibilities that our new technological achievements open up.

So, finally, we can ask whether religion can make any contribution to the way in which our societies handle the challenge of the technological revolution. Are they, too, so wedded to old patterns that they cannot help us take advantage of new opportunities? I have already discussed these problems in the final chapter of *Habit of the Heart*.<sup>3</sup> Here let me only say that the Catholic bishop's pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*,<sup>4</sup> makes an enormous contribution not only in its policy suggestions but even more in its theology. What we need to learn, in the words of the letter, is that "human life is essentially communitarian." No amount of private accumulation or dreams of such accumulation will save us from our essential emptiness. We will find ourselves only in giving to one another and in concern for the whole world. That of course is simply what the gospel says but perhaps it is the essential message that will help us avoid one more frenzied round of competition, that could well be our last.

But here I want to consider the possible contribution of Buddhism, particularly Pure Land Buddhism, to clarify our situation. I will rely heavily on an article by Professor Minor Rogers,<sup>5</sup> growing out of a talk he gave in 1985 to the Federation of Buddhist Women's Organizations, and in which Professor Rogers placed *Habits of the Heart* in the context of Nembutsu thought.

Rogers follows the authors of *Habits* in finding that individualism has come to be a central issue in our society. But it is very important what kind of individualism it is. *Habits* speaks of an ethical individualism, based on the belief in the dignity and indeed sacredness of human beings, that Rogers calls an "Other-power" individualism, translating this into Shinran's view of reality. But there is also a widespread form of individualism in American that assumes the individual has a

primary reality over against society, and all social relationships are seen as only a means for individual gratification. Rogers translates this kind of individualism as a "self-power" individualism, in which the individual believes himself to be more real and more valuable than any group or relationship. This conception of individualism goes back at least to Emerson, whose idea of "self-reliance" is an almost pure expression of "self-power." But today, Rogers argues, agreeing with the authors of *Habits*, that this second kind of individualism has become cancerous and threatens to destroy the very social fabric of American life. Rogers writes:

Such a dark analysis of our society or any society is to be taken seriously . . . On the other hand, this analysis may not be cause for dismay to those of you living out of Shinran's visions that this is the age of *mappō*, a degenerate age controlled by the illusion that we as individuals have some power of ourselves to help ourselves; an age in which the *dharma* can be neither taught nor practiced in a traditional sense, and is no longer efficacious for salvation for those relying in any measure on their own efforts; an age in which our only recourse as foolish beings (*bonbu*) is the saving power of Amida's Primal Vow. In any event . . . Professor Bellah and his colleagues . . . raise fundamental questions about life in America today to which, I believe, Shinran's Nembutsu provides answers—in other words, Shin Buddhism as a way of life offers a devastating critique of self-power individualism and provides vital resources for reawakening a commitment to the very best of humane values in American life. . .

Too many of us in America today . . . are constrained by a language of self-power individualism; we are incapable of explaining the deepest commitments that truly define our lives; to

that extent, the possibility of commitments beyond our own self-interest is seriously called into question. Bellah's analysis, however, is not entirely pessimistic, for he hears in the language of our religious communities—which he calls communities of memory—resources for reworking deeper levels of commitment. In his study, he takes up primarily the resources of biblical . . . and civic republican language . . . However, it is clear to me that comparable resources are available in the Buddhist tradition of Shinran, Rennyo, and Shinshu *myōkōnin*.

Professor Rogers worries lest his analysis be understood as subordinating the teaching of the Buddha-dharma to any sociological or psychological or even historical consideration. The true teaching is to be found in the sutras and the commentaries, and the writing of Shinran and Rennyo, and in the lives of countless lettered and unlettered *myōkōnin*. It is simply: "We are to discard—to throw away—every kind of self-power endeavor and rely singlemindedly and wholeheartedly on the saving grace of Amida Buddha alone. What matters is not an individual's success; what matters is living naturally (*jinen ni*); what matters is living free of calculation and self-designing (*hakarai nashi*)."

Yet Professor Rogers believes, and I believe, that the living tradition of Nembutsu thought can make a major contribution to deflecting us from our fanatical pursuit of self-power, our preoccupation with the "competitive edge," that seems so destructive in both Japan and the United States. Certainly the need for Nembutsu teaching would seem to be great in Japan as well as in the United States. In Japan the reliance on self-power may be more collective than in America, but it is just as extreme. The Japanese have had a longer history of exposure to the "Other-power" teaching, but they are in no less need of it again today. What is certain is that both societies need creative centers of Buddhist

studies where the applications of Pure Land teachings to our present need can be worked out. Such institutions as the Institute of Buddhist Studies need to be nurtured and strengthened so that they may contribute to the religious conversation that is so necessary today.

Near the end of his talk, Rogers said:

The real point, however, is that there is no conclusion to the dynamic, living tradition of Shinshu in which you are participants. It is a tradition new every morning, which each of you redefines as you go about living each day. To the extent that we are open—or are opened—to the truth of Amida's Primal Vow and the nurture of his wisdom and compassion, we transcend naturally the self-power individualism that so threatens American life today; further, we move, or are moved, beyond a definition of success as narrow self-interest and preoccupation with self-cultivation and self-expression to compassionate concern for all sentient beings.

Rogers suggests the transforming power that faith can have in our lives. It is easier to see it in our personal lives than in the life of our society as a whole or in the modern world as a whole. But I believe we are called to ask those larger questions. What would it mean if religion set the ends, and the means that have usurped the status of ends—wealth and power—were reduced to the status of means again? Can we imagine a world in which the technological revolution might make it possible for compassionate concern to be the pattern of our actual lives?

Wassily Leontieff, the Nobel Prize winning economist, gave an instructive parable at a conference that I attended a few years ago on Japan's technological and economic challenge to the United States. He said that when the English first went into the tropics

they found the country to be very rich. They established plantations and offered wages but no one came to work. The natives could pick a few bananas from their trees and spend the rest of the day in religious ceremonies. Why should they work? Then the English levied a tax, and made it payable in money, not in bananas. So the natives had to come to work to pay their taxes. Modernity, if we want to think of it that way, places a tax on all of us, and it is a very high tax. We are all working in various plantations even though many of us might rather be spending our time in religious ceremonies.

Leontieff made another point in his remarks. Technological unemployment is bound to increase with ever greater speed as we close the century. Competition is forcing it all over the world. What will happen? This could be the great crisis of modernity from within. What will we do when an economy more and more productive employs fewer and fewer people? One can see very dark possibilities, forms of control and tyranny worse than any we have known before. But there is also a possible benign outcome. Could our economy become our banana trees? Could it release us from ceaseless toil to find

the meaning of life in religion where most of the human race has always believed it to be? Could the Japanese and the Americans lead the world in that new direction?

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#### FOOTNOTES:

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2. Winston Davis, "Religion and Development: Weber and the East Asian Experience," in Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington, eds., *Understanding Political Development*, Little, Brown, 1987, pp. 266-267.

3. Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steven M. Tiptin, *Habits of the Heart*, University of California Press, 1985.

4. *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C., 1986.

5. Minor L. Rogers, "Nembutsu and Commitment in American Life Today," *Pacific World*, New Series, No. 2, 1986, pp. 22-30.

# **Biomedical Ethics From a Buddhist Perspective**

Shoyo Taniguchi

## **INTRODUCTION**

**T**he development of modern biomedical science and biotechnology has created complex situations which become increasingly more serious each day. These situations present greater ethical dilemmas than have ever existed. Society and individuals are confronting profound moral dilemmas, requiring an entirely new field of ethics, called "biomedical ethics." This new branch has grown more rapidly in the last few years than any other branch. Biomedical ethics is a prevalent topic today among ethicists, as well as in the mass media.

We can find a tremendous amount of literature by authors who bring the Christian viewpoint to the decision-making process in biomedical issues. Numerous books and articles have made substantial direct and indirect contributions to contemporary American society. Comments, opinions and suggestions are constantly being requested from various Christian moral theologians by members of the media; and the latter have taken the initiative to provide their own perspective as opportunities arise and are actively attempt to resolve contemporary biomedical ethics problems.

On the other hand, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find Buddhist contributions towards solving these biomedical problems. There may be good reasons for Buddhists not engaging in these discussions.

However, the silence of Buddhists regard-

ing biomedical issues does not mean that Buddhism is incapable of providing answers to these questions. I boldly assert that Buddhism is fully capable of presenting a solid and universal approach to contemporary biomedical ethics. As the Christian perspective towards biomedical ethics is rooted in Christian theology, Buddhism has its own perspective towards biomedical ethics. There are ethical principles in Buddhism which can easily be applied.

By applying early Buddhist teachings, theories, ethical principles, anthropology and philosophy integrally, I will attempt to find Buddhist perspective to some essential biomedical issues, such as abortion, suicide, contraception, in vitro fertilization, patient/physician confidentiality, and quality of life.

The purpose of this paper is to draw the attention of Buddhist scholars to serious discussion of contemporary biomedical issues. This paper is only a simple and unsophisticated attempt to solve these problems by using some Buddhist principles.

## **ABORTION**

### ***What is Abortion?***

Abortion is divided into two kinds: spontaneous abortion and induced abortion. Spontaneous abortion is usually referred to as a miscarriage, which is beyond the scope of



ethics. Induced abortions are classified into two types: therapeutic and non-therapeutic. Therapeutic induced abortion is a medical procedure performed by a licensed physician when there is a threat to the life of the mother, and usually regarded as a legitimate practice. Non-therapeutic induced abortion was banned by law, but later legalized in some states such as California. In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court liberalized abortion and over a million pregnancies are now aborted annually. Although non-therapeutic induced abortion is now protected by law, the issue of its ethicality is still discussed and debated by ethicists. From a Buddhist view, both therapeutic and non-therapeutic induced abortion are equally debatable. However, let us discuss the validity of non-therapeutic induced abortion from a Buddhist perspective.

Regarding the process of fetal development, the *Mahātāṇhāsāṅkhaya Sutta*, an early Buddhist text, explains it as follows: conception is possible only by a successful conjunction of three causes and conditions: (1) union of a sperm and ovum, (2) the mother's fertile period, and (3) arrival of consciousness.<sup>1</sup> According to this, a new life starts at the very moment of conception. It is also worth mentioning that Buddhism believes that however premature and small this fetus is, compared to an adult, in this fetus, all physical and psychic attributes are already latent,<sup>2</sup> although not fully developed. In this regard, this living being called a fetus is another individual, having all psycho-physical phenomena. Thus, in Buddhism, abortion is regarded as an act of taking the life of a living being.

Why does Buddhism discourage the taking of a life of a living being? It is because, according to the Buddha, for every single living being, the most dearest is one's own life.<sup>3</sup> All beings fear pain, harm, and suffering, and seek comfort and fearlessness. This is one of the most basic teachings which can be applied to all biomedical issues. Of all living beings, whether out of the womb or inside the womb,

whether human or non-human, the most precious and dearest is one's own life. Taking someone's life means you accept the idea that someone else can take your life against your will. Since this is not so, in Buddhism, taking life is not regarded as correct action. Buddhism uses the term skillful and unskillful (*kusala* and *akusala*) instead of right and wrong.

In Buddhism, "wrong" action is called unskillful action, because it always brings suffering and pain as its result. Buddhist ethics does not discuss morals for morality's sake. We cannot trace any ontological concept of sin, or evil in Buddhist ethics. Thus, unskillful actions are discouraged because they result in suffering.

### *Harmful Action*

In advising the seven-year-old monk Rahula, the Buddha clearly taught the criteria of skillful action (*kusala kamma*) and unskillful action (*akusala kamma*) as recorded in *Majjhima Nikāya*. The list of criteria given to Rahula are divided into Unskillful Action (*akusala kamma*) and Skillful Action (*kusala kamma*) as follows:

1. Unskillful Action  
(*Akusala Kamma*)
  - a) actions harmful to oneself
  - b) actions harmful to others
  - c) actions harmful to oneself and others
2. Skillful Action  
(*Kusala Kamma*)
  - a) actions beneficial (or not harmful) to oneself
  - b) actions beneficial (or not harmful) to others
  - c) actions beneficial (or not harmful) to oneself and others<sup>4</sup>

These are the most fundamental Buddhist



ethical principles which Buddhists can apply to any decision making.

Abortion can bring physical damage to the woman in the form of hemorrhage, sterility or infection. Besides physical damage, abortion more gravely harms the psychological health of the woman, producing mental suffering and pain in the form of guilt, self-accusation, self-torment, anger, frustration, fear, hatred, depression, and remorse.

Abortion not only harms the woman herself, but it also could harm others. For example, physical and mental damage may extend to the woman's family.<sup>3</sup> Further, more importantly, the fetus would be harmed to the ultimate level.

In Buddhism, the so-called "individual" is represented by the term *nāmarūpa* or a psycho-physical unit, composed by the corporeal factor (*rūpa*) and incorporeal factor (*nāma*). All living beings are composed of the aggregates of the mind and the body. In Buddhism, those whose minds and bodies are functioning are regarded as living beings. As long as consciousness is functioning, craving (*taṇhā*) is there, except within an enlightened one. As long as craving is there, there is fear. Where fear is, pain arises. So, no matter how small a living being is, like an ant, as long as this being has consciousness, the fear and pain which it experiences when it is harmed is not less than that of other living beings. Likewise, in the consciousness of a fetus, craving, fear, and pain equally arise when harm is rendered.

From the Buddhist point of view, it seems that by having an abortion, a mother is creating a great deal of pain and fear of death in the fetus. Actually, the fetus is the very one who experiences the greatest physical and psychological pain and fear.

Looking at abortion using this Buddhist criteria, abortion is an action which harms both the woman herself and others. It can be categorized as the most unskillful action

(*akusala kamma*) among the three types of unskillful actions. This may be only a one-sided application of the criteria of skillful and unskillful action. Each situation is different, so we need further discussion on this subject.

### *Law of Kamma*

One of the most important and particularly Buddhistic reasons for discouragement of abortion derives from the teaching of the law of *kamma*.

In Buddhism, the action of the mind is given closer consideration than the action of the body and of speech. The Buddha clearly says, "Volition (*cetanā*) is action (*kamma*)."<sup>4</sup> According to the law of *kamma*, to perform the action of killing or any other unskillful action, one would be motivated by greed, hatred and ignorance.

Unskillful action is rooted in one or all of the above negative emotional states. Once one does the action again, it enhances the intensity of those basic negative emotions. Then the tendency to perform the unskillful action becomes more intense. This is the process of learning a negative habit. This is called, in Buddhist terms, 'accumulation of bad *kamma*', which will result in pain and unhappiness for the person. In this regard, the theory of *kamma* is "the theory of cause and effect, of action and reaction; it is a natural law, which has nothing to do with the idea of justice or reward and punishment."<sup>5</sup>

Buddhism teaches that one will become heir to whatever one does.<sup>6</sup> One is the creator of oneself. The one who acts skillfully or unskillfully is the one who receives the results of the action. In the case of abortion, it is the woman herself, who would suffer the result of her *kamma*.

### *To Whom Does the Fetus Belong?*

The abortion issue is sometimes replaced

with the issue of the woman's right to privacy.

### *A Buddhist Way*

Buddhism teaches that the concept of "my own body" is the result of ignorance (*avijjā*). According to Buddhism (Buddhist anthropology), a human being is composed of six elements: solidity, fluidity, heat, motion, space and consciousness. All of these are interdependent, relative, conditioned and ever changing. Only a thought process makes us feel that "I" exist, or that "this is my body." The idea of "This body belongs to me" is only a phrase concept which arises by the condition of a physical organ and a sensory object reacting interdependently. In reality, nothing exists that one can claim as "mine."

Since even "my body does not belong to me," then how can one say that "a fetus belongs to me"? The parents merely provide a fetus with a material layer.<sup>10</sup> The *Dhammapada* declares that delusion makes one say that one's body belongs to oneself or one's child belongs to oneself.<sup>11</sup>

If a woman can claim the woman's right to the use of her body in the case of abortion, saying "a fetus belongs to me, because it is in my womb, therefore, I can do whatever I want to do with it," she can also claim the right to take the life of her one-day-old, one-year-old, or two-year-old child, saying, "this child belongs to me, this is mine. So I have the right to kill it." In reality, this is not so. The taking of a life within the womb, as opposed to outside the womb, is similar to the situation of a murder taking place either inside or outside of a house—there is no intrinsic difference. The Buddhist point of view regards that there is no necessary qualitative difference among a one-day-old fetus, a one-day-old baby and a fifty-year-old man.

This seems to mean that the woman does not have the right to do whatever she wants with her own fetus.

Abortion under some circumstances is justified by some modern ethicists. They argue that when a pregnancy is unwanted and abortion is contemplated, abortion under "serious reason" should not be condemned. Those reasons they claim are: rape or incest, contraceptive failure, probable genetic defects in the offspring, or economic depression. They say that abortion performed due to those reasons "need not be condemned."<sup>12</sup>

To allow the termination of the life of a fetus caused by rape or incest, where violence initiates life, is to allow another kind of violence towards another individual. As will be discussed later, in Buddhism, effective contraception is encouraged when the couple does not want to have any offspring. Thus, contraceptive failure, either due to the parents or the device itself, cannot be used against the fetus. In simple language, the fetus should not suffer for someone else's fault.

From a Buddhist perspective, the question of abortion is basically a matter of a life of ease or a life of difficulty for the woman. It is a matter of life or death for the fetus.

From the previous discussions, it is clearly the Buddhist way is to consider possible options other than abortion. The Buddhist way is to find the least damaging option to both parties—in this case, the mother and the child. Since abortion is the most seriously discouraged answer, the issues to be considered, discussed and acted upon are other options, such as adoption, single motherhood, assistance from family members, social organizations, and so on.

The compassionate Buddhist approach to the woman who is already considering abortion is to provide her with the correct knowledge and full information about the facts of abortion, a fetus, the law of *kamma*, the value and quality of human life, and the

knowledge of other options available. It may not be necessarily comfortable or pleasant, and may be even difficult for the woman to understand and accept. But this would give her more tools to analyze the situation correctly. In Buddhism, the gift of correct knowledge is regarded as the greatest of all gifts, surpassing any kind of material gift.

### CONTRACEPTION

In the modern world, contraception plays an important role in the process of human sexuality. Here we can make use of the Buddhist theory of Cause and Effect or of Dependent Co-Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). The principle of this doctrine is given in a short formula of four lines: "When this is, that is. This arising, that arises. When this is not, that is not. This ceasing, that ceases." Simply put, it means that when the causes and conditions co-exist, there is always its effect. If the causes and conditions do not exist, there is no effect.

From this teaching, it is possible to draw the following conclusion: If one does not want to have a certain effect conditioned by certain causes, one should prevent the necessary conditions from falling together. Prevention of the unwanted effect is a skillful action in Buddhism.

Unlike Christianity, Buddhism does not teach procreation as the essential purpose of marriage. In Buddhism, human sexuality is only an attempt to gratify one's sensual desire (*kāma*). Sensual desires are caused by the six sensory faculties: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, and mind. Union of man and woman or two physical bodies in sexual action is the result of this desire (*tanha*) to gratify the senses, including the mind. Even the need to have a child is an extension of the same major desire (*tanha*). Thus, no particular significance is attributed to procreation in Buddhism.

What is important in Early Buddhism is that a sperm and an ovum cell are not regarded as living beings by themselves. They have the potential to produce a life by joining together, but by themselves are like a matchstick and a match box. Fire arises only with the action of striking these two objects together. Once one generates a fire, it has to be treated differently from the way one treats a match and a match box.

Therefore, based on the theory of Cause and Effect, contraception or masturbation cannot be regarded as actions of taking life. As we have discussed before, according to basic Buddhist teaching, abortion could be strongly discouraged, while on the other hand, contraception could be acceptable. Prevention of the causes and conditions of pregnancy by using harmless contraception can be more praiseworthy than getting pregnant and going through an abortion. Under these circumstances, intentional contraception can be regarded as a wise and right action.

But it is important to use harmless kinds of contraceptive devices by getting the right information and knowledge about the process of contraception. Some medication and devices abort already fertilized eggs, and yet they are sold as contraceptive devices. In this case, their use would be discouraged.

### EMBRYO TRANSPLANT, IN VITRO FERTILIZATION AND ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

According to the scientific theory of conception, the conjunction of a sperm and an ovum is the only cause for a new life. Reproduction is subject to "a great deal of chance as to whether a good egg meets a good sperm."<sup>13</sup> Science reduces it to a chance. In other words, science does not answer the question as to why all fertilized eggs do not always create a new life.

But according to Buddhism, as men-

tioned before, the conjunction of material elements of a sperm and an ovum are only one cause for new life; without arrival of consciousness—called *Gandhabba*—a new life cannot form. Buddhism does not attribute any phenomena to chance. Buddhism has no conflict in applying scientific development towards procreation, but Buddhism holds that every phenomenon is causally conditioned. As long as all the causes and conditions for the beginning of a new life co-exist, there is always its necessary effect. It is possible to fertilize a human ovum in a test tube, making it an equivalently-conditioned space like an artificially-available womb, a fetus can grow there.

In 1985, the National Center for Health Statistics said that one in nine couples of childbearing age cannot conceive easily or maintain a pregnancy.<sup>14</sup> Childless couples have been trying many different methods in order to conceive. If the couple wants to have a baby, as long as the technology harms no parties involved, what they can do is to provide proper causes and conditions by making use of scientific knowledge and modern technology.

As long as technology brings benefits to the couple who wishes to have a child, and as long as it does not bring pain or suffering to any parties involved, Buddhism would find no conflict in applying and using modern biotechnology. This is a basic Buddhist standpoint.

## SUICIDE

A 1974 World Health Organization estimate indicates that, in the reporting nations, at least 1,000 persons kill themselves everyday. During 1975, 27,000 deaths were reported as suicides in the United States. Suicide is becoming a more serious problem, especially among the young.

Suicide, however, is not a new issue and

has been recorded throughout human history. It has been discussed by philosophers and theologians such as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Immanuel Kant.<sup>15</sup> For Aristotle, for example, suicide is “unjust” to others, but not to the self. His claim is based on the idea one can never treat oneself unjustly and that an injustice is an act done to oneself against one’s will. Aristotle thinks that suicide cannot be unjust to the suicidal person, because it is a voluntary action. He believes that one cannot intentionally hurt oneself.

From the Buddhist view, suicide is rooted in craving or greed, hatred and delusion (*tanha*): (1) The person may be dominated by greed for a better existence; (2) he/she may be dominated by hatred toward the present conditions of life; or (3) may not have clear and complete understanding of the existing conditions. All these are heavily rooted in ignorance, lack of clear and understanding of the situation.

Therefore, although Aristotle thinks that suicide is justifiable because of its voluntariness, for Buddhism, it is not. Deluded persons can always harm and hurt themselves with full awareness of what they are doing. Voluntariness itself does not “justify” an action.

For Kant, who tried to establish that the fundamental moral principle would always be self-consistent, suicide was an issue of moral dilemma, because Kant thinks that a candidate for suicide believes that “care for oneself” requires “destruction of oneself.”

From a Buddhist view, what a suicidal person wants to eliminate is not his/her own life, but his/her pain, suffering, despair, torment, affliction, or other physical or mental pains which he/she experiences. The suicidal person has confused the two (elimination of life, and elimination of suffering and pain) with each other.

In Buddhist teaching, true "care for oneself" derives only from non-greed, non-hatred, and absence of confusion or ignorance. True self-love never requires self-destruction. A good evidence for this is that modern research on suicide proves that in many suicides, individuals wish neither to die nor to kill themselves.<sup>16</sup>

From the above discussion, it is clear that Buddhism regards the suicide wish as an unskillful action (*akusala kamma*).

#### PATIENT/PHYSICIAN CONFIDENTIALITY AND TRUTH-TELLING

Ethics in truth telling is precisely taught in the Early Buddhist texts. In the *Abhaya-rājakumāra Sutta*, a statement is evaluated from three aspects: whether the statement is (1) true or false, (2) beneficial (or harmless) or unbeneficial (or harmful), and (3) pleasant or unpleasant. According to this, any statement which we make can be categorized under the following eight configurations:

1. true - beneficial (harmless) - pleasant
2. true - beneficial (harmless) - unpleasant
3. true - unbeneficial (harmful) - pleasant
4. true - unbeneficial (harmful) - unpleasant
5. false - beneficial (harmless) - pleasant
6. false - beneficial (harmless) - unpleasant
7. false - unbeneficial (harmful) - pleasant
8. false - unbeneficial - unpleasant<sup>17</sup>

What is most unique about the eight configurations is that the Buddha did not simply consider giving a true statement to be a proper verbal action, or a false statement to be an improper action. The Buddha carefully examined it to see if the statement is beneficial, and if the statement is pleasant. What is more important, the Buddha does not always label and "unpleasant" statement as an improper one. Further, this implies that even though the statement is true, if it is not beneficial, it is not recommended.

In this sutra, the Buddha says that the Tathagata (Buddha) makes only two types of statements: (1) true, beneficial, and pleasant, or (2) true, beneficial, and unpleasant. The Buddha says that he makes true, beneficial and pleasant statements all the time, however, he makes true, beneficial and unpleasant statements only at the proper time.

We can apply these principles taught by the Buddha in the biomedical field. Some cases of truth telling or patient/physician confidentiality present serious problems, especially when the situation is directly related with a person's life or death.

Two California judges arrived at opposite conclusions in a case of possible violation of medical confidentiality in which a man killed a woman after confiding to a psychiatrist his intent to commit the act. The psychiatrist attempted unsuccessfully to have the man committed to an institution, but because of the patient/physician confidentiality involved, did not communicate the threat to the woman when his attempt to commit the man failed.<sup>18</sup>

The judge who wrote the majority opinion in this case held that physicians generally ought to observe the protective privilege of medical confidentiality, but the principle must yield in this case to the public interest in safety from violent assault. On the other hand, the other judge disagreed, arguing that if it were common practice to break these rules of confidentiality, patients would lose confidence in psychiatrists and would refrain from divulging critical information to them.

What would be the Buddhist answer to this case? Based on the Buddhist ethical principles of harmful and beneficial statements, we can find the answer. In such a situation, the Buddhist way is to clearly understand who is in need of the most urgent protection from danger. It is apparently the woman. In this regard, Buddhists would agree with the judge



who placed the greater importance on saving a life rather than keeping a rule for the rule's sake.

## QUALITY OF LIFE

The development of biotechnology and other sciences may be regarded as an advancement of mankind. But a Buddhist's question may be, "How much security or happiness does it really bring to people?" Contentment, feeling of security, or happiness is only a matter of mind. Therefore, while not discouraging the development of greater technological advances, Buddhism emphasizes the development of the mind rather than the development of other sciences which bring only a limited and temporary satisfaction. In other words, the main emphasis of Buddhism is given to the advancement of mind or mental health.

In the Buddhist perspective, therefore, quality of life or the value of a person, can be evaluated only in connection with the degree of mental development or mental health of that person.

Buddhism teaches that all human beings have the potential to possess this perfect healthy mind. There is no qualitative difference between a one-year-old child and a fifty-year-old man, as a potential possessor of a healthy mind. Qualitative difference comes only when quality of the mind is considered. What is more qualified as a human, an innocent one-year-old child or a fifty-year-old man full of human weaknesses, such as greed, hatred, and delusion? There is no necessary qualitative difference between a handicapped person and an Olympic athlete as a potential being of a healthy mind. Which is more qualified as a human, a severely handicapped person full of loving-kindness (*mettā*) or an Olympic gold medalist full of jealousy and greed.

According to Buddhism, to be born as a human being is the rarest and most precious

opportunity. Among all beings, the human being is the only one who has the potential to become perfect or be free from all suffering.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we did not discuss issues such as euthanasia, neo-natal care or death and dying because of the limited space. However, I believe that the above discussion based on Buddhist texts presents evidence that Buddhism can contribute to the discussion of biomedical ethics. The Buddhist way is to solve the problem in a manner which is least damaging to all the parties involved. As a responsible member of society, I sincerely hope that this attempt to introduce Buddhist biomedical ethics may be helpful when the modern world makes decisions in the future regarding biomedical issues. I also hope that the Buddhist scholarly community will address these issues more actively and come up with better solutions for many complicated problems of modern biomedical ethics.

*This article is an excerpt from the author's presentation given at the International Buddhist-Christian Dialogue Conference held at G.T.U. and University of California at Berkeley, August 10-15, 1987. It represents only a minor portion of her M.A. thesis. The author encourages those who are interested in a more comprehensive treatment of Buddhist perspectives toward biomedical ethics should read the original text of her thesis, obtainable at the libraries of I.B.S. and G.T.U.*

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# FOOTNOTES:

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4. *Anguttara-Nikāya*. iii. p. 137.
5. *Majjhima-Nikāya*. ii. p. 89.
6. See, e.g., medical case 23.3 in *Abortion: The Personal Dilemma* by R.F.R. Gardner, 1972. p. 210.
7. *The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Anguttara-Nikāya)* (The Pali Text Society edition). iii. p. 294.
8. Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*. N.Y.: Grove Press, Inc., 1962, p. 32.
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15. Warren Reich, ed. *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*. N.Y., Free Press, 1978, Vol. 4. pp. 1620-1621.
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## **A Buddhist Approach to the Treatment of Drug Abuse Patients\***

by Darryl Inaba

**O**n June 7 of this year, the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic will celebrate its 20th anniversary. The clinic has now treated over 22,000 different substance users. It has been recognized as having an outstanding, innovative program and treatment. It has won a lot of awards; and people recognize our program for its effectiveness. I believe that to a great extent, the success of our program is due to our application of Buddhist teachings in our treatment process.

The clinic now treats 600 to 700 different addicts every month. Ninety percent of the people who come to the clinic, come on their own volition. They are not sent there by parents, probation officers, coaches, school counselors, or the justice system. They are people who look at their lives and recognize that a drug is causing a major problem leading to progressive impairment and dysfunction. They want to do something about their drug problem, but they cannot stop. They have developed what we call addiction; and that is what the clinic is involved with.

Many different types of addictions are being treated, from heroin to marijuana. Also, some of those who come to the clinic are addicted to drugs like caffeine or cigarettes. The new trend, especially among the youths we treat, is a drug called "dip", or "snuff", a chewing tobacco—like substance, which leads to another type of dependence. Other patients are addicted to coffee, or think they have a problem with sugar, chocolate, all kinds of different substances, even carbohydrates. But 99% of the clients we see are addicted to what society calls "hard drugs."

We have pretty much come to a conclusion in 1987 that it is hard to define a drug. People take in substances; and they cannot control those substances. Those substances cause a dysfunction or problem in their life. They develop a major addiction problem. Regardless of the substance causing addiction, we offer appropriate treatment. We are treating kids who were licking frogs and were getting psychoactive effects from licking frogs. A current abuse problem stems from young people sniffing glue. They are sniffing white-out, the typewriter correction fluid. Three weeks ago, a young adult male in San Francisco removed the paint brush from each of these little bottles, stuck a bottle in each nostril, and suffocated. All he breathed in was the white-out, the liquid substance, and he died of asphyxiation.

So we treat a great variety of drug addictions, but cannot define clearly what a drug is. I am a pharmacist, and I teach at the University of California Medical Center. My students often ask me to define what a drug is, saying "You're talking about sugar as a drug, chocolate as a drug, paint as a drug, and all these different things as a drug. How do you define a drug?" Nowadays, I just tell them that a drug is any substance that creates a scientific paper if you inject it into a rat. That is a funny definition, but we do see a wide variety of drug problems.

For a long time, since the beginning of our clinic 20 years ago, we have believed that drug addiction was an illness, a disease; an addict was not someone who was bad, stupid, weak-willed, or crazy, but someone who con-

tracted a physical illness we call the disease of drug addiction. The treatment at the clinic centers around understanding people and accepting them as people with an illness, just like heart disease, diabetes, or hypertension. Like others with illnesses, as soon as they enter treatment, they are starting to get into better health. They begin to recognize that they have an illness. They want to take care of themselves, and we treat addictions as a health problem.

However, it was only two years ago that the World Health Organization reclassified drug addiction as a disease. The American Medical Association last year in 1986 finally relented and evaluated the problem by looking at all the research, and finally accepted drug addiction as an illness, a disease. Like all diseases, drug addiction is a chronic process. You cannot expect somebody to go into a treatment program, and within one month, six months, or a year, become cured of this disease. It is a long-term process. It is an incurable condition, but it can be treated, arrested and minimized. We also know that it is progressive. To someone who comes in with all kinds of personal and family problems, and who thinks life is terrible, I quickly tell him that if he continues to use that drug—if he continues to use alcohol, or cocaine, or quaalude, or heroin—he will continue to progress, to get more and more impaired, more and more dysfunctional. He is going to progress toward deeper and deeper impairment.

Like any disease, addiction is also a relapsing condition. It means that if you have a heart disease, and you are placed on some kind of treatment program, and you do not follow the program, what happens? Your disease gets worse, or it comes back to you even though it was controlled for awhile. Addiction is the same process. If you have an addiction, but you stop taking drugs, and you are doing well—let's say you are clean for five years—if you do not pay attention to your treatment, and you start using or playing

around with alcohol or drugs again, you go right back and become an addict again. It is very much a relapsing condition. That also qualifies it as a disease.

The most important point I would like to communicate is that a drug addiction problem is potentially fatal. That is a necessary condition for it to classify as a disease by the World Health Organization. That means that if you do not treat yourself for this disease and continue to take drugs, this disease will potentially kill you. We now know that is a definite fact, whether it is nicotine, alcohol, heroin, quaalude, cocaine, marijuana, all these different drugs. If you continue to use these drugs, the drugs will cause dysfunction, such as heart condition, blood pressure condition, lung condition, kidney condition, all kinds of complications and adverse effects that potentially can kill you.

From the standpoint of Buddhist philosophy, I think that rather than the physical death that occurs from the disease of addiction, it is more important to note the spiritual death we see in our patients. People who had been avoiding treatment but who finally come into our clinic are found to be suffering from a spiritual disease, a spiritual death. They do not have any belief in themselves, no self-esteem. They do not have any belief in life, any belief in any good in life, or living, any belief in anything whatsoever. What is important to them is the drug, and there is no purpose for existence other than that drug. As we learn from Buddhism and Jodo Shinshu, life is very much an illusion. Lot of illusion, lot of sorrow. People respond to this illusion and sorrow out of ignorance and perform acts that bring about their karma. Ignorant acts based upon this illusion bring about karma. The addict responds to the suffering, the sorrow, the illusion around him, develops a response by taking drugs and suffers spiritual death. His karma results in addiction. That is the way we see it, and that is the way we treat it. That is important to our

whole process of bringing people to understand how they can get better; how they can interrupt this process; and how they can stop this process. That is how they can enter the world of health and the world of recovery in terms of drug addiction.

It is especially important for the Asian-Americans and the Japanese American community that they recognize, without feeling guilty, that drug addiction now is a treatable family disease. By stating that it is a treatable family disease, we are not saying that the family is at fault. We are saying that the addict has an illness. The addict is not bad, dumb, stupid, crazy or weak-willed. The addict simply has an illness. In the same context, this is a family illness. Symptoms of the addict manifest in each and every member of the family. They slide over into the family. Families become very dysfunctional. They become very uptight. They enter into a deep sense of guilt, thinking about what is going on with this problem. The whole family system falls apart. In order for a person to get better, especially in the Japanese American community, we need participation, as much as possible, from the family members. They need to recognize that this is not something to feel guilty about but something we all need to address and work with and help the individual who is an addict, to confront him with the addiction problem, and to enter into the treatment process.

The treatment process we use in the basic parameters of the treatment is first to break denial. With every addict we treat, there is denial. Denial means a person is unwilling to look at the emotional systems in his life that are bringing about pain. He relies on ignorance and karma to get him through what continues as his addiction process. As the initial step in our work—our most important work—is to work on breaking through the denial. We need to have the addict understand that he has an illness, getting him to accept that he has an illness, and admit it to himself

and surrender to a real teaching process where they can enter into treatment.

In trying to break the denial, we have the person understand that the only way to break the cycle to get better and get healthier is to enter into abstinence. The only way to get rid of addiction is not to use that drug, understand that he cannot use that drug pretty much for the rest of his life. If you are an alcoholic, and you stop for awhile and then start drinking again, you would go right back into addiction. So, we have to get him to understand the need for him to remain a clean and sober person. We do this not by motivating him toward the negative of not taking drugs but by inspiring him toward the positive goals of a clean and sober, recovering life-style.

We also have to recognize that it is not just cocaine but all the drugs in his system that need to be treated. The patient may come to us and say, "Well, I'm coming here because my father thinks I'm spending too much money; my wife's mad at me, because we don't have enough money for rent and food in the house, and I have a cocaine problem, so please help me with my cocaine." We sit there and do an inventory. We ask him, "Do you ever use alcohol?" "I drink every night. I'm a social drinker; I never drink more than five drinks a day." "Do you ever smoke marijuana?" "I smoke marijuana, maybe two times a week." "Do you use valium?" "I need that to go to sleep, because cocaine makes me too jittery."

As we look at these persons, they are taking a great variety of drugs. If they are going to get better, they have to understand that all of these drugs contribute and participate in their addiction, and they have to learn to give up all of them. We sit down and assess them. We try to break through that denial system. We enter into an understanding of abstinence. But also, especially with Japanese American youth, we have to break through an isolation

process. Many Japanese Americans become alienated, isolated. When they start using drugs, they become part of a special peer group of drug users. That's fun for awhile. There is a honeymoon phase. They can be part of this unique gang of people using drugs. They can be exotic, be mystical, have their own language, their own customs, and be secretive. But that does not last too long—at the most, about five years—and they continue to use the drug.

The drug changes your body chemistry; it changes your body cells, and changes your emotional state. Tolerance develops within you. Tolerance means it takes more and more of the drug to produce the same effect. What happens to an individual is that even though he had been hanging out with all the drug users, he becomes more and more isolated and alienated, increasingly retreating into himself. One of the quick things we have to do is to fracture that isolation. We have to get that person back into talking with people, back into communicating. This is hard for Japanese American youths. They are not used to it culturally. Even though they are sansei, yonsei, and even gosei youths now, they sit there and believe that they are not supposed to share their sufferings, their pain, their thinking, their insecurities with other people. They do not want to talk about it. If they do not talk about it, they will not get any better. Therefore, we have to break through that isolation and get them to participate, to start communicating more about what they are feeling and what their needs are.

Finally, if we are going to get somebody better, we have to bring a spiritual existence back into his life. We have to bring back something that they can put trust in, something that they can believe in, something to give them hope, something to work toward, some sort of knowledge, some sort of wisdom or higher truth that they do not have within themselves. And in this, the Buddhist Dharma can be that spiritual existence, that spiritual

meaning, that people can turn back into and find purpose in life again. That is further down the road.

Immediately for the first two or three years, we are just dealing with people to get them detoxified, getting them abstinent, getting them to understand that they have to stay clean. Ultimately, what we have to do is to make sure that they are going to have a good life, a fulfilled life, and in many ways, a better life than a straight person. I always believe that, for this reason, a recovering person is a better person than straight people. They have had to find some sort of spiritual existence again. So, that is an overview of our treatment process.

For our recovery process, our programs have been recognized, given a lot of boost and support from Buddhists all around the country. Last year, we were honored in receiving the Dana Award from the National Fujinkai (Buddhist Women's Association of the Buddhist Churches of America)—a very large award of over \$7500 to our program to help us reach more Asian-American and Japanese American youths. Through that gift of Dharma, the Japanese American staff and I had to review our program. We recognized that many of my staff, like myself, have grown up in the church, we were sent to church, we participated, but we could not be considered as being morally good. We did all kinds of crazy things, but somehow a lot of just being at church did rub off. We did gain something out of going to church. As a result, our clinic treats addiction as a disease according to the system I described above. Our clinic has always had a non-judgmental, non-punitive, sympathetic and supportive view of interaction with addicts in addition to providing health care. We always had the belief that health care is a right which should be provided to each and every individual in the country. It should not be doled out as a privilege. We rejected very strongly a Christian model; and I did not know why we were doing this at that



time, but now it became clear after we received the Dana Award. Many of us were Buddhists, so we were bringing our philosophy into our clinic, which was not Buddhist. We very quickly rejected the idea that we were charitable. We did not believe in charity. At that time, we thought we were being political—that this is a political cause, not a charitable cause. We rejected charity, because charity puts you at a different level than somebody else. It assumes that you are morally superior, more intellectual, that you are helping out the poor, unfortunate ones. That is not what we believe in; and that is not what we do. That is the reason that we have been so effective in our treatment process. It is because we have the Buddhist philosophy of compassion. We have compassion for the drug addict; we are not helping out the poor, unfortunate drug addict. It is compassion that drives us and brings us into our treatment modality and provides the main emphasis for what we do at our clinic. That is what we recognize; that is what we believe in. We have been doing that for a long time.

In 1974, Dr. William Pone, a Ph.D. entomologist, came to our clinic. Dr. Pone was once a professor at the University of California, Davis. He was a fifth-generation, traditional acupuncturist, a Malaysian-American. He was also an alcoholic and a drug addict. He came to us out of alienation, out of frustration, and out of despair. He could not find treatment service in San Francisco, a city with 22-25% Asian-American population. He could not find treatment services that were sensitive to his cultural needs, to his language needs, or even to understand what Dr. William Pone was all about. He came to the Haight only because we had Asians with a high profile on our staff. He saw us on TV and recognized that at least there were Asians there and that maybe he could get help there. He asked us for treatment; we helped him to get into a continual recovery effort. He provided to us an acupuncture approach. We provided free acupuncture for many years to help

drug addicts stay clean and sober.

What is most important, in 1974, William Pone challenged me and my clinic on Asian-American substance abuse issues. He said that we were not paying attention to Asian-American drug issues, that we did not even know that there were any drug issues, and that we were not doing enough for Asian-Americans. He wanted us to investigate what was going on among Asian-Americans. As a first step, we at the clinic had to deal with our own denial and our own misconceptions about Asian-Americans and drug abuse problems. One of the biggest misconceptions and problems that we had to face very early was that many Asian-American people, even the sansei and yonsei (third- and fourth-generation Japanese-Americans), had accepted the imposed values of other societies upon our culture. We accepted what other people were saying about us as being a model minority. We were proud of that. We thought it was a good thing. We thought the Asian minority were the good kids. We do not abuse drugs; we do not do things like that. We had to recognize very quickly that that was the major problem, both in terms of preventing us from looking at problems but also preventing us from getting help from these other communities to deal with our problems. So, we had to address that issue. More importantly, we had to recognize that we, too, had a total misconception about drug abuse and drug addiction.

We also had a misconception that Japanese-American youth, the Chinese youth, all Asian-Americans were probably immune to substance abuse. We used to think that they were a population that could play with drugs, smoke marijuana, snort cocaine, and take a little bit of heroin, or drugs like Quaalude, and control our use without developing problems like other people. We believed that we had more ability and more strength of will. It was only the other population—only the blacks, the Hispanics, and the Cauca-

sians—that could not handle it. Asian-Americans were strong. We can take the drug. We will not have drug problems. That was a serious and eventually very dangerous misconception.

Recently I have come to believe that the only completely non-prejudiced, non-biased, non-stigmatized, the only objective system in the whole world is that of drug abuse and addiction. It is the only thing that does not care who you are. It does not care how rich or poor you are, what kind of family you come from, what ethnicity you have, what kind of education you have. If you use drugs and continue to use drugs with increasing progression in impairment and dysfunction, you will become an addict. There is no doubt of that in my mind. So we had to again apply that in ourselves and recognize that maybe we may not have been looking at Asian-American drug abuse issues. Maybe we were comfortable. Maybe we were saying we were special. So what we did originally was to form an Asian-American substance abuse task force in San Francisco. There were thirty-four meaningful groups that identified themselves as Asian-Americans in the City and County of San Francisco. The task force included ministers from many different churches, and people from the congregations of different religions. We got the criminal justice system involved. We managed to get together many Asians to work together. We soon discovered that there were really significant Asian-American drug problems that had not been addressed in San Francisco. All the churches, all the ministers, everybody involved in the task force said that there was a growing problem in the Asian community, but abusers were not getting help; they were not going for treatment. There was nothing being done.

In 1978, there was a study done of California correctional institution inmates. What we discovered was startling to us. Out of close to 1000 self-identified Asian-American prisoners, over 90% felt that the

main problem they were in jail was not because they liked robbing people, liked stealing and committing all these anti-social crimes, but because they were addicts. They were addicted to drugs and did these other activities to support their drug addiction. The next startling statistic was that of these addicts, only 5% had ever thought of getting treatment. The rest of these Asian-Americans did not think of drug addiction as a disease, so they did not get treatment. Further, there were no programs for Asian-American substance abusers, thus alienating this population from tax-subsidized service. Not surprising to us in the treatment field, when we sat down and looked at this population again with another questionnaire, we found only 1.7% of this population had ever received any kind of drug education, or treatment, for their drug problem. Immediately, we felt confident that there were significant problems, and somehow Asians were falling through the cracks. They were being missed. We need our community to become more aware that Asian-Americans are not immune to drug abuse, and we have to face these problems as well.

The next step in our process as a committee was even more difficult. We then had to deal with a society that had a bias and had originally identified Asian-Americans as a model minority and had imposed that value upon our community and was not willing to look at drug problems within the Asian-American community. We went before the City and County of San Francisco to inform them that we had identified significant problems among Asian-Americans, and that we needed to provide for some sort of targeted, focused intervention. We needed to have a high profile Asian-American treatment service and delivery system for drug abuse in order to start addressing these problems. But the City and County of San Francisco insisted that we did not have problems with drugs. They said that only 1% of all the patients in San Francisco treated for drug problems were Asian-Americans, so they wanted to know why we

needed money for Asian-American substance user problems. They refused to recognize that the reason the Asians were not coming in, even though they had drug problems, was that the problem needed to be addressed.

As the next step, an ethnographic effort was begun. We wanted to show the authorities that there is a multiculturalism that occurs with drug abuse. Every group of people has its own customs, its own language, its own slangs, its own way of doing things, and even its own separate cycles of drug abuse that occur within the larger spectrum of drug abuse in the United States. Ethnographers were hired to look at different youth populations, 13 to 16 and 16 to 19. We wanted to get a handle on four youth populations in San Francisco: the black population, the Hispanic population, the Asian-American population, and the white middle-class population. We finally found four locations that would give us that, but the Asian-Americans were too diverse for an Asian-American study, so we narrowed our focus to a Chinatown study with the understanding that there are some similarities of drug use among the Chinese, The Japanese, the Korean, and the Filipino youths.

We found that the black youths, 13 to 16 and 16 to 19, in 1983 to 1985, liked drugs like cocaine, rock cocaine, the crack cocaine, or smokable cocaine, mixed with marijuana which they called champagne and caviar. At that time, these drugs were specific to that culture, to their self-esteem, and to their values. They felt proud that they used those drugs. They thought that if you use alcohol, you are sloppy; if you use PCP, you are crazy. Their drug esteem was related to crack cocaine and marijuana.

The Hispanic youth population we looked at in San Francisco during those years liked the drug called PCP. Among them, there was an epidemic of PCP, an animal tranquilizer that makes you psychotic and causes

psychedelic reactions. Also, there was a very alarming 20% use of heroin among the very young youths in the Hispanic population.

For the white middle class population in San Francisco (since we could not find an area in the city that was predominantly white, we had to go to Pacifica), we found that these youths liked alcohol. In addition to beer and wine, they liked "booze," all kinds of hard liquor, including tequila and scotch. They did not like to drink just any scotch. They were partial to particular brands and drank in all kinds of patterns. They were also taking a drug called "crank" which is a methamphetamine—a stimulatory drug, a diet pill. They would take it and drink more alcohol. The two drugs went together.

When we did the Chinese-American study, it validated everything we believed in terms of drug abuse in the Asian community. The Chinese youths were involved with Quaalude abuse. Quaalude is a sleeping pill. It used to be sold in the pharmacies, but no longer. It is a tablet that helps people get to sleep. It makes you very drowsy, very sleepy. We found 43% of all the youths we surveyed in Chinatown in our Chinese study (120, in ages 13 to 16; and, in ages 16 to 19) were using Quaalude. That is a high proportion abuse of the drug. We had a Quaalude epidemic. It became clear to us why they use Quaalude. They have a real difficult time talking to members of the opposite sex, or expressing themselves at meetings, or anywhere else. Asian youths are very shy, very inward people, so when they take Quaalude, it is like drinking alcohol. It lowers their inhibitions, puts their inhibitions to sleep. It makes them feel more awake, more alert, more "with it," more open, and more willing to talk. Usually the person slumps over and goes to sleep, but in his mind, the alert feeling is an illusion—just as Buddhism teaches that all life is an illusion. This drug gives them the illusion that they are more talkative and friendly, and that everybody likes them more. Actually, they are

sitting in a chair, slobbering all the time, so that is why some of them said they like it; but there were a few in the Chinese youth study who said that the drug gave them all the same benefits and feelings that alcohol provides. However, when they take Quaalude, they do not get red in the face, feel nauseated, have a hangover, or vomit. They do not have any of the side effects one gets from drinking alcohol.

Quaalude is a very addictive substance. It is a drug that changes your brain chemistry, changes your body and causes addiction. It causes you to need that drug over and over. When the youths come into our program, they have been taking at least five Quaaludes per dosage, about ten Quaaludes a day. They take five tablets at a time to get sleepy and drowsy. Since tolerance rises, they may start taking more at a time. If you take up to eight to ten Quaaludes every day for about thirty to sixty days, your body changes. It changes to the point that if you try to stop, you would go into convulsions, get headaches, and vomit. You might go into all kinds of reactions. So in order to prevent yourself from getting sick, you would have to keep taking it. That is part of the addiction process. This drug, then, was specific to the Chinese population.

At that time, we were also seeing Japanese, Filipino, and Korean youths. Quaalude was the drug that was endemic, or popular, within the Asian-American population. Because it totally supported and validated what we were trying to tell the City of San Francisco, we took the information to the city authorities. They were saying no Asians had problems with drugs, because no Asians came in for treatment. But we sat there, and we looked at the Asian-American population statistics and said, "They do have a drug problem, but where in San Francisco do you have a Quaalude treatment program? You have a heroin treatment program, alcohol treatment program, other kinds of

sedative treatment programs, the cocaine treatment programs. How come you don't have a Quaalude treatment program? Maybe if you had a Quaalude treatment program, and you identified the other drugs that are popular and predominant within the Asian community, maybe there would be a reason for the Asian kids to try to get help. There's no reason for it now. There's no one treating the drugs they're abusing."

The outcome of all this was that we went political, trying to get as much political support as possible. We accused everybody, and we got everybody mad at us. But due to this effort, we got two programs funded. One of these is the Bill Pone Unit. Unfortunately, Dr. Pone contracted cancer and died in 1980. We named our program after him, the William Pone Memorial Unit, an outpatient program established to treat specifically Asian-American drug problems. We have an inpatient unit called Asian-American recovery service program. The Asian-American outpatient program, treats now 70 to 80 different Asian-Americans every month. We were funded for forty treatment slots, but we treat 80 by using volunteers and doing benefits. In the Asian-American residential program, we are funded for 15 beds, but we overstack our program and have 20 beds full, around the clock. So, 20 addicts are treated as inpatients.

The Dana Award was extremely beneficial. In the process, we learned about Buddhist Dana, which is giving without any expectations. As taught in Buddhism, it is the pure act of giving. With the Dana Award, we started an Asian-American recovery group among Asian-Americans, an AA-type of group, a self-support group of Asians helping Asians staying clean. The Asians need a place where they can feel comfortable in discussing their drug problems and talking over things. That out-group is now very strong. A lot of people are helping themselves, helping to stay clean, and continuing to stay clean from drugs. We are appreciative of the help we



received from the Buddhist Women's Association.

In San Francisco, we treated last year 600 to 800 different Asian-Americans for substance abuse problems. No place in the world, no place in the United States is there such a high utilization of Asian-Americans participating in the treatment of drug abuse problems. It is so remarkable that a lady came from Japan to study our work with Asian stimulant abuses. That is the second big drug abuse we are seeing now. Japanese-American youth are into the use of cocaine. She came because she has seen much Japanese-American abuse of cocaine and wanted to learn from us what our treatment processes were. Four people came from the People's Republic of China. They have never been outside of Peking. They spoke perfect English and were very intelligent. They sat down with me, and the first thing they said to me was that they have no drug problems in the People's Republic of China. So I asked why they were here, because I did not understand this. They said, they were interested in what our program was seeing in terms of Chinese youths. We began by saying that we have this problem with Quaalude. They asked what Quaalude was. We said that it is a sleeping pill. All their eyes went wide open. They remarked that they had the same problem. The youths in China were taking sedative medication as well. So we were able to share that.

Our programs have expanded to treat many Asian-Americans with specific drug abuse problems. Quaalude still being the number one drug, followed very quickly by cocaine. We also treat alcoholism. Alcoholism is something that has not been looked at enough in Asian-American cultures. Marijuana is a very popular drug among Asian-American youths. We even have a significant number of Asian-Americans who are heroin addicts. There are more Japanese-American than Chinese heroin addicts. There are also a

few PCP users among Asian-Americans.

We have to wake up in our community and recognize that all the problems that exist outside our community are also within our community. A real startling thing for me to find out was that forty Asian-Americans in San Francisco were diagnosed as having an AIDS condition. About 14 Japanese Americans died of AIDS over the last three years, so it is also a problem within our culture, and we should pay attention to that as well.

A great variety of drugs are being abused by the Asian-American community. Drug abuse is within our community. But drug abuse is a very treatable condition. We need in our community to dedicate ourselves to two things. Recognize that we have it and help our children and people who have contracted this disease to get into treatment and get better. The other thing is that we have to start paying attention to the need for better education and prevention, and not feel that it is for people outside our community. We must address these problems so we can prevent them before they happen.

One thing that I think is important in our treatment process, very early on, with any addict we see is that we have to try to make them understand three basic things that are very spiritual. These three things are needed for an addict to really progress in life. They have to somehow obtain serenity to deal with those things in life they cannot change. When I was growing up, I always had problems about karma. I used to think karma is something that you had done wrong, or something bad that pops up in your life. Recently someone clarified for me that karma is your ignorant acts based upon your illusions, based upon untruths. Things happen to you in your life, and how you respond—your ignorant acts based upon things that happen—creates the karma. You can control these things in your life. To obtain a sense of serenity, addicts



have to learn that they have to deal with those things they cannot change in life. There are many things in life you cannot change. I cannot change the fact that I was born short. I cannot change the fact that I was born Japanese. These are the things I cannot change. You have to accept things in life that you cannot change and learn the serenity that comes in accepting that there are things that you were born with that you cannot change in life. Also, things happen in life: you have accidents; you have tragedies, death in the family; you have grief, your dog dies or something. Those things happen, and you cannot change that. You have to learn the serenity to accept those things in life you cannot change. Then, somewhere along the line, the next thing you have to do is to find the courage and strength and understanding to face up to the fact that you can change. You can change the way you respond. You can change the way you approach life, or set your priorities. Perhaps the church is a higher priority. These are things you can change. You have to gain the courage and strength to address these things that you can change. But the most important thing in this process is that out of the Dharma, the teaching, the truth or

something, you have to obtain the wisdom to know the difference between these two things. If you do not know the difference between what you can change and what you cannot change, you are going to be in trouble. When an addict begins to understand this process and accept those three things in the recovery process, that is when we have people entering into a happy, contented, fulfilled life—a life that is full of health, happiness and wisdom. That is what kept us working in the clinic for 20 years. That is what keeps the Japanese-American youths who are working with me actively involved. They, too, are Buddhists. I believe that some of our dedication, understanding, and compassion came to us through the Buddhist teaching and ideas we might have resisted and did not pay attention to in our youth, yet somehow contacted to our great benefit.

\*Transcribed and edited for publication by K. Hisatsune from a tape recording of the speech presented on May 15, 1987 at the Alameda Buddhist Temple for the Bay District of Buddhist Churches of America Mompo Lecture Series. The transcription was reviewed by Dr. Inaba.

# Buddhism and Science: A Personal View

by Clarence Hisatsune

## INTRODUCTION

“I have run through a course of many births looking for the maker of this dwelling and finding him not; painful is birth again and again.”<sup>1</sup> Gautama Buddha at the moment of his enlightenment is said to have uttered these words. Here, the term “dwelling” refers to the physical body or the self of the Buddha; and, in effect, the Buddha is teaching us that there are no answers to the fundamental questions, “What am I?”, “Where did I come from?”, and “Where am I going?” These questions are undoubtedly asked by all of us at one time or another; and perhaps, may even have become sources of our mental anguish. However, Buddha lived some 2,500 years ago, whereas we are now in a technologically and scientifically more sophisticated age approaching the twenty-first century. So, why have our scientists not provided us with readily understandable answers to these questions? This is a fair question and I feel that I should attempt to respond to it, since I was an active member of the scientific community until my retirement three years ago.

## IDENTITY OF SELF

As one of the major conclusions of his teaching, Gautama held consistently that we are all brothers and sisters regardless of our race or color. The unity of the world of living beings has been a major theme of Buddhist tradition. The significant scientific findings concerning the building blocks of life enhance and illuminate the Buddhist insights. Let us first consider the question “What am I?” If I

examine my California driver's license or my U.S. passport, I am identified on the basis of my birth date, a not-so-good three-year-old photograph, and limited personal physical characteristics, such as weight, height, and color of my hair and eyes. As you know, much of these identification data change with time and are not very reliable. Furthermore, consider all the “look-alike” contests that we have seen on TV and in newspapers, as well as the amazing results from modern plastic surgical procedures.

A better way to distinguish myself from everyone else is through my handprint and/or bare footprint, including all digits. Markings on such prints are unique to each of us—so much so that we can claim with confidence that no one else with identical print pattern has existed or ever will exist on this planet. Why is this so? Simply put, it is because of our genes, the chemical carriers of all hereditary information about ourselves.

Our bodies are made of building blocks called cells. Starting from our head, we have the hair cells, the skin cells, the bone cells, the brain cells, the nerve cells, the blood cells, etc., all of various sizes and shapes, but all too small to see with the naked eye. These different cells have one important common feature, an identical set of chromosomes (so named because they readily pack up dye colors) in their cell nuclei. Whether it is a blood cell or a muscle cell, each has exactly the same set of chromosomes. These chemical entities called chromosomes are the genetic material

of life; they determine the shape, the growth, and other important functions of each cell. Our physical appearance, our internal structures, and even our resistance or proneness to diseases are fundamentally determined by our chromosomes. Because of my chromosomes, I am different from you and from all other living things on this planet. My chromosomes make me unique.

Our inquiry into the question "What am I?" has now been reduced to the level of our chromosomes. If my uniqueness is due to my chromosomes, then where did I get these chemical substances? This question is, in fact, a biological restatement of our original question, "Where did I come from?"

The existence of my chromosomes began at the moment of my conception in my mother's womb. When that single egg cell was fertilized by my father's sperm cell, a completely new set of chromosomes, my own unique set, was created. This fertilized egg cell then divided into two cells; the two cells divided further into four cells; the four into eight, etc.; and here I am. In other words, all chromosomes that I now possess are essentially clones of that original set in the nucleus of the single fertilized egg cell. I must use the qualifier "essentially" since changes in one's chromosomes, that is genetic mutations, can occur during one's life. For example, as we know, excessive x-ray radiation and many chemical carcinogens are believed to cause chromosome abnormalities.

Getting back to my chromosomes, can I now claim that my uniqueness originated at the moment of creation of the fertilized egg cell? Although many would prefer to do so, I as a scientist cannot make such a claim, because during the fertilization process, half of my chromosomes came from my mother, more or less ready-made, and the remaining half came from my father, again essentially ready-made. My chromosomes, therefore, were not made from scratch but were recycled

from those of my parents. An egg cell contains only one-half of the chromosomes found in the mother's normal body cell; and similarly, a sperm cell has only half of the number of chromosomes found in the father's tissue cells. A fertilized egg cell, on the other hand, has the normal number of chromosomes for a human cell, each parent contribution being half of the required total.

We have traced my origin one generation back in time to the sets of chromosomes of my parents. I would not have existed, nor have been what I am without my parents. However, before we blame our parents for all positive and negative attributes we were born with, we must continue our search further. By using the same reasoning discussed above, I may conclude that my parents' chromosomes came from their parents, making me what I am because of my grandparents. But my grandparents would not have existed without their parents and grandparents. It should be apparent to you by now that I am creating a chromosome family tree, one that is the reverse of the usual genealogical family tree. My set of chromosomes forms the tree trunk and all the outer branches represent the chromosome pool of my ancestors. At this point, for scientific accuracy, let me replace the term "chromosome pool" with a new term "genetic pool" or simply "gene pool" because those parts of a chromosome that control heredity are the molecular units called genes. Note that the progress in science has reduced heredity to a molecular level. Today we have, in addition, molecular medicine, molecular engineering, and even molecular psychology.

## OUR GENETIC ORIGINS

The gene pool from which my genes originated is enormously vast. It is astronomically large, as I will show you. First, my genes came from my parents; so one generation back, my gene pool consisted of contributions from two individuals. Two

generations back, there were four or  $2^2$  (two squared or two-to-the-power-two) individuals, since each of us has or has had four grandparents related by blood. With each generation back in time, we increase the exponent on 2 to obtain the number of individuals contributing to the gene pool of that generation. For example, the number of great-great-grandparents related by blood is given by  $2^4$  which is  $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$  or 16, since these ancestors were 4 generations before us.

Let us extend this analysis to the time of Shinran Shonin (1173-1262), which is about 800 years ago. If we assume that the average life of each generation is 50 years, which may be an underestimation for the more recent generations but may be a serious overestimation for earlier times, we come out with  $800/50$ , or 16 generations, a conservative but not an unreasonable number. My gene pool at the time of Shinran would involve  $2^{16}$  or 65,536 individuals. (These numbers are listed in standard mathematical tables found in most libraries.) This is a sizable number; if all of these people lived in a single city, that city would have approached the size of Kyoto at the time of Shinran. The size of this gene pool tells me that I am related genetically to a very large number of individuals in Japan where my parents and grandparents came from.

Because of the relative isolation of the Japanese islands, I also expect genetic homogeneity to have been established by now; and, hence, there should be many look-alikes living in present day Japan. However, if even one individual in this gene pool were replaced by another individual, I would be different today. Just what the difference would be between the present me and the individual who would replace me in such a case may not be readily apparent without a clear genetic marker of some sort. For example, where sufficient records were available, some hereditary diseases have been traced back to medieval times. Hypothetically, if one of my ancestors 16 generations back carried within himself or

herself an abnormally high content of radioactive carbon-14, then I would expect a significant number of Japanese, including myself, to show abnormality in carbon-14 content in our bodies. Note that this radioactive carbon isotope is present in our environment, and its decay properties can be used to determine the age of ancient wood or plant samples (radiocarbon dating method).

That I am from the Japanese stock is self-evident, but my genetic origin actually extends well beyond that of the Japanese people. We can show this by applying the gene pool analysis to the time of Gautama Buddha. If we again take one generation to be about 50 years long, we obtain  $2,500/50$  or 50 generations. Therefore, the number of individuals making up my gene pool becomes  $2^{50}$  or 50 generations. Therefore, the number of individuals making up my gene pool becomes  $2^{50}$  or 1,125,899,906,842,624—an astronomical figure. Recall that the current population of this planet is only about five billion, the largest it has ever been. My gene pool is more than two hundred thousand times greater than the current human gene pool. What does this mean? It means that I am a member of the human race, and that we are all brothers and sisters regardless of our race or color, as the Buddha and other spiritual leaders have already pointed out. Interestingly, genetic analyses have been carried out in recent years to determine the origin of mankind, and it appears that we originated from Africa and/or Asia. Humanoid fossils, a few million years old, have been discovered in eastern Africa, but so far fossil records of comparable age have not been uncovered or searched for in Asia.

## DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

In Buddhism, a central teaching is that of Dependent Origination. This principle indicates the interrelation of all things and is a correlate of the emphasis on cause and effect. The Principle of Dependent Origination is

also the basis for the Buddhist assertion of **non-self**.

According to current scientific views, this principle may be illustrated and given substance in the comparison of the cells and structures of living things. *Homo sapiens* became genetically distinguishable, i.e., differences in bone structure, teeth, etc., from other higher primates (gorillas, chimpanzees, and orangutans) about one hundred million years ago. Earlier, our ancestors were simply a part of the general mammalian world, which in turn evolved from life forms living in the seas. Plants also trace their origins to the seas. Oceanic fish and worms appeared about a half billion years ago, and these in turn evolved from the simplest life forms that began some three billion years ago.

The extent of common features or structural universality in the genes from nuclei or cells from all living things, be it a single cell bacterium or an elephant, suggests a common evolutionary origin for all life forms on this planet. After all, the chemical building blocks needed in the construction of these animal and plant bodies are restricted in kind, leading to extensive indistinguishable features appearing in the genes of these living systems. For example, there are only twenty kinds of amino acid molecules; and they are the building blocks of all proteins, those of a soybean as well as of the meat we eat. The genes, on the other hand, are made of combinations of sugar molecules, phosphoric acid molecules (a good fertilizer for plants), and only four different kinds of molecular units called chemical bases. A human gene, i.e., DNA, contains approximately thirty billion such bases. The exact sequence of these bases, or the structure of a human gene, is yet to be determined. It is estimated that with the presently available technology, it would take more than ten years at a cost of billions of dollars to accomplish this task. Such a monumental task is, however, being contemplated by our government and the scientific community because of its importance, not only in understanding

human evolution but in the control of many human diseases including cancer.

The enormously large number of chemical structural units present in a gene of a living system leads to another important consequence, that of storing vast amounts of very specific information necessary for the control of the life of each organism. These genes provide the basis for the oneness or inter-relatedness of all life; and, at the same time, for the uniqueness of each life. Whether it is a plant or an animal, each is entitled to live on this planet. Human beings who believe themselves to be at the apex of terrestrial evolution generally tend to extend their compassion only to other mammals, but there is no genetic reason to establish such a relative value scale for different forms of life on this planet. For example, being a vegetarian does not free oneself from the act of destroying other living systems. According to the sutras, Gautama Buddha was deeply aware of this fact and was not a vegetarian. He knew that our lives cannot continue without being sustained by other living things. Regardless of how painful or painless the act of taking other lives may be, we are burdened with such acts if we are born into this world and want to continue to live.

We have sought an answer to the question "Where did I come from?" and found none. Even with the aid of information from modern genetic science, we were only able to establish that there is no definitive beginning to our existence. The origin of our first set of chromosomes that developed in the single fertilized egg cell and determined our individuality was traced back beyond the gene pool of humanity to the evolution of life on this planet and to the genesis of our universe. Our analysis, however, is not completely futile since it illustrated unequivocally an important Buddhist concept, the Principle of Dependent Origination, or Dependent Genesis of our lives. It is truly remarkable that the Buddha, without the benefit of any scientific informa-



tion, was able to deduce this revolutionary idea 2,500 years ago.

The Principle of Dependent Origination applies not just to the formation of the first unique cell involved in one's life but to the subsequent growth and development of this cell into a new human being. Let us see how we can come to this conclusion. All changes taking place during the development of the single fertilized egg cell into an embryo and during the lifetime of the resulting individual are chemical in nature. These chemical reactions, whether we are aware of them or not, obey the scientific Law of Conservation of Energy and Matter. In simple terms, this principle states that matter and energy in chemical reactions are neither created nor destroyed; they only change forms. Consequently, when the original egg cell divides into multiple cells, this process requires both energy and matter, the source of which, of course, being the mother who in turn is dependent on the external world to provide energy and matter that sustain both herself and the unborn child. After its birth, the external world is still the source of energy and matter for the child's growth into an adult.

Just how much change in matter and energy occurs in one's lifetime? Let us assume that the mass of an egg cell is of the order of a microgram (one millionth of a gram) and that of an average adult is 60 kilograms (about 130 lbs.). Then, there occurred an increase in mass of one's life system by at least ten-billion-fold. All this matter came from our environment, so our growth is indeed one of "dependent origination." For the estimation of energy requirement, let us assume that about 1,000 calories per day are necessary to maintain life. Individuals who are still growing or participate in heavy labor require two or three times this amount, but under normal circumstances, 1,000 calories may keep us alive without causing gain in body weight. Taking an average lifetime of 60 years, we get for the lifelong energy requirement at least 20 million

calories. To get an equivalent amount of energy from coal, we would have to burn about three tons with 100% efficiency. These numbers, again, illustrate how dependent we are on our environment and how amazing was Buddha's insight in deducing the Principle of Dependent Origination.

#### NON-EXISTENCE OF SELF

Finally, the identification of our uniqueness with the first set of chromosomes in the single fertilized egg cell permits us to discuss another fundamental principle of Buddhism, that of the non-existence of a permanent self. All human beings instinctively long to survive, as evidenced, for example, by the presence of our body's natural immune system that protects us from foreign matter, be it a small splinter of wood, or a harmful bacterium, or even a transplanted body organ. Nevertheless, we acknowledge willy-nilly the inevitability of death and consequently develop a desire for the existence of an entity identifiable with each individual and with a permanence beyond that of one's natural body. Among the major religions, it seems only Buddhism teaches the non-existence of such an entity, call it a soul, an ego, or the self. Is such a view consistent with science? The answer is in the affirmative, since it can be shown that the notion of a self is arbitrary.

Today, the problem of abortion, for example, has made it acutely necessary to define the beginning of a human life. Should it be the moment of conception when a unique set of chromosomes is first generated? Should it be some specified number of weeks thereafter? Or, should it be at the moment of birth? These may be legal questions, but not scientific ones. For example, if one takes the fertilized egg cell as the origin of a self, then that self has only a short life. For this cell to develop, it must undergo division into two new cells, and each of these must divide further into two new cells, and so on. Perhaps we can consider a collection of cells as the "self", but the collec-

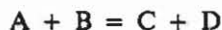
tion itself undergoes continuous change. Furthermore, a collection of cells generally does not think, sing, or appreciate a beautiful sunset. Is the brain, then, to be identified as the self? If so, what happens if one has a permanent loss of memory due to illness or accident? Does one become a new self? What happens to the old self? Does a "self" become diluted with other "selves" when one receives blood transfusions or organ transplants? Numerous unanswerable questions arise when we attempt to identify a permanent self with any portion of one's physical body. Any assignment of self external to our bodies also encounters serious difficulties. The Buddha, 2,500 years ago, taught that we are continuously changing and that we do not possess an identifiable permanent self. This is a much wiser way of avoiding these unanswerable questions. Our lives are, indeed, cycles of "birth again and again" from the standpoint of human cell biology.

Let us return to the final question, "Where am I going?", for which a partial answer has already been provided, at least for the growth phase of one's life from the original fertilized egg cell to a fully developed adult. Remaining points that require consideration pertain to why all growth processes apparently come to an end or why decay processes appear, leading to the death of all life forms. A common human concern is the ultimate question of what happens to us after death. This difficult question might be set aside by simply referring to the teachings of the Gautama Buddha, namely that life is ever-changing in an endless cycle of birth and death. Let us, instead, examine these questions from a scientific standpoint.

#### THE SIMULTANEITY OF GROWTH AND DECAY

Earlier, it was stated that all life processes are chemical in nature and that such changes, i.e., chemical reactions, follow the Law of Conservation of Energy and Matter. These chemical reactions show another universal

trait, namely that they proceed in either direction. That is, if A and B combine to produce C and D, then C and D can also combine to produce A and B. Such reactions are called equilibrium, or reversible reactions, and when equilibrium is reached, there is no change in the overall amount of A, B, C, or D. An equilibrium process is a dynamic one. Even if the overall amounts of chemical species involved in a reaction are not changing, some A and B molecules are always reacting to produce C and D molecules while at the same time C and D molecules are reacting to produce molecules A and B. In the language of chemistry, an equilibrium reaction is usually indicated by the equality sign, viz.



Sometimes a set of parallel arrows pointing in opposite directions is used instead of the equality sign.

Biological reactions including all those taking place in our bodies are equilibrium reactions. They are delicately balanced, highly efficient processes that take place in a relatively narrow range of temperature and reaction conditions. We are all too aware of the consequences of disrupting such equilibrium processes. Too high or too low a body temperature can be fatal. On the other hand, controlled lowering of one's body temperature decreases one's rates of metabolism and oxygen consumption, making it a useful procedure in organ transplant surgeries. Replacing the air we breathe with pure oxygen leads to oxygen poisoning, while decreasing the amount of oxygen in the air causes high altitude sickness.

We are now ready to apply the idea of an equilibrium reaction to the growth and decay of our bodies. When we are in a growth phase, forward reactions (that is, reactions represented by A and B reacting to form the products C and D) are dominant. It is not essential that we know the identities of all

such reactions. As long as new body matter C and D are being produced from some external matter A and B, there is obviously growth. Once such reactions reach their equilibrium states, overall growth ceases. Although our growth is genetically limited, making it impossible for us to grow as tall as a giraffe, or as large as a whale, there are some variations in the final equilibrium growth states. For example, improved diet and living conditions affect our growth, as evidenced by the remarkable change in the average height and weight of Japanese children after the Second World War.

When reactions represented by C and D producing A and B become dominant, decay becomes evident. However, whether the forward or the reverse reactions are playing their major roles, the reactions are still equilibrium processes as are occurring in both directions. That is, growth and decay occur simultaneously; they are not necessarily sequential processes. It is relatively easy to become aware of the presence of growth processes, even during the declining years of one's life when decay is dominant; but it is difficult to accept the fact that one's body is decaying while it is still undergoing overall growth. Healing of wounds and mending of broken bones occurring throughout one's lifetime, although definitely a slower process with advancing age, are manifestations of the ever present growth processes. Decay processes are more evident at the cellular level. For example, our skin cells are constantly being replaced. Just scratch your skin surface and the presence of dead skin cells will be readily apparent even though you may refer to them as "dry skin".

## THERMODYNAMICS OF LIFE

We have deduced that, in life, growth and decay occur at the same time and are inseparable, being parts of the same equilibrium processes. There are, however, fundamental differences between these processes. Without

the support of external sources of energy and matter, it is difficult, if not impossible, to have growth. Although one can survive for a short time without taking food or water by relying on one's internal sources of matter and energy, such as body fat and tissues, it is unlikely that growth will be a dominant factor under such circumstances. Decay processes, on the other hand, do not depend fundamentally on external supports; they are spontaneous processes. In order to discuss these differences, it is necessary to refer to another law in the science of thermodynamics which deals with the movement and accounting of energy and matter in changes taking place in our universe. Earlier, we introduced the idea that energy and matter are neither created nor destroyed in chemical reactions. This notion is a law in this particular branch of science and is called the First Law of Thermodynamics. Now, the additional law needed in our discussion is called, not surprisingly, the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

There are many spontaneous changes taking place around us, changes occurring by themselves without apparent external assistance. Such changes cannot be fully explained on the basis of energy consideration alone. Drop a glass cup on a concrete floor, and it breaks into many small pieces. This is a common phenomenon, but has anyone ever seen broken pieces of glass come together by themselves to form the original cup? Take a deck of playing cards and throw it high into the air. Do you expect the cards to land on the floor all arranged in their proper order? Can one recreate a piece of log after it has been burned in a fireplace? These very common examples show that there must be some preferred direction in events taking place around us. The Second Law of Thermodynamics helps to explain and quantify such changes. It does so by introducing a new concept called "entropy" that depends on both energy and temperature.

Entropy is a measure of the degree of

disorder associated with any system. It is also related to the notion of probability (gambler's mathematics). A highly disordered state is more probable than one that is well ordered, and the entropy of such a disorganized state is consequently larger than that for the ordered state. The entropy of an unbroken glass is lower than that of the same glass in a thousand pieces. A randomly arranged deck of cards has a greater entropy value than the same deck arranged in proper sequential order. The entropy of the heat and ashes resulting from the burning of a wooden log is greater than the entropy of the original unburnt log.

The concept of time does not appear in thermodynamics. Hence, *when* decay starts, or *when* death occurs, is not answerable by the application of thermodynamic laws to life processes. Time is introduced into chemical reactions through a field of science called "chemical kinetics". In this field, the speeds and paths of chemical changes are studied. We try to answer such questions as how fast does something appear or disappear, and how changes actually take place. Unfortunately, this field, as applied to living systems, is still in a very primitive state, making discussion of life processes in terms of time sequence not possible at present. Thus, our discussions so far have dealt only with the *sequence* of events and not with *when* such events take place.

The phenomenon of death can be discussed without the knowledge of the time variable. However, death is an event that extends over a period of time, a very long one from the standpoint of molecular behavior. Death is not an instantaneous event; and this fact causes difficulties similar to those encountered in trying to identify the beginning of a human life. For example, the absence of a heartbeat does not necessarily indicate death, since many individuals have been revived after their hearts have stopped beating. Cardiac arrest arises often from the death of heart muscle cells, so defining death in terms of heart

motion involves an element of arbitrariness, for it is unlikely that we will ever be able to specify the exact number of dead cells necessary for heart muscles to stop functioning. The notion of brain death, although a useful one from a legal and medical standpoint, is also an arbitrary definition of death. Just because there is cessation of electrical signals in one's brain does not mean that the rest of the body is biologically dead. If it were so, no organ transplant would be possible.

Scientifically, the term "decay" gives a more appropriate description of the events surrounding the phenomenon of death. At the cellular and molecular levels, there is no death, only continuous decay and changes from biological to organic to inorganic chemical levels. Moreover, these changes do not terminate at the inorganic level, because our bodily constituents become readily incorporated into the bodies of other forms of life on this planet. Since the Law of Conservation of Energy and Matter is still operative during the decay phase of a living organism, all that a living organism is made of will remain on this planet to be used by other living things, including humans. In other words, bodies of living things are continually recycled. One example should suffice to illustrate this point. More than one half of our body weight consists of water. If one tries to estimate the number of water molecules in a typical individual, it comes out to be over  $2 \times 10^{27}$  (2 followed by 27 zeros or two thousand trillion trillion) molecules. The world population is only about  $5 \times 10^9$  (five billion), so there are plenty of water molecules to go around. Thus, matter and energy making up the bodies of living things are used over and over again.

Life has no beginning, nor does it have any ending; it is a continuous cycle of birth and rebirth. But Gautama Buddha already said that 2,500 years ago. He also said, "Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, how each of us thinks can make a difference in this world.

FOOTNOTES:

1. *The Dhammapada*, no. 153, trans. by S. Radhakrishnan

2. *The Dhammapada*, no. 1, trans. by Eknath Easwaran (Petaluma: Nilgiri Press, 1986), p. 78



## BOOK REVIEW

### A BUDDHIST CRITIQUE OF THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF GOD

by Gunapala Dharmasiri. Second edition. Antioch, California: Golden Leaves Publishing Company, Forthcoming.  
Approximately xv + 325 pp. cloth: \$42.85; paper: \$19.00

Originally a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Lancaster, this work of comparative theology is now being published in a second, American edition. This edition includes a new forward and a additional chapter entitled "More Problems With The Concept of God That Require Our Serious and Urgent Attention". This new chapter deals with contemporary issues related to the belief in God. Editing plans for this edition are intended to increase the readability of the work. For example, the original gives as footnotes the Pali for quotations from the canon made in the text. These will be moved to the end of the text, making for a cleaner, fuller page of text.

The body of the work is composed of eight chapters which deal with different contemporary issues in theology, and a postscript outlining future problems. The eight chapters are entitled: "God and the Soul," "God as the Creator and Designer," "God as Benevolent, Omnipotent and Omniscient," "God as The Good," "God, Cosmos and Evolution," "God as Experience," "The Nature and Existence of God," and "Revelation and Reason." Under these rubrics the author considers both classical theological positions, such as Aquinas' Cosmological Argument, as well as more modern theologians, such as Teilhard de Chardin, Underhill and the "Death of God" theologians.

Work of this type—comparative work—is very difficult, since it requires equal sophistication in both terms of the comparison, in this case Christian theology and Buddhist philosophy. Dharmasiri has succeeded at this difficult task through careful preparation and thorough scholarship.

The issue which this reviewer found most interesting is treated in Part 2 of "God as Experience." This is the widely accepted notion "that there is a mystical truth common to all religions though it may be obscured by various denominational colourings (6.59)." The author rejects this view, developing the idea of Nirvana as total extinction, which he holds is different from any theological or mystical position which views God as a more real form of existence. Although it may have been useful in the development of Western respect for other religions, the idea that there is a single mystical truth common to all religions has become an unexamined assumption which now needs to be reexamined.

The republication of Dharmasiri's work comes at a particularly auspicious time, since there continues to be concern with the dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity. What is particularly important is that he is willing to confront the differences between the two traditions, rather than politely emphasizing similarities.

Richard K. Payne, Ph.D.  
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## Project to Translate Classical Chinese Tripitaka Test

In 1965, Mr. Yehan Numata, Founder of Mitutoyo Manufacturing Company, Ltd., one of the world's leading producers of precision measuring instruments, established the Buddhist Promoting Foundation (Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai) in Tokyo, Japan. As its first major activity, the Foundation compiled a text entitled *The Teaching of Buddha* and translated it into 24 languages. These texts have been published by the Foundation and placed into hundreds of thousands of hotel rooms and classrooms world-wide.

In 1982, at the request of Mr. Numata, the Foundation initiated a monumental project to translate the entire Classical Chinese *Taishō Tripitaka* Buddhist Canon into English. Forming a scriptural base for all Buddhists, the *Tripitaka* contains the complete system of Śākyamuni Buddha's teachings and has been called a cultural legacy for all humanity.

In order to implement this new translation project, an English *Tripitaka* Editorial Committee was formed in Tokyo. Composed of leading Japanese Buddhist scholars, this committee selected 70 eminent scholar-translators from many parts of the world and made arrangements for the translation of 139 carefully selected texts, which are to be considered the "First Series."

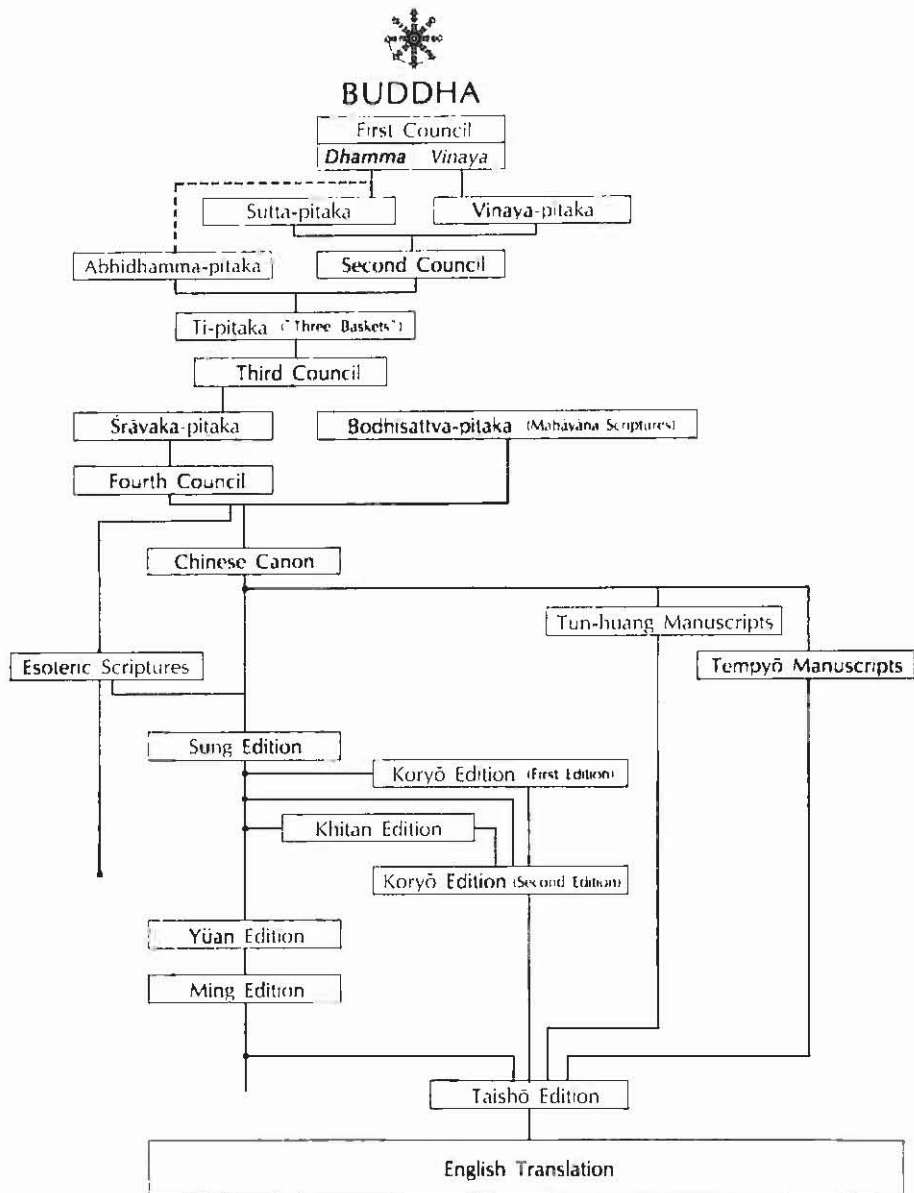
Much progress has been made. By the year 2,000 A.D., it is expected that these "First Series" texts, in 100 volumes, will be published. They represent 11 percent of the complete *Tripitaka* Canon. In order to give a clearer conception of the magnitude of this ambitious and epochal undertaking, one must be aware that it is expected to take an additional 80 years to complete this project, as it consists of thousands of works.

In 1984, to bring this project to fruition, the Numata Center for Translation and Research was established at Berkeley, California. The role of the Numata Center is to monitor the translators' work, to review and edit the translated manuscripts, to make payments to these translators, and to ready the texts for publication. It is anticipated that the initial volume of the "First Series" will be ready for distribution before 1987.

The Numata Center, through the generosity of Mr. Numata, has also established Chairs in Buddhist Studies at three major universities in America and, just recently, at the Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley. Additionally, the *Pacific World Journal* is published under the sponsorship of the Numata Center as one of the many ancillary projects of the Buddhist Promoting Foundation.

By utilizing the vehicles of the Buddhist Promoting Foundation in Japan and the Numata Center for Translation and Research in California, Mr. Yehan Numata has been able to bring into focus his singular objective to make available the message of the historical Buddha to all the world's people in the sincere hope that the teachings will lead eventually to universal harmony and World Peace.

# A Genealogical Chart of the Original Texts of the English Translation of the Buddhist Canon



(based on Dr A Hirakawa, "Daizōkyō no keifu")

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## **The Institute of Buddhist Studies Seminary and Graduate School**

- History:** Its predecessor, the Buddhist Studies Center, was started in 1949 in Berkeley, and in 1966 the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) was founded as a graduate school for Jodo Shinshu ministry and for Buddhist studies. The IBS was founded by the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA), which is affiliated with the Homba-Hongwanji branch of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, a school of Pure Land Buddhism
- Affiliation:** In 1985, the IBS became an affiliate of the Graduate Theological Union. The GTU is the coordinating organization for one of the most inclusive concentrations of religious educational resources in the world. This marks the first time another major world religion has joined in a consortium with religious schools from the Judeo-Christian traditions. In addition to the IBS, the GTU includes six Protestant and three Roman Catholic seminaries, a Center for Jewish Studies and eleven other specialized centers and Institutes.
- Degrees:** Master in Jodo-Shinshu Studies (M.J.S.), a professional degree for Jodo Shinshu ministry granted by IBS. GRE exam required.
- Master of Arts specializing in Buddhist Studies, an accredited degree granted jointly by GTU and IBS. GRE exam required.
- Deadline:** Admissions applications are due February 1 for fall semester and September 30 for spring semester.
- Resources:** Credits for the degrees can also be earned at the University of California, Berkeley. Univ. of Calif students, in turn, can take courses at IBS and GTU for credit.
- Core Faculty:**
- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
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