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**PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF AMIDA
BUDDHA ETERNITY IN OUR NEM-
BUTSU LIVES.**

Recently I was watching a movie "The Thin Red Line" in a cinema theater of Yokohama. It was a movie about the Pacific War. There was a moment there when the Americans successfully invaded one Pacific Island after very heavy fights.

Both sides were exhausted and on the edge. Among the total brutal hysteria after bloody take over, one Japanese soldier sat in gassho and started to say: Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Bustu, Namu Amida Butsu.... I had tears in my eyes. But young Japanese audience was laughing.

What does it prove? It proves to me that we have been keeping the traditional way of the Nembutsu teaching too long to reach out to our children. I also have noticed that being a Jodo Shinshu follower in Japan has started to be some sort of embarrassment. Jodo Shinshu nowadays is widely taken in Japan as the inferior teaching for inferior people. The mostly known about Jodo Shinshu is the story about afterlife paradise, which is not attractive anymore.

I would like to ask you today, if you feel still comfortable with the common way Jodo Shinshu talks to people using mainly Christian language, adopting Presbyterian rituals for our services, never referring to internationally known Buddhist terminology originated from Sanskrit and making us look naïve and simple-minded? Do you feel well, when your children are about to change the religion you have shared? Do you feel that nothing can be done about it?

Why don't we try something more challenging? What if we say to all people the story about irreversible satori, about becoming Amida Buddha by His Merits during this life-time, this very now? Why we don't use the Buddhist language?

If we only read at least "Shoshinge" in the spirit of Shinran, we may change a lot.

In "Yuishinsho-moni" Shinran was preaching that we are approaching the Nembutsu Gate through the centuries of so-called Jiriki practices. He also used to say that Nembutsu is the only reality in this world (in "Tannisho"). The only reality means Buddha. Shinran said this, because he understood that Amida Buddha is not any great Parent-God, but Hojin (Sambogakaya), working Energy of Hongan. Shinran understood Jodo-mon (the Gate or method called Jodo) as the final realization of all Buddhists.

There have been historical, political and social reasons for very far going simplification of Jodo Shinshu Teaching. Nevertheless, this paper would like to go in the opposite direction. I would like to talk in the way, which may grasp the attention of my and perhaps your children, who live in the world of self-promotion, competition and continuous achievements. For this reason I have to go back to Shinran and read him in the Light of the Name.

It may sound simple, if you believe that saying Nembutsu even once makes you Buddha. But it is not that simple at all. All great things look simple. We all may wish a miracle, but miracles don't take place.

If you want to say "Namu Amida Butsu" even once, but with your sincere wish of "being born in Amida Pure Land", this ichi-nen is the most difficult thing to reach. To pronounce these six kanji, Namu Amida Butsu, is not so difficult. All foreigners do it without any difficulties. What is difficult to get it is the state of mind in which it should be pronounced. It requires very special conditions. "Ichi" means one, but "nen" means "to keep in mind" or "to become one with" (Shinran's interpretation in his letter about Sho - Realization), not "one thought" as it is usually be-

lieved. Nen in its Buddhist sense is the same as samadhi (san mai), which translates itself as "a mind facing the Buddha".

There is not even single thing in this world, which is not under control of the Law of Karma. Everyone, who wants to become Buddha, no matter the way, must do it accordingly to the Law. It means that anybody, who wants truly to be born in Jodo must first learn that it means the spiritual transformation. One must take the proper action to let Amida Buddha work on him. Finally, one should be all time without any doubts that he/she truly seeks to become Amida Buddha by the Amida Buddha's Merits working in the Hongan.

The point is not to seek any rebirth as a better being in more comfortable condition called gokuraku (paradise), but **to aspire to become Amida Buddha**. It actually means that we should give up (or let Amida Buddha strip us off) all our expectations and desires connected with this samsaric world. It means that we should come to the point Queen Vaidehi did. She said to Sakyamuni Buddha: "I don't expect anything good from this world anymore. I have only one wish. I want to be born in Amida Buddha Jodo." And she said this with sincere heart and mind. Sakyamuni Buddha answered; "Look around. You are already there." Sakyamuni Buddha said so, because Ojo is the symbolic event. Queen Vaidehi was physically still in her prison, but her mind was the Jodo and Amida Buddha "sat" symbolically on a throne situated there in the central most important position.

I personally treasure The Mediation Sutra very much. It is dramatic and pragmatic. It is informative. And additionally, this sutra actually explains most the symbols of the entire Pure Land Teaching. Queen Vaidehi is the first known shinjin person. Shinran reports her exemplary shinjin experience in Shoshinge. This sutra illustrates also 9 kinds of entry to Amida Buddha Pure Land conditioned by various sort of bonno (various aspirations).

In my understanding, Shinran considered shinjitsu shinjin as the Ojo of the highest level. And I interpret the Teaching according to this statement. I see the status of being born in the lotus bud as living in good condition, practicing various religions even not only various Buddhist traditions, but without the chance to face Buddha, without samadhi experience. After needed interval, the lotus opens and one may enjoy seeing Buddha. The beings of the lowest level of Ojo will see a good teacher instead of Buddha, since they are not ready yet (even after many kalpas in lotus bud) for samadhi, they are not ready yet to face the Absolute and to grasp all the Teaching correctly.

Shinjitsu shinjin (the true shinjin) doesn't mean for me just a deep faith. It is most of all a very long process, in which ordinary being's mind is transformed by the Energy of all Buddha's Merits into Amida Buddha's mind. It means that shinjin person goes through rather dramatic changes, which somehow force her or him to act very dynamically and sometimes even controversially, too. Shinjitsu shinjin life is not a continuous festival. The Big Parent Amida does not solve all our troubles, while we are only playing and singing. It is a process of quick becoming the Buddha of Unlimited Life from just an ordinary limited bombu. It needs a lot of effort and determination to accept such a change instead of just saying: "Oh, yes, it is human thing to be imperfect. I am imperfect. So what?" It takes a lot of guts to decide to become Amida Buddha, The Perfect One, for real. But it pays off.

Ojo (the symbolic Birth in **the condition** called Pure Land) means futaiten, which is the very advanced satori classified as the 41st stage of the Bodhisatvas' Realm in the scale of 52 stages. Ojo marks the beginning of Shinjin process, which may go on quite a long time. All depends upon one's karma (bonno). Vinaya scriptures say that to advance from one stage of Bodhisatva world to another one by one's own effort takes kalpas. By Amida Buddha Merits we can do it in a quicker way. Though it is true that the Power of Buddha's Merits is unlimited, unfortunately, we have our limitations.

Our human limitations (bonno) together with our present determination (yokusho) will condition the speed of our transformation into Amida Buddha through all the stages of 4 satori realms. As it is said in The Meditation Sutra, it may take kalpas for beings with regularly heavy karmic burden. But anyway it is worth all our efforts.

What I mean by our efforts? It seems obvious to me that the concept of Jiriki is questionable in the Teaching of non-ego. Sooner or later each one adept has to realize that there is no any

ego, so there is no any true Jiriki. Additionally, after one moment of a clear reflection such an adept should also notice that it looks quite impossible to remove all unfortunate consequences of our existence since the time, which doesn't know its beginning, by chanting, begging, walking around any saint mountain and performing any sacred rituals. **"Even if", how Ogonge Gata says, "one will practice the purest meditation of the basic Sunyata through the time of 100 mln kalpas with the utmost effort and will use his entire lifetimes for that purpose only, even such an adept is unable to understand the Wisdom, which has not any limit."**

In my understanding, every single Buddhist practice and each Buddhist ritual, regardless of Buddhist tradition, has got only one goal – to synchronize the practitioners mind with the Energy of Buddha's Sambogakaya (Hojin) to develop samadhi. Tariki Nembutsu is the Samadhi of the Name. Japanese scholars prefer not to talk about samadhi, because this is a true mystic experience. They even don't like the word "mystic". But who knows any true religion without mystic experience? The mystic experience makes the difference between philosophy and religion. The true religion is to make us reach beyond our human limitations, to give us more dimensions than we already have. This is exactly what Jodo Shinshu can provide to us. Philosophy is always limited by human intellectual abilities and even the most beautiful philosophical system cannot take us beyond ourselves. Jodo Shinshu can.

I know we have our tradition. This is first of all the tradition stretching back to the Japanese long medieval and strongly interrelated with the Japanese culture. Most Nembutsu followers don't know what has purely religious meaning and what is just only their culture. But the reality of today's world is not about traditions. Today young generation of all nations, including Japan, doesn't want to look back and follow blessed footprints of Shinran and Rennyo just because it has been the tradition of their family. Our world is not about tradition anymore. Our world is about success, quick success, and powerful success, about competition, about experience, about passions. This is the internationally leading fashion. And we cannot change it by preaching about any promised better afterlife.

Yes, we may become Buddha by the merits, which are not of our own, but in return we should, with our full responsibility, become this particular Buddha, we took merits from. It means we should vow His Hongan and promise to help others as He does. We should promise not to withdraw our Sambogakaya from samsara until even one being of 10 directions will call our Name, which will be Namu Amida Butsu. We should vow that our Pure Land will be identical to the Pure Land we are born spiritually now. And we should vow to follow all that Buddha teaches us in samadhi of the Name – the Tariki Nembutsu, the Nembutsu of listening to the Buddha.

In return we will be given the life in genso-eko, the life of receiving and giving, the life of learning and teaching, the fascinating but secure life, dynamic and rich, free from confusion and fear, the only life which may be called the full success with no regret. Genso-eko process doesn't start in any remote future, when we are already Amida Buddha. Genso-eko activity of receiving and giving back starts at very moment of shinjin. When we reach shinjitsu shinjin level of satori, our human forms, though still imperfect, sing the purest Dharma like Amida-kyo birds. Amida still guides us, but at the same time we are able to pass some of His guidance to others. We are all time helped, but it makes us able to help others quite efficiently. And all we do on this level belong to Amida Buddha and it is free from hakarai, it is pure and right. Just because there is not us who is doing. We let Hongan work through us. This is the true meaning of **genso-eko: "gan ni shiku doku, byo do se issai, do hotsu bodai shin, ojo,arakoku – I am vowing to give all received merits to all sentient beings equally to make them able to evoke the pure Bodhi mind through method called ojo."**

Personally I don't have any inferiority complex of being Jodo Shinshu priest. On the contrary, I feel privileged and grateful. The title of my Polish book is "Jodo Shinshu – the message of irreversible satori". It catches eyes of people with some spiritual aspirations. My Japanese editor gave to my book a title "Buddha's Energy" to introduce more fresh perspective.

For many people there is some problem with Jiriki and Tariki Nembutsu. Actually, it shouldn't be any trouble at all. Nembutsu is the Buddha, Amida Hojin. It never contains any of our effort. It is impossible to be manipulated. Nembutsu works only in one direction – to



transform us into Amida Buddha. The term Jiriki Nembutsu describes only the quality of human mind, its lack of samadhi experience, its karmically limited knowledge.

It means that one should live with Nembutsu the way one can. If one takes it honestly and with determination, it will develop into samadhi of the Name, the Tariki Nembutsu, by which we are given "san-nin" (great Joy of becoming one with Amida Sambogakaya, the access to Buddha's Wisdom, the diamond reliance upon Buddha, and upon His Teaching).

The only problem we may have is that most people don't like to treat Nembutsu like the Buddha. This comes after centu-

ries of regular Buddhist practices called Jiriki.

In fact, there is not even single Buddhist practice, which may be called Jiriki practice. They all are the activity of Hongan, though for people performing prescribed rituals it looks like they do something. There is no true Jiriki power, because there is not any true ego. Jiriki is as much an illusion as our ego is. True Jodo Shinshu teaching requires a totally different way of thinking from the common one. That is why without studying the Teaching in Nembutsu Light it is hard to grasp it in the spirit of Shinran.

Let me conclude this reflections by a quotation from Ogongge Gata:

**"...If a man does not establish Buddhist virtues,
he is unable to understand this sutra.
Only pure and well controlled minds
can grasp this teaching correctly.**

**Everyone must see Buddha in samadhi in the past
to accept the message of the Pure Land.
Therefore, one should modestly listen to Buddha
and practice accordingly to His guidance.
This is the way to rejoice the greatness of Buddhahood.**

**Arrogance, wickedness and laziness make
prasada-mind (shinjin) difficult to be born.
Only those who had seen various Buddhas in the past
will listen to this teaching with joy...**

**...Even if the whole universe would catch on fire,
You should be able to pass through it listening to Dharma
In order to establish your firm Way of being liberated
From the everlasting current of birth and death."**