

"SHINRAN AND JODOSHINSHU"

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1

Buddhism spread to the north-east beyond the borders of its homeland India, and reached China in the early centuries A.D. and from there Korea and Japan. The form of Buddhism which was introduced into those countries and enjoyed popularity was predominantly Mahayana, the Great Vehicle. Like other Pure Land schools, Shinran's Jodoshinshu belongs to Mahayana and shares the fundamental standpoint with various Mahayana systems, including Zen and Tibetan esotericism which have become popular in the west.

Jodoshinshu means 'the true essence of the Pure Land teaching'; originally it is not the name of the sect. Shinran had no intention of founding a new sect, but simply sought to reveal the essence of Pure Land teaching which had been transmitted and developed by the seven eminent masters in India, China and Japan. He compiled a collection of quotations from their works and those from Pure Land sutras and discourses, and thus formed a comprehensive system of the teaching of salvation, which has become known as Jodoshinshu, the True Pure Land sect, or Shinshu, the True sect. This branch of Pure Land Buddhism has come to be widely known by the name of 'Shin' ever since D.T. Suzuki first used this appellation. Although celebrated as the leading exponent of Zen, Suzuki in fact made a great contribution to the introduction of Shin to the west by writing

articles and translating the first four chapters of Shinran's *magnum opus*, *Kyogyoshinsho*. From now on, I will use this abbreviation for *Jodoshinshu*.

2

All doctrinal and practical systems of Pure Land Buddhism center on a specific Buddha, called Amida, who is believed to be dwelling in the western paradise known as the Land of Utmost Bliss (*Sukhavati*) or, more popularly, the Pure Land. 'Amida' is the Japanese reading of the Chinese 'O-mi-t'o,' which represents the Sanskrit 'Amita', meaning 'immeasurable' or 'infinite'. 'Amita' is interpreted as standing for 'amita-abha' (infinite light) and 'amita-ayus' (infinite life). Amida, therefore, is better known in the west as Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, and also Amitayus, the Buddha of Infinite Life.

Amida is the most popular Buddha in Japan, perhaps more popular than the founder of Buddhism, Shakyamuni. Being a transcendent Buddha beyond time and space, Amida saves those who have sincere faith in him and call his Name. He embraces such devotees in his Light and welcomes them to his Land of Utmost Bliss. His saving activity is assisted by Bodhisattvas, headed by Kannon (Kuan-yin, Avalokiteshvara) and Seishi (Shih-chih, Mahasthamaprapta). Statues of Amida flanked by those two Bodhisattvas are seen at many temples in Japan.

There are three basic scriptures of Indian and Central Asian origin which give full accounts of the history of Amida Buddha, his saving activity, glorious manifestations of the Pure Land and its essential nature, and so forth. They also describe how we can be born in the Pure Land and attain Enlightenment there.

Before we look into the contents of the three Pure Land sutras, there are a couple of basic principles in Buddhism, which need to be clarified. First is the theory of karma, which means 'action.' The law of karma is generally accepted in Hindu thought and is fully explained in Buddhism. According to this law, one's existence has continued from the beginningless past up to the present and, impelled by karma, will continue on and on into the indefinite future. One's life, therefore, does not end with death, but will be followed by another in a different form. According to the quality and quantity of our moral acts, our future destiny is determined. Simply stated, what we are is the result of what we have done in the past, and what we do now will create what we will be. And so, in Buddhism no creator god is conceived; our karma, including our thoughts and words, is responsible for our states of existence.

Secondly, such continuation of one's existence, called Samsara, is considered painful. Even though one attains a higher state of existence in the heavens, it does not last forever. It will be eventually followed by miseries in a lower state. Buddhism teaches us the way of emancipation from cycles of birth and death in Samsara. Such a state of emancipation is called Nirvana.

Thirdly, Buddhism does not simply encourage morally good acts. The quality of acts is important. However hard we may do good, if our acts are based on self-attachment, they produce only limited effect, short of attaining Nirvana. Truly good acts should, therefore, be free of self-attachment, and can only be successfully performed through intensive meditation.

Fourth is the Mahayana principle of dependent origination (*pratitya-samutpada*) and that of emptiness (*shunyata*). Briefly

stated, all existing things are mutually related, and so are devoid of substantiality of their own. Based on this realization, the Bodhisattva seeks to cultivate pure merits without being attached to anything, to say nothing of his own self.

The last is that the pure merits obtained by selfless acts of love and compassion can be manifested as glorious bodies of the Buddhas and their Pure Lands. Such merit can also be shared by other beings. Those who partake of the pure merits of the Buddhas can quickly attain emancipation.

4

All living beings are potential Buddhas. Mahayana emphasizes that everyone has the Buddha-nature. One who believes in his Buddha-nature and seeks to realize it is a Bodhisattva. At the outset of the Bodhisattva's career, he makes vows, resolving to realize the highest wisdom (*bodhi*) and deliver all sentient beings from suffering. It is conceived in Mahayana that there are innumerable Bodhisattvas in the universe who are practicing the way to Buddhahood and also innumerable Buddhas who have already completed the Bodhisattva-course.

According to the *Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra* (abbreviated to *Larger Sutra*), the longest and the most important of the three canonical scriptures, Amida was formerly a king. He met a Buddha and was deeply impressed by his personality. He renounced the world and became a Bodhisattva, a seeker of the Way, called 'Dharmakara' ('Store of Dharma or Truth'). He resolved to attain Buddhahood and save all suffering beings. At his request, the Buddha showed and explained to him all the glorious manifestations of the twenty-one billion Buddha-lands. Having seen them, Dharmakara meditated for five aeons (kalpas) on the Buddha-land he would establish and the way of saving

beings from suffering. When the plan of his Buddha-land and his method of salvation became clear, he expressed them in his forty-eight Vows.

The *Larger Sutra* explains that Dharmakara's career as a Bodhisattva lasted for many aeons over innumerable lives. Vows alone do not automatically become reality; in order to realize the vows, one must do all kinds of meritorious deeds and also cultivate wisdom. When his wisdom reached the highest level and his virtues and merits were developed to the fullest extent, he became a Buddha, called 'Amida'. His supreme and boundless merits were then manifested as his majestic illuminating body and glorious Pure Land, as promised in his Vows.

Of all the Vows, the Eighteenth is most important for Pure Land Buddhists because it promises the salvation of those who maintain sincere Faith and call Amida's Name. This Vow provides a channel of contact between Amida and man. The devotee can partake of Amida's merit by repeating his Name, with which he will be able to be born in the Pure Land.

The Buddhas and their spheres of activity are beyond our ordinary sense-perceptions and concepts, but they can be visualized by specially trained minds. The second of the three Pure Land sutras, commonly known by the title 'the *Contemplation Sutra*', presents a method by which one can visualize Amida and his Pure Land with one's spiritual eye. Simply stated, there are thirteen steps of visualization, beginning with concentration on the setting sun. First, one faces west, gazes at the setting sun and imprints its image on the mind until one clearly sees it whether one's eyes are open or closed. When this is accomplished, one goes on to the next step, which is the meditation on water. One forms an image that the entire western quarter is flooded with water; in the next step, one visualizes that

the water becomes frozen, and then the whole expanse of ice turns into lapis-lazuli. Since the earth of the Pure Land is made of lapis-lazuli, one who has seen it can now construct images of other aspects of the Pure Land and proceed to visualization of Amida himself. The *Contemplation Sutra* states that successful visualization of Amida and his Pure Land extinguishes one's evil karma and ensures birth in the Pure Land after death.

5

Throughout the history of the development of Pure Land Buddhism in India, China and Japan, recitation of the sacred Name of Amida has been the essential practice for attaining birth in the Pure Land. This practice, known as '*nien-fo*' in Chinese, '*buddha-anusmriti*' in Sanskrit and '*nembutsu*' in Japanese, consists in repeating the six-character formula: *na-mo-o-mi-t'o-fo* in Chinese or *namu amida butsu* in Japanese. This formula literally means 'Adoration to Amida Buddha' or 'I take refuge in Amida Buddha.' In the *Contemplation Sutra*, after the thirteen visualizations, nine grades of aspirants are distinguished according to their moral and religious accomplishments and the gravity of transgressions they have committed. To the lower grades of those who have committed grave offenses, the Buddha recommends recitation of Amida's Name. According to the law of karma, those evildoers would be destined to hell, but their evil karma is cancelled by the merit of the Nembutsu which they repeat, and so they can be born in the Pure Land.

The Nembutsu is also exclusively recommended in the *Amida Sutra*, the shortest of the three Pure Land scriptures, where it is stated that by repeating the Name of Amida Buddha with singleness of heart for one to seven days, one can attain birth in the Pure Land. More importantly, in the 18th Vow, which promises salvation of all beings, the Nembutsu is presented, along with deep faith, as the essential practice leading to birth in the Pure Land.

As compared with the meditative practice centering on visualization of Amida and his Pure Land, the recitative Nembutsu is an easy practice which anyone can perform at any time and anywhere. Its easiness, however, does not mean that the Nembutsu is of poorer quality or earns smaller merit. All the Pure Land masters in the past, beginning with Nagarjuna of India, down to Shan-tao of China and Honen of Japan, placed great importance on the Nembutsu recitation. Shan-tao (613-681) of T'ang Dynasty China, who was credited with organizing and propagating the Pure Land teaching, succeeded in visualizing the Pure Land and, based on his experience, wrote an extensive commentary on the *Contemplation Sutra* and other works explaining the method of meditation and its doctrinal background. His system of practice, however, centers on recitation of the Nembutsu, while other practices, including meditation on Amida, serve as an aid. Shan-tao's teacher, Tao-ch'o (562-645), is said to have chanted the Nembutsu as many as seventy thousand times a day. Shan-tao himself was dedicated to constant practice of the Nembutsu. His Nembutsu teaching spread far and wide, and was inherited by Honen (1133-1212) of Japan, who founded the Jodo sect based on the teaching that the exclusive practice of the Nembutsu alone is the sufficient cause for birth in the Pure Land. Honen's disciples, while following the Nembutsu practice, developed theories clarifying the doctrinal bases of the master's teaching. Shinran was one of them.

In Japan, before Honen founded the Jodo sect, the Nembutsu was already widespread even among the nobility, owing largely to the efforts of Genshin (942-1017) and other masters as well as such Nembutsu sages as Koya (903-972). Genshin is particularly well-known as the author of the *Ojoyoshu* ("*Collection of Essential Passages Concerning Birth in the Pure Land*"). He describes in it details of sufferings in the evil realms of Samsara and those of the pleasure and happiness in Amida's Pure Land, and encourages us to seek birth there. Genshin also formed a

society to practice the Nembutsu together on a fixed day of the month. The Regent Fujiwara Michinaga (966-1027) was one of those who died while holding one end of five-colored strings, of which the other end was tied to the hands of a statue of Amida. According to the *Contemplation Sutra* and Genshin's work, those who die mindful of Amida while reciting the Nembutsu will be welcomed by him with hosts of sages and escorted to the Pure Land. The five-colored strings were believed to ensure Amida's coming to welcome a dying person.

6

When we say Pure Land Buddhism, we do not merely mean Japanese Pure Land schools. In other parts of Asia, such as Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam, and also in the areas of Europe and America where Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese communities exist, various forms of Pure Land faith and practice are maintained, often under the guidance of native Buddhist priests.

In Japan, Jodo and Shin have been the most popular forms of Buddhism. According to the government survey in 1987, the number of the temples of Pure Land Buddhism was 30,368, and that of its followers was 20,446,912, which was nearly a quarter of the total population of Buddhists in Japan. This figure compares more than favorably with Zen, which has only 9,481,011 followers. Although there is no way of knowing the exact number of the followers, the above figure gives us an idea of the extent of influence which Pure Land Buddhism still has in Japan.

If you begin your tour of Japan in Tokyo, you will not miss Kamakura on the way to Kyoto. Kamakura is a historically important place as the seat of shogunate government for 140 years and is also one of the centers of Zen Buddhism since the Kamakura period. By far the most popular tourist attraction is the huge sitting Buddha, 15 meters in height. This Buddha is Amida.

He is sitting in meditation with his fingers formed in the Amida mudra. Erected in 1250, he has seen many vicissitudes of the world with compassionate eyes. He welcomes visitors from abroad as if wishing to say that Japan is the land of Amida Buddha.

When you get off the bullet train at Kyoto Station and walk a short distance to the north, you will find a majestic temple on your left. It is the head temple of one of the two largest Shin schools, called the Higashi or East Honganji. About ten minutes' walk to the west, you come to another temple of a similar scale, which is the Nishi or West Honganji. According to the survey in 1990, the number of temples belonging to Nishi Honganji is 10,369, and that of the priests is 27,238. The educational institutions are scattered throughout the country. Nine universities and junior colleges, including Ryukoku University where I used to teach, belong to Nishi Honganji, and the total number of junior and senior high schools is thirty-five. Besides those, Nishi Honganji has ninety-seven temples in the United States, fifty-nine in South America, and eighteen in Canada. In Europe there are two temples affiliated to this school, one in Antwerpen and one in Geneva, and a third has been built in Dusseldorf. There are also *dojo*, or Nembutsu centers, in various countries throughout the world.

7

Shinran, the founder of Shin, was born in Kyoto in 1173. Bereft of his parents when very young, he entered the priesthood at the age of nine. It was a turbulent age with the civil war between the two powerful clans, Minamoto and Taira, which ended in the defeat of the Taira clan and the establishment of the shogunate government in Kamakura in 1192 by Minamoto Yoritomo.

Shinran went to Mt. Hiei, the center of Tendai Buddhism, where he studied and practiced the Tendai teaching for twenty

years. But failing to attain Enlightenment, he went down to Kyoto to seek a way of suitable salvation. At that time, Honen, who was forty years older than Shinran, was teaching the Nembutsu to men and women of all walks of life. Shinran went to see him and found the way of salvation in the Nembutsu.

When Honen's Nembutsu teaching invited the jealousy and criticism from the traditional sects and was finally persecuted, he and his leading disciples were exiled. Shinran was banished to Northern Japan in 1207, and later married there. After he was pardoned, he went to stay in Hitachi Province, north-east of Tokyo, where he taught Amida's law of salvation to local people, while he began to write the *Kyogyoshinsho*, the most comprehensive text of the Shin sect. After he passed sixty years of age, he returned to Kyoto and dedicated the rest of his life to literary activity until his death at ninety.

Shinran led a normal family life with a wife, a son and five daughters (according to another tradition, two sons and five daughters). According to the monastic precepts, Buddhist monks ought not to marry, because practicing the Buddhist Way in search of the transcendent Truth was considered incompatible with married life. When Shinran was exiled, he was stripped of priesthood and given a criminal's name, Fujii Yoshizane. After that he was conscious of himself as being neither a priest nor a layman. Under the circumstances, he must have felt it natural to marry when he found a suitable wife, Eshin-ni. Through his entry into a matrimonial life he showed that Amida could save ordinary men and women.

Of all the Pure Land schools which arose in Japan after Honen, Shin has attained the most impressive institutional development. In its doctrinal aspect, too, Shin has offered wider perspectives in the re-interpretation of the Pure Land teachings. Shinran himself did not intend to found a new school, but as he states in the *Kyogyoshinsho* and other works, he merely followed the teachings of the Buddha and the Seven Patriarchs and sought to reveal their true meanings. His re-interpretation of the Pure Land teaching may seem to be based on his own personal judgement, but has actually served to clarify, through his insight and experience, the teachings developed and transmitted by Pure Land masters of the past.

Re-interpretation, by the way, is an indispensable element for any religious or philosophical advancement. In order for any religious theory and practice to keep its vitality, it needs to be interpreted and re-interpreted from new viewpoints based on deeper insights, personal experiences, and so forth. Re-interpretation is like digging up the earth to find new energy resources. The Dharma, or the Law, which the Buddha realized some twenty-five centuries ago, is like the earth. At first he taught a rather primitive way of digging and drilling and a method of processing the raw materials obtained. The term 'dharma,' which I have just translated as 'law,' had been widely used in India since early days. The Buddha used the same term for the truth he discovered and for his theory and practice leading to its realization, but he did not use it with the same connotation as in the Hindu tradition. He gave it new dimensions of meaning and invested it with the connotations which were to be fully revealed a few centuries later, when Mahayana arose in India. From the Mahayana viewpoint, the Buddha's Dharma is meant to be re-interpreted over and over again with insightful wisdom and

observations as historical, geographical and social circumstances change.

Re-interpretation in Buddhism, it must be emphasized, is closely linked with meditation. Mere intellectual re-interpretation does not go very far. From the beginning of its history, Buddhism has derived its spirituality and transcendent metaphysics from the experience of meditation. This applies to the Mahayana as a whole and to Pure Land Buddhism as well. As we have seen from the *Contemplation Sutra*, one can visualize the transcendent Buddha Amida and his Pure Land if one successfully practices according to the prescribed method. Whenever metaphysical speculations or theoretical analyses grow too complicated and threaten the life of spirituality, we can revert to meditation to remedy this tendency. But meditation is not always effective. In ages far removed from the time of the Buddha, good teachers of meditation are very rare. Even if you found one, it would be difficult to follow the prescribed method for a long time. Meditation on Amida and his Pure Land is easier than Zen, because we have objects of concentration and also we can count on Amida's spiritual power (*adhithana*), which helps to accomplish the meditation.

Honen failed to attain salvation through the Tendai practices which he followed on Mt. Hiei for many years, and Shinran, too, practiced the same kind of meditation for twenty years, but without success. Honen found the way of salvation in the Nembutsu teaching expounded by Shan-tao of T'ang China, and then gave up all other Buddhist practices. Honen's conversion to the Nembutsu was accompanied by a deep awareness of his inability to save himself by his own power. He realized that Amida's power was working behind the Nembutsu. Based on this realization he re-interpreted the whole teachings of the Buddha, and placed the Nembutsu above all other practices.

Shinran is often compared to Martin Luther (1483-1546), and described as a renovator of Buddhism in much the same way as Luther is in Christianity. Shinran, however, did not stand up in open defiance of the ecclesiastical authority, nor did he intend to start a new movement. Like Honen and other Pure Land masters, Shinran's immediate concern was his own salvation, which was to be fully realized in the Pure Land. In this respect, his approach may be described as 'self-centered' and 'other-worldly'. But we note that his self-centeredness does not mean selfishness and that the other-worldliness is not an escapism or pessimism. For, through the acceptance of Amida's Compassion, he found close karmic relationships with other sentient beings, and also realized that, after transcending this world, i.e., going to the Pure Land, he would be able to come back and save other beings as he wished.

Shinran's deep self-reflection and his insight into Amida's law of salvation have brought about a complete reversal of the common-sense view and of ordinary Buddhist concepts. In the most popular Shin text, *Tannisho* ("*Notes Lamenting Divergent Views*"), Shinran is quoted as saying:

"Even a good person is born in the Pure Land; how much more easily an evil person! People of the world, however, usually say, "Even an evil person is born in the Pure Land, how much more easily a good person!" At first sight, this view seems reasonable, but it is contrary to the intention of the Primary Vow of the Other-Power. (chapter 3)

The Buddha teaches that we can attain higher spiritual states by moral good and cultivation of wisdom through meditation. If we are unable to do any good, we will be destined to lower states of existence where we must receive suffering as the retribution of our wrongdoing. Although Shinran was actually capable of morally good acts, his reflective eye penetrated to the huge mass

of evil karma in his unconscious realm, and so he recognized all acts as rooted in evil karma. He realized that he was hopelessly evil and not possessed of any stock of merit to count on for attaining salvation by his own power. The *Tannisho* quotes his saying as follows:

"Since I am incapable of any practice whatsoever, hell would definitely be my dwelling." (chapter 2)

Shinran was, however, not despondent or desperate. Nor did he feel alienated from Amida's salvation. His realization of utter powerlessness is sure proof that he has been saved by Amida. On receiving through Faith Amida's boundless merit, wisdom and power, he was able to give himself up to Amida, along with his clinging to his limited power and stock of merit.

Shinran's re-interpretation of the Buddhist teachings comes from his experience of complete reliance upon Amida's Power, which is called 'the Other-Power'. He divided Buddhism into two: the Other-Power teaching and the teachings of self-power. Shin is entirely based on the Other-Power, but the other Buddhist ways are based on one's own efforts. For Shan-tao and Honen, the Nembutsu was the practice to be performed by one's utmost efforts. For Shinran, all that is required is Amida's saving activity which is to be received with sincerity of heart and deep faith; this faith is also Amida's free gift.

10

Shin Buddhism has produced many wonderful persons, called "*myokonin*". According to their biographies, those known as *myokonin* are usually men and women of little education, who have attained deep understanding of the Other-Power teaching. They are not simply devout practitioners of the Nembutsu. Having realized the Other-Power and experienced oneness with Amida, they fully live up to his all-embracing Compassion. While keenly

aware of their absolute powerlessness, they are always grateful to Amida, and their daily life is full of spontaneous expressions of joy and selfless love.

Asahara Saichi (1851-1933) became interested in Buddhism in his late teens. After five or six years' serious pursuit of the Way, which mainly consisted of hearing sermons and thinking deeply on the law of salvation in relation to his own self, he gave it up. Ten years later his Buddhist aspiration arose again. While working as a ship's carpenter, he did not miss any opportunity to hear sermons. Seeking to understand the Other-Power salvation, he tried and tried again until, after he was 50, finally Faith was awakened in him. He changed his job and became a maker of wooden clogs. His overflowing joy in Faith found its expression in poems. Without any knowledge of Chinese characters, he wrote the poems on scraps of wood in Japanese syllabary while making clogs, and in the evening he copied them into notebooks. Out of a large number of poems, here are some examples showing his deep experience of Faith:

▫ *Namuamidabutsu and Amida
Are one and not two.
Namuamidabutsu is myself,
And Amida is my Parent;
Here is the oneness of Namuamidabutsu.
How happy I am for this favor!
Namuamidabutsu.*

▫ *"O Saichi, where is your Land of Bliss?"
"My Land of Bliss is right here."*

▫ *How grateful I am --
your voice is Namuamidabutsu!
I, Saichi, have been saved by it.
You and I are one in Namuamidabutsu!*

▫ *The Buddha's Name casually found on my lips --
It is indeed a wonderful Buddha!
It is our Parent Amida's call to us.
I, Saichi, am caught up in it!*

▫ *This Faith is wonderful Faith;
The Buddha hears the Buddha's voice!
There is no room for me, Saichi, to meddle.
How grateful I am for his benevolence!
Namuamidabutsu, Namuamidabutsu.*

For Saichi and other people of true Faith, the Nembutsu and Faith are inseparable. The Nembutsu is not a practice to be performed with diligence, but is the joyful, spontaneous expression of Faith. *Namuamidabutsu* symbolizes the oneness of Amida and the devotee, for '*namu*' indicates his Faith, and '*amidabutsu*' is Amida's universal and absolute saving power.

Ashikaga Genza (1842-1930), another *myokonin*, lived in the spirit of Amida's boundless Compassion, which was manifested in his acts of selfless love. One day he saw his persimmon tree in the garden tied round with thorny branches. "Who did this?" he asked.

His son said, "I did. To protect persimmons from being stolen by children." Genza said, "What will you do if someone gets hurt?" So saying, he removed thorny branches and, instead, stood a ladder against the tree.

The son protested, "Why, you make it easy for them to steal our persimmons."

Genza said, "Let them take what they want. We'll still have plenty more to eat."

On another occasion at dusk, a man was feeding his horse with beans in Genza's field. Genza saw this and cried, "Young

man, beans on that spot are no good. Step further in, and you will find better beans for your horse." Hearing this, the man with the horse ran away.

Shoma (1799-1871) from Shikoku Island was a poor, illiterate man, hired for odd jobs or making straw ropes and sandals for a living, but had wonderful understanding of Amida's Compassion.

Someone asked him, "What is it like to have absolute Faith in Amida?" Shoma lay down comfortably in front of the family shrine.

When he went to a temple with his friend, he lay on his side relaxed in the Buddha hall. The friend reprimanded him, "You are impolite. Behave yourself." Shoma replied, "This is our Parent's home. Don't be too ceremonious. Are you a son-in-law?"

Once he went on pilgrimage to the Honganji in Kyoto with his friends. On the homeward voyage, their boat was caught in a storm. All the passengers were frightened, but Shoma alone was sleeping peacefully on deck. When awakened by his friends, he exclaimed, "Haven't we come to the Pure Land yet?"

Many episodes and sayings of *myokonin* like those show that Shin followers who have attained the Other-Power Faith are like Zen adepts who have realized satori. They are completely free in their thinking and doing, and yet full of kindheartedness, gratitude and deep insight. They have transcended the boundaries of good and evil, and even those of this world and the Pure Land, but are not aloof in their attitudes towards their fellow-beings. They are understanding, ready to help others, and eager to lead them along the same Pure Land Way.

11

As we have seen above, Shin covers many aspects of human activity as well as the area beyond our day-to-day experience.

Before anything else, Shin is the way of salvation through Amida's Power originating from his Vows. Salvation in Shin has three implications: First, in the present life, we are enabled to attain unity with Amida, the Transcendent Buddha, and are freed from the bondage of karma; when our salvation is achieved through our endowment with Faith, we are filled with joy and gratitude to Amida.

Second, after death we will be born in the Pure Land, which is the Transcendent Realm beyond Samsara and is essentially the same as Nirvana. The Pure Land being the sphere of pure karmic energy, those born there can partake of it, enjoy life of utmost bliss, and perform activities as Bodhisattvas.

Third, in the Pure Land we will attain Nirvana and realize Enlightenment. This means that we will become Buddhas.

These three kinds of salvation can be conceived in temporal order, from the present to the future, but more importantly, the ultimate realization of Buddhahood is latent in the 'Here and Now' experience of Faith. Saichi says in one of his poems:

*O Saichi, who is the Buddha?
He is no other than myself.
Who is the founder of Shin Buddhism?
He is no other than myself.
What is the canonical text?
It is no other than myself.*

For Shinran, Faith is not only a free gift by Amida, but is essentially Amida himself, as he says in a hymn:

*One who rejoices in Faith, it is taught,
Is equal to the Buddha;
The Great Faith is Buddha-nature:
Buddha-nature is the Buddha. (Jodo Wasan 94)*

This means that Faith is everything. When one receives Faith, one is assured of birth in the Pure Land and attainment of Enlightenment. This is not simply Shinran's theoretical re-interpretation of the Pure Land teaching. Through Faith Shinran realized oneness with Amida, and Saichi and many other Shin followers share the same experience. Again, Faith is joy; it is joyful acceptance of Amida's saving Power. Amida approaches us in the form of *Namuamidabutsu*, and when this is received in our hearts, it becomes Faith. In other words, the Sacred Name is all that Amida is, and Faith, too, is Amida himself.

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