



PRINCIPAL TEACHINGS OF THE TRUE SECT OF PURE LAND

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From this, it is evident that the fundamental truth of the True Sect was first taught by Shākyamuni himself, which was later developed in detail and made more manifest by these seven fathers of the Sect, while Shinran Shōnin synthesised all these teachings severally brought forward by his predecessors into one system and gave it the name of the True Sect of Pure Land, whereby the doctrine of salvation by faith gained a new and deeper and clearer significance. In this sense, therefore, he is the founder of the True Sect, and his work on the "Doctrine, Practice, Faith, and Attainment" of the True Sect is its fundamental book. As to the other authoritative books published later than the one just mentioned, we have had occasion to refer to them in a previous chapter.

II. SYSTEMATISATION.

Buddhism is a most complex system of religion, and its founder, Shākyamuni, taught his followers in various ways according to their different abilities, characters, and dispositions; the Buddha opened many a gate of entrance for his disciples, and of these we now distinguish generally two main entrances or pathways to salvation. One of them is the way directly leading to the truth of salvation whereby one can escape from a world of suffering; while the other is a provisional way which will prepare one to enter finally upon the path of truth. It is necessary for students of Buddhism to keep this distinction in mind. Let us now see what an insight Shinran Shōnin had into the essential truth of Buddhism, according to what it taught in the above-mentioned three sūtras and by those seven great predecessors of his.

Buddhism divides itself into two principal schools, the Lesser and the Greater Vehicle; the former is for the Shrāvakas and Pratyeka-buddhas, who are satisfied with a comparatively inferior attainment, while the Greater Vehicle teaches the way of great enlightenment whereby is made possible the attainment of Buddhahood. Therefore, the doctrine of the Greater Vehicle must be regarded as superior to that of the Lesser Vehicle. But in the former we again distinguish what is called the "Path for the Wise" (*shōdōmon*) from that of "Pure Land" (*jōdomon*). The "Path for the Wise" is

one that will lead a Buddhist to sagehood while on earth, by uprooting the passions and disciplining himself in all virtues; whereas the "Path of Pure Land" teaches us to attain to Buddhahood by being born in the Pure Land of Amida. The "Path for the Wise" requires one to gain enlightenment through one's own efforts, and its prescribed discipline is naturally beset with difficulties. Therefore, it is properly called the "jiriki-kyō" or the doctrine of self-salvation, by which it is meant that one can be saved by one's own efforts; or the "nangyō-dō," which is to say, the way difficult to practise.

The "Path of Pure Land," on the other hand, teaches the possibility of attaining enlightenment through a power other than oneself; and, therefore, this way must be considered far easier than the other, and we call it the "tariki-kyō," that is, the doctrine that teaches salvation by a power other than one's own; it is also called the "igyō-dō," which means the way easy to practise. It is evident, then, that if a man is not highly endowed with wisdom and intelligence, the following of the "Path for the Wise" must be said to be extremely difficult. For such people as ourselves who were born in these latter days far from the time of the Buddha, and who are not endowed with wisdom nor intelligence, the best policy will be to walk along the "Path of Pure Land," believing in salvation through the grace of Amida.

The Buddhism of the Greater Vehicle can also be viewed as having two classes of teaching, the "Gradual" (*zen*) and "Abrupt" (*ton*). The "Gradual" is the doctrine that teaches the attainment of final enlightenment after gradually passing through stages of discipline; while, according to the "Abrupt" teaching, one can reach the goal, as if by a sudden leap, without successively passing through various stages of ascension.

This distinction of the "Gradual" and the "Abrupt" can also be applied to the "Path for the Wise" as well as to the "Path of Pure Land." The "Gradual" teaching in the "Path for the Wise" says that Buddhahood is attainable by practising the six virtues of perfection (*pāramitas*) for a period of three asamkhyas and one hundred great kalpas. The "Abrupt" teaching in the "Path for the Wise," on the contrary, shows no such patience, for it declares that when a man gets enlightened as to his spiritual oneness with the Buddha, he is a Buddha. While this latter teaching of Buddhism points out the direct way of attaining Buddhahood, the "Gradual" way must be said to

be provisional in its relation to the one just mentioned, in as much as its function is to prepare one for the final and real comprehension of the truth.

Now, the distinction of the "Gradual" and the "Abrupt" in the "Path of Pure Land" is that, according to the former, one is able to enter into the Pure Land of Amida only by degrees, and not, as it were, at a stroke; for a man can only be born on the outskirts of Pure Land if he wishes to be there by the accumulation of good deeds through his own efforts, and it is after another accumulation of merits that he can have his faith firmly established and at last be a resident in the Pure Land proper: whereas the "Abrupt" doctrine teaches that when a man, having an immovable faith in the absolute saving power of Amida, completely resigns himself into the hands of the Buddha, this faith of his at once determines his destiny to be born in the Pure Land proper, and he is able to have a spiritual insight into the enlightenment of the Buddha. It is apparent, then, that this latter teaching penetrates more deeply into the truth of the doctrine of Pure Land than the other one, which is merely a provisional or preparatory step leading up to the ultimate truth.

There are, thus, two classes or grades of teaching in the doctrine for the Wise as well as in that of Pure Land, provisional and ultimate. But the ultimate teaching in the doctrine for the Wise, when compared to the corresponding grade of teaching in the doctrine of Pure Land, must be regarded as still belonging to the preparatory grade; for the former is the path beset with difficulties requiring an extraordinary amount of discipline to overcome them. The tabular view that follows will make us understand the foregoing argument more graphically:

Buddhism	The Lesser Vehicle (Hinayāna)	for Shrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas		The Provisionary
	The Greater Vehicle (Mahāyāna)	"Gradual"	Path for the Wise— Provisionary one (Shu-	

			shutsu). ⁴⁴	
			Path of Pure Land— Provisionary one (Wō-shutsu) ⁴⁵	
		"Abrupt"	Path for the Wise— Ultimate teaching (Shu-chō) ⁴⁶	
			Path of Pure Land— Ultimate teaching (Wō-chō) ⁴⁷	The Ultimate.

The conclusion of all this is that the "Abrupt" teaching in the doctrine of Pure Land is the final path leading to the truth of Buddhahood attainable by all sentient beings; and this is no more than the teaching of the True Sect of Pure Land.

⁴⁴ "Lengthwise going-out."

⁴⁵ "Crosswise going-out."

⁴⁶ "Lengthwise passing-over."

⁴⁷ "Crosswise passing-over"

These four terms are too technical to be briefly explained here; suffice it to quote a passage from the *Shinshū-kyōshi* ("Principal teachings of the True Sect" by K. Ogurusu), relating to the subject. The translation is by Mr. James Troup of England.

"Again, within the Shōdōmon there are the methods (schools) of 'lengthwise going-out' and 'lengthwise passing-over.' The Hossō and San-ron Sects belong to the school of 'lengthwise going-out'; the Ke-gon, Tendai, Shin-gon, and Zen Sects belong to that of the 'lengthwise passing-over.' In the Jōdo-mon there are the methods of 'crosswise going-out,' and 'crosswise passing-over.' Salvation by various actions constitutes 'crosswise going-out.' This depends on the power of one's self. Salvation by remembrance of the Name of Buddha constitutes 'crosswise passing-over.' This depends on the Power of Another."

III. WHY CALLED THE TRUE SECT OF PURE LAND?

By the True Sect of Pure Land is meant the true teaching in the doctrine of Pure Land, that is to say, the way of truth that assures one's rebirth in the Pure Land of Amida.

We can imagine the existence of three paths leading to the Pure Land of Amida, one of which is broad and safe, while the other two are rough and narrow. This broad and safe one is the true way that assures our rebirth in Pure Land.

The Pure Land of Amida is a land of perfect beauty founded upon the truth of goodness, and not a particle of impurity could be brought in there. Therefore, however apparently good and praiseworthy in this world, human morality issuing out of a heart ever full of defilement cannot be said to be a good which is truly free from every trace of impurity; and it will be an impossibility to be born in Pure Land through our human will and moral discipline; nay, if indeed a person wants to be born there, he must absolutely renounce his self-will.

Through what power shall we be allowed to be born in Pure Land? The question has been answered in the very beginning of things, for the will of Amida entertains no doubt as to this point. That pure and beautiful land of happiness is for us; Amida, wishing to have us join him in Pure Land, is ever showering his light upon us in order to make us grow in wisdom and to become conscious of our sinfulness and falsehood, whereby we might come to entertain the desire of being born in the land of truth and goodness. It is thus entirely due to the effulgence of Amitābha (the Infinite Light) that we have at all grown conscious of the darkness existing in our hearts and awakened an aspiration after a land of eternal light. Amida who has brought up our minds to this state while we were altogether unaware of his existence, is now beckoning us, saying: "Hear my name of truth and goodness, awaken your consciousness of the impurity and falsehood darkening your hearts, and have your destiny absolutely entrusted into my hands that will save you from sin and ignorance." Those who listen to this call of Amida, and growing aware of their sinfulness, surrender themselves to the will of the Buddha, and grasp his hand of salvation with absolute

confidence, are embraced in the truth and goodness of his love that saves; and after death they will no more be the owner of such a defiled mind and body as they have now, but being born in the land of happiness and purity, will be given infinite wisdom and love. If it is not for the love of Amida that wills to save all beings, we shall have no opportunity to be born in his Land of Purity. Therefore, the true way of being born in the Buddha-country lies in crossing this sea of suffering on board the boat of love steered by Amida. This way is called the "Gugwan," by which is meant the Buddha's will to save all beings.

But there are some who can not resign themselves entirely to the Buddha's will to save; though approaching the true way, they are not yet quite ready to surrender themselves to Amida, whose arms are extended towards them for their salvation, but desire to be born in Pure Land through the merit of reciting his name with singleness of heart. These people, believing there is no other way of being born in Pure Land but through the reciting of Amida's name, place too much emphasis on the reciting itself and have the tendency to repeat the name of the Buddha as many times as they could. These are the people who want to be in Pure Land partly through their own efforts. They would be born on the outskirts of it if their hearts remain serene at the time of their death. We call, however, this way the "Shimmon," or real gate.

There are still others who can not enter even upon the path of the so-called "Shimmon"; for they so strongly believe in their own efficiency that they desire to be born in the Pure Land of Amida through the accumulation of merits gained by their own moral and religious deeds. Such people would be born on the outskirts of Pure Land if by the accumulation of merit their hearts remain undisturbed. This way is known as the "Yōmon," meaning the gate of importance.

These two gates or ways, the "Shimmon" and the "Yōmon," are not the true road leading to Pure Land. As there is mixture here of one's own impure will, one is barred from the Pure Land proper; only by the love of the Buddha, one is able to approach a region lying on the outskirts. To such one, the time will come when he will realise his own fault after years of self-discipline in the outlying district of Pure Land, and then he will for the first time come to the path of truth. It is, then, evident that these two gates are merely

provisionary, narrow ones furnished for those who are unable to enter at once upon the path of truth, while the "Gugwan" way is the only, true, ultimate one directly carrying us to the abode of Amida.

When a man thus perceives the existence of these three different roads to Pure Land, he must guard himself against going astray, and follow the true, straight road of the "Gugwan," The doctrine that teaches this, is called the True Sect of Pure Land, or briefly the True Sect.

IV. SALVATION.

In the True Sect of Pure Land, we have the true, all-embracing love of Amida to save all beings from ignorance and pain. It is the net of boundless compassion thrown by the Buddha's own hand into the sea of misery, in which the ignorant rather than the wise, the sinful rather than the good, are meant to be gathered up. This love and compassion is eternally abiding with the Buddha, whose will to save all beings knows no temporal limitations; and on this account the Buddha is called *Amitāyus* (Eternal Life). His power to save is manifest in his light. Though invisible to our defiled eyes, this light is constantly shedding its rays upon all sentient beings ever leading us onward to the awakening of faith. Those who have awakened this faith in the love of Amida which saves, are at once embraced in his light and destined to be born in Pure Land after death. This light is the will of Amida under whose merciful care all beings are made to grow; it reaches every part of the universe, knowing no spatial limitations. Therefore, the Buddha is also called *Amitābha* (Infinite Light). His will to save is, thus, infinite not only in time but in space, hence his two attributes, *Amitāyus* and *Amitābha*. In China and Japan, he is briefly known as Amida, meaning the Infinite.

Amida is the Father of all beings; he is the Only One; he has, from the very beginning of all things, been contriving to save the world, and once incarnated himself in the person of Dharmākara Bhikshu to deliver the message of happiness among us. Amida made the Bhikshu invoke forty-eight vows as recorded in the *Amitāyus-sūtra*, the main idea of which is that "I will make every one enjoy a rebirth in Pure Land if he listen to my name and believe in my will to save and rejoice in it." It is said that, before making

this wish, the Bhikshu cogitated for a period of five kalpas; that, in order to fulfil the wish, he accumulated innumerable merits by practising the six virtues for innumerable kalpas with a heart full of love and compassion and free from all defilement; and, finally, that the fulfilment of this vow took place ten kalpas ago. Amida is now summoning us to his Land of Purity by showing us his name that saves.

This world of ours is a defiled world filled with sin and suffering; neither the wise nor the ignorant are free from sin, the noble as well as the poor are suffering from pain. He that declares himself to be sinless must be either an insane man or an idiot. Even when, judging from our own ignorant conditions, we imagine ourselves happy, we may be deceiving ourselves; for in the Buddha's eye our apparent happiness may be a real pain. In such a world of impurity as this, it is impossible to find a true state of peace and happiness. Fame, wealth, love, learning,—so many evils are ever leading us downward into the abyss of utter darkness. Where can we then find a region which harbors no pain? There stands Amida pointing to his Land of Purity and Happiness (*Sukhāvātī*), where our worldly sufferings and tribulations are no more. In this land there always smiles the spring of peace. No pain, no sin, but all beauty, goodness, and joy. Those born there enjoy a happiness that knows no ending; they are endowed not only with infinite wisdom and liberty, but with pure love and compassion which has the power to save all beings from the world of pain. All this happiness enjoyed by those who are in Pure Land is the outcome of Amida's love and will to save.

Amida thus grudges nothing for our deliverance from sin; with various contrivances, good and excellent, he ever leads us to the way of salvation, and it is through his grace that we have in ourselves the reason of salvation and are allowed to enjoy its fulfilment. Now, Amida has two ways of showing his grace towards us: the one is called the "wōsō yekō," which means that the Buddha supplies us not only with the cause of our rebirth in Pure Land, but with its result; and the other is called the "gensō yekō," meaning that he confers upon us the power to come back to this world of pain even after our rebirth in Pure Land, in order to deliver our fellow-beings from sufferings. In the "wōsō yekō" there are four things to be

