

# **KYO-GYO-SHIN-SHO**

## FOREWARD

The *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* is the canon of the doctrine of the Jodo-Shin-shu. It is the quintessence of all religions and religious philosophies. The System is grand and unique. But the doctrine is so complicated that the students will be thrown into a labyrinth or tire of the study mid-way, unless they are well guided.

The *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* is famous and widely known, but few read it through with joy. Hotan, a great scholar of Kegon, once said: 'The man who composed the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* must be a mad man'. If a man tries to understand this book simply by intellectual reasoning like Hotan, he will think it a book of a mad man. If a man tries to climb this steep peak with his own legs of self-power (Shodomon), he will be at a deadlock. If a man opens this book for the purpose of increasing worldly knowledge, he will be disappointed. Only he who fears and trembles before the mirror of the Law of Karma (Causality), and sincerely aspires to discover his life in the Truth of the Buddha, will rejoice in it. If he has found peace of mind, he will be delighted and thankful to the Three Treasures (or Gems) the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The Book of Life must be read with the inmost heart.

The *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* is the overflow of Shinran-Shonin's pure religious feeling. It is the Book of Pure Faith. Through Faith he had a spiritual union with the Buddha of Infinite Light; and reposed in the bosom of the Buddha of Eternal Life.

Shinran-Shonin perused for many years all the Sutras, Mahayana (Great Vehicle) Theravada (Small Vehicle) and after that he selected the Three Sutras, upon which he established the Jodo-Shinshu. He amalgamated all Buddhism in his own crucible of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*. All Sutras, all sects, and all different teaching of Buddhism seem to have dissolved in the doctrine of the True Pure Land Sect. This book is the system of Amitabha's transcendental Wisdom and Infinite Love. Those who ardently wish to get rid of Samsara (cycle of birth-and-death) and fervently aspire to reach the highest perfect knowledge will appreciate the value of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*. Was there anyone who was as sincere and reflective as Shinran-Shonin, concerning Karma, Samsara, and Emancipation? And was there any who discriminated and judged true faith and untrue faith as severely as our Master Shinran?

The *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* is the Book of Confession of the true disciple of the Buddha. It is the self-manifestation of the Power of Amitabha's Sacred Vow (Hongan-riki): the treasure store of Wisdom and Love of all Buddhas. It is the voice, the heart, and the virtue of the Absolute Truth, 'Shinnyo' (Tathata). Unless one has deep introspection, awakened conscience, lamentation for one's own sinfulness, and the fervent aspiration for absolute Freedom, his knowledge of the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* would be like a house built on sand.

Shinran-Shonin was a great religious genius. He was truly awakened by the power of Amitabha. He heard His Name unconditioned, and suddenly he acquired pure Faith. The *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* is indeed the embodiment of His Calling (Choku-mei) and his pure Faith. The Pure Faith is the only way to Enlightenment, Nirvana (Nehan). It is the nucleus of all Buddhism. This is the doctrine of this sacred book.

Life is short, and full of sufferings; life without philosophy and religion is dry. Without pure Faith one cannot reach the other shore of Nirvana. But what are the relations between the pure Faith of Shin Buddhism and the Noble Eight-fold Path (Hasshodo) or the Four Noble Truths (Shishotai) of Theravada Buddhism? What are the relations between pure Faith and humanity or moral laws? The *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* will give you the answer to these questions.

In the world today most of the people are selfish, covetous, irritable and have neither peace of mind nor noble ideals in life. They are like a forsaken boat lost on the rough seas. Philosophy, practices, disciplines and morals have no power to emancipate mankind from its illusions, lusts and Karma. Religions of revelation, or reason and others, easy but irrational, cannot carry the people to the ultimate Enlightenment of Nirvana; and are incapable of cultivating the soil of human mind as deeply as to reveal the Jewel of Light-and-Love of Buddha-nature (Bussho). A religion without the True Practice (Shinjitsu-no-Gyo) and True Faith (Shinjitsu-Shinjin) is not the paramount; Buddhism without Vow (Hongan) and Practice (Gyo) is not the supreme. Let those who have ears to hear, listen to the voice of the Absolute Truth.

I have been contemplating for a long time to translate Shinran's *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* into English. It is a difficult task, nay, almost impossible to represent perfectly Shinran's true spirit in a foreign language. Perhaps the present attempt may be a failure, but, being unable check the overflow of my joy and thankfulness for the Three Treasures (or Gems), I have boldly taken up this difficult undertaking, hoping for improvements in the future. I was compelled often, in wishing for clarify the meaning or to make it understandable, to expound the text by avoiding word for word translation. However, I have tried my best to remain faithful to the original meaning.

Times have changed. The people of the world have come to pay closer attention to Buddhism, and translation works are being carried on in many countries. The teaching of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* is not only a revelation of the Three Great Sutras, but it is the light of all religions of the world. And Jodo-Shinshu will play in the future the most sublime and significant role in the history of religions.

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1953

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**THE PURPOSE OF**  
**THE KYO-GYO-SHIN-SHO**  
(THE SMALLER SUKHAVATI-VYUHA)

## PART 1 INTRODUCTION

### THE PURPOSE OF THE KYO-GYO-SHIN-SHO

The rise of a great religion such as Mahayana Buddhism has its sufficient reason. Shinran-Shonin (Kenshin-Daishi) appeared in Japan for the sake of the sinful and the wicked. He founded the Sect of Jodo-Shinshu as a new method in Buddhism by which the Great Nirvana could be attained. In other words, Shinran-Shonin, surveying all the fields of both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, propagated the Dharma (Ho) of Buddha Amitabha in the form of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*. His compassion for the people led him to write this noble book. He experienced for himself the Buddhism of Self-Power, (Jiriki), profound and philosophical, and found that it was beyond the power of ordinary people, especially in the Age of Depravity.

In the days of Shinran-Shonin, the great sects of Buddhism such as Kegon, Tendai, Shingon, and Zen flourished. They were regarded to be the highest authentic doctrines or the trunk of Buddhism.

Kegon is a grand and sublime religion. It is the direct manifestation of the Buddha's transcendental wisdom, by which the Reality of the whole universe is revealed and developed to the fullest extent. But it is extremely difficult, almost beyond the power of human comprehension.

The philosophy of Tendai says that even a moment's thought contains all the truth and all the elements of the worlds, from Buddha countries to Evil Worlds (Akushu), and that all things are systematically blended together by virtue of the 'The Laws of Reality', or the ten Real Categories (Ju-Nyozze), such as Phenomenon (so), Quality (sho), Substance ( tai), Power (riki), Motion or Action (sa), Cause (in), Conditions (en), Result (ka), Comprehension (ho), and the law of Inter-blending (honmatsukukyo-to). And in the state of perfect calmness of the mind through Meditation or through Spiritual Intuition in Meditation, one can grasp simultaneously the Truth of Void (ku), Phenomenon (ke), and the Middle way (chu or chudo).

Shingon teaches the organic unity of the Six Elements (roku-dai) - Earth (chi), Water (sui), Fire (ka), Wind (tu), Void (ku), and Consciousness (shiki). Through Meditation they also attempt unity with the Absolute and to know their own Mind in its true nature. Zen Buddhism wishes to find Buddha abruptly by realizing the Truth through Meditation.

Shinran-Shonin, having studied these doctrines and philosophies for many years, thought that philosophical doctrines might be good for the wise, but the ignorant and the wicked had no other way but the Liberation through Buddha Amitabha, and that only His Supreme Vow (Hogan) and His Sacred Name (Myogo) could give them the True Benefit (Shinri). For this reason Shinran-Shonin believed in Buddha Amitabha and wrote the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*. And through this wonderful book he wished to express his own faith, thankfulness and gratitude to Buddha Amitabha, Buddha Sakyamuni, and all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (Bosatsu) for their compassion and skilful devices (Hoben).

All philosophical schools of Buddhism believe that they can reach the supreme wisdom by accomplishing the duties of the Four Grades- Teaching (Kyo), Philosophy or Truth (Ri), Practice (Gyo), and Attainment or Enlightenment (Ka or Sho), that is, in the Teachings of Buddha there is Philosophy or Truth, and by Practising the Philosophy they can attain Nirvana, the supreme wisdom. This is the general law of Buddhism. But Shinran-Shonin saw the greater truth in Buddhism, and he believed that the wicked and the unwise could be saved only through the pure Faith in Amitabha, the property of which being Buddha's Wisdom (Chi-e) and Mercy (Ji-hi) which are all powerful. For this reason, following the fashion of the Patriarchs, he, proclaimed the Doctrine of Teaching (Kyo), Practice (Gyo), Faith (Shin), and Attainment (Sho), and on which he established the Jodo-Shinshu.

In this case, the True Teaching (Kyo) is the *Larger Sutra of Pure Land* (*Dai-Muryo ju-kyo*, the Larger Sukhavati-vyuha), in which the True Practice or His Sacred Name 'Namu-Amida-Butsu' and His Supreme Vow (Hongwan) are manifest. And we are saved by believing in His Sacred Name and Vow and can be reborn in the Pure Land (Jodo), where we attain Enlightenment.

He put absolute value upon Pure Faith (Joshin), the sole cause of Enlightenment, and he wrote the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* chiefly for the purpose of manifesting the Pure Faith, discriminating it from other faiths for the Temporary Paradise (Ke-Shin-Do), and the Enlightenment, distinguishing it from other Schools of Self-Effort.

In the *Larger Sutra* (The Larger Sukhavati-vyuha) we read: 'All Buddhas do like this; preach like this; and teach like this. This is My Law (the Buddha's)'.<sup>1)</sup> Having read this phrase, Shinran-Shonin firmly believed that the *Larger Sutra*, in which Amida's Vows are perfectly manifested, is the True Teaching of Buddha Sakyamuni and that for the sake of this Teaching all Buddhas appeared in the world. Indeed Amida's teaching is most adapted for the ages of depravity, and the truth of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* is acceptable by all people, and those who believe are given the true Benefit.

In reality, Shinran-Shonin systematized and accomplished the works of the Seven Patriarchs (Hichi-Koso) of Pure Land School (Jodo-mon) of India, China and Japan. Some teachers put stress on Practice (Gyo), others on the "Recitation of the Sacred Name (Shomyo or Nembutsu), and some on Faith (Shin), but Shinran-Shonin most distinctly and most conspicuously revealed the True Pure Faith (Shinjitsu-no-Joshin) in the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* with many evidences and testimonies quoting Sutras and discourses. Therefore we look upon this Living Book with reverence as the Dharma-kaya (Hosshin, or Body of the Law) of Shinran-Shonin. Indeed it is the 'Oasis' in the desert, and the 'Light' in the darkness.

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1) The Larger Sutra, Vol 11, leaf 34.

Shinran-Shonin was ever conscious of his ignorance and wickedness, and called himself 'Gutoku Shinran, that is to say 'Shinran, a Simple Bald-headed Man'. He was humble and deeply reflected upon himself by the Light of Buddha Amitabha; yet, why did such a meek man write as great a book as the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*, in which he sometimes rebuked the scholars of other Schools so harshly? This is the point that we must consider.

Of course he had no personal grudge against them, nor was it because of his ignorance of Buddhism. He was full of thankfulness to all Buddhas for Amitabha's salvation. This thankfulness and joy begot the spirit of gratitude and at last he rose to repay the Teaching. His compassion for his fellow beings led him to proclaim the true Benefit of the Pure Land and to compose the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*.

In the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* and other writings he expressed a deep lamentation reflecting upon himself, but on the other hand, he rejoiced at the *Larger Sutra* and discourses and commentaries of the preceded Patriarchs, gaining victory over difficulties and adverse circumstances. He was especially glad to be blessed with the pure Faith by which he could rid himself of the eternal suffering of birth-and-death. Therefore he ardently wished all the people to believe in Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho, and to repose in the Power of Amida's Great Vow and to meet with one another in the Land of Bliss. He was of the same faith as Zendo who said: 'To hold the true faith and to persuade others to believe you is very hard, say, almost impossible; and if you could propagate His great mercy, you have really repaid Buddha Amitabha'. 1)

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1) The Ojo-Raisan (A Liturgy Praising the Rebirth in the Pure Land, leaf 17.

In reality, he founded the Jodo-Shinshu by writing the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*, but he was not proud of it at all. Rather, he was humble and condescending and always praised, glorified and revered his teacher Honen-Shonin 1) and said, 'It is Honen-Shonin who founded the Jodo-Shinshu and proclaimed the chosen Vow of Buddha Amitabha (Senjaku-Hongan).' Shinran-Shonin also respected and revered Prince Regent Shotoku (Shotoku-Taishi) whom he called the 'Lord of Teachings in Japan (Wagakuni-no-Kyoshu).' And as for the great teachers in the past, he said, 'Each of the Patriarchs of the three countries proclaimed of his own accord the Jodo-Shinshu,' 2) and he taught the people to come to the teachings of those great teachers.

The actions and deeds of Shinshu adherents always proceed out of their pure Faith. This is the characteristic of Shinshu, which is distinguished from the ideas of other Schools of Buddhism. Their faith, thankfulness and joy are none other than the virtues of His Sacred Name.

The *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*, as stated before, is the book of confession of Shinran-Shonin. Speaking objectively, he intended in this book to expound the spirit of the Senjaku-Hongan-Nembutsu-shu (lit. The Sacred Name as the Realization of Amida's chosen Excellent Vow) written by his great teacher Honen-Shonin, the founder of the Jodo-shu. He also attempted through this book to correct the heretic views of the scholars of Buddhist Schools of Self-Effort or Shodo-mon, and consequently he wished the adherents of the Jodo-shu not to deviate from the right path of Pure Land Buddhism. At the same time he hoped that the followers of the Schools of Self-Effort would not entertain any misguided prejudices.

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1) 'Shonin' means a Venerable Person.

2) Kakunyo-Shonin's 'Goden-sho' (Life of Shinran-Shonin), Vol. 11, Chap. 23; The Book of Keshindo, Part 1, P20.

The scholars of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* have discussed the intention of Shinran-Shonin in composing this book. They state as follows: Shinran-Shonin wrote the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* with the following object in mind:

1. To express his thankfulness and faith in Amitabha for his salvation and to lead all the people to the same realization.
2. To establish a true religion in Buddhism, Jodo-Shin-Shu.
3. To distinguish the true faith and the True Pure Land from the inferior faiths and the Temporary Pure Land.
4. To proclaim widely the doctrine of The True Teaching, Practice, Faith and Attainment (Kyo, Gyo, Shin and Sho).
5. To propagate the good Law of Buddha Amitabha, crushing heretic views of the various branches of Pure Land Schools, and the prejudice of other Schools of Self-Effort.
6. To reveal the true sense and spirit of the *Senjaku-Hongan-Nembutsu-shu* by Honen-Shonin, his teacher.
7. To lead the scholars of other Schools in Buddhism to the True Teaching.
8. To indicate the wrong views of other religions.

The seven articles, from 2 to 8, are all included in the first article.

Historically speaking, the reasons for composing the *Kyo-Gyo-Shun-Sho* can be known by the notation at the end of the book. Shinran-Shonin wrote about the exile of Honen-Shonin and himself in the first year of Shogen (1207), the first meeting with Honen-Shonin at Yoshimizu in Kyoto (1201), and the transference of the *Senjaku-shu* by Honen-Shonin to Shinran-Shonin himself. In closing he wrote:

'Thanking heartily my teacher for his kind instruction and meditating upon the infinite mercy of our Tathagata, here I put down the true doctrine of Shinshu and the essence of the Teachings of the Pure Land, without regard for the sarcastic criticism of the world. Therefore, I sincerely wish that those who read this book would be born in the Pure Land through their faith in the Power of His Vow, and that even the abusers would be blessed with conversion in the end.'

From the above quotation we can see clearly Shinran-Shonin's intention for composing this noble work.

The irreligious calamity in the year of Shogen moves us deeply.

In consequence of this calamity Honen-Shonin was exiled to Hata in the province of Tosa, and Shinran-Shonin to Kokubu of Echigo. Taking advantage of these terrible punishments, the happy tidings of Buddha Amitabha came to spread to every nook and corner of Japan. Indeed the adverse circumstances brought him joyous fruits, The *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* was firstly projected by virtue of this terrible event. As a rule, a religion spreads by encountering difficulties and adversities. This truth can be applicable to the case with Shinran, and indeed his teaching has shone most brilliantly in the history of religion of Japan.

Shinran-Shonin's conversion under Honen-Shonin at Yoshimizu in the first year of Kennin (1201A.D.), and the transference of the *Senjaku-shu* in the second year of Genkyu (1205A.D.) from his master these two historical events can be conjectured to be the principal reason of composing the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*. This book, as we have already mentioned, is the self-manifestation of Amida's compassion and the confession of Shinran's faith, that is, it is the description of his conversion from the Path of Difficult Practice (Nangyo-do) to the Way of Salvation by Amida's Vow of the Path of Easy Practice (Igyo-do). The first five books of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* are the exposition of True Salvation and the last chapter, 'Kenshin-do' denotes the attitude of the true disciple and the course of his conversion.

In *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*, Shinran-Shonin confessed his faith for the sake of the people, and at the same time he intended to protect the *Senjaku-shu*. For in those days the *Senjaku-shu* was attacked and reproved by many scholars. Moreover, there sprang many heretical views among the disciples of Honen-Shonin as to the doctrine, and the true meaning was perverted and wrongly interpreted. In order to tide over the religious crisis for the sake of the glory of the Great Sage and of the honour of his master, Shinran-Shonin wrote the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*.

Those days were indeed the ages of persecution against the new religion. The Buddhist scholars of Mount Hiei and of Nara, who belonged to the Schools of the Path of Self-Effort, abhorred, accused and even persecuted the new religion without cause. They were always ready to attack the priests of the new religion as rioters or breakers of peace and order. On the other hand the Scholars of Confucianism (Jukyo) and Taoism (Dokyo) dared to rebuke the followers of Nembutsu School (Nembutsu-shu) without discriminating right and wrong. In the end there appeared the formal protest by Myoe-Shonin and the impeachment by Gedatsu-Shonin, and at last the Order of Nembutsu at Yoshimizu was condemned to disperse. This religious disturbance has an intimate connection with the *Senjaku-shu*. For instance, the *Sai-jarin (The Crushing of the Heretic Doctrine)* by Myoe-Shonin, the *Jodo-Ketsugi-sho (The Judgment of the Doctrine of Pure Land)* by Koin, and the *Dan-Senjaku (The Impeachment of the Senjaku-shu)* by Josho, were the books written against the *Senjaku-shu*.

The outward impeachments and abuses were comparatively easy to bear, but the formidable enemy was in their own circle -- among Honen's disciples. Honen-Shonin had three hundred and eighty disciples and more whom he kindly taught for many years. Nevertheless, strange to say, very few disciples could understand clearly the true spirit of Honen-Shonin. Some disciples insisted a new heretic view, 'Ichinengi', and said that a man could enter the Pure Land by reciting the Sacred Name even once in his life time; and some entertained 'Tanen-gi', that is, repetitions of Nembutsu is

necessary for the rebirth into the Pure Land, and another had the doctrine of 'Shogyo-hongan-gi', that is, Buddha Amitabha's Vow is to save the people who fulfilled all moral laws or merits without emphasis on Faith.

Those who insisted on the 'Doctrine of Merits' as the True Sense of Amida's Vow (Shogyo-hongan-gi) impeached the *Senjaku-shu* as Honen's temporary teaching. They said that Honen-Shonin in reality supported the 'Doctrine of Merits'. And some of the disciples were so impudent and audacious as to say that the *Senjaku-shu* was not Honen-Shonin's real work.

Soon after the death of Honen-Shonin the Jodo-shu Sect branched into four great schools: - Seizan, Chinzei, Kubon, Cho-rakuji. Of these all misunderstood the *Senjaku-shu* and their doctrines were nothing but their own heretical opinions, deviating from the true sense of Jodo-shu. Such being the circumstances, Shinran-Shonin was at last compelled to compose the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*. He discriminated and separated 'Shin' (faith) from 'Gyo' (practice or reciting of the Sacred Name), while Honen-Shonin always taught apparently to recite the Sacred Name (Gyo) as the condition of the rebirth into the Pure Land. Shinran-Shonin also distinguished the right faith from the wrong, and indicated the difference between the True Pure Land (Shindo) and the Temporary Pure Land (Kedo) in the chapter of 'Keshindo'. He judged and asserted that the 11th, 12th, 13th, 17th and 18th Vows are the True Vows, and the 19th and 20th Vows are Temporary Vows - the causes of the Temporary Pure Land. By so doing, Shinran-Shonin clarified the true meaning of the *Senjaku-shu*.

He said in *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* as follows:

'Both priests and lay-adherents in these depraved ages, nay, even the so called patriarchs of Buddhist sects entertain philosophical interpretations and hold heretical views, saying: 'Amitabha and His Pure Land exist within the mind, and not beyond this earthly world'. They do not believe in the Enlightenment in the Pure Land; They do find more religious value in Meditation and merits than in the pure faith of the Sacred Name. Alas! They are all blind to the True Faith imperishable!'

Again he lamented saying:

'Most of the priests, who cling to the doctrine of the Path of Self-Effort and who have gone astray from the genuine Path of Shin-shu, are not so unwise as to understand the Buddha's teachings correctly. They cannot discriminate between the true and the temporal teachings. The scholars of Confucianism in the cities of Kyoto and Nara do not know what work (or practice) is the most beneficial to the sinful, nor do they distinguish between the right path and the wrong' 1)

In conclusion, Shinran-Shonin, on the one hand, pleaded for the Senjaku-shu and its author Honen-Shonin and on the other hand/ he confessed his faith, following the faith of Vasubandhu (Tenjin Bosatsu) and Donran-Daishi (Tan Luan). These are the reasons for which he composed *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*. He said in the chapter of 'True Faith', as follows:-

'Here I, Gutoku-Shinran, a simple priest, believing in the true teachings of all Buddhas, could know the discourses and commentaries. I was blessed to read with reverence the Three Sutras of Pure Land, but I was especially obliged to Vasubandhu's Jodo-ron Discourse on the Pure Land in, in which his pure faith (Isshin, or a single mind) in Amitabha is clearly described'. 2)

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1) The Book of Keshindo, the Conclusive Passage.

2) The Book of Shin, The Introduction.

## THE OUTLINE OF KYO-GYO-SHIN SHO

The *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* by Shinran-Shonin consists of six volumes.

In the first volume, the True Teaching (Kyo) of the Buddha Sakyamuni, the World-Honoured One (Seson), is revealed according to the *Larger Sukhavativyuha* (*The Larger Sutra of the Land of Bliss, Dai-Muryo ju-Kyo*), through which Shinran-Shonin (1173-1262) founded the Sect of Jodo Shinshu, the True Religion of Salvation by Faith.

In the second volume, he teaches the True Practice (Gyo) (or the Sacred Name of Buddha Amitabha); in the third volume, he teaches the True Faith (Shin); in the fourth, the True Attainment or Enlightenment (Sho); in the fifth, the True Buddha and the True Buddha's Country, Amitabha's Pure Land (Shin-Butsu-Do); and in the sixth volume, the Temporary Buddha and the Temporary Buddha's Country (Ke-shin-Do) is taught.

Firstly, the True Teaching (Kyo) denotes the virtue and power of the Buddha Amitabha and the adornments of His Buddha Country, that is, the teaching of the *Larger Sukhavati-vyuha*. In this Sutra the Bhagavat Sakyamuni, the Tathagata (Nyorai), proclaimed the forty-eight Vows of the Tathagata Amitabha, of which the Eighteenth Vow (Dai-ju-hachi-gan) is the most important, because through this Vow the Tathagata Amitabha revealed his own supreme wisdom and unparalleled great benevolence- a fact which can be explained only by a Buddha, and through which all beings can be saved from their sins.

Secondly, the True Practice (Gyo) is the 'Practice' of the Pure Land School, which is taught in the *Larger Sukhavati-vyuka*. It is the Sacred Name of Buddha Amitabha, or the recitation of the Name, that is, 'Adoration to Buddha Amitayus' (Namo-mitayushe Buddhaya; 'Namu-Amida-Butsu'); 'Amitabha' means the Infinite Light (Muryo-ko), and 'Amitayus' denotes the Eternal Life (Muryo-ju). Therefore 'Amida Nyorai is the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life, or Buddha of Infinite Wisdom and Boundless Mercy. According to the doctrine of the Jodo-Shinshu, the glorification or the recitation of the Sacred Name is nothing but the virtue of the Sacred Name itself. The Sacred Name of the Tathagata Amitabha was revealed in the *Larger Sutra of the Land of Bliss*.

In the Seventeenth Vow it says:

'If immeasurable and innumerable blessed Buddhas in immeasurable Buddha countries do not glorify my name, after I have obtained Bodhi (the supreme knowledge); if they do not preach my fame and proclaim my praise, and utter it together, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.'

His Sacred Name is the root of all works; it is the whole of good deeds. Therefore, if a man practises it or glorifies His Name, taking refuge therein, he shall be born in that Buddha's country; and if a man believes in it, he shall obtain the highest perfect knowledge in the Land of Bliss.

Thirdly, the True Faith (Shin) is the belief in the Sacred Name (Namu-Amida-Butsu) as the true cause of power of entering the Country of the Tathagata Amitabha. This is the faith of His Eighteenth Vow. It says:

'When I have obtained Buddhahood, if those beings who are in the ten quarters should believe in me with Serene Thoughts (Shi-Shin) and Joy (Shingyo) and should Wish to Be Born (Yokusho) in my country, and should have ten times of even once think of me (or repeat my name) (Naishi-Junen), ..if they should not be born there, then may I not obtain perfect knowledge; barring only those beings who have committed the five deadly sins, and who have spoken evil of the good Law.'

A man, who believes in this Vow and trusts in His supreme Vow, shall be endowed with all the virtues of the Tathagata Amitabha of His Sacred Name, and shall be born in that Buddha country.

Fourthly, the True Enlightenment (Sho) is the highest perfect knowledge that is obtained through the True Practice (Gyo) and the True Faith (Shin) above mentioned. This Enlightenment (Sho) is to be gained by virtue of the Eleventh Vow. It says:

'If in that Buddha country of mine beings who are born there should not all be firmly established (even in this life), viz. in absolute truth, till they have reached Mahaparinirvana (the Great Final Enlightenment), then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.'

This Enlightenment is called Ever Happiness (Joraku), Nirvana (Nehan), Dharmakaya (Hosshin), Reality (Jisso, things such as they really are), Tathata (Shinnyo, The Truth), or All One (Ichinyo). In other Schools of Buddhism, Self-Enlightenment consists in the efforts (Jiriki) of the people; therefore it is called 'the Religion of Self Power or Effort' (Jiriki-kyo or Shodo-mon). It is not a genuine salvation, but a philosophical religion. The Jodo-Shinshu, on the contrary, teaches us to believe in the salvation by Amida-Nyorai, through His wisdom, mercy and power. It is a religion of salvation, and it is called 'Salvation by Other Power' (Tariki-kyo or Jodo-mon). The Religion of Self-Efforts demands us to enlighten ourselves through our own efforts in the present life as the Buddha Sakyamuni did, following the steps that he walked; Jodo-Shinshu teaches us to believe in the Tathagata Amitabha and to enter the Buddha's country in the after life. But when we are born in that Buddha's country after death, we are immediately enlightened and are in perfect unity with the Absolute (Tathata) where there is no birth or death. This truth is too deep and too profound for us to comprehend, but we can believe. The truth of No-Samsara (cycle of birth-and-death) can be realised only in that Buddha country of the Tathagata Amitabha. The truth of No-Samsara is the True Enlightenment. Enlightenment means Living in Reality. The world of experience is but phenomenal and not real. Men of ignorance (Avidya) and delusion (Klesa) cannot truly comprehend things in its true nature. Reality (Jisso, Tathata) can be reached only through the transcendental wisdom which is acquired by virtue of Paramitas through Samadhi (Sammai, deep meditation). The insight through Samadhi gets at the real, which we call Tathata. Tathata is the true Light and the true Life which pervade the whole universe, and from which all Buddhas are born; all good and teachings come there from; Amitabha and His teachings are also nothing but the virtue of Tathata.

But we sinful men, through delusion of ignorance, separate ourselves from others, and from this selfish discrimination there arise passions, evil desires, love and hatred, covetousness, unrighteousness, and other innumerable sins. To correct this error the Bhagavat Sakyamuni, the incarnatio of the Tathagata Amitabha, came into the world

and, and taught the vanity of all things (the Truth of Emptiness of Void), and self effacement (Muga), and denied the existence of the Self (Ga) and empirical world. He himself fully acknowledged the truth and united with Tathagata or Reality. In other words, he obtained the highest perfect knowledge, and through this Supreme wisdom he produced the great unparalleled compassion. That is to say, he became a Buddha. This is Enlightenment, where there is no passion, no evil desire, no evil karma (Go), and no pain. To be Enlightened he taught us to have right wisdom and clean conduct, which we obtain by discipline, work and Samadhi. Therefore he taught the Noble Eightfold Path, which consists of-

(1) right belief, (2) right resolution, (3) right speech, (4) right conduct, (5) right livelihood, (6) right effort, (7) right recollection, (8) right meditation; and the Six Paramitas, which are-

(1) charity, (2) observance of the teachings, (3) patience, (4) effort, (5) recollectness (Samadhi), and (6) wisdom.

But as any man can easily imagine, these teachings are, in the true sense, very hard to observe and to practise as strictly as the Buddha taught; nay, almost impossible for ordinary people to follow, for they are the teachings for the wise.

On the other hand, the Buddha Sakyamuni, being compassionate to the unwise, the wicked, the unrighteous, and the sinful, taught the teachings of Pure Land, the Jodo-Shinshu. Our founder Shinran-Shonin turned into the Jodo-Shinshu, after he had walked on the Difficult Path of Self-Efforts (Nangyo-do) for as long as twenty years on the Mount of Hiyei. Shinshu is the Easy Path of Salvation (Igyo-do); the True Religion of the Buddha Sakyamuni, by which all people, the wise and the unwise, the good and the wicked, the righteous and the unrighteous are all emancipated from their delusions through the Supreme power of Buddha Amitabha, the Infinite Light.

By the teachings of Buddha Sakyamuni, and through Shinran-Shonin, all men can be saved, and they are to be born in the Buddha's country, where they attain the Real, Tathata (the Truth). This is the True Enlightenment.

Buddha Sakyamuni's Enlightenment was grand and sublime, full of Life and Light, and in his Enlightenment he found Amitabha, the Absolute Being. Many sermons were delivered by Buddha Sakyamuni during his life-time, but very often he taught most willingly about the Tathagata Amitabha, as Amitabha was the truth he had found in his Enlightenment. Indeed he was the incarnation of Buddha Amitabha, and he himself was Amitabha.

Fifthly, the True Buddha and the True Buddha's country (Shin-Butsu-Do): the True Buddha of Infinite Light (Wisdom) and Life (Mercy), the Tathagata Amitabha, who has obtained the highest perfect knowledge through the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path and the Six Paramitas for the accomplishment of his Forth-Eight Vows (Sacred Promises), Buddha Amitabha became a Buddha of Infinite Light and Life, being rewarded for his Vows especially through the Twelfth and the Thirteenth Vows.

The Twelfth Vow reads as follows:

'If, after I have obtained the highest perfect knowledge, my light should be liable to be measured in this Buddha country of mine, even by the measure of a hundred thousand niyutas of kotis of Buddha's countries, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.'

The Thirteenth Vow is as follows:

'If the measures of my life after I have obtained Bodhi (Buddha knowledge) should be limited, even by numbering a hundred thousand niyutas of kotis of kalpas, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.'

The Buddha's country of the Tathagata Amitabha is also full of Light and Life. Not only the Buddha Amitabha and His Country are full of Light and Life, but also the beings that are born in His Country are full of Light and Life, becoming Buddhas as soon as they have entered his Country after death. The Buddha Amitabha is the Lord of all Buddhas, and He is indeed the True Buddha worthy of His Vows (Hongan) and Practice (Gyo), and His Country is also the True Buddha Country worthy of His Supreme Promises and merits.

Amitabha's Country of the Land of Happiness (Gokuraku) is the Garden of Nirvana. Those who are born there, gain the Great Enlightenment of Nirvana, enjoy life everlasting, and are forever free from the bondage of birth-and-death. They are then able to manifest themselves over and over again in the worlds of Suffering in order to deliver their fellow-beings from sin and ignorance (Mumyo, Avidya).

Sixthly, the Provisional Buddha and the Provisional Buddha's Country (Ke-Shin-Do): in the sutra *Meditation on Buddha Amitayus (Amitayur-dhyana-sutra; Kwan-Muryo ju-Kyo)*, it is written that the Buddha Amitabha appears before the believer who practices the Meditation on Buddha Amitayus and his Buddha Country, the height of the Buddha being six hundred thousand niyutas of kotis of yojanas innumerable as the sands of the river Ganga. In the opinion of Shinran-Shonin, the True Buddha is unlimited and should not be measured by number nor by quality; therefore a Buddha measured, however great he may be, is not a True Buddha (Shin-Butsu or Shin Shin), but he is a Provisionary Buddha (Ke-Butsu or Ke-Shin). And Shinran-Shonin is of the opinion that the Buddha and Bodhisattvas who have appeared in our sight when we practise the Meditation on Amitayus and His Buddha's country are all Ke-Shin or Temporary Beings; we, sinful men, are not able to see the True Buddha Amitabha in the present life, even with the eyes defiled with delusion. In this respect Shinran-Shonin's opinion is different from those of Zendo Daishi and Honen-Shonin, the founders of Jodo-Shu. The true Buddha Amitabha embodies Himself in His Sacred Name; therefore His Name (Myogo) is Buddha Amitabha Himself. We can be united with Amitabha only through His Name; to hear and believe in His Name is superior to or more virtuous than to see a Provisionary Buddha. From these viewpoints Shinran-Shonin determined the Buddha Amitabha who appears in the Ninth Meditation (Dai-Kukan) in the *Amitayur-dhyana-sutra*, and also he asserted that the Buddha's Country of Amitabha literally expressed in that sutra is not the True Amitabha's Country, but a Provisionary Happy Land, (of course, in the implicit sense it is the True Land) and that the True Buddha Amitabha and the True Amitabha and the True Amitabha's

Country are mentioned in the *Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra* (Such a great sage as Vasubandhu (Tenjin-Bosatsu) could see the True Land through the Temporary Land in deep Samadhi, for he was partly united with the Truth of Tathata). We Shin-shu followers are heartily moved to hear His Name through the Vow of Amitabha, and by hearing His Name we believe in His Great Compassion, which is the true cause of entering His Happy Land; Buddha's Enlightenment.

The full text of the Ninth Meditation is as follows:

'Further, when this perception (the spiritual eyes above mentioned) is gained, you should next proceed to meditate on the bodily marks (Shinso) and the light (Komyo) of Buddha Amitayus.'

'Thou shouldst know, O Ananda, that the body of Buddha Amitayus is hundred thousand million times as bright as bright as the colour of the Ganbunada gold (Embudangon) of the heavenly abode of Yama; the height of that Buddha is six hundred thousand niyutas (of kotis of yojanas) (Yujun) innumerable as are the sands of the river Ganga.

'The white twist of hair (Byaku-go) between the eyebrows all turning to the right, is just like the five Sumeru Mountains (Shumi-sen).'

'The eyes of Buddha are like the water of the four great oceans; the blue and the white are quite distinct.'

'All the roots of hair of his body issue forth brilliant rays which are also like the Sumeru Mountains.'

'The halo (Enko) of that Buddha is like a hundred millions of the Great Chiliocosms (Sanzen-Daisen-Sekai); in that halo there are Buddha's miraculously created (Kabutsu), to the number of a million of niyutas of kotis innumerable as the sands of the Ganga; each of these Buddhas who are also miraculously created (Ke-Bosatsu).'

'Buddha Amitayus has eighty-four thousand signs (So) of perfection, each sign is possessed of eighty-four thousand minor marks (Ko) of excellence, each mark has eighty-four thousand rays,

*each ray extends so far as to shine over the worlds of the ten quarters, whereby Buddha embraces and protects all the beings who think upon him and does not exclude (any one of them).*

(This expression of His rays is as valuable as in the Larger Sutra). His rays, signs and so forth, are difficult to be explained in detail. But in simple meditation let the mind's eye dwell upon him.'

'If you pass through this experience, you will at the same time see all the Buddhas of the ten quarters. Since you see all the Buddhas it is called the Samadhi of Remembrance of Buddhas (Nembutsu-Zanmai).

'Those who have practised this meditation are said to have contemplated the bodies of all the Buddhas. *Since they have meditated (Kanzuru) on Buddha's body, they will also see Buddha's mind. It is great compassion that is called Buddha's mind. It is by his absolute compassion that he receives all beings.* (We ordinary people who are unable to meditate on His body can see Buddha's great compassionate mind through hearing and believing in His Sacred Name, and by virtue of which can we be born in the Pure Land).

'Those who have practised this meditation will, when they die, be born in the presence of the Buddhas in another life, and obtain a Spirit of Resignation (Mushonin) wherewith to face all the consequences which shall hereafter arise.'

'Therefore those who have wisdom should direct their thought to the careful meditation (Kan) upon that Buddha Amitayus. Let those who meditate on Buddha Amitayus begin with one single sign or mark - let them first meditate on the white twist of hair between the eyebrows as clearly as possible; when they have done this, the eighty-four thousand signs (So0 and marks (Ko) will naturally appear before their eyes. Those who see Amitayus will also see all the innumerable Buddhas of the Ten quarters. Since they have seen all the innumerable Buddhas, they will receive the prophecy (Ki) of their future destiny (to become Buddhas), in the presence of all the Buddhas; such is the perception gained by a complex meditation on all forms and bodies (of Buddha), and it is the Ninth Meditation.' (*from the Sacred Book of the East*)

The Temporary Buddha Country miraculously created is the same country, the outskirts (Henji) of the True Buddha Country, as is written in the sutra *Bodhisattvas Who Dwell in the Calyx of the Lotus-flowers (Bosatsu-Shotai-Kyo)*.

The True Buddha Country and the true Faith through which we can be reborn therein are described in the *Larger Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra*, and in Bodhisattva Vasubandhu's *Discourse on the Pure Land (Jodo-ron)* and its *Commentary (Ron-shu)* by Donran-Daishi, we can see the significance of Amitabha's True Country and the True Faith of Shin Buddhism.

## THE SEVEN PATRIARCHS IN THE KYO-GYO-SHIN-SHO

The Pure Land School in Japan was firmly established for the first time by Honen-Shonin. And it was Shinran-Shonin who revealed the spirit of the Pure Land School even more clearly. His doctrine is completely described in his principal work, *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*.

The doctrine of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* is established on the Three Sutras (Sambu-kyo) of Pure Land School, and through the discourses (Ron) and commentaries (Shaku) of the Seven Patriarchs (Shichi-Koso).

Shinran-Shonin declared the unprecedented grand doctrine of Amida's Free Gift (parinamana Eko) <sup>1)</sup> as the foundation of True Pure Land Sect (Jodo-Shinshu). As regards Gifts there are two kinds:

- (1) The Gift of Entering into the Pure Land (Ohso-Eko), and
- (2) The Gift of Returning from the Pure Land (Genso-Eko).

Then Shinran-Shonin, for the first time, published the new way of reaching Nirvana through the Four Laws (Shiho) - Kyo (Teaching), Gyo (Practice, or Work, or the Sacred Name), Shin (Faith), and Sho (Attainment, Enlightenment or Supreme Wisdom). He also clearly distinguished the true *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* from the untrue or temporary *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*

He clarified the characteristic or attributes of Buddha Amitabha and of men who are to be saved. He explained how our sins are destroyed and how we can realise the Maha-Nirvana (Daihatsu-Nehan) - the highest, perfect wisdom.

Now let us consider historically the doctrine of the True Pure Land Sect. In the 'Introduction (Sojo) to the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*' by Shinran-Shonin, he expressed his joy and gratitude for his having been able to see the commentaries and discourses of the great teachers of India, China and Japan.

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1) In the Anraku-shu by Doshaku there are six kinds of 'Eko', and in the Kegon-gyo ten kinds of 'Eko' are described.

In the *Shoshinge* at the end of the 'Book of True Practice' (Gyo-kan), he describes the history of the True Pure Land Sect, mentioning the doctrinal succession of the Seven Patriarchs - Ryuju (Nagarjuna, 100-200) and Tenjin (Vasubandhu, 420-500) in India, Donran (Tan-luan, 476-542), Doshaku (Tao-ch'ao, 562-645), and Zendo (Shan-tao, 613-681) in China and Genshin (942-1017) and Genku (or Honen, 1133-1212) in Japan. And in the 'Book of Temporary Pure Land' (Keshindo-kan), he also expresses his thankfulness to these Seven Great Teachers. This shows that Shinran-Shonin never preached a new religion. He was neither a protestant nor a heretical reformer, but he was a faithful successor of the Pure Land School. He systematized the doctrine of Pure Land School through strict critical studies.

At the end of the sixth book of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*, he adds the same conclusive passage, professing that he personally succeeded Genku (Honen-Shonin). He rejoices at the flourishing of the Pure Land Teaching, and definitely states that Genku is the great Master of the Revival of Pure Land School. He mentions the *Senja-ku-Hongan-Nembutsu-shu* by Honen-Shonin, saying:

'The essence of Shinshu and the mystery of Nembutsu are completely described in this book'. So saying, he expresses his exceeding joy for having acquired his Master's sanction to copy that precious book. He composed the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* in order to glorify Amitabha and repay his Master for his instructions. Therefore it is presumed that the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* was composed on the thoughts of the *Senjaku-shu* by Honen-Shonin; but he developed it, and revealed more clearly the deep meaning of the Nembutsu of Pure Land Sect, especially according to the doctrine and faith of Vasubandhu - '*The Discourse on the Pure Land*'.

Shinran-Shonin always respected and revered his teacher Honen-Shonin as an incarnation (Gonke) of Buddha Amitabha or Bodhisattva Seishi (Mahasthamaprapta). So he says in his *Wasan* (Songs, Verses). In the *Tannisho* (*The Lamentation for the Heretic Views*), he says:-

'As for me, Shinran, simply obey my good Master (Honen-Shonin) and believe that it is by the Power of Amitabha alone that whosoever practices the Nembutsu is saved'. (Chapter 2)

It should therefore be said that Shinran-Shonin had no other intention but to preach and expound the teaching of Nembutsu handed down by Honen-Shonin, his Master.

Honen-Shonin succeeded the Nembutsu of Zendo-Daishi (Shan-tao), a great teacher in China. Zendo-Daishi wrote a *Commentary on the Meditation on Amitayus Sutra* (Kangyo-sho) and he came to the conclusion that the Kangyo is none other than the manifestation of the Nembutsu.

Zendo-Daishi says this Sutra has a dual purpose: one is to teach how to Meditate on Amitayus (Kambutsu-Zammai), Buddha of Infinite Life, and the other object is to teach the power of Nembutsu (Nembutsu-Zanmai, or *Recitation* of the Sacred Name). In the Meditation there are 16 kinds or grades, and these grades of Meditation can be divided into two kinds of Good: one is the 'Good of Meditation' (Jozen), and the other is the 'Good of Morality and Religious Observances' (Sanzen). These two kinds of Good are explicitly the cause of entering into the Pure Land. But, exploring the deep meaning of the two kinds of Good, he decided that the Nembutsu with the 'Deep

Mind' (Jinshin, that is, the deep Faith) is the true cause of rebirth in the Pure Land, and he put stress upon the 'Deep Mind'.

Zendo-Daishi put preponderance upon the Recitation of the Sacred Name or Nembutsu. This Practice is specially called the 'Shojogo' or the Principle Right Karma (Cause), and the others are called 'Jogo' or the Auxiliary Karma (Cause). So dividing, he declared the Nembutsu is the chief of all the practices described in the Sutra *Meditation on Amitayus*. Moreover he said the Nembutsu is the most important of all the Buddhist Practices taught by Buddha Sakyamuni.

Why is the Nembutsu so important and so powerful a key to open the door of the Pure Land? Zendo-Daishi thought it was because the Nembutsu accords with Amida's Vow, and other practices do not.

In the 18th Vow of the Larger Sutra Buddha Amitabha says: 'Whosoever recites the Sacred Name ten times, nay, even once, can enter my (Amitabha's) Buddha Country.' In the Ojo-Raisan (Liturgy of Pure Land), Zendo-Daishi speaks of the 'Senju' or the Exclusive Practice (Reciting the Nembutsu exclusively) and the 'Zasshu' or the Miscellaneous Practices (the Practices of many sorts), and he argues that the former is more important and more powerful than the latter. So reasoning, he encourages the people to practice the Nembutsu exclusively.

Honen-Shonin, succeeding the doctrine of Zendo, composed the *Senjaku-shu*, and he quoted in it Zendo's argument, while Shinran-Shonin, notwithstanding the two precedented great teachers, revealed the mystery of Nembutsu standing on the *Larger Sutra* (Larger Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra). Zendo and Honen relied chiefly upon the *Meditation on Amitayus Sutra* (*Amitayus Dhyana-sutra*), while Shinran-Shonin thought the Larger Sutra was the most fundamental teaching, for Amida's Vows are most perfectly denoted therein. Consequently Zendo and Honen encouraged the followers to practice the Nembutsu without distinguishing Practice from Faith. But Shinran-Shonin, according to the true meaning of Nembutsu, distinguished the Recitation of the Sacred Name from the true Faith in the Power of the Vow.

At the outset of the 'Book of True Teaching', Shinran-Shonin mentions the title of the *Larger Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra* and says: 'The *Larger Sutra* is the True Teaching.' In every other book of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*, he places the name of the Vow. For instance, in the second book he places the name of the 17th Vow, 'The Vow of His Name Being Recited by All Buddhas'; in the third book he places the name of the 18th Vow, "The Vow of Believing with Sincerity-an-Joy, and so forth. In the last and sixth book, he places the names of *Meditation on Amitayus Sutra* and of *Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra* (Amida-kyo). This shows the True Pure Land Sect was founded on the one hand through the Sutra, and on the other hand through Amida's Vows.

The *Meditation on Amitayus Sutra* corresponds to the 19th Vow in the explicit sense (Ken-no-Gi), and the *Smaller Sutra* corresponds to the 20th Vow, also in the same sense. These two Vows the 19th and the 20th, are not the True Vows, but they are Preparatory (or preliminary) Vows (Ken-no-Gan), while the 18th is the true Vow (Shinjitsu-no-Gan).

Shinran-Shonin also discriminates the true Sutra (the *Larger Sutra*) from the temporary Sutras (*Meditation on Amitayus Sutra* and the *Smaller Sutra*).

The first five books of the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* are of the True Vows; and the last book is of the Preparatory or Temporary Vows. Shinran-Shonin says: 'As for the Vows, there are true Practice and true Faith, and temporary Practice and Temporary Faith.'

The Sutra tells that Buddha Amitabha, when He was yet a Bodhisattva Dharmakara, made 48 Vows and practised all the necessary Works, i.e., the Noble Eightfold Path and Sixfold Paramitas, and at last He attained the Final Enlightenment (Shogaku). It also teaches that the Adornments in the Pure Land are nothing but the manifestation of His Supreme Enlightenment and Infinite Love (Daihi). The cause for the rebirth of all beings in the Pure Land is made Possible through the power of Amitabha or His Sacred Name. Why is this so? It is because of the special characteristic of the Power of Amitabha's Vow. He vowed to save all beings by virtue of the Power of His Vow or His Name. This is the doctrine of Shin Buddhism.

After Nagarjuna (Ryuju), Vasubandhu (Tenjin) appeared in the northern part of India. He composed the *Discourse on the Pure Land (Jodo-ron)* according to the Three Sutras of Pure Land School, but especially on the *Larger Sutra*. The third Patriarch Donran in China, taking up Vasubandhu's *Discourse on the Pure Land*, made a commentary on it, which was entitled the *Commentary on the Discourse on the Pure Land (Jodo-Ronchu or Ronchu)*. He also, following after the pattern of Vasubandhu, tried to reveal the spirit of the *Larger Sutra*. He wrote another book *Buddhist Verses Glorifying Amitabha (San-Amidabutsu-ge)* in accordance with the *Larger Sutra*. At the head of the *Commentary on the Discourse on Pure Land*, Donran mentioned Nagarjuna's Division of Buddhism the 'Path of Difficult Practice' (Nangyo-do, through which men are to be Enlightened in the present life), and the 'Path of Easy Practice' (Igyo-do, through which men are to be Enlightened in the Pure Land in the next life). Nagarjuna's Division is to show the Power of Amida's Vow. Donran says in his *Ronchu*:

'The path of Easy Practice (Igyo-do) is that if anyone aspires to be born in Amitabha's Pure Land through faith in Him, he shall be born in His Land of Purity through the Power of His Vow (Gan-riki), and that he shall be counted among the Number of Congregation in the Pure Land through the power of Amitabha. Those who are predestined to be born in the Pure Land are in the Rank of No-Retrogression (Shojoju; Futaiten).' 1)

Bodhisattva Vasubandhu classified the adornments of the Pure Land into three kinds, that is,

- (1) the 'Adornments of the Land (Kokudo-Shogon)', which are composed of 17 kinds of adornments,
- (2) the 'Adornments of Buddha Amitabha (Butsu-Shogon)', which are composed of 8 kinds of adornments, and
- (3) the 'Adornments of Accompanying Bodhisattvas (Bosatsu-Shogon)', which consist of 4 kinds of adornments.

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1) The Ronchu, Vol. I leaf 1

So there are 29 kinds of adornments in the Pure Land in all. Donran-Daishi says:

'These 'Three Kinds of Adornments' are caused by Amitabha's pure merciful mind, i.e. by the power of His 48 Devine Vows. The Supreme Vows are of Amida's pure mind; therefore the fruits of His pure mind, i.e. the adornments of His Land of Bliss are also pure. Without cause no one can enjoy the adornments of the Pure Land. Amida's cause for His own Enlightenment is identical with the cause of our entering the Pure Land. Such is the characteristic of His Enlightenment and His Vows'. 1)

To expound Donran's meaning more in detail, the Pure Land of Amitabha is the naturel outcome or fruit or realisation of His Vows. There is no absurdity or illogicality therein. If the mind is pure, then the Buddha's Land is also pure. The phenomena are but the appearances created by the mind. This is the Law of the universe, spiritual and natural.

On the other hand, all sentient beings, sinful and wicked, cannot create the Pure Buddha Country, because their minds are defiled with passions, covetousness and darkness. Such being the undeniable fact of the sinful world, we must resort to His Compassionate Vow and take refuge in His wisdom and power for our final Enlightenment. We must be born in His Pure Land to be Enlightened therein. Some people would say that the salvation by Amitabha is unreasonable because it is against the Law of Cause and Effect taught by the Buddha. Or, they would say that Buddha Sakyamuni is the Teacher or the Leader, and not the Emancipator, and therefore we must enlighten ourselves by our own effort according to the Law of Karma; that is the teaching of the Buddha; that is the truth of Buddhism.

Of course, we know the Law of Karma and the truth of Self Enlightenment. But Amitabha's deliverance is different from that of Christianity. It is not against the Law of Karma or the Law of Causation. Because it is Amitabha's Law of Karma that we are saved by the Power of His Vow; our Karma is made identical with that of Buddha Amitabha. His power is embodied in His Enlightenment-His Sacred Name. That is the principle of deliverance in Shin Buddhism. Donran laid much stress upon the law of deliverance by Amitabha.

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1) The Ronchu, Vol II, leaf 25

The deliverance consists of the principles of 'Other-Power' (Tariki) and 'Turning His Merit towards Beings to Be Freed' (Eko). In that case His Vow plays the principal role. Shinran-Shonin says:

'Other-Power (Tariki) means the power of Vow of the Tathagata Amitabha.' 1)

The doctrine of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* owes much to Donran's Commentary on Vasubandhu's *Discourse on the Pure Land*. Therefore his Commentary helps us greatly to appreciate the doctrine of Pure Land. His book serves as the link between the Buddhism of Self-Effort and the Buddhism of Other-Power.

Zendo-Daishi is one of the greatest scholars of Pure Land School in China. His exposition of the 'Three Minds' (Sanshin) in the *Amitayus-dhyana Sutra* (*Meditation on Amitayus Sutra*); is excellent and unique. The 'Three Minds' have but subordinate sense apparently (Ken or explicitly) when compared with the 'Good of Meditation' (Jozen) and the 'Good of Religious Observances' (Sanzen) in the *Kangyo*, whereas Zendo revealed the deep meaning of the Sutra and laid preponderance upon the 'Three Minds' as its principle thought. After studying the *Kangyo* carefully, he at last disregarded the Meditation and the Religious Observances, thinking that these two kinds Goods are not in accordance with the original purpose of Amida's Vow. And he taught the people to take refuge in the Nembutsu.

The *Larger Sutra* is taught explicitly, but the *Amitayus-dhyana Sutra* (*Kangyo*) has a dual meaning:

(1) literal, superficial and explicit meaning (Ken-no-Gi) and

(2) deep, implicit, reserved meaning (On-no-Gi).

So said Zendo-Daishi. It is inferred from the *Amitayus-dhyana Sutra* that the *Smaller Amitayus Sutra* has also a dual meaning, explicit (Ken) and implicit (On).

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1) The Book of Gyo, leaf 41.

Shinran-Shonin says:

The 'Three Minds of the Two Sutras, Kangyo and Daikyo, are different in the explicit sense, but in the implicit sense, (if we reveal the Hard-to-Believe Law the Truth of His ineffable Vow), the two are one and the same.' 1) He discriminated most distinctly between the 'temporary' and 'true' as regards the Practice and Faith in the Vows. He quoted Zendo's commentaries many time in his *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*. For instance, he explained after Zendo the Sacred Name 'Namu Amida-Butsu', the relation between Practice and Faith, the value of reciting the Sacred Name, the 'Three Minds' in the *Amitayus-dhyana-sutra* and the 'Three Minds' of the *Larger Sutra*, and so forth. The Three Minds of the *Amitayus-dhyana-Sutra* are

- (1) the True Sincere Mind (Shijoshin; Amida's sincerity in the implicit sense),
- (2) the Deep Mind (Jinshin; implicitly, the true faith), and
- (3) the Aspiration for Entering into Pure Land, Turning Merit towards Amitabha (Eko-Hotsugan-shin); implicitly, Amida's divine will of Calling).

The Three Minds of the *Larger Sutra* are

- (1) the Sincere Mind (Shishin, truthfulness),
- (2) Belief-with-joy (Shingyo, the true faith), and
- (3) Aspiration for Rebirth in His Country (Yokusho).

Shinran-Shonin received instruction personally from Genku (Honen), but especially is he indebted to Donran and Zendo for the exposition of the True Faith in the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*.

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1) The Book of Keshindo, Part I, leaf 18.

## THE TRUE TEACHING AND THE TEMPORARY TEACHING

The Seven Patriarchs of the True Pure Land Sect are of the same opinion that the 18th Vow is the principal and most important Vow of the 48 Vows. The 18th Vow represents all to the Vows, that is, the other Vows are included in the 18th Vow. Because in the 18th Vow Amitabha's Infinite Wisdom and Love and the condition of being born in the Pure Land are manifested, and His Will is most clearly seen in this Vow.

It goes without saying that all the Patriarchs of the three countries highly appreciate and fully acknowledge the important role of morality and the teachings of the Noble Eight-fold Path and the Five Precepts taught by the Gautama Buddha. In considering, however, the span of life, and the craving, covetousness, and ignorance of the people, they reflected upon themselves and at last they resorted to the 18th Vow for their salvation. They were prudent and religious, and sincerely wished to attain the supreme Enlightenment-Nirvana.

The scholars of the True Pure Land School examined carefully the Practice or the condition of entering the Pure Land. Accordingly Doshaku-Zenji, the fourth Patriarch, divided all the practices of Buddhism into two kinds:

- (1) the Practice of Nembutsu and
- (2) the Practice of All Other Precepts (Shogyo).

Zendo-Daishi, the fifth Patriarch and disciple of Doshaku, following after the fashion of his precedented Patriarchs, divided the Condition (or Practice) into

- (1) 'Shogyo' or the Right Practice and
- (2) 'Zogyo' or the Miscellaneous Practice (Practice of the Precepts of all sorts).

Genshin-Kasho, the sixth Patriarch, declared the theory that

- (1) 'Senju' or the Exclusive Practice or Nembutsu is for the True Pure Land and
- (2) 'Zasshu' or the Miscellaneous Practices are for the Temporary Pure Land.

And Genku (Honen-Shonin) also followed Zendo's Division of the Right Practice and the Miscellaneous Practice.

Shinran-Shonin also, having studied carefully those theories, discriminated between the Right Practice and the Miscellaneous Practice, taking Amida's Vow into consideration. He took up the Three Vows - the 19th, the 20th and the 18th, and he asserted that in the 19th Vow the Tathagata Amitabha promises (or vows) to save all beings on condition that they fulfil all kinds of moral and religious precepts; in the 20th He promises to save the people provided that they practice the Nembutsu exclusively. In this case the Nembutsu means to recite the Sacred Name through self-effort (Jiriki), being proud of their Recitation. In the 18th Vow He declares to save all the people if they believe in the Merit of the Sacred Name. In this case the Nembutsu (Recitation of the Sacred Name) is identical with True Faith, taking refuge in the Sacred Name. The 19th and 20th are Temporary Vows, and the people who fulfil the conditions of those Vows shall be born in the Temporary Pure Land (Kedo). And those who believe in the 18th, the True Vow, shall enter into the True Pure Land (Shindo). For the above reason, Shinran-Shonin placed entire trust only in the 18th, and he rejected the other two Vows as Temporary (Ke). And he composed the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* for the purpose of making clear the reason of discriminating the True Practice from the Temporary Practice.

At the end of the fifth book, 'Book of True Buddha and True Pure Land' (Shinbutsudo-kan), Shinran-Shonin says: 'Concerning the Sea of Vows, there are the True Vows and the Temporary Vows, and consequently, concerning the Buddha Country, there are the True Land and the Temporary Land' 1)

He developed the 18th Vow into the 'Five True Vows' (Shinjitsu Gogan), that is, the 11th Vow (Vow of Final Enlightenment), the 12th Vow (Vow of Infinite Light), the 13th Vow (Vow of Eternal Life), the 17th Vow (Vow of His Name's Being Praised by All Buddhas), and 18th Vow (Vow of True Faith, or Vow of Sincerity-and-Faith).

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1) The Book of True Land, leaf 29.

So dividing, Shinran-Shonin put preponderance upon the 'Vow of True Faith' (the 18th), and asserted that the True Faith is the only cause of entering into the Pure Land. In this case, the Practice of Nembutsu (Reciting the Sacred Name) is considered to be identical with True Faith, or that Recitation is the natural and spontaneous product of the True Faith.

The 18th Vow is the profession of the original compassionate Will of Amitabha, and the 19th and the 20th Vows are the Vows that He proclaimed temporarily as a skilful, expedient device for leading the people to the 18th. This is the meaning of 'Temporary'. Some people cannot believe directly in the 18th owing to their own Karma in former lives, therefore Buddha Amitabha, out of compassion, declared those temporary Vows for them. For a man who immediately believes in the 18th Vow, the 19th, and the 20th Vows are of no use.

The 19th Vow is called, 'The Vow of Accumulating Miscellaneous Merits'. In this Vow, Buddha Amitabha vowed various kinds of merits to be accumulated. This Vow is for the People who cannot easily discard the idea that moral good and Precepts taught by the Buddha are the necessary factors to Enlightenment. Of course, those Precepts or Practices are good in themselves. In the 20th Vow, Buddha Amitabha vowed the Nembutsu to be recited as the condition of entering into the Pure Land. Therefore those who come to the 19th Vow should abandon it, and turn into the 20th; and those who entered the 20th Vow should forsake it, and turn into the 18th. Indeed Shinran-Shonin experienced such a religious process. But if interpreted spiritually, this 'Turning-into' 1) (Tennyu) is but the power of Amitabha.

The 19th Vow corresponds to the *Amitayus-dhyana Sutra*. Shinran-Shonin thought the *Amitayus-dhyana Sutra* has a double meaning: the Explicit Meaning and the Implicit Meaning. The 'Explicit Meaning' (Ken) is literal, apparent, and temporary, while the

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1) The Book of Keshindo, Part I, leaf 31.

'Implicit Meaning' (On) is deep, involved, and true. The 'Explicit Meaning' of this Sutra corresponds to the 19th Vow in the *Larger Sutra*, and the 'Implicit Meaning' refers to the 18th Vow. The true intention or message of the Buddha, of course, is to reveal the 18th Vow. In the 'Keshindo-kan', Shinran-Shonin says;

'Buddha Sakyamuni, having preached explicitly the 'Store of Virtues and Merits' (that is, *Amitayus-dhyana Sutra*) (the 19th Vow), guided the 'Sea of Beings' with many devices. Buddha Amitabha rose, out of compassion, precious Vows, and saves all from the 'Sea of Samsara' (Cycle of Birth-and-Death) (the 19th Vow) 1)

In the 19th Vow, Amitabha says; 'Whosoever that raises within himself the Bodhi-aspiring Mind (Bodaishin; Aspiration for becoming a Buddha) and practises all the noble Precepts shall be saved.' In this Vow He encourages the people to practise all kinds of Precepts of Self-Enlightenment School (Shodomon).

These Practices described in the 19th Vow are the Practices that are not the Right Practice (Non-Right Practice). On the contrary, in the sixteen Meditations (of the *Amitayus-dhyana Sutra* both the Non-Right Practice or the Miscellaneous Practices (Zogyo) and the Right Practice (Shogyo) are described.

The first thirteen Practices of Meditation on Amitayus and His Land are the Right Practice, and in the last three Meditations the Right Practice and the Miscellaneous Practices are mixed. The 16th Meditation is the teaching for the wicked and the sinful, and in which the Nembutsu (Recitation of the Sacred Name) is encouraged exclusively, therefore it is the Right Practice. The Practice that concerns Buddha Amitabha and His Land exclusively is the Right Practice.

The thirteen Meditations are the Right Practice, but they do not accord with the purport of His Original 18th Vow. So they are yet the Auxiliary of Temporary Practice (Jogo, or device), which was preached by the Buddha in order to carry the people into Principal Right Practice (Shojogo) - the Nembutsu. Unless a man truly understands the meaning of Nembutsu, he can not appreciate the doctrine of True Pure Land Sect - 'Other Power' (Tariki).

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1) The Book of Keshindo, Part I, leaf 1.

Those who follow the Temporary Practice will not be aware that they are practising temporarily: so they will not be able to discriminate the Right Practice from the Temporary Practice. All kinds of Precepts that were taught by the Buddha for us to observe are accepted as the Right Practice by those students of the School of Self-Enlightenment without discrimination. But it is not so with the True Pure Land Sect, for those Practices that are practised with Self-Effort (Jiriki) does not accord with Amida's Original Vow.

If the Nembutsu be practiced with self-power (Jiriki) or if one be proud of one's merit of practising it, that Nembutsu can even be called 'Temporary Practice.' In the 19th Vow, the Nembutsu is one of the miscellaneous practices. There are some people who choose the Nembutsu exclusively, abandoning all other Practices. For such people Amitabha raised the 20th Vow. It says:

'Those who, having heard My Name, turn their thought toward My Buddha Country and practise the 'Root of Virtues' (the Nembutsu), shall be born in My Land of Bliss and Happiness.'

They, who belong to the 20th Vow, do not take refuge in the Infinite Mercy of Amitabha, but rely upon their own merit of reciting His Sacred Name, that is, they practise the Nembutsu with self-power, and wish to be born in His Buddha Country. The *Amitayus Sutra (Amida-Kyo)* is indeed the exposition of such Nembutsu.

The *Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra (Amida-kyo)* says:

'Whosoever recites the Sacred Name with a single mind even for a day or for seven days shall gain rebirth in the Pure Land.'

The Sutra also says:

One cannot enter into the Pure Land by virtue of little merit (the miscellaneous Practices that are practised in the School of Self-Enlightenment).'

So describing, the fulfilment of all kinds of Precepts is said to be an inferior merit in comparison with the Practice of Nembutsu, concerning the rebirth in the Pure Land. And the Nembutsu is more highly praised than any other Practice, for the Nembutsu is most virtuous and powerful. But the Nembutsu in the *Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra* (Amida-kyo) is recited with self-power; therefore it cannot be called the true Nembutsu, but Provisionary Nembutsu. Through the Provisionary Nembutsu one cannot enter into the True Pure Land, but perhaps they will enter into the Temporary Pure Land. The self-power (Jiriki) in this case, means the pride of his merit from reciting the Name many times. A man of pure faith is never proud of his power or merit, but he is ever thankful for Amitabha's infinite mercy, wisdom and power.

This Sutra also says:

'Those who diligently recite the virtuous Name on ordinary days may, at the brink of death, see the vision of the sacred troop, Buddha Amitabha and Bodhisattvas, coming to guide them into the Pure Land, and consequently they can be born in the Buddha Country without their minds being disturbed.' 1)

Certain kinds of people, aspiring for the vision at their last hour, devote themselves to the Nembutsu exerting self-effort. Such Nembutsu is called the 'Nembutsu of Shimmon' (Shimmon; The Gate of Truth). The Nembutsu of the Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra corresponds to the Nembutsu of the 20th Vow in the explicit sense.

It is different from the Nembutsu of the 18th Vow, i.e. the "Nembutsu of Gugan" (Gugan; The Gate of Great Vow). According to the Three Vows (the 19th, 20th and 18th), the Nembutsu is also divided into three kinds:

- (1) the Nembutsu of Yomon (the 19th Vow) (Yomon; The Gate of Importance),
- (2) the Nembutsu of Shimmon (The Gate of Truth), and
- (3) the Nembutsu of Gugan (Mon) (The Gate of Great Vow). The 'Yomon' is described in *The Amitayus-dhyana Sutra*, the 'Shimmon' in the *Shokyo* or *the Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra*, and the 'Gugan mon' in *The Larger Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra*.

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1) The Amida-kyo, leaf 4.



Firstly, a man of 'Yomon' recites the Nembutsu, but he is not freed from Miscellaneous Practices. He accounts the Nembutsu as one of the Miscellaneous Practices. Secondly, a man of 'Shimmon' recites the Nembutsu exclusively, and he does not rely upon any other good or Good of Meditation, establishing his faith upon his reciting the Name through his own effort. He is nearer to the Nembutsu of the 18th Vow, but his faith is not yet absolutely pure, and his Nembutsu is imbued with self-effort. Thirdly, a man of the 18th Vow relies absolutely upon the infinite mercy, wisdom and power of Amitabha, His Name and His Vow; he puts entire trust in His sincerity and mercy; and he takes refuge in the Three Jewels (or Gems) the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Out of his pure Faith he recites the Sacred Name. The true Nembutsu is nothing but the expression of praise, laud, homage and thankfulness to the Sacred Name. The true Practice is the glorification of the Name filled with all kinds of virtues. Therefore his Practice is but the overflow of his 'Faith-with-Joy (true-Faith)'. Such true Practice (Nembutsu) and such true Faith is the true cause of the rebirth in the Pure Land - these two being inseparable.

The Pure Land should not be materially interpreted, but it should be understood spiritually. The Pure Land is indeed the embodiment of Amitabha's Enlightenment; and its substance (Tai) is His infinite mercy, wisdom, power and the Name; it is also the realization of His Vows. In other words, the Buddha Country of Bliss and Happiness consists of Amida's Light (wisdom) and Life (mercy).

In the last part of the *Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra* (Amida-kyo), we read a passage as follows:

'I (the Buddha) preach the most difficult Law (Teaching) to believe.' This corresponds to the words of the *Larger Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra*, which says:

'This Law is the most difficult to believe, none else is more difficult than this.'

'This Law' means the gospel of the 18th Vow. The 'one days or seven days' Nembutsu' in the *Smaller Sutra* is, in the temporary sense, the Nembutsu of the 20th Vow, but 'the most difficult Law to believe' implicitly denotes the Nembutsu of the 18th Vow.

The teachings of the *Amitayus-dhyana Sutra* and the *Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra* are preliminaries to the *Larger Sutra*. At the same time it can be said that the *Larger Sutra* is the root of the other two Sutras. In the 'Keshindo-kan' Shinran-Shonin says:

'Buddha Sakyamuni, opening the 'Treasury of Virtues' (the 20th Vow), taught the worlds defiled with heinous sins and passions. And Buddha Amitabha, raising the Preliminary Vow (the 20th Vow), intended to save all sentient beings unenlightened.'

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1) The Book of Keshindo, Part I, leaf 21.

## RELATIONS BETWEEN GYO (PRACTICE) AND SHIN (FAITH)

In the True Pure Land Sect, much stress is laid upon Practice-and-Faith (Gyo-Shin), and concerning this problem, many books have been written. As regards Practice-and-Faith, there are two kinds: (1) the True Practice-and-Faith, and (2) the Temporary Practice-and-Faith. The Temporary Practice-and-Faith is described in the 19th and the 20th Vows. The Temporary Practice-and-Faith is expounded explicitly and in detail in the *Amitayus-dhyana Sutra* and the *Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra*. It was preached through the Buddha's skilful device for the sake of such people as not yet fully matured to hear the True Practice-and-Faith. If they should reach maturity to hear and believe in the True Practice-and-Faith, the Temporary Practice-and-Faith would accordingly be forsaken. At the same time, to preach the Temporary Practice-and-Faith is to let the people know more clearly the True Practice-and-Faith or the spirit of the Original Vow.

The truth of the Shin Sect is manifested in the 18th Vow. Having examined carefully the factors of the 18th Vow, Shinran-Shonin developed it into the True Five Vows (Gogan) as we have already stated in the preceding chapter. They are the 11th, the 12th, the 13th, the 17th and the 18th Vows. The 11th is the 'Vow of Realization of Final Enlightenment': the 12th is the 'Vow of the Infinite Light': the 13th is the 'Vow of the Eternal Life': the 17th is the 'Vow of His Name's Being Praised by All Buddhas': and the 18th is the 'Vow of True Faith.' These Five Vows are included in the 'Vow of True Faith'.

As stated before, Shinran-Shonin, taking up these Five Vows, composed the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*. The 'Kyo' (True Teaching) comes from the *Larger Sukhavati-vyuha Sutra*: the Gyo (True Practice) comes from the 17th Vow: the 'Shin' (True Faith) comes from the 18th Vow: the 'Sho' (Final Enlightenment or Attainment) comes from the 11th Vow: and the 'Shin-Butsu-do' (The True Buddha and the True Pure Land) comes from the 12th Vow and the 13th Vow, for the substance (tai) or the Pure Land is Infinite Light and Eternal Life, and Amitabha is the Buddha of Light-and-Life. Light denotes His supreme Wisdom and Life represents His Infinite Love. Light-and-Life is identical with His Sacred Name. And the 'Keshin-do' (The Temporary Buddha and the Temporary Land) comes from the 19th and the 20th Vows, and it has branched (detached) from the 'Shin-Butsu-do.' And indeed the 'Keshin-do' is the temporary virtue or activity of His supreme Enlightenment.

Of these six kinds of teachings (Six Laws) the most important is Practice-and-Faith. Practice and Faith are inseparable and are identical with each other. They are the cause of being born in the True Pure Land; therefore the students of the True Pure Land Sect devote themselves to the study of Practice-and-Faith, spending years labour.

The 18th Vow reads as follows:

'O Bhagavat (Lokesvararaja, or Sejjizai-O-Butsu), if when I (Bodhisattva Dharmakara, or Hozo-Bosatsu) have obtained the highest and most perfect knowledge (Buddhahood, Shogaku), if those beings who are in the ten quarters should believe (Faith-with-Joy, or 'Shingyo') in me with Serene Thoughts ('Shishin', accepting Buddha's Truth and Sincerity), and should wish to be born in my country (with a Fervent Aspiration, or 'Yokusho'), and should have ten time or even once thought of me (or repeated my Name)

(Naishi-Junen), - if they should not be born there, then may I not attain to the highest and most perfect knowledge: barring only those beings who have committed the Five Deadly Sins (Gogyaku-zai) and who have spoken evil of the good Law (or of those sages who have the good Law) (Hiho-Shobo).'

In this Vow Buddha Amitabha requires of us to have only

- (1) 'Serene Thought' (Shishin; accepting Buddha's Truth and Sincerity,
- (2) 'Pure Faith' (Shin-gyo), and
- (3) 'Fervent Aspiration of Rebirth' (Yokusho) and
- (4) 'Ten-to-One Times' Recitation of the Sacred Name' (Naishi-Junen).

The factors (1), and (2) and (3) can be condensed into One Mind (Isshin) which denotes 'Shin' (True Faith), and the (4) denotes 'Gyo' (Practice), that is, the essential factors of the 18th Vow can be summarised into 'Practice-and-Faith.'

Shinran-Shonin, transcending his own narrow-self and immersing himself deeply into the Wisdom and Mercy of the Vow, thought that the 'Ten-to-One Times Recitation of the Sacred Name' (Naishi-Junen) (The Nembutsu) is not the Practice that is performed by the self-effort out of man's own narrow-self. He thought that the Nembutsu of the 18th Vow is nothing else than the self-manifestation (or self-revelation) of the Power (or Vow) of Amitabha through the mouths of sentient beings. He thought that 'Ten-to-One Times Repetition of the Name' can be called the 'True Practice' because the Nembutsu (the Repetition) is but the Power of Amitabha.

As regard the 'Gyo' (Practice or Nembutsu), the power of Amitabha is manifested in the 17th Vow more in detail through the Sacred Name. It reads as follows:

'O Bhagavat, if immeasurable and innumerable blessed Buddhas in the immeasurable Buddha countries do not glorify (or recite) my Name, after I have obtained Bodhi (Enlightenment): if they do not preach my fame and proclaim my praise, and utter it together, then may I not obtain the highest and most perfect knowledge.'

His Vows were answered, and the Sacred Name (Namu-Amida-Butsu) of Amitabha is, in innumerable countries, glorified, and His fame has spread in myriads of worlds, wherever sentient beings are. All beings in the ten regions who have heard this most virtuous Sacred Name are joyful with exceeding joy. His Vow is to save sinners through the Power of the Sacred Name, in which His wisdom, mercy and power abide eternally.

In the natural world, a thing and its name are different. For instance, however loudly we may repeat the names of food, our appetite will never be satisfied, or however often we may cry out the names of liquids, our thirst will never be quenched. The names of warriors, however fear inspiring they may be, have no power to beat the enemies, and the names of their arms can never vanquish the foe.

In Buddhism the names of Buddhas and the names of Bodhisattvas have the same compassionate power to fill all beings that hear with joy, and to arouse faith in their hearts unto salvation. Nevertheless in the spiritual world all things cannot be conceived with physical laws or material observations. The name of a deity is considered as powerful as the deity himself.

The True Pure Land Sect teaches that the Sacred Name of Amitabha Himself, and at the same time it denotes His wisdom, mercy and power: the accumulation of His merits. His Name is the realisation of His Vow; His Name is His Vow, and those who wish to be born in that Buddha country and glorify the Holy Name shall enter the Pure Land according to His Vow.

To call on (or to recite) His Name is to glorify His power, Light and Life. It is to praise His virtues. Buddha's virtues can dispel the darkness of the sinful. The Sacred Name that is glorified in the 17th Vow is the Practice or the substance of Practice, and it is nothing less than the true Faith: and Faith, the essence of which is the Name, alone can lead us to that Buddha country of Amitabha. Nowhere is there such a religion of the Sacred Name as Amitabha's.

Buddha Amitabha revealed Himself to all beings in the form of 'Namu-Amida-Butsu' -the Sacred Name, and His power (or the power of His Vow) is in activity in the form of Nembutsu. The Sacred Name is the Law of Salvation, which appeared as the compensation for His Vow-and-Practice (Gan gyo). Therefore the Name is Amitabha Himself. And the power of His Name is the power of His Vow: it is the Power of His Love. Therefore it is never separated from all beings. As the shadow follows a thing, so His Love follows, covers and permeates all beings. His Love which is eternal appears in the forms of His Vow, Name, Buddha and Sutras. It manifests itself as Teaching, Practice, Faith, Attainment and His Land of Bliss and Happiness.

