

# Enlightenment for Ordinary People

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## Daiei Kaneko

*Daiei Kaneko, born in Niigata Prefecture, Japan, in 1881, was one of the most influential Shinshu thinkers of the 20th Century. A prolific writer and much beloved teacher, he sought to bring Pure Land Buddhism into the modern age, exploring difficult concepts in plain language and rejecting scholarly approaches and venues. A student of Kiyozawa Manshi and graduate of Otani University, Kaneko manifested deep but simple religiosity grounded in the incomprehensible gift of Wisdom and Compassion. Kaneko died October 20th, 1976.*

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### About Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho

#### *Eyes of Deep Sorrow*

What we call 'life' is simply each person's actions or movements, in accordance with his or her abilities and capacities. We describe our bodily, physical movements in terms of our arms and legs, while knowledge is expressed through reference to our sense organs. Among the five, we can say that the eyes predominate, because we use the word 'see' to describe the functioning of all five organs. [In Japanese], for hearing, we combine 'hear' and 'to-see'; for taste, we use 'taste' and 'to-see.' It is even more obvious when we use words like 'knowledge' ('see-consciousness') and opinion ('mind-see'). Ordinary life, therefore, is nothing more than bodily movement, the physical movement of our legs, arms, etc., guided by the knowledge acquired by 'seeing.' We would say then that notions such as 'hearing the fragrance' of incense or 'savouring language' were different, apart from actual or ordinary daily life.

But it is also possible to shift from being the 'seer' to being the one who is seen. And I do not mean being seen by other people's eyes, but by non-human eyes. For instance, some people say that the sun 'watches,' the morning star 'watches,' or the moon. Some might say it's God who sees and some might say it's Buddha. The eyes

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of this seer may be relentless or may be kind and compassionate. But in either case, when we become the one seen or watched, light is shed upon our true self, the self we normally do not wish to see.

I am going to talk about Shinran's *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*; it is his most important work and is thought of as the basic, fundamental sacred scripture of Jodo Shinshu. As the title indicates, it reveals 'the true teaching' (*kyo*), 'act,' 'action,' or 'practice' (*gyo*), 'faith' or 'entrusting' (*shin*) and 'enlightenment' (*sho*). I will not explain its structure or its outline, but I would like to talk about what I have learned from Shinran's writings and what I was taught. And I will try to make it clear to you that his writings do not explain actions and movements that result from his seeing and knowing; rather he talks about being seen and about the seer's mind and heart; he speaks from the point of view of how he, Shinran, was seen.

The seer, in this case, is Buddha, Tathagata or Amida Buddha; but the seer's eyes are nothing other than the heart of Deep Sorrow.<sup>1</sup> What is important here is the 'seer as the eyes of Deep Sorrow.' We are seen by the eyes of Deep Sorrow and the seer is called Tathagata or Amida. Because the eyes of Deep Sorrow have Infinite Compassionate Love and Wisdom, they are Amida. Even today in India, the term Amida is known to mean something infinite and vast. So being seen by the eyes of Deep Sorrow is same as being illumined by Amida's light. Furthermore, because the eyes of Deep Sorrow rise out of, or come from truth itself (*tatha*), we call it Tathagata (that which comes from truth).

Tathagata, then, means someone coming from truth itself and revealing what the truth is. It is the eyes of Deep Sorrow that truly know how humans are, and that is why we call the eyes of Deep Sorrow Buddha. In either case, in Buddhism we name the seer from the perspective of the heart of the seer's eyes, but without feeling compelled to determine what the seer's substance is. This is a characteristic of Buddhism that differentiates it from religions of God.

We are seen by the eyes of Deep Sorrow. Humans live with the fear of death, not knowing when or how it may come. Our instinct for life leads us to love and attachment and also causes us to struggle angrily against anything that threatens to take our life. Hence, the suffering that comes from the karmic interrelationships between self and others will never cease. Our dependence upon human knowledge to rid ourselves of anxiety and suffering is not as effective as we would wish and our efforts often lead to unintended side effects and results that are the opposite of what we had in mind. The discovery of atomic energy has led to a sense of insecurity never experienced in human history. And disputes between right and wrong, good and evil, have become more and more confused, only increasing our distress. Human existence is indeed lamentable. Nonetheless, we are unable to see the sorrowful condition of human existence with our own eyes, which always open outwardly, always in service

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<sup>1</sup> Translator's note: The original term here is *Dai-Hi*. It is usually translated as Great Compassion, but this may not sufficiently convey the original meaning, which is a compound of *Dai* and *Hi*. *Dai* means Great, Vast, Superb and *Hi* means Sorrow, Sad, Grief.

of the body and its movements. It is not easy to turn our eyes inward to see who we really are, how we really are. No one really wants to do such a thing. For if we somehow force ourselves to look inside, to see what we should not have seen, we may be moved to pessimism and even to disastrous despair. As a consequence, it may seem wiser to live life by ignoring or covering up such a sad state of affairs.

However, although it may sound strange, if this turning to look inward is done through the eyes of Deep Sorrow, it can happen naturally and without difficulty. The seer's world, in this case, is much bigger than ours is and we can sense Great Compassionate Love in the depths of the eyes of Deep Sorrow. This is like saying, of a parent who is feeling sadness and sorrow over his child's illness, that the entire content of that parent's heart is comprised of nothing but his love and caring for his child. Tathagata's Deep Sorrow respects and compassionately loves all and everyone of us, the old, the weak, man, woman, the wise, the foolish, the good and evil. So it is said 'Buddha's heart is nothing but Great Love and Sorrow.' And it is only when we sense this Compassion and Love, sense it through the eyes of Deep Sorrow, that we come to truly see our own existence.

This Love and Sorrow holds in itself a vow to remove human anxiety and suffering, just like the heart of the parent of the ill child naturally wishes for the child's health. Here, Tathagata's Deep Sorrow is said to hold the vow of the Pure Land, a still realm, where the anxieties of birth and death do not exist, the realm of Nirvana, a peaceful world where the sufferings created by attachment also do not exist. Therefore, being seen by the eyes of Deep Sorrow is Tathagata's vow, made for us; it is the vow in which he wishes for all human beings to come to a state of One-like Equality.<sup>2</sup> Just as parents' vows are for their children, the vow of Deep Sorrow is for all of humanity.

This vow of Deep Sorrow is indeed called Tathagata's Primal Vow and through this we come to see how different Tathagata's vow is from human ideals, which are the product of human knowledge and necessarily realized through human-self-effort. Shinran was driven to despair because he found it impossible to fully realize the efforts of his spiritual practice; and from that failure he came to believe in the Other Power (*tariki* 他力) of the Primal Vow.

In the *Kyo* volume of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*, he wrote that the true teaching reveals Tathagata's Vow as the true intent of the sutra and the Name of the Buddha—Amida Buddha—as its essence. What this means is that to entrust in Tathagata's Primal Vow, which is expounded by the name of Amida Buddha, is the true essence of teaching of Shinshu. I want to emphasize here that the teaching of Shinshu is completely different from activities based on human knowledge. You must understand this point before you go any further.

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<sup>2</sup> Translator's note: The original term is *Ichī-Nyō-Byōdo*. It is usually translated as Oneness. *Ichī* is 'One,' but elsewhere Kaneko explains the meaning of *Nyō* as 'it is so.' Therefore, *Nyō* should be translated more like 'likely' rather than 'Suchness' as we typically do. *Byōdo* is a synonym for *Ichī-Nyō*. It means a state of equality or non-discrimination, non-judgemental; it refers to the natural state of the universe, which we cannot see, due to our discriminating mind.

### *Where the Other Power Exists*

Tathagata's Primal Vow is to bring us to a place of no anxiety and no suffering; therefore, the Primal Vow must have the power to do so. That power is called Other Power. In the *Gyo* volume Shinran states that 'the Other Power is Tathagata's Primal Vow Power.' How then how does the Primal Vow Power appear to us? How does this Power exist, how does it manifest?

Taking into consideration the notion of being seen by the eyes of Deep Sorrow, when we can sense that we are seen by the eyes of Deep Sorrow, our eyes that usually look to the outside will turn inward, our heads are made to bow, our hands stop their activities and come together in *gassho* and our legs stop their movement and kneel. Of course, these physical gestures are not always the same, but there is no doubt they will be similar across cultures. It is the attitude reflected through such gestures that are called *Nembutsu* 念仏 (mindful of Buddha or thinking of Buddha). In other words, in its broadest sense, *Nembutsu* is the natural attitude of those who sense that they are seen by the eyes of Deep Sorrow. The Tathagata's Primal Vow is sensed within when one 'does,' or is made 'to do' *Nembutsu*. From the perspective of the Wisdom sensed within, it is the Vow Power of Tathagata that creates within us, makes us have, the attitude of *Nembutsu*; the Vow Power of Tathagata is none other than our attitude of *Nembutsu*. Therefore, the Power of the Primal Vow appears, exists and manifests in us, as nothing other than our natural attitude of *Nembutsu*. And that *Nembutsu* is *Namuamidabutsu* 南無阿弥陀仏.

What is important here is Amida Buddha's name. Tathagata's Primal Vow is transmitted by Amida Buddha's name. Just as a person's great virtues are transmitted by their name, Tathagata's Great Compassion and Sorrow, too, is transmitted through the name of Amida 阿弥陀. Tathagata's sorrowful vow, which cannot be explained by other names, like Yakushi Healing Buddha, Jizo Bodhisattva or Kwannon Bodhisattva, is passed along by Amida's name. I won't take complex, theological approaches here, but I will not deny that many Buddhas' primal vows reflect human ideals and desires. In that context then, Amida Buddha's name is important, because *Nembutsu* is nothing but *Namuamidabutsu*, nothing but Tathagata's Great Compassion and Sorrow.

But *Nembutsu* also means to say or utter *Namuamidabutsu*. 'Namu' 南無 means 'reverence' and 'bow,' and is also a word of appraisal. I think that the fact that one's virtue is transmitted by one's name means that people praise a person by repeating his name and thinking of his virtues. So, uttering Amida's name and thinking of the Primal Vow of Deep Sorrow is very natural. But this naturalness is not one that corresponds to the human definition of naturalness; therefore, discussions about whether or not we have to say the *Nembutsu* are actually expressions of the fact that only through the name of *Namuamidabutsu* has Tathagata's Primal Vow been transmitted and only the name can become our sustenance.

But more than that, I have to further clarify the characteristics of the Primal Vow power that can be sensed in *Nembutsu*. We can clearly sense Self Power (*jiriki* 自力)

as some sort of a power, but this is not so in the case of Other Power. For this reason people say Buddhism is not useful in daily life. But there are many types of power. For example, it is not too difficult to subdue or subjugate bandits in the mountains; but it is hard to subdue the bandits in our mind. The power and force needed to subjugate these different kinds of bandits are not same. The nuclear power that might destroy the entire human race doesn't seem to be able to destroy human anger. Even though we have all kinds of rules and regulations, we don't really know what will happen when our anger explodes out of control. If there were a power that could control our anger, then nuclear power would only be used for peaceful purposes. Sadly, we humans do not possess that power; and even worse, we turn to the power of our anger as a source to energize ourselves.

But the source of Tathagata's Primal Vow is deep sorrow over the human condition. Therefore, the power that comes from *Nembutsu* moves us toward the other shore, beyond this world of birth-and-death, and calls on us to reflect on our existence; it calls on us to reflect upon the difficulties caused by our inability to detach ourselves from love and hate. While we tend to live our lives by any means necessary, it is needless to say that the power of *Nembutsu* is different. This is why it is impossible to say that we can 'use' the power of the Primal Vow for our own purposes. To the contrary, *Nembutsu* nullifies human power, Self Power; it makes us realize our limitations and directs us to a power beyond our own.

At this point, if you were to say that the Primal Vow, Other Power, has no connection to 'real life,' I would agree completely. However, from the standpoint of the movement of *Nembutsu* in us, that which we think of as 'real life' is adrift from the very thing it should be rooted in. The life that we call reality and to which we are clinging is like rootless trees and grasses, afloat in a moving stream.

Life, where are you going? It is, indeed, the *Nembutsu* that reveals the right direction for the lost life. This is what it means to be 'Grasped and Not Forsaken by *Nembutsu*,' and also what we refer to as the 'the Beckoning Voice of Deep Sorrow.' For those who think that the content of human life is only our outward movements, Other Power seems useless, and reasonably so. But it is because of this very reasoning that Other Power is of the utmost importance for humans. For there is nothing other than *Nembutsu* that can make us realize the truth of our existence, make us realize the purpose of this life.

It is here that the power of the Primal Vow exists. It appears in *Nembutsu*, removing the fear and anxiety of the cycle of birth-and-death, easing worries and suffering caused by love-and-hate. And it is from here that our life's direction can be determined. I think that only those ideologies that are acceptable within *Nembutsu* are true and real. If the *Nembutsu* mind, the mind that looks inward, cannot accept it, it is not true and real, even if it looks authentic. Ideologies developed with the view that life is comprised only of the outward are false. Or, in other words, ideologies cannot be valid until they can be accepted by the *Nembutsu* mind. And the same is true for our actions. If actions are undertaken with the *Nembutsu* mind, they are all right. And if

reflected on with the *Nembutsu* mind, we can say that no conduct is ever in vain. Even after having said something we should not have said or having done something we should not have done, if those words and deeds are washed away by tears of genuine repentance, then they were meaningful. And further, even when we have been able to do something good, the *Nembutsu* mind moves us to give credit to others and to be thankful for the conditions which allowed us to do good.

In this way, the life of a person of *Nembutsu* naturally becomes a life with no obstacles. The light of Deep Sorrow always illumines that person and the path opens for that person, without fail. The section that stresses the unhindered, single path is the *Gyo* volume of the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*.

I have said that where the Primal Vow power exists is in the *Nembutsu*. This is especially stated in the *Kyo* volume of *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* and is a unique characteristic of the True Entrusting Mind that Shinran spoke of. Entrusting through *Nembutsu* is called ‘entrusting in Other Power’; it comprises the Primal Vow of Deep Sorrow, together with one’s entrusting mind. Generally speaking, there are no religions that do not seek other power, and there is no Buddhist school that does not emphasize the entrusting mind. But only Shinran’s teaching considers both entrusting mind and Other Power together, as one. This is because the mind entrusting in Other Power is indeed due to the Other Power.

It is from this standpoint that some people say that the Jodo Shinshu teaching is one of ‘Absolute Other Power.’ Yet, there is no such phrase in the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*. And that is probably because this expression is not thorough enough to express the Deep Sorrowful heart contained in the Primal Vow. Zen Master Dogen said, ‘When, by forgetting one’s mind and body and throwing them into Buddha’s house, one follows the actions that come out of it, one can detach from the cycle of birth and death and become a Buddha without any effort and using any mind.’ This, indeed, is ‘absolute other power,’ but it is a state that cannot be reached without knowledge of and skill in contrived, meditation methods. Therefore, attaining this state can also be called ‘absolute self power.’

Shinran’s ‘entrusting in Other Power’ is not like this. It is the Tathagata’s Deep Sorrowful heart that can be sensed by humans who are in agony. This entrusting mind is nothing but the sincerity and truth of the Primal Vow reaching out to us. It is called the ‘true entrusting mind given as a gift by Other Power.’ It is not the ‘relative other power’ of the entrusting mind caused by one’s own power, with different degrees of entrusting, deep or shallow, depending upon each individual’s capacity. Shinran’s entrusting mind is not this; it is just nodding and bowing to the Heart of the Vow of Deep Sorrow. Therefore, the content of the entrusting mind is nothing but the Deep Sorrowful heart and mind of the Primal Vow.

If one thinks that entrusting mind comes about from one’s self effort, his *nembutsu* will also be a result of his self effort. If *nembutsu* means ‘to throw one’s mind and body into a Buddha’s house,’ then it is ‘absolute other power.’ These are not the same as Shinran’s entrusting mind, in which he sensed the Primal Vow Power through the

*Nembutsu* moving deep within himself. This is the very reason Shinran taught that *Nembutsu* is activity preformed by Buddha.

Here, we find the unique character of Other Power-Entrusting Mind: anguished humans and the Primal Vow of Deep Sorrow co-exist, echoing one another in what is known as ‘reverse correspondence.’ Our lives as humans move in an opposite direction from that of the Primal Vow. And it is at that point of difference where I can deeply sense the Deep Sorrow of the Primal Vow. Shinran clarified this truth by explaining the three minds: *Shishin* 至心 (ultimate mind and heart); *Shingyo* 信樂 (entrusting and joy); *Yokusho* 欲生 (desire to be born in the Pure Land).

According to Shinran, *Shishin* means a true and real mind and heart. Entrusting mind must be a true and real mind and heart. Its synonym, *Shijo* (utmost true and real), is said to be able to take us to the place of highest virtue. And it is also said that a god dwells in *Joshin* (true mind and heart, a synonym of *Shishin*). But the human experience that Shinran lived was expressed in the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* as follows: ‘I find that all beings, an ocean of multitudes, have since the beginningless past down to this day, this very moment, have been evil and defiled, completely lacking the mind of purity. They have been false and deceitful, completely lacking the mind of truth and reality.’ There is no need to explain this further; but if this is so, then how can truth be sought in such human beings? The Deep Sorrow of the Primal Vow comes about out of the true and thorough understanding of this, the human condition. Unable to ignore or disregard human anguish, the Tathagata established the Primal Vow. Therefore, we should know that true and real mind and heart is found only in the mind of Tathagata’s Vow. There is no entrusting mind beside this; in the midst of our deceitful life, we are made to realize the Deep Sorrowful mind and heart.

Next, *Shingyo* (joy of entrusting mind) means a mind without doubt. Where there is no doubt, joy naturally arises. This is why the term *Shingyo* is used. Entrusting mind is, of course, a doubtless mind, as is shown in our everyday conversations, like ‘I believe, without any doubt.’ But is it really possible for us to believe something, anything, without any doubt? Between good friends, a completely trusting relationship is very rare. Even religious people sometimes say things like, ‘There is neither God nor Buddha.’ When I reflect deeply, people who speak this way are probably attempting to relieve their own doubt, believing rather than doubting. One may have strong convictions, but convictions arise from the mind of self power; the ‘no doubt’ of such a mind cannot be said to be without doubt. Shinran reflected on this and sensed the true mind of no doubt in the Tathagata’s Deep Sorrowful mind and heart, in which there is no doubt that humans can take the right path. Out of this truly doubtless belief, the Primal Vow of Tathagata appears. Therefore, the entrusting mind Shinran speaks of is not our minds freed of doubt, but must and can only be the doubtless mind of the Primal Vow of Tathagata. Only through this mind are we able to find, from the bottom of our hearts, a deep sense of joy.

Thirdly, *Yokusho* means a mind that longs for the Pure Land and seeks after Nirvana. It is natural for a person to have such a mind if he is trying to overcome the anxieties

of the cycle of birth and death and (or) detach himself from the afflictions of love and hate. And I think that kind of mind would correctly correspond with the Primal Vow. Repeating myself again here, the light in our life can be found at this place of correspondence. However, Shinran reflected deeply on this and what he found was a gap, a reverse correspondence, between the Primal Vow and the way he actually lived. The reality for us amounts, simply, to actions based upon knowledge and intellect. In this life we lead as humans, a mind which longs for the Pure Land and seeks after Nirvana cannot exist; but if it does, it must be due to the penetration of the Deep Sorrowful mind and heart of the Primal Vow. This is what Shinran means by 'entrusting mind.'

With these characteristics clear then, we see that it is not the case that we flow and melt in with the mind and heart of Buddha. It is not that we take our mind to his mind, in order that they match each other. What is particularly important is that the Tathagata's Primal Vow is made for and is unceasingly extended to human beings. It is just and only our receiving of the Buddha's mind and heart. It is to sense the mind and heart of Deep Sorrow through the *Nembutsu*.

But this cannot be done without guidance from a 'good teacher.' Without Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings, we cannot come to know the Primal Vow of Amida. That means the mind and heart of the Primal Vow, as expressed through the Name, ought to be heard with our ears. And naturally, it cannot be heard if we do not hear it as words, as a teaching. The teaching of the Primal Vow should be studied as theory, but also should be heard and accepted as the truth of Deep Sorrow. If the entrusting mind is acquired only through learning, that is a mind created by one's own power. If the entrusting mind is something heard and accepted, it is due to the Other Power. Therefore, Shinran rejoiced, saying that he was given the gift of the entrusting mind from the words, the teachings, of Shakyamuni Buddha and Amida. Entrusting in the Tathagata's Primal Vow is to have heard it as words of Deep Sorrow, and 'to be heard' means to receive it as words or teachings.

Other Buddhist schools emphasize that the truth is to be seen and realized. But Shinran, knowing that to be impossible, knowing that humans can never detach themselves from a life of anxiety and suffering, caused by blind passions, entered into the *dharm*a of hearing and contemplation. This is the uniqueness of Shinshu.

### *Eternal Truth*

I was asked not just to give a talk on the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*, but also to express my inner, personal experience of it, especially the spirit that flows throughout the entire work. As you probably know, this is a very difficult work; it is not easy to convey the teaching that penetrates Shinran's entire understanding, nor the touching emotions that flow from the sentences. But as a Shinshu follower, who has spent a lot of time studying this work, I feel I must do what I can to reveal even the smallest insight into its spirit. It is both regrettable and lamentable that presently this work is regarded simply



as a sacred text for only one sect of Buddhism. For if openly and clearly revealed, its spirit could be a light for all of mankind.

Consequently, I have talked about its spirit, keeping the four *dharma*s in mind: *Kyo*, *Gyo*, *Shin*, and *Sho*. These are expounded in the first four of the six chapters of this work. The fifth is ‘the True Buddha and Land’ and the sixth, ‘the Transformed Buddha-Bodies and Lands’. The fifth chapter talks about the true Buddha and the true Buddha’s Land. It explains what the Tathagata is, and what the Pure Land is. It says, ‘I find that the Buddha is the Tathagata of inconceivable light and that the land, also, is the land of immeasurable light.’ This may be rephrased as ‘the Buddha is the Buddha of immeasurable light and the land is the land of inconceivable light’. The Buddha is Amida Buddha and the Buddha’s land is where the people who are born there dwell. Therefore, when we speak of the oneness of the Buddha’s body and the Buddha’s land, it means that the state of those who are born and the state of Amida Buddha are identical.

Please think of the saying that ‘those who have passed away are all Buddhas.’ This may make you think that the number of Buddhas are immeasurable; but in reality, they all go back to one, Amida Buddha. This is why we are made to feel that we are able to talk with our beloved ones through the *nembutsu*. This non-separable stage between the Buddha and those who are born in Buddha’s land is called Great Nirvana, which is poetically expressed as ‘the light of cease or extinction.’ Nirvana is what we long for, as our spiritual home; it is where all human karmic sufferings and blind passions cease and what feels so warm and dear to us, isn’t it? In that place, where all anxieties are extinguished, we feel and sense the truth that is never extinguished. In order to reveal this truth, in the chapter on ‘the True Buddha and Land,’ Shinran quotes the *Nirvana Sutra*, and here I would especially like to talk about the notion that ‘all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature.’

The Nirvana Sutra stresses the teaching that among all sentient beings, there is not a single being who does not possess Buddha-nature. Many great masters have been touched by this teaching and have transmitted it to us. However, when we think of actual human beings, this view might easily be regarded as a mere ideal. The world is filled with wicked people and it seems difficult to find people with Buddha-nature. The main focus of the Nirvana Sutra is how we should understand this reality. And the passages that answer our questions are quoted in Shinran’s chapter on ‘the True Buddha and Land.’ The first answer is that people possess Buddha-nature ‘in the context of the future tense.’ Even if they do not possess Buddha-nature in the present, we cannot say they will never possess it. Sentient beings are lost. So when the sutra says that all beings possess Buddha-nature, this means that those who are lost must and will definitely become enlightened. However, this is not the only reason the sutra states this. For the appearance of Buddha-nature, indeed, is inconceivable. By virtue of having been touched by a profound teaching, a person thought to be evil yesterday may be completely different today. Where did his fierce look go? He is now smiling and even the color of his eyes has changed. Knowing many cases like this, Shakyamuni

Buddha did not necessarily mean a far distant time when he said that the Buddha-nature would be there in the future.

And it is here that the second answer is given: ‘As seen by Buddha’s Wisdom,’ all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature. Ordinary, unenlightened people are not able to see that all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature. How can their minds, which see oneself as good and others as bad, know that all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature? But just as parents do not see any bad children, in the eyes of Deep Sorrow, beings without Buddha-nature simply do not exist, and this is not just because we are seen by Buddha’s Compassion, but because we are also seen, through and through, by Buddha’s Wisdom.

There are cases in which virtuous priests are able to find a conscience, even in evil men who have been expelled from society. If so, it is obvious that it is not just a matter of theory or of idealism to say that from the perspective of Buddha’s Wisdom, everyone possesses Buddha-nature. Therefore, as long as we know about the Buddha’s wisdom, we cannot deny that all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature.

And here we find the third answer, which is that all sentient beings possess the Buddha-nature ‘through hearing the Buddha’s voice and sound.’ We find these phrases in the Nirvana Sutra: ‘seeing through eyes’ and ‘seeing by hearing.’ Although it may only be the Buddha who can see with his eyes that all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature, hearing about it, by being touched by a profound teaching, is possible even for those of us who are not Buddhas. Here, please remember what I said before about two truths: one is the truth discovered by one’s self-realization; the other is the truth that comes to our minds through hearing and contemplation. What is not possible by knowledge through seeing may be possible through hearing. And this may be because what we hear naturally rings within ourselves. One who senses the joy of being liberated (saved) has no doubt about the liberation of all sentient beings. One who states his sincere feeling as in, ‘when I consider deeply the Vow of Amida, which arose from five kalpas of profound thought, I realize that it was entirely for the sake of myself alone!’ realizes the universal *dharma* through which everyone can be saved.

Thus, this sutra reveals the truth that ‘all sentient beings have Buddha-nature’; and by doing so it shows the state of Great Nirvana. What a profound teaching. Look as far into the future as possible. Contemplate the Tathagata’s wisdom and hear his words. When we do these things, we come to realize that there is a realm in which everyone can take refuge. For those who know that realm, there is neither loser, nor winner, neither good people, nor evil people. When the light of Nirvana is shed upon us, all the distinctions between love and hate, self and others, disappear. This is the eternal truth and reality, the eternal true reason. Eternal truth has the light of Nirvana; and the light of Nirvana, we can sense, is the eternal truth. If one wants to touch the light, he had better soak himself in the teaching that ‘all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature.’

Shinran quotes this truth, that ‘all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature,’ in both the *Gyo* and the *Shin* chapters. In *Gyo*, he quotes it in order to prove that the *nembutsu*

way of the Primal Vow is the only path for us. In *Shin*, he explains that the entrusting mind, which arises from hearing the Tathagata's Primal Vow, is Buddha-nature.

It is a very significant point that Shinran regarded this notion so highly, that 'all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature.' Regarded as the basic principle for the promotion of self-power effort by many virtuous priests, Shinran understood it as something that reveals the inconceivability of the Other Power. He must have sensed the light of Nirvana in this teaching. And that which makes us hear the realm of great Nirvana is called the *Jodo Shinshu*.

### *Enlightenment of Ordinary (Unenlightened) People*

As seen by the eyes of Deep Sorrow, humans are beings who cannot detach themselves from their anxieties and suffering. Therefore, Tathagata's Primal Vow was established with the desire to bring humans to a realm of peace and bliss. The realm without anxiety and suffering is called the Pure Land or the realm of Nirvana. Nirvana means quietude and stillness; it is a place without disturbance and conflict. Because the defilements of worldly desires are absent, it is called a Pure Land. And although the *nembutsu* or the entrusting mind directs us to the realm of One-Like Naturalness, the realm of Equanimity of Quietness, this does not mean that we are going to actualize the attainment of this realm, for human life can be nothing other than anxiety and suffering. But in the midst of this life of anxiety and suffering, we do not doubt the existence of the realm of Nirvana. Thus, Shinran said, 'though the light of the sun is veiled by clouds and mist, beneath the clouds and mist there is brightness, not dark.'

I have heard that there are times that there are only ten plus clear days throughout the entire year. There are hardly any days that our spiritual mind is clear, yet the light of Deep Sorrow shines through our spiritually clouded mind. A more appropriate expression might be that it is like a brightness at night, a dim light made brighter and clearer when it breaks through the darkness. Consequently, the enlightenment of Nirvana that is without suffering and anxiety is on the other shore and is anticipated in the next life.

Now, I would like to go into a topic that is a little complicated, that is the notion of the other world or the next life and how we should think about it. The Pure Land is the realm of Buddha and this world is a world of ordinary unenlightened people. I say that the Pure Land exists in a world of a different dimension. We use the word dimension to express this space (that we are in) as a three dimensional world. But the Pure Land exists in a world of a higher dimension. Things that cannot be explained in the lower dimensional world can be resolved from the perspective of the higher dimensional world. And although the higher dimensional world can embrace the lower, the opposite is not possible.

This can be clarified by looking at the relationship between infinite and finite. In this sense, the Pure Land is an infinite world and this world a finite one. Therefore, through the eyes of Buddha, this world, where ordinary, unenlightened people live,

must also be Buddha's realm. In the eyes of ordinary people, however, the Pure Land exists beyond this world and is therefore a place to be longed for. But even that longing is made possible because the infinite permeates the finite. Ordinary, unenlightened beings long for the Pure Land of Nirvana because the Tathagata's Deep Sorrow endows them with the entrusting mind. And with this realization, we see that the reason we do not call ourselves enlightened is due to the very human realization that we are not enlightened.

This is similar to the light at night I mentioned before. There is a light unique to nighttime. The bright light of daytime prevents us from seeing the true self; the shining of the light enables us to move and act in accordance with our knowledge and skill. What enables us to gaze upon the truth of our self; our lonely, unreliable self, is the light of the night, like the stars and moon. Not only that, the universe is vast and boundaries cannot be sensed in the daylight; the origins of astronomy can only be found in the evening light. A poet said that moonlight reminded him of the other world. The Pure Land teaching enables us see the side upon which our life is based, the side we do not usually see in our everyday life.

This truth is applicable to the notion of the next life. Some say that only today exists and that there is neither yesterday, nor tomorrow. You could also say that without yesterday and tomorrow, today would not exist either. Therefore, we can say that time, too, has three dimensions. It is interesting to see that the line of time has been expressed so that the future exists obliquely upward and the past exists obliquely downward, like the train of a dress. It is a good expression. It might very well be true that there is no life, either before or after, this life. But if so, this life would become a floating one, with nothing to be relied upon. *Nembutsu* followers sense both the next life and the lives before this one, which together make this floating life this life. Buddha's world must be an eternal one that transcends these three time frames. It is just like the sun, which does not distinguish between the night and day experienced on earth. But ordinary, unenlightened beings can anticipate entering into the eternal world, after this life.

Contrary to the Pure Land teaching, there is a teaching for sages, which teaches that the true aspect of this world must be the Pure Land or that we must actualize the Pure Land in this world. This idea is well accepted by today's intellectuals. But from the standpoint of the Pure Land way, this is nothing but the human idealization of the Tathagata's Primal Vow. As an idea, it seems be close to us, but it is so very far from reality. To the contrary, expecting the Pure Land of Nirvana in the coming life is an idea that seems far away; but in reality it is the closest to us. When we try to create the Pure Land in this world, the Pure Land goes away; and when we expect the Pure Land in the next life, the light of the Pure Land comes close to us and illumines this world. This is an inconceivable truth. And after attaining the enlightenment of the Pure Land, one can return to this human world and work freely to save others. This is called the virtue of the Returning Aspect, which is to return from the other world to this world and/or from the next life to this present life. But there are issues related to

this subject, and I do not have time to discuss them now. The discussion of the virtues of the Returning Aspect in *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* is very profound. Among the related concepts that attract my attention are *Prajna*, *Karuna*, and *Upaya*. *Prajna* means to not assert one's ego. *Karuna* means to understand others' situations—this does not mean that one understands others because they have same ideas or have the same interests; only one who has realized Nirvana for himself can truly understand others. *Upaya* means to find the best and most appropriate path in any situation or circumstance, based on *Prajna* and *Karuna*. This is the virtue of Tathagata as it appears in our daily life. However, Prince Shotoku said that ordinary people, with the realization of who they are, must perform three virtuous deeds. He said, 'With this realization, when you see others getting angry with you, you must reflect on yourself and realize your own faults. Even when you think you are only one who is righteous, do things together with others by putting your righteousness away.' This means that we should not insist upon the desires of our own ego. We should understand others and then try to take the appropriate action. This must be implemented in this temporal and empty world by setting one's mind on 'only Buddha alone is true and real,' and through 'reverence to the Three Treasures.'

What Shinran expected in the next life therefore, was set forth by the Prince as the morality to be followed in this life, in order to raise the level of consciousness of unenlightened beings. However, we, in the *Nembutsu* heart, can accept both the teaching of the Prince and the realization of Shinran without any contradictions. The reason is that because of the deep sorrow and regret we feel because we cannot realize things that ought to be realized in this world, we anticipate the next world; and correspondingly, the things we cannot realize appear in this world because we anticipate the next world. This is the nature of the Primal Vow power. And here again is the truth of something close being far and something far being close.

We learn here that the ethical rules set forth by the Prince appear naturally for Shinran. 'The way or path exists naturally' is Shinran's way, and 'human morality exists by following the natural way' is the Prince's way. We can see herein the relationship between liberation and human ethics. True ethics can be revealed only when great liberation is achieved. Great liberation is revealed in the true essence of Shinran's teaching. To realize great Nirvana through the Primal Vow of Infinite Compassion opens the realm of the great liberation for us. This great liberation gives each person his own place, regardless of young or old, good or evil. Only when we find our own place, are we able to do our share to the fullest.

This is how we receive the virtues of the Returning Aspect.

### *Inexhaustible Vow*

The sixth chapter of the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* is called 'the Transformed Buddha-Bodies and Lands That are Provisional Means of the Pure Land Way.' The phrase 'Provisional Means' corresponds with the phrase 'Truth' of the previous chapter, and 'the

Transformed Buddha-bodies and Lands' with the phrase 'the True Buddha and Land.' Chapter 6 criticizes the established Buddhist orders of his time, as he reflects upon his personal path as a seeker. These criticisms remain relevant to today's religious situation.

As I have stated many times, Buddhism teaches the way of liberation from the cycle of birth-and-death and the extinction of anxieties caused by love-and-hate. It makes life itself the issue and urges our complete awakening. Yet, for many people these are not matters for concern; common sense says that we should simply live the happy life already given to us. We think that ethics and morals should stay within the realm of common sense and that they should neither question, nor destroy, our perception of common sense. This being the common sense of the world, we can say that teachings based on our common sense should be called 'worldly teachings' and Buddhism a 'trans-worldly' teaching.

Among trans-worldly teachings, all Buddhist teachings except Jodo Shinshu are idealism. This is because the others teach that we should transcend the cycle of birth-and-death and be freed from the bondage of love-and-hate through our own wisdom and effort. Teachings which assert that our true self is already the Buddha or that through our own self-effort we have to make this world a Pure Land fall into this category.

To the contrary, a teaching that urges us to aspire to the Pure Land really understands the truth about human beings. However, if it says that we go to the Pure Land so that we can then pursue the way or that we can be born into the Pure Land by the merit of reciting the *nembutsu*, then it too is idealism, because it too relies on human effort.

To rely on self-effort is idealism. If relying on self-power is not idealism, then Buddhism makes no sense. Knowing that fulfilling the way of the self-power is almost impossible, Shinran criticizes idealistic Buddhism as not being true *dharma*. This is the essence of the first half of this chapter. Shinran's criticism is based upon his own agony during the process of his search. And the reason for his criticism is simple: we are full of blind passions.

We may talk about transcending the cycle of birth-and-death, but when we try to do it, we find it is impossible. It is our nature to cling to our lives, even when inflicted with a fatal illness and no matter how old we get, we do not wish to die. How can we, who are always caught up in personal obligations and kindnesses, be freed from feelings of love-and-hate? Educated people, who look down on the illiterate, find, ultimately, that their knowledge is unreliable and useless. And the so-called foolish ones have the same worries as the well educated. Either way, we cannot separate ourselves from this, our actual world, and neither can we find true settlement in this, our actual world.

There is then no other way but to live this life with *nembutsu*, by entrusting in the Primal Vow. This is what Shinran realized through his own experience. He was never satisfied with worldly teachings; for those who seek a true way, worldly teachings should be denied as false. Shinran states this in the latter part of this chapter, strongly

warning us not to follow other paths, not to bow to the heavens, not to worship spirits, nor to divine propitious or unpropitious times.

It is not that I don't understand today's intellectuals, who think religion is irrelevant and has no meaning for our daily lives. However, as I said earlier, our daily life itself is floating, not securely grounded. And it is true religion which grounds a floating life. Utilitarian religions move life away from its ground, don't they? It is so clear then why Shinran called these false.

Therefore, according to Jodo Shinshu, religions that teach benefits in this world are false. But this does not mean that Jodo Shinshu is a religion that ignores this present life. Rather, by showing us the ground of our actual life, it truly engages with our real living. What we need to understand is the difference between benefits in this life, on one hand, and worldly benefits, that is to say, benefits in this world, on the other.

Worldly benefits, benefits in this world, include those like longevity and freedom from difficulty. Benefits in this life are trans-worldly, like practicing great compassion. While Shinran did not deny that *nembutsu* followers enjoy benefits in this world, what he rejoiced in, solely, were the benefits in this life.

Whenever I read this chapter, the first half makes me think of Shinran leaving Mt. Hiei and becoming a commoner. It shows his experience of leaving a group of the good and wise and becoming one among the masses. But in the latter half of this chapter, I think of him deploring peoples' lack of awareness (of true religion). The superstitions of bowing to heaven, worshipping the spirits of the dead and fortune telling must have been a part of Japanese religion from olden times, continuously repeated under the name of new religions. But if we keep the same course, there will never be true salvation for our fellows.

In this chapter, there is a passage, a quotation from a sutra, that says that heavenly gods protect and guard people of *nembutsu*. Here, we can see that Shinran probably did not deny the existence of gods and that he believed that gods would protect people without prayer. But for Shinran, the important matter was that we not believe that our destiny is controlled by something outside of our human world. What our life is based upon and ends in is completely different from what controls our destiny. And what differs between these two is human awareness, or the lack of unawareness.

However, almost all of the world's religions are worldly, and therefore are idealism. And even though trans-worldly religions offer significant, very important, meaning, they are not able to truly save human beings, because they too are idealistic. Thus, Shinran's desire to spread the knowledge of the religion of the Primal Vow Other Power was inexhaustible. He wrote, 'I have collected true words to aid others in their practice for attaining birth, in order that the process be made continuous, without end and without interruption, by which those who have been born first guide those who come later, and those who are born later join those who were born before. This is so that the boundless ocean of birth-and-death be exhausted.'

This is his conclusive wish, stated at the very end of his *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* and this is also the wish of those of us who are fond of Shinran's teaching. What the *Kyo-Gyo-*

*Shin-Sho* reveals is very unique and cannot be found in any other religion. Therefore, if someone asks what the Japanese can contribute to world culture, this, the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*, must surely be named. And it will truly be a tenet of the realization of world peace.

Feeling very ashamed of myself for not being able to accomplish this, I hold the same wish for the future. In this sense, I am very grateful that I was able to briefly introduce this book.

佛陀彌阿無南

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