

Jodo Shu 浄土宗 and *Shin Shu* 真宗*

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Since their independent establishment in the Kamakura period, the two principal schools of Pure Land Buddhism, the Jodo Shu founded by the saintly scholar Honen Shonin (1133–1212) and the Shin Shu founded by his most illustrious disciple Shinran

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Shonin (1173–1263), have been pre-eminent as spiritual forces among the Japanese people as well as enjoying the patronage of both throne and shogunate, and together account for the majority of Japanese Buddhists today. Yet they have been largely overlooked by Occidental scholars and have attracted far less attention than Zen among students of religion in general, despite an antecedent history in China and India stretching back for almost two thousand years. This has been partly due to the paucity of translations of their basic scriptures and commentaries into European languages, the few hitherto available having been rendered into a pseudo-biblical English which would deter all but the most determined seeker; and this has resulted in their being dismissed, after a cursory perusal, as ‘too much like Christianity’. The Pure Land doctrines were fully developed in complete isolation from Christian influence, and although in certain points resemblances to Christianity, as well as to other traditions, can be found in them, nevertheless they remain essentially nondual and authentically Buddhist.

Jodo Shu, which adheres strictly to the letter of Honen's original teachings, is the more conservative branch, and still partly retains the old monasticism, as well as the repetition of the Nembutsu backed by Faith as many times as possible up to the moment of death, as a means of posthumous rebirth in the Pure Land. Shin Shu, or more properly Jodo Shinshu 浄土真宗, the True Pure Land School, was founded by Shinran to counteract misinterpretations which had arisen after Honen's death and to restore what he believed to be the true meaning and spirit of his master's words. Acting on Honen's advice for him to marry, Shinran abolished celibacy for monks and lay followers alike, between whom there was no longer to be any difference; held that the Name was called once and for all by the Other Power; and carried the Pure Land doctrines to their final point of development by concentrating upon Faith alone.

The historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, had prophesied that, after his Parinirvana, his teachings subject, like all composite things, to the law of Impermanence, would gradually decline through three

lengthening ages: *Shoboji* 正法時, or the Age of the True Dharma, lasting for five hundred years; *Zoboji* 像法時, the Age of the Outward Semblance or Form of the Dharma, for one thousand years; and *Mappoji* 末法時, or the Age of the Decadence of the Dharma, for ten thousand years, a symbolical number indicating an indefinite period continuing until the end of the present cycle. Buddhism has survived for 2,500 years because of its lack of rigidity and readiness to adapt to different times and climes and to adopt the truth wherever and in whatever forms it might be found. Already, seven hundred years ago, Honen realized that the cyclic moment had arrived when a revision and readaptation of doctrine and method were overdue to bring Buddhism, hitherto largely the preserve of the aristocracy, to people of every kind and class. The Nembutsu had already had a long history in Japan before his time, but had either been associated with the meditational practices of the Tendai school, or with the *Mikkyo*, or secret oral transmission of Shingon, in which it was used as a mantra. After prolonged study of the entire Buddhist Canon,

Honen at last found the clue he was seeking in a passage of the *Sanzengi* by Shan-tao, or in Japanese, *Zendo* (613–681), the Fifth Pure Land Patriarch. By reducing the method to its shortest and simplest possible form, the mere calling of the Nembutsu with Faith, he exoterized a practice which was esoteric in its essence and made it available to the whole community. For a time of social disturbance and instability and of individual doubt and dismay, here at last was an Easy Way which could be practised by anyone, anywhere, and at any time.

As a basis for their classification of the various schools, the Pure Land masters selected a passage in the 'Igyohon' or the ninth chapter of Book Five of the *Dasabhumivibhava Sastra* by Nagarjuna, who is therefore considered as the First Patriarch. Their own doctrines of pure Faith and the Invocation of the Name are called *Igyodo* 易行道, the Easy Path, while all others belong to the *Nangyodo* 難行道, or Difficult Path. Following the Third Patriarch in China, Tan-luan (476–542), these two ways were assigned to the Other Power and the Self Power respectively;

while by the Fourth Patriarch in China, Tao-cho (562–645), they were also distinguished by the names *Jodomon*, or Gate to the Pure Land, as contrasted with *Shodomon*, or Gate to the Way of the Sages.

The most penetrating criticism of the Buddhism of their period put forward by Honen and Shinran was that whilst the Way of the Sages had in earlier times been fully efficacious, it had now, due to the downward course of the cycle, become invalidated by one great difficulty: almost no one could put it into practice any longer. Both master and disciple, who were among the most learned and most devout men of their day, had spent more than twenty years on Mount Hiei, headquarters of Tendai, studying and attempting to follow the Difficult Path, without avail. True, there might still be rare exceptions, perhaps one or two in a century, born with the requisite spiritual endowment; but how could the Mahayana call itself the Great Vehicle, if it left most of humanity fallen by the wayside? This was all too reminiscent of the Hinayana Arhat who, by seeking and gaining Enlightenment for himself alone, really rested in a

partial and penultimate Nirvana.

For the Mahayana, humanity is a continent, not an archipelago. We carry not only our own individual burden of Karma, both good and bad, but are also inextricably involved in the onerous past of all our ancestors: the thoughts, words, and deeds of family, class, caste, race, and finally the whole of mankind. It is this collective Karma, as much as individual shortcomings and transgressions, which prevents any one man from gaining Liberation by his own unaided efforts. Hence, even the wisest and most virtuous, like Shan-tao who lived a life of blameless purity, felt compelled to consider themselves as sunk in ignorance and defilement from the incalculable past. When Vimalakirti, the greatest of Buddhist lay sages, was asked the reason for his continual ill health, he replied that he was sick because all men were sick.

A wish to take Heaven by storm may well conceal motivation by an aggressive ego. In these latter days of the Law, anyone who *claims* to belong to that elite of exceptions still capable of the difficult path of self-help is almost certainly deceiving himself—and

probably others as well—by his secret pride. Shinran taught all who sincerely requested him, but refused to accept or acknowledge any disciples. All schemes for self-improvement are really subtle pretensions and subterfuges of the ego. Being black with past Karma by nature, all man's efforts at polishing his own supposed virtues never result in his becoming white, but merely, as Shinran wittily put it, 'a shiny instead of a dull black'. If factors such as collective Karma and the downward course of the cycle made attainment almost impossible then, how much more so now, seven hundred years later, when spiritual decadence has reached the point of extinction of all religion!

Some exponents of Zen claim that it is possible to reach Enlightenment by one's own efforts, physical and mental, through meditation, working at a *koan*, or catechistic paradox, or in other ways from the artistically delicate to the brutally drastic. But if looked into more closely, it will be discovered that all this self-willed effort is being used only to exacerbate and exhaust the individual ego and prove to it the fu-

tility of its own struggle. The Zen practitioner finally reaches an emotional impasse and mental block, the Great Doubt, and comes to realize the utter impossibility of attaining *satori* by any contrivance of the ego. He must then simply face the Void and patiently wait for the Other Power, which is within, to speak. The rigours of Zen discipline sometimes prove too strenuous even for Japanese powers of endurance, and those few who finally do break through have been granted the strength to do so because of the firmness and zeal of their Faith. Most Western followers of Zen desire the dragon's pearl of great price—but without being willing to pay the price. Even a Zen adept still needs to be reborn in the Pure Land in order to have the authenticity of his final *satori* confirmed by the Buddha himself; which explains why some Zen masters in their last hours have turned to the calling of the Name. Nagajuna himself, the author of the Madhyamika dialectic and, after the Buddha, probably the most towering intellect produced by Indian Buddhism, was reborn at the end of his life in the Western Paradise. Incarnation in human form,

from which alone Buddhahood can be reached, is immensely difficult to attain; and so Issa, a lifelong follower of Shin Shu whose spirit permeates so many of his haiku, felt the urgent need to seize and not to waste this precious opportunity in the pursuit of evanescent pleasures:

We roam about this touchwood world of ours
Which forms the roof of Hell—admiring
flowers.

No matter how well-meant the intentions with which we pave our way to atomic perdition, we are no longer able to save ourselves by rational thought which we have put at the service of unregenerate passions and desires. But no devotee can summon up whole-hearted devotion at will. No one can choose to invoke the Divine Name, for the Name must choose the invoker. What then can be done to acquire that pure selfless Faith which we lack and which alone can extricate us from our human predicament?

The final answer arrived at by Shin Shu is that there is absolutely nothing whatsoever that we can do

to free ourselves, except to renounce all our mental and material attachments without reservation, to surrender unconditionally our individual will and throw ourselves wholly upon the Divine Mercy which, no matter how shameful our past Karma, will never be refused. Even our last desire, the desire to call the Name, must be abandoned, for only then can we be freed from *Jiriki*, or self-effort, by the working of *Tariki*, the Other Power. Such a remedy is not likely to taste very palatable to that aggressive self-assertion and ego-aggrandizement which is now held up as the desirable norm for modern humanity, and it will cause no surprise if no one now is prepared to swallow such a bitter pill.

Issa's own confession of faith in the postscript to his *Ora ga Haru* reveals the depth and sincerity of his submission: 'The great thing of the next world is simply to throw yourself before the Buddha and beseech that you be sent to Paradise or Purgatory according to his good pleasure.' Allowance should be made here for poetic exaggeration, for it is not orthodox Shin doctrine to regard Amida as some

sort of Oriental despot who judges and condemns, a function which Buddhism reserves for Emma O, the Lord of the Underworld. Unlike Christ, who 'shall come to judge the quick and the dead,' Amida sentences no one to Hell, which is of our own illusory devising, but wishes to lead all to the Land of Highest Happiness, even those who cannot or will not call on him for aid.

As canonical scriptures, the Pure Land Schools recognize the Chinese translations of three Sanskrit sutras, known as the *Sambukkyo*: the Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra, or *Daimuryojukyo*; the Amitayur Dhyana Sutra, or *Kammuryojukyo*; and the smaller Sukhavativyuha, or *Amidakyo*. These three sutras contain mytho-poetic descriptions, in the highly ornate imagery and language beloved of the Indian mind, concerning the Buddha Amitabha, his Forty-eight Vows, the Pure Land which he has established by fulfilling these, and his retinue of Bodhisattvas, divine beings, and reborn humans. These myths, elaborated on a quasi-historical basis, enshrine symbolical meanings of the highest spir-

itual significance. To the *Sambukkya*, Honen added the *Jodoron*, a commentary by the Second Patriarch in India, Vasubandhu (320-400), since it was he who first emphasized the singleness of Faith as the essential condition for Rebirth, and Amida's Vows as the cause thereof. Shinran, however, regarded the *Daimuryojukyo* as the central and all-important sutra.

In Pure Land Buddhism, Amida, the Japanese form of Amitabha, or Amitayus, becomes the One and Only Buddha of Infinite Light and Eternal Life, all other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas exemplifying his various attributes and virtues; for example, his two attendant Bodhisattvas, Mahasthamaprapta, or Seishi, and Avalokitesvara, or Kannon, embody his Wisdom and Compassion respectively and with him form a triad. Amida represents the Buddha in his *Sambhogakaya*, or Body of Recompense, in which he enjoys the blissful fruits of the fulfilment of his Vows; while Shakyamuni is his *Nirmanakaya*, or Accommodated Body, who, incarnating in a form suited to human comprehension, brought the Name and Vows

of Amida to this world by preaching the three sutras. As for the *Dharmakaya*, that can be fully realized only after hearing the teaching of Amida in the Pure Land and so attaining Enlightenment. According to the mythological account given in the *Daimuryojukyo*, Amida, while he was still the Bodhisattva Dharmakara, or Hozo Bosatsu, made Forty-eight Vows before the Buddha Lokeshvararaja that he would establish a Pure Land embodying the best qualities of all other Buddha-Fields, to be called Sukhavati, or the Land of Highest Happiness, and to be situated in the western quarter of the universe. By practising an asceticism of the Six Paramita for incalculable lengths of time, he became the Buddha Amitabha, and has already, ten Kalpas, or aeons, ago fulfilled his Vows to save all beings by the illimitable stock of merit which he has accumulated. In a brilliant flash of metaphysical insight, Soga Ryojin has suggested that as his name indicates, Dharmakara, the Storehouse of the Dharma, really personifies the *Alayavijnana*, or Great Storehouse Consciousness of the Vijnanavadins.

The most important of the Vows are the Eight-

eenth, the Nineteenth, and the Twentieth, which Shinran arranged in an order which he termed the *sangantennyu*, or the Upward Pilgrimage of Faith through the Three Vows. The Nineteenth Vow, which Shan-tao termed the *Yormon*, or Essential Gate, is related to the *Kammuryojukyo* in which the Buddha Shakyamuni reveals the Western Paradise of Amitabha to Queen Vaidehi and instructs her in the visualization of its features and in meditation on its Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in order to gain rebirth there, which is classified into nine grades according to spiritual qualifications. The Twentieth Vow, which Shinran called the True Gate, *Shinmon*, corresponds to the *Amidakyo*, advocating repetition of the Divine Name of Amida by self-effort as a means to rebirth. The Eighteenth or Original Vow, given the name of *Gugammon*, or the Gate of the Universal Vow, by Shan-tao, since it is the supreme way leading to all the other Vows, is enunciated in the *Daimuryojukyo*, in Shinran's view the highest of the three sutras. This Grand or Royal Vow promises Rebirth in the Pure Land to whoever calls upon the Name of Amida,

though it be only once in a lifetime, even at the very point of death, provided it is with pure Faith devoid of the slightest trace of self. This is known as the Nembutsu of the Other Power and is effortless in its operation. Shinran thus showed that in these latter days of the Law, *daishin* 大信, or Great Faith, was the one and only means left whereby most could reach first virtual and, finally, actual Liberation. Even meditation on the attributes and qualities of the Divine or repetitions of the Sacred Name were only an *upaya*, or expedient devised by Amida, to lead the aspirant upwards through these two preliminary stages, in which he must not linger, to the third: single-minded trust in Amida's Vow and total reliance on his Name, whose repetition is then *daigyō* 大行—the Great Practice.

Because they still enjoin a combination of faith and good works, ritual and prayer, devotional religions such as Christianity would fall into Shinran's category of Mixed and Accessory Practices, in which there still remains some measure of self-effort and so a latent duality, a secret egoism, which at best could

lead only to Rebirth in the Borderland of Sukhavati.

The spiritual fascination of the Pure Land was felt by many *haijin*, especially Issa, whose haiku will provide us with several subsequent examples:

A butterfly on the gilded lotus-flower
Hears of Rebirth through Amitabha's Power.

While the poet was listening to a sermon on Rebirth in the Western Paradise, a butterfly fluttered into the Buddha Hall through an open shoji and, mistaking it for a real flower, alighted on one of the lotuses of gilt wood or bronze which adorn the altar in two vases to right and left of the main image of a standing Amida. The symbolism of the butterfly has already been commented on and was certainly known to Issa, but he also means that the butterfly is fortunate indeed to hear of Amida's promise to liberate all beings before it has gained a human birth.

Amida has given his Name as the channel through which Light and Life can flow from the boundless merit that he earned during innumerable Kalpas. But though the devotee may begin by believing that he

calls on Amida, in truth it is Amida who calls to himself through the devotee. The caller has no self, *Anatma*, with which to call the Name, for during the moment of calling, Amida alone is present in his Name. When the Infinite speaks, the finite listener is silenced; and indeed to anyone who has heard those six syllables, even once in his lifetime, only the Divine Voice is worth listening to: all the rest is idle chatter. The great Sufi poet Rumi summed up the paradox in one line: 'Your invocation of Me is My reply to you'.

Shin Shu is thus seen to be a doctrine of the purest nonduality, *bhakti* in the true sense of an actual 'participation' in the Divine, not a dialogue with it, as in the quasi-dualistic I-and-Thou devotions of the monotheistic religions, at least in their exoteric forms, for in reality there is no I, only Thou. Unlike Christianity, where many are called but few are chosen, all are called and all ultimately chosen to reach Buddhahood.

For thirty nights in the depth of winter, devotees of Amida, carrying little bells and hand-lanterns used

to run through the streets of old Kyoto, reciting the Nembutsu and begging for donations to their temple, a custom which is the subject of a haiku by Ryota:

Winter Nembutsu: white-robed voices go
Running with bells and lanterns through the
snow.

It is significant that the white-robed pilgrims are invisible amid the landscape transformed by the purity of snow. All that can be seen are dim candleflames in paper lanterns, glowing like faith in the winter darkness. All that can be heard is the chanting of the Nembutsu, accompanied by little silver bells. Because he is the real Caller, Amida responds immediately to the calling of his Name. This is the oneness of the One who saves with the one to be saved. The hearing of this call, therefore, happens in the shortest space of time, in *ichinen* 一念, or one thought-instant, so that Shin, like Zen, is a method of sudden attainment, reached by what Shinran designated 'a crosswise leap' in contrast to the gradual transcendence of self-motivated meditation

and invocation, found in the *Kammuryojukyo* and the *Amidakyo*, as well as in the methods of Tendai and Shingon.

This inward Name of Amida Butsu, silently heard in the Heart, at once issues spontaneously from the lips as the spoken Nembutsu: *Namu Amida Butsu*. This may be variously pronounced and vocally abbreviated, but the two syllables of *Namu*, since this word signifies the whole-hearted abandonment of the ego, are considered as forming an essential part, an indispensable element of the Name.

Some followers of Jodo Shu held that in order to ensure Rebirth it was necessary for the Nembutsu to be recited continually throughout one's lifetime and especially during one's last moments. But Shinran pointedly asked: if one were cut short by sudden death or died unexpectedly in one's sleep, thus being prevented from reciting the Name, had all the Nembutsus previously recited gone for nothing, and was one therefore reborn in some inferior state? Besides, if we spend our time counting the number of repetitions of the Name, then we are really putting our

faith not in the Name at all, but in the number of repetitions. In consequence, our Mind of Faith would be divided and distracted. On the contrary, if the repetition of the Nembutsu becomes automatic and continues even in our sleep, then we have merely established a *samskara-skandha*, or mental habit, which will stand as an obstacle between us and the reception of Pure Faith; for if our minds are occupied with such repetitions, how can we hear Amida's call? All these are examples of the Nembutsu of self-effort, which is gently satirized in Taigi's haiku, 'Life-Assurance':

After poisonous globe-fish soup, he keeps
Mumbling the Nembutsu—even while he
sleeps!

In the old days, before it was discovered how to remove the poison-sack, the delicious soup made from *fugu*, or globe-fish, sometimes proved fatal.

Shinran also resolved the old controversy among the disciples of Honen as to whether *ichinen*, one calling of the Nembutsu, or *tanen*, many callings, were necessary to ensure Rebirth, by declaring that Amida

never need call his devotee more than once, although the devotee should afterwards re-call Amida as many times as he felt a need to express his gratitude. So, too, what matters is not whether the Name is called aloud or in silence, but the sincerity and continuity of devotion and the purity of Faith, free from all self-effort.

The Obaku School of Zen mentioned earlier, which imported the combined Pure Land and Ch'an Buddhism from Ming dynasty China, where they were almost the sole surviving schools, employs both Zen meditation and the recitation of the Nembutsu as an aid to concentration. Blyth, Blofeld, and other Western writers have mostly adopted this Zen interpretation of the Name; but it should be realized that such a use of the Nembutsu as a means to an end is not in accord with the orthodox Pure Land doctrines, in which the Name is not a means to anything: it is the end itself. As an adjunct to Zen meditation, the Nembutsu would need to be said with mindfulness, involving self-conscious effort; but in Jodo, the Name with Faith, and in Shin Faith alone, are enough

to save. If we ask the Zen question, ‘*Who* is it that recites the Name?’ then we have merely introduced a new duality. Try as it may, the ego cannot eliminate itself by any ruse.

Undoubtedly, the best short statement of Shin Faith is that little masterpiece of spiritual literature, the *Tannisho*, attributed to Yuien-bo, who records in it the words which he received directly from Shinran. Its advice is echoed by Issa in the postscript to his *Ora ga Haru*: ‘Why should you say the Nembutsu in a feigned voice? Without being asked, Amida will keep his word. This is the true peace of mind’. He has also expressed it in verse:

Simply have faith: let all attachments go.
Do not blossoms scatter, even so?

Trusting the wind, the falling petals may be trodden back into the black anonymity of mud, but are immediately reborn as the heavenly flowers that shower six times each night and day in the Western Paradise.

Through his Name, Amida endows us with the

Mind of Faith which is the true cause of our Rebirth in the Pure Land. According to Tan-luan and Tao-cho, the Third and Fourth Patriarchs in China, Faith is distinguished by three qualities: it is sincere without admixture of doubt or endeavour; it is single-minded in its reliance on the Other Power; and it is continuous in its trust and longing for Rebirth. The characteristics of Faith are clarity, calm, and happiness, and on no account should it be confused with mere belief, a wishful attachment of the mind and emotions to an ideology or dogma, which may be true or false.

The Divine Name confers its own initiation since, without self-conscious striving for virtue on our part, it allows us to draw wisdom and compassion from Amida's limitless store. But men, especially in this twentieth century, are so driven by the lust for power, so infatuated with violence, that they no longer have any use for this supreme gift of peace and joy. Religion in any form is now the good news that no one wants to hear.

A moonlit night: we few assorted cranks
Fogies and halfwits call the Name with thanks.

What Issa says is the painful truth: for just such sorry remnants of humanity as these did Amida make and fulfil his Vows. The fools and freaks with perfect Faith will inherit the Pure Land, while the rest continue on their happy, healthy, well-adjusted way to Hell. Yet, as R. H. Blyth said of this haiku, the Moon of Buddhahood still shines in the night sky overhead, even though almost no one but the lunatic, the lover, and the poet troubles to look Heavenward any more. For the sane and normal, there remains only the earth's dead satellite as a station for space travel, political contention, and possible military strife.

With the extinction of Mahayana Buddhism in Tibet, Japan is now the only country in which it still survives; yet it is worthless in the eyes of most younger Japanese who prefer some meretricious imitation, preferably imported. This rare and precious jewel, with all its reflective facets, is thrown on the rubbish heap of outworn ways. Buddhism is discour-

ted and cast off as a religion only for the old, and that this was, to some extent, the case even in Basho's day is shown by his haiku on the anniversary of the Buddha's Parinirvana on the first of March:

The Day of Buddha's Death: from devotees'
Wrinkled fingers, the click of rosaries.

Only in the winter of our lives do our thoughts turn to the following spring. During *Mappoji*, or the Age of the Dharma in Decay, few if any can hope to reach Nirvana directly from this Saha world of long suffering, and so Amida has providentially established his Pure Land as a spiritual state inter-mediate between Samsara and Nirvana, to enable those re-born there to hear the preaching of the Buddha in his Body of Recompense under ideal conditions for attaining Enlightenment. For that cannot be in this world, but only in the next, which is both now and hereafter. This posthumous Rebirth refers not only to corporeal death but also to the initiatic death during life, a dying to oneself before one dies, by the unconditional submission of the individual will to

the Divine Will. In the words of Meister Eckhart: 'The Kingdom of God is for none but the thoroughly dead'. While for most seekers, actual Nirvana is thus attainable only after bodily decease, at the very moment when Faith becomes firmly established during this lifetime, which follows immediately on the living death of the self-will, Amida confers the Right Established State, which constitutes virtual Nirvana. This is also called the Stage Beyond Regression, since it ensures that the faithful will never again relapse into doubtful and inferior realms of existence, and confirms the certainty of Rebirth with its promise of eventual Enlightenment. Even though, as an ordinary human, one may still have to live out one's unresolved Karma for the remainder of this life, one is henceforth in but not of this world, where meantime one now enjoys the Ten Spiritual Blessings.

In these degenerate latter days, I stare
Astounded: cherry-blossoms everywhere!
—ISSA

To one who is established in the Stage Beyond Re-

lapse, even this world can appear as a Temporary Pure Land, transformed by wonder and joy. We cannot help but contrast the Faith of Issa with the doubt of Shiki:

A light that moved about the gloomy moor
Entered a cottage: where is now unsure.

One who has been granted this Irreversible State henceforth exemplifies *Maitreya Bodhisattva*, or *Miroku Bosatsu*, Buddha Elect, who waits in the Tusita Heaven pondering on means to save mankind after his next birth into this world; and who really represents the aspirant's own latent Buddha-nature or the Mind of Faith in every man, which now begins to awaken at the inmost core of his being. In the devotee who has once heard and answered Amida's call, the merit transferred operates henceforth with a natural spontaneity. Moral conduct does not precede as a prerequisite, but follows as a consequence this first and definitive moment of the reception of Faith. Amida takes us in just as we are, with all our faults. Shinran, who had most probably never heard of the

Sahaja Samadhi of Hinduism, described the operation of the Other Power in man in almost identical terms as *jinen honi*: spontaneous naturalness, thus providing independent confirmation of this selfless freedom. But *jinen* is at the opposite pole to the ignorant man's indulgence of his natural appetites, which still hold him in bondage to the endless Round. No longer identified with selfish desires and drives, the true follower of Shin Shu can live out his still unresolved Karma, gratefully accepting all things, good or bad, as they come. Through no endeavour of his own, all goes well with him, even seeming calamities work out for his ulterior good. Amida comes unasked to his aid and accomplishes all in his stead, until at death he is reborn into the Pure Land. The Mind of Faith in Shin does not necessarily manifest itself as cleverness, but rather as compassion. Thus the most highly regarded follower of Shin Shu is not the temple dignitary or scriptural scholar, but the *myokonin* 妙好人, the devout and joyful caller of the Nembutsu, the simple-hearted devotee who may well be an unlettered peasant, but whose Faith is single

and sincere. He makes no vain pretence to virtue, is innocent of altruism, but is naturally and spontaneously helpful and good:

Our simple honest servant: every day
From next door, too, he sweeps the snow away.

—ISSA

Even into the twentieth century Shin Shu has still produced true *myokonin*, like Saiichi, a maker of *geta*, or Japanese wooden clogs, who wrote his devotional poems on the shavings from his plane. But such sincerity is a long way from the simulated and sophisticated naiveté of Buson's 'Pious Pottery':

O, Blessed Sound! My teapot, too, recites
The Nembutsu on the Ten November Nights!

The point of this somewhat obscure jest is lost unless one knows that the Ten Nights on which followers of the Jodo Shu used to foregather to recite the Nembutsu lasted from the first to the tenth of November of the old lunar calendar; and that the gurgling of Buson's teapot while pouring for

his guests sounded like *Dabu-Dabu*, which is one of the vocal abbreviations of *Namu Amida Butsu*. With its apparent abrogation of the observance of the moral law by individual effort and its complete reliance on the transferred goodness of the Other Power, Shin Shu doctrine is razor-edged and could easily be blunted by misunderstanding and abuse into antinomianism. No matter how rare and precious the spiritual gift which man receives from above, he will at once set about distorting and corrupting it, as witnessed by Shinran's own son, who had to be disowned for pretending to a secret oral transmission. So Issa does not hesitate to satirize any hypocritical inconsistency in his religious contemporaries:

Every time your Buddhist swats a fly,
'*Namu Amida Butsu!*' is his cry.

Thus he reminds them of the Founder's saying which states: 'One does not continue to take poison simply because one knows that the antidote is at hand.' Issa was concerned with the decadence into which certain Shin Shu followers of his day had

fallen, misusing the Nembutsu as an antidote to moral laxity and lack of compassion. And so he cannot help but contrast the faithfulness of Nature with the infidelity of man.

The sermon at the crossroads gives the Name
Scant praise, but spring is tranquil just the
same.

Shin Shu therefore distinguishes clearly between genuine goodness, which is within, and the outward forms of public morality. The Gate of Worldly Truth is passed by obedience to the social conventions and institutions maintained for the sake of communal peace, cooperation, and good order in the State; but the Gate of Absolute Truth is entered by Faith alone and that is the priceless and irrevocable gift of Amida Nyorai.

The spiritually blind cannot behold the transcendent glories of Jodo; even those half-awakened in the Right Established State are still not able to gaze directly on the True Pure Land. Amida has therefore arrayed its formless splendours in the mytho-poetic

imagery of the Transformed Pure Land, or *Kedo*, which one can contemplate by practising the visualizations and meditations prescribed in the *Kammuryojukyo*. This distinction, first pointed out by Genshin (942–1017), the Japanese Sixth Patriarch, is really a pious stratagem, or *hoben*, devised by Amida for those whose Faith is still not perfectly pure but defiled by uncertainty or striving. His intention is to lead them by this compassionate expedient from the Temporary Pure Land to the True Pure Land of Recompense, from the accessory practices of meditation and self-motivated calling of the Name, to pure Faith alone, as in the Eighteenth Vow of the *Daimuryojukyo*. This is referred to in Seibu's haiku written on his deathbed:

The dawn's pink lotus-petals now expand:
Portals opening on the True Pure Land.

The mythological images and miraculous events of the Pure Land are intended to induce by means of poetic wonder a vision of the invisible brilliance of Enlightenment itself; and although the devotee of simple faith may still believe in them literally, they

are also capable of intellectual explanation as spiritual states and insights which transcend more direct expression. Thus the location of Sukhavati, like the Garden of the Hesperides and other paradises, in the 'western' region of the universe, refers to this the last quarter of the cycle, or in Hindu terms the *Kali Yuga*. Even today, we speak of the dead as having 'gone west' toward the setting sun. Similarly, the jewelled pavilions and terraces do not represent a pauper's wish-fulfilling dream of a sensual afterlife, but the crystallization of the superior possibilities at the end of the cycle. Ever accelerating time having then almost reached the point of devouring space, space in turn fixes time, an immovable bee in the amber of everlasting duration. The rich and various adornments of Sukhavati, such as palaces, trees, nets, lakes, lotus-blooms, and other embellishments of gems all emitting rays of different coloured light thus symbolize, as Ryukyo Fujimoto has shown, the perfected virtues of the Buddha and his celestial hierarchy who reside there in radiance and calm. The permutations of the seven gems composing the jewelled trees, and

the mutual reflection of the lights emanating from their leaves, flowers, and fruit also suggest *jijimuge* 事事無礙, the interpenetration of the 'ten thousand things'.

This Provisional Pure Land is sometimes called the Borderland, Womb Palace, Castle of Doubt, or Land of Pride and Indolence, and is also figured as Rebirth in a closed lotus-bud in one of the lakes of Sukhavati. This bud will not open and allow the embryonic Bodhisattva within to hear the Buddha's preaching until twelve greater Kalpas have elapsed. He is thus deprived by his residue of doubt from the highest blessing: the vision of the Three Treasures, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Community of celestial beings, until his lotus-bud finally opens upon the Sun of Enlightenment. One must, therefore, not become attached to the dazzlingly beautiful symbols of the Transformed Pure Land for the delights which they afford, else one will never reach the True Pure Land. Once, however, the Mind of Faith has been received, the search even for such other worldly pleasures dies out of its own accord, and we wish to use

the grace and power granted us to lead other beings also to the True Pure Land.

Jodo is thus not merely a mythological place or metaphysical notion but, as we have seen, an intermediate state of virtual Nirvana from which actual Nirvana can be realized. It is, moreover, not a closed world, but opens up like the petals of a lotus-bloom on Nirvana above, while its stem and roots strike down into this dark world of Samsara below, so that defiled mortals may be purified and reborn there. The Unretrogressive State having once been reached, there can be no subsequent re-involvement with Samsara, no backsliding into suffering—although for the Bodhisattva the Pure Land also opens downwards, in a sense, upon this world, otherwise how could he return?

Attainment of Buddhahood is not the final stage: it must be followed by the return of the Bodhisattva to use his powers for universal welfare. His renunciation of Nirvana is the consummation and proof of the validity of the fifty two previous stages of his ascesis. Since there can be no Liberation until all are

liberated, no one can grasp and gain selfless freedom, for himself alone. So one who seeks to be reborn in Jodo for the bliss which it affords and not for the benefit of others, will not be reborn there. This is illustrated in the life of the Buddha Shakyamuni himself, for after his Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, he hesitated for a time and was tempted to remain silent because of the apparent impossibility of communicating his ineffable Realization; but was finally persuaded by the gods to remain in this world and to preach the Dharma. He thus exemplified the phase of the Bodhisattva's return as well as that of the Buddha.

It is manifestly impossible for any individual who has once died ever to pass through the same state again, for that would be to contradict the basic principles of *anitya* and *anatma*, and would also impose a false limitation on the Infinite, which precludes all identical repetition. The apparent 'return' of the Bodhisattva, however, need not involve a 'reincarnation' in the gross corporeal sense, but rather the remanifestation of his spiritual influence within one

or more beings still passing through psychophysical states of existence. We see this illustrated in Tibet by the Dalai Lamas and *tulkus*, for there a Bodhisattva such as Avalokitesvara can manifest his influence not only successively but also simultaneously through multiple contemporaneous ‘incarnations’.

Having once attained ascending realization, the aspirant renounces Buddhahood, and proceeds to the descending realization of Bodhisattvahood. In Shin Shu both of these nondual phases are the result of *parinama*, or *eko* 廻向, the transference of merit from the Other Power. As Shinran explains in his masterwork the *Kyogyoshinsho*, or ‘Teaching, Practice, Faith and Attainment’, *oso-eko* is the phase in which the aspirant goes to be reborn in Jodo, while *genso-eko* is that in which he exercises the Bodhisattva’s privilege of remanifesting his powers and presence. For one who has realized that Samsara and Nirvana are the same, these two phases are necessarily one, and he can manifest his wisdom and compassion at will anywhere throughout the Six Realms of Existence without the need ever to leave Paradise. He is

able to fulfil his Vows to liberate and enlighten all beings, while at the same time realizing their essential Emptiness. One is reminded of the Bodhisattva's Vow: 'Though there are no sentient beings, I vow to save them all'.

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