

The Ultimacy of Jodo Shinshu: Shinran's Response to Tendai

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Introduction

The topic of Jodo Shinshu as the ultimate teaching of the Great Vehicle is significant for illuminating aspects of Shinran's teaching which receive little direct attention because of their sectarian implications. Nevertheless, an understanding of the background which inspired Shinran to assert the ultimacy of the Pure Land path is essential in determining the relevance of his teaching for modern people.

This essay moves on two levels. The context of the paper is the necessity for Shin Buddhism to address problems and issues of the contemporary age in which we live. I am using Shinran as an example of this response for his own time. The second aspect is the points of doctrine which indicate Shinran's effort to develop a comprehensive perspective on Pure Land Buddhism as a response to the current thought of his time.

The paper assumes that Shinran was a person of his times, aware of its character. However, it is where he goes beyond the religious and perhaps social character of that age to advance his own understanding and to assist other contemporary seekers that his historical and religious significance lies. A meaningful theory of salvation for contemporary people must be comprehensive in speaking to the human condition and in offering a deep understanding of reality and religious experience.

Hence, it is important to take full account of Shinran's religious experience and his subsequent religious development and life-style which are reflected in his writings. Shinran's response to Tendai-Lotus teaching reveals the breadth and creativity of his thought and offers a good example of the way in which Shin Buddhism must confront trends in contemporary thought. Further, the presuppositions of contemporary interfaith dialogue requires clarifying one's own stance and seeing its relation to other alternatives.

The main point to be made in this paper is that, for Shinran, the Pure Land teaching, as he understood it, is not simply one alternative among a variety of possibilities to the practice and teaching of Tendai and Shingon. Though these two streams of teaching and practice formed the basis of medieval Buddhism in what is generally known as the kenmitsu-taisei, that is, the system of exoteric and esoteric teachings and practices, Shinran laid the foundation for displacing them.

While to some observers Shinran's view may appear overly sectarian, he must be seen in his context which discriminated people in terms of class and religious ability. The major religious institutions were aristocratic and elitist. For them Pure Land teaching was simply a tactful device for people lacking in full spiritual capacity. It is to be noted that Pure Land teaching received persecution, not because of the belief in nembutsu or the recitation of the Buddha Amida's name which was a subsidiary practice in all traditions, but because Honen and his followers, including Shinran, stressed the sole practice (senju) of recitation of the name.

The issue was more than religious, having social implications as well. Confronting the religious monopoly of his time, Shinran reinterpreted Pure Land teaching as the supreme expression and representation of the truth of Buddhism. In doing this, he challenged the traditional understanding of religion. By drawing also on significant aspects of contemporary thought, he completed the logic of the evolution of Pure Land thought toward broader universality, and rooted its teaching and practice in the very nature of Cosmic Amida Buddha.

The paper will demonstrate this effort by a survey of several key issues emerging from Shinran's writings. It is clear that the specter of Tendai teaching looms behind the issues on which Shinran focuses in the "Kyôgyôshinshô" and elsewhere. Among the major issues to be discussed are:

- A. The fundamental reason for the appearance of the Buddha in the world;
- B. The principle of the One Vehicle that grounds the path to enlightenment;

C. Shinran's critical classification of doctrine (nisôshijû) and the method of correlating teachings (kenshônmitsu) as well as the distinction of true and temporary or provisional (shin-ke), all of which establish his interpretation of Pure Land teaching as the supreme teaching in Buddhism;

D. The renewed emphasis on bodhi-mind as the essence of shinjin (endowed trust) which is the foundation of the Buddhist path and the related principle of faith-Buddha-nature (shinjin-busshô) which correlates to features of Tendai and Shingon on an Other Power basis;

E. The universality of salvation, focusing on Ajâtasatru as the most evil person, which corresponds vividly to the teaching of nijôsabutsu [1] (buddhahood of the two vehicles and the salvation of Devadatta in the "Lotus Sutra");

F. The elevation of Amida Buddha to the level of eternal Buddha, with no beginning and no end, the kuonjitsujô Buddha based in the Tendai teaching of hongaku as the all-pervasive and encompassing Buddha-nature, ensures the attainment of enlightenment for all beings. Shinran's reflection on his own religious experience within the context of Pure Land tradition led to the formulation of a religious perspective which took into account the realities of human existence, the nature of religious consciousness and experience and the place of practice as an expression and witness of religious reality. His perspective in its comprehensiveness and realism challenged the prevailing religious understanding of his time and beyond. In similar fashion, it is essential that contemporary Shin Buddhists follow Shinran's lead in offering an existentially grounded, vital and creative interpretation of the teaching for all modern people.

1. Shinran's Religious Experience

It is well known that Shinran (1173-1262) spent 20 years on Mount Hiei from the age of nine years to twenty-nine. During that time, according to Shin tradition, he studied the Tendai teaching thoroughly, including the "Lotus Sutra." However, despite his long, arduous practice and study, he had no assurance that he would attain enlightenment.

According to his wife Eshin-ni, as a result of meditation in the Rokkakudo and a message he received from Prince Shotoku, he became a disciple of Hônen at his hermitage in Yoshimizu. Shinran is usually included in the group of teachers such as Dôgen and Nichiren who left the monastic institution of Mount Hiei, embarking on their respective independent quests for religious understanding and final enlightenment. They departed from Hiei, because they perceived defects or limitations within the Tendai system itself. They became critics of such religious institutions, forming their own alternatives.

In the case of Shinran, his basic motivation for leaving was despair at realizing the high ideals of Tendai. He became deeply aware of his own spiritual incapacity and limitations, resulting from his passionate nature. Though his writings were produced much later in his life, his personal confessions of the power of his passions and attachments represent a life-long, deeply felt awareness of his spiritual condition.

Shinran's self-understanding became the basis on which he re-interpreted the path to enlightenment in Buddhism through absolute Other Power. His doctrinal system is marked by a concern to clarify the basis for the assurance of enlightenment for even the most desperate, defiled person. Following the direction of his own experience, Shinran found release through Hônen in the Pure Land tradition. However, in the course of his ongoing reflection, he came to understand Pure Land teaching as the reflection and expression of spiritual reality itself.

In other words, Pure Land teaching became the absolute and ultimate path in Buddhism. He understood that the Buddha reaches out actively to embrace sentient beings through his Vow power, rather than sentient beings striving to realize Buddha-nature through rigorous monastic practices. Only in this way could foolish people such as himself receive the assurance of enlightenment. It is clear that Shinran was a man of his times and in many ways affirmed or employed the prevailing understanding of Buddhas, the Buddhist world view and kami, with which he had been nurtured from his childhood.

In this connection we would call attention to the work of William LaFleur whose text "The Karma of Words" [2] elucidates the context or background within which Shinran lived. LaFleur defines the medieval period in Japan as the age where a certain understanding of Buddhism and life constituted the basis of Japanese religious and intellectual outlook. The elements of this outlook included belief in karma and the six paths of transmigration in Buddhist cosmology by the masses, and, in addition, the principles of interdependence, and non-duality or

hongaku thought by Buddhist teachers, as well as literati and artists. These aspects of Buddhist teaching captured the intellectual imagination.

The pervasiveness of these features within the medieval religious and philosophical environment clearly expressed themselves in religion, literature and drama, supported in the social sphere by the prevailing system of exoteric and esoteric teachings and practices of the Tendai and Shingon sects. No movement of the time could fail to be influenced by it. Within this environment Shinran set himself clearly against that ethos, going so far as to assert that the general system of 84,000 teachings, which symbolically included all forms and doctrines of Buddhism, represented the self-striving teachings in contrast to the one teaching of absolute Other Power which cannot simply be included among all the alternatives in Buddhism. [3]

Rather, it stands alone as the only true teaching, established by the power of the Primal Vow. Therefore, what is most significant about Shinran is how he went beyond the common beliefs and perspectives to enunciate a distinctive interpretation of Pure Land religious experience, doctrine and realization, establishing it as the supreme teaching of Buddhism. His experience reshaped the teaching to express his singular trust in, and devotion to, Amida Buddha as the sole basis for the universal Enlightenment of ordinary, passion-ridden people of the last age or any age.

All other forms of Buddhism were simply compassionate means designed to lead people to the ultimate realization of the Buddha's embrace which never abandons. He reversed the traditional view of these practices which regarded Pure Land practice of reciting the name as the compassionate means for weak people who were unable to engage in more rigorous discipline.

According to Shinran, the assurance of enlightenment rooted in the nature of spiritual reality and not in human efforts. Of all the teachers who rejected the Tendai tradition in a formal sense, Shinran was the most decisive from the doctrinal standpoint. Nevertheless, in his endeavor to state the religio-philosophical grounds for his interpretation, he had to deal with issues raised by the Tendai system. According to Tendai understanding, the "Lotus Sutra," together with the "Nirvana Sutra," was the final, supreme teaching of the Buddha. Without indicating that the Pure Land teaching, as he understood it, adequately encompassed those issues, it would remain simply a relative path within Buddhism, albeit the most suitable for ordinary people in the last age (mappo).

II. Shinran's Response to Tendai and the "Lotus Sutra "

In this section we will explore various aspects of Shinran's thought for significant indications of influence of the Lotus-Sutra-Tendai teachings which may derive from his exposure to that teaching. With Shinran's existing corpus of writings he never directly quoted from the "Lotus Sutra," though he quoted other important Mahāyāna sutras such as the "Avatamsaka" (Kegon) and "Nirvāna" sutras, as well as many treatises and commentaries. Takada Jisho points out that Shinran quotes from 13 types of sutras, 128 times, but not once from the Lotus. [4]

Further, Shinran was very severe in his criticism of the style of religious faith which he defines as self-power and symbolized for him by the Lotus school (hokkeshū), meaning Tendai. The question becomes all the more intriguing in view of the clear difference Shinran made between his understanding of Buddhism and that of the Nara, Tendai, Shingon and Zen schools. Despite his outward rejection of this tradition, it contributed greatly, if unconsciously, to the development of his teaching.

A. The Fundamental Purpose for the Appearance of the Buddha in the World

One of the most important passages for observing the influence of the "Lotus Sutra " is in connection with the concept of the original purpose for the Buddha's appearing in the world (shusse honkai). This concept was an important aspect of the spiritual authority attributed to the "Lotus Sutra." It proclaims the ideal of universal deliverance for sentient beings. According to the Sutra, the Buddhas appear in the world for one reason and that is "to cause all living beings to open [the gate to] the insight of the Buddha..." [5]

The theme is reiterated four times in this passage with certain modifications, indicating strong emphasis. Later, the Buddha states that it is "only for the purpose of revealing the One Buddha-Vehicle." In the chapter on Teaching in the "Kyōgyōshinshō," Shinran establishes in the preface that the "Larger Pure Land Sutra " has as its central purpose to reveal the true teaching concerning Amida Buddha's Vows, and this was the reason for Sākyamuni's appearing in the world.

He proceeds to raise the question: How is it known that [this Sutra] was the great matter for which Sākyamuni appeared in the world? He responds by quoting the Sutra, which states: "I have appeared in the world and expounded the teachings of the way to enlightenment, seeking to save the multitudes of living beings by blessing them with the benefit that is true and real." [6] In the conclusion of the chapter, Shinran declares that the Larger Sutra , "...is indeed the right exposition for which the Tathāgata appeared in the world...the conclusive and ultimate exposition of the One Vehicle..." [7]

The emphasis which Shinran places on the purpose for the Buddha's appearing in the world highlights the same issues as the "Lotus Sutra" assertion, universal deliverance and the One Vehicle. In a more concrete way Shinran's use of the term "daiji," or great matter, purpose, derives from the "Lotus Sutra" phrase "ichi-daiji-innen" (Murano: One great purpose). However, in the conclusion to the Jōdomonruijushō, Shinran states: "daishō-seson-shukkō-ose daiji-innen" which is a conflation of the terms of the "Pure Land Sutra" and the "Lotus Sutra." [8]

Zonkaku later argued in his Rokuyōshō that despite the fact that the term honkai (original purpose, intention) does not appear in the Pure Land Sutra, the concept is present. There are, according to him, two types of understanding of the concept. The "Lotus Sutra" is concerned with the One Vehicle in terms of true and provisional teaching, while the Pure Land teaching focuses on the nature of the beings for whom the Buddha appears, particularly for those who live in the defiled age. [9]

B. The Principle of One Vehicle as a Symbol of Ultimacy

Shinran declared in the "Kyōgyōshinshō" that the Name or absolute Other Power Nembutsu is the concept of Sea of One Vehicle [ichijōkai]. The principle of the One in the One Vehicle is a central issue in the Mahāyāna tradition and the various schools which developed within it as part of their critical classification of doctrines. It is an assertion of the ultimacy of the particular teaching in question. In general, the term generally has been thought to signify the Mahāyāna teaching over against the Hīnayāna (namely the Srāvaka, listeners, or Pratyekabuddhas, the solitary buddhas). The Mahāyāna, in contrast to these other ways, was aimed to bring all beings to enlightenment. It proceeds in spiritual development from seeking self-benefit to benefitting others. Because the ultimate aim is to become Buddha, the Mahāyāna is also called Buddhāyāna. The One means unique or great. The vehicle means the teaching, that is, the unique teaching that bears all beings to the other shore of enlightenment.

However, as Prof. Inagaki indicates, the One Vehicle also transcends Mahāyāna, since it includes all vehicles, rather than being simply a contrast to them in accord with the goal of liberating all beings. All beings attain the same enlightenment, and all the alternative paths are compassionate means leading to the One Vehicle. For Shinran, the One Vehicle is the Single Buddha Vehicle of the Primal Vow. As a consequence the 84,000 teachings are all provisional or temporary means which lead to the Vow. [10]

This principle was employed in many traditions. We can find it in the teachings of the Kegon, Lotus and Shingon traditions, as well as the Pure Land. The specific term "Sea of the One Vehicle," which was adopted by Shinran, appears in Shan-tao's commentary to the "Meditation Sutra" (Gengibun section) where it is described as instantaneous or immediate teaching (tongyō). In this context it is the unsurpassed great benefit, the true benefit. The term "Sea" refers to the breadth or depth of the teaching.

In other words, the Nembutsu of the Primal Vow is the ultimate teaching. In the "Gutokushō," [11] Shinran presents the Lotus, Tendai, Shingon and Zen paths among the True Teachings of Buddhism because they also are instantaneous, immediate teachings. However, they are difficult paths or Saintly Paths, in contrast to the Pure Land teaching which is the easy way of universal salvation based in the Vow. The teachings in the difficult paths are upāya (ways to help people toward the Pure Land path). As we pointed out above, Shinran indicates that the 84,000 teachings are all upāya, compassionate means of good of the Pure Land. They are the yōmon, essential gate or kemon, temporary gate, referred to in the Transformed Land chapter of the "Kyōgyōshinshō." [12]

Though the concept of One Vehicle appears in other schools and in Pure Land tradition, the immediate background of Shinran's thought is the expression of this principle in the Tendai teaching and the "Lotus Sutra" which relates the One Vehicle to the purpose of the Buddha's appearance in the world. In the history of the interpretation of the "Lotus Sutra" there has been a question whether there are only three vehicles or possibly four. In chapter 2, we read that:

"There is only one teaching, that is, the One-vehicle
In the Buddha-worlds of the ten quarters
There is not a second or a third vehicle
Except when the Buddhas teach expediently. [13]
(The Buddhas) appear in the worlds
Only for the One Vehicle.
Only this is true; the other two are not." [14]

In the same chapter there are several references to the One Buddha-vehicle which the Buddha divides into three as a means for teaching. [15] In the parable of the burning house in the "Lotus Sutra," the father had promised his children their favorite carts if they would come out. These carts were sheep, deer and bullock. However, in the end the father gave them all equally large, white bullock carts. There is an implication of a vehicle beyond the ordinary three. The Buddha declares: "Sāriputra! The rich man persuaded his sons to come out at first by promising them the gifts of the three kinds of carts. But the carts which he gave them later were the largest, most comfortable carts adorned with treasures...I led all beings at first with the teaching of the Three Vehicles. Now I will save them only by the Great Vehicle..." [16]

Though it was apparently a vehicle beyond the three that were promised, they were all united in ultimately arriving at the same enlightenment. While Shinran had the "Lotus Sutra" and Tendai Buddhism in his background, his passage is based on the text of the Queen Srimālā Sutra (Shōmangyō). However, Shinran's reading of the passage differs from that in the Sutra itself. [17] Commenting on the character of realization of the arhats and pratyekabuddhas, the Sutra states: "Why is that so? Because the vehicles of the Disciples and the Self-Enlightened ones are included in the Great Vehicle. Lord, the 'Great Vehicle' is an expression for Buddha Vehicle. In that way, the three vehicles are counted as one vehicle (ekayāna)...The ultimate realization of the Dharmakāya is the One Vehicle. Lord, the Tathāgata is not one thing, and the Dharmakāya something else, but the Tathāgata is himself the Dharmakāya. The ultimate realization of the Dharmakāya is the ultimate of the One Vehicle..." [18] To heighten the ultimacy of the teaching, Shinran reads the passage "There is no other Tathāgata, there is no other dharma-body." [19]

According to Yamabe and Akanuma, Shinran is maintaining that there is no Tathāgata, Dharmakāya, or Truth beyond or different from the ultimate truth that the Buddha Vehicle (of the Primal Vow) represents. [20] For Hoshino Gempo, this means that for those who attain rebirth in the Pure Land are not different from Amida Buddha and that rebirth is to attain Nirvāna. Dharmakāya, Bodhisattva, Amida Buddha, and Suchness, are all one with no distinction. [21]

Shinran holds to the Four Vehicle interpretation in stating that there are no two or three vehicles. The three lead to the One Vehicle which is none other than the One (Unique) Buddha Vehicle. [22] The "Lotus Sutra" is a conciliatory or unifying text. In Japanese Tendai, it provided the basis of a broad syncretism. In the case of Shinran and other Kamakura Buddhists, however, the other side of the One Vehicle in terms of the ultimacy of the teaching which embraces all and which all must embrace became the emphasis. The ultimacy of the Name - nembutsu was further strengthened by a quotation from the Nirvāna Sūtra: "The ultimate in the process of consummation is the six paramitas. The ultimate that has been consummated is the One Vehicle that all sentient beings will realize. The One-Vehicle is called Buddha-nature. All beings without exception, possess the One Vehicle. Because it is covered over by their ignorance, they are unable to see it." [23]

Following the presentation of the Ocean of the One Vehicle in the Practice chapter of the Kyōgyōshinshō, Shinran sets out a long list of contrasts or comparisons from either the standpoint of the nature of the teaching (48) or the person (11). These comparisons are followed by a list of 27 similes which drive home the point that the One Vehicle of the Vow "is unhindered, unbounded, supreme, profound, inexplicable, indescribable and inconceivable." [24] The many distinctions and similes relate to the critical classification of teachings. The contrast is essentially Other Power over against self power. Shinran makes clear throughout the absolute supremacy of the One Vehicle of the Primal Vow.

C. Shinran's Critical Classification of Doctrine

On the basis of Shinran's assertion that the Pure Land teaching represented the fundamental purpose for the Buddha's appearing in the world, and was the true One Vehicle teaching or the supreme teaching, he had to formulate his own critical classification of doctrines. He, therefore, followed the practice of Mahāyāna Buddhist schools in positioning his teaching in relation to other schools. While he generally accepted the general line of Pure Land analysis delineated in Hōnen's Senjaku-shū, as well as the shin-ke, gon-jitsu distinctions of true and

temporary or provisional employed in general Mahâyâna and Tendai, they did not fully afford him the categories with which to clarify the supremacy of his teaching grounded in absolute Other Power. The Tendai distinctions compared teachings in terms of their completeness (en) and suddenness (ton).

The Pure Land system made distinctions based on the decline of human capacity to fulfill the practices and the theory of mappô. To make his point, Shinran required a system that singled out the principle of absolute Other Power, as well as distinguishing self-power Pure Land practice. As a consequence, he developed the system known as Two Pairs and Four Levels (nisôshiju). [25] In addition to the emphasis on absolute Other Power, this theory implied the principle of selection/rejection (hairyû) or aspect of exclusiveness. On the other hand, he also employed the principles of explicit and implicit (perhaps, exoteric-surface, esoteric-inner) to correlate the Pure Land Sutra's teachings (kenshônmitsu). This approach reflected a more conciliatory and inclusive (kaie) approach to the various teachings. Each approach aimed to establish his interpretation of the Pure Land teaching as the supreme teaching in Buddhism, while also exhibiting influence from his Tendai background.

The terms which Shinran employed in the system of Two Pairs and Four Levels appear in Pure Land sources. However, his arrangement and interpretation derived from his own experience and need to clarify the relation of his teaching to Buddhism generally and alternative Pure Land factions specifically. Shinran's system makes the distinction of sudden transcendence (chô) and gradual, progression (shutsu), corresponding to the Mahayana principle of suddenness or instantaneous and from the standpoint of Other Power, vertical-lengthwise (shu), self power, and horizontal-crosswise (ocho), absolute Other Power.

Hence, the combination of these terms result in four types of teachings, indicating the religious styles of the many sects. Shushutsu (vertical-lengthwise progression) represents the Hinayana tradition of attaining Enlightenment through many aeons of cultivation and development. Shuchô (vertical transcendence) signifies the self-striving Mahayana sects such as Tendai, Shingon and Zen which offer the way to Buddhahood through many methods of self-cultivation. shutsu (horizontal progression) stands for attaining rebirth in the Pure Land through self-striving nembutsu. Finally, chô (crosswise-transcendence) expresses Shinran's sense of the unconditional embrace of the Buddha which never abandons but takes us in completely in an instant, experienced as the moment of joyous trust. Shinran declares: "Transcending crosswise is the true teaching based on the fulfillment of the Vow, which embodies the perfectly consummate true reality. This indeed is the true essence of the Pure Land way." [26]

The principle of explicit and implicit understanding is not strictly a critical classification of doctrine. [27] Rather, it is a method of harmonizing the differing tendencies or perspectives on religious practice of the Larger Pure Land Sûtra, the Smaller Pure Land Sutra and the Meditation Sûtra. Each sûtra was typified by a particular Vow among the forty eight Vows of Amida Buddha. As we have seen above, the Larger Sutra preeminently represented the Eighteenth Vow, while the Smaller Sutra epitomized the twentieth Vow and the practice of recitation of the Name. The Meditation Sutra exemplifies the nineteenth Vow and practices of morality and meditation.

According to Shinran, the Larger Sutra clearly teaches the principle of absolute Other Power. However, the Smaller Sutra and the Meditation Sutra promote self power practices exteriorally in their manifest teaching. However, from the standpoint of trust (shinjin), they all teach the Primal Vow of absolute Other Power. Though focused on Pure Land teaching, Shinran's perspective on the sûtras hints at a mode of classification which reflects the exoteric-esoteric outlook of Tendai and its Shingon component.

D. Shinran's Renewed Emphasis on Bodhi-mind.

Hônen had been criticised strongly by Myôe Shônin for his apparent rejection of the cardinal Buddhist principle of bodhi-mind. However Hônen refers to it several times in the Senjakushû, but viewing it from the standpoint of the universality of the nembutsu, He notes that each tradition in Buddhism has their own concept and correlative practices. [28]

Over against the applicability of the nembutsu to any level of spiritual development (or lack of it) the practices employed in any school to fulfill the aspiration for enlightenment, are, according to Hônen, auxiliary practices and provisional. [29] Though the principle is indispensable in maintaining the spiritual foundation of Buddhist motivation for undertaking discipline and practice, it was Hônen's insight that in the way it was presented by contemporary schools, it could not be fulfilled by the common people of the decadent age. Nevertheless, bodhi-mind is the mind that aspires to become Buddha with the object of bringing all other beings to equal enlightenment. The ideal which it represents cannot be restricted to a particular school, since it is a

fundamental principle of all Buddhism. It may have appeared to Hōnen's critics that he had rejected the principle and ideal of bodhi-mind.

Consequently, Shinran focused on this teaching in the Faith chapter of the Kyōgyōshinshō, indicating its fundamental importance for spiritual life. In this text he states that in contrast to the self-power-within-Other-Power aspiration for enlightenment, the bodhi-mind of "transcending crosswise" (ōchō) "is directed to beings through the power of the Vow. It is the mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood. The mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood is the mind aspiring for great enlightenment of crosswise orientation..." [30] Bodhi-mind is shinjin.

Related to Shinran's renewal of emphasis on the principle of bodhi-mind within the context of Pure Land thought, he also stressed the identity of joyous trust (shingyō-shinjin) and Buddha-nature. To explicate this association Shinran depends largely on the Nirvāna Sutra and the Avatamsaka Sutra (Kegon). In the Nirvāna Sutra it states: "Buddha-nature is great shinjin. Why? Because through shinjin the bodhisattva-mahāsattva has acquired all the pāramitās from charity to wisdom. All sentient beings will without fail ultimately realize great shinjin. Therefore it is taught, 'all sentient beings are possessed of Buddha-nature.' Great shinjin is none other than Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathāgata." [31]

The concept of Buddha-nature, which is the forecast of the realization for all beings, is given an active turn by Shinran when he declares: "Because this mind is the Tathāgata's mind of great compassion, it necessarily becomes the decisive cause of attaining the fulfilled land. The Tathāgata, turning with compassion toward the ocean of living beings in pain and affliction, has given unhindered and vast pure shinjin to the ocean of sentient beings." [32] Shinran depicts the relation of the mind of sentient being and the Buddha, quoting T'an-luan and Shan-tao. According to T'an-luan, "This mind attains Buddhahood means that the mind becomes Buddha; this mind is itself Buddha means that there is no Buddha apart from the mind. This is like the relationship of fire and wood: fire arises from the wood; it cannot exist apart from the wood...The wood, on the other hand, is consumed by the fire; it becomes the fire." Shan-tao states: "This mind attains Buddhahood. This mind is itself Buddha. There is no Buddha apart from this mind." [33] It is also interesting to note that with this principle Shinran also transcends the concept of mappō.

The pervasiveness of endowed trust-Buddha-nature (shinjin-busshō) is not bound by time. Rather, the condition of sentient beings, trapped within the wheel of births and deaths and bound by ignorance and passion from beginningless time, motivates and activates the Buddha's universal, unconditional compassion through the cosmos and through all aeons. The passages from the Nirvāna Sutra reveal the source or basis of endowed entrust. From the Avatamsaka Sutra Shinran quotes an eloquent poem exalting trusting faith, depicting its manifestation within the person as the reflection of the nature and character of Buddha. The experience of endowed trust establishes the person as equal to the Tathāgata. According to the poem on trusting faith: Shinjin is the source of enlightenment, the mother of virtues; It nurtures all forms of goodness. It cuts away the net of doubt and breaks free from the currents of desire; It unfolds the supreme enlightenment of nirvana.[34]

The themes of attaining to the company of the truly assured in this life, equality to the Tathāgata, Maitreya or Vaidehi in Shinran's writings express the high spiritual status conferred on those who have experienced endowed trust. [35] These concepts are Shinran's alternative to the expectation in Tendai of attaining union with the reality of all things in an instant of thought (ichinen-sanzen), based on the principle of the unity of Buddha-nature and the ten worlds (jikkaigogu), and the Shingon goal of becoming Buddha in this very body (sokushinjōbutsu) which signifies union with the cosmos represented in Tathāgata Mahāvairocana. However, where the latter, as commonly understood, are pursued as the goal of discipline and rigorous practice, the former results from the working of Other Power which transforms attitudes and values. Hence, the poem states that "If one awakens the mind that aspires for enlightenment (In Shinran's thought this is shinjin), One diligently practices the virtues of the Buddhas." [36] Nevertheless, despite the spiritual unity of the Buddha-mind and the mind of sentient being, one remains a foolish common mortal, while free of arrogance and self-indulgence, and dwelling "in the realm of birth-and-death without fatigue or revulsion." [37]

E. The Universality of Deliverance

The Mahāyāna principle of universality of deliverance has been expressed in various ways in our previous discussion. However, it is a mark of the "Lotus Sutra" that all followers of the various vehicles and paths in Buddhism will attain the highest Enlightenment, even though their aspirations and practice may be devoted to inferior ways. This is termed nijōsabutsu which signifies that followers of the sāvaka and pratyekabuddha or hinayāna paths, on entering the Mahāyāna, all become Buddha. In addition, the Sutra explains how Devadatta, who is traditionally known as an evil person who tried to destroy the Buddha and take over the Order, as well

as inspiring Ajātasatru to his horrific crimes against his parents, was a teacher of the Buddha in a past life, and will himself become a Buddha named Heavenly King. [38] It also depicts the immediate transformation of the dragon king's daughter into a Buddha as a result of her trust and devotion to the Buddha. The account relates her spiritual capacities, but the monks did not believe she could become Buddha in an instant, because she was a woman. However, her offering was immediately accepted by the Buddha, and instantly she transformed to a Buddha to the astonishment of the disciples. [39]

Further, in chapter II the "Lotus Sutra " graphically delineates the universality and equality of deliverance by recounting the various ways that people employ to attain enlightenment beginning with the sages who have undergone discipline to those who show even the slightest spiritual inclination. All of these people attain the enlightenment of the Buddha. Those who practised many virtues, observed precepts and meditation down to those who merely enter a stupa-mausoleum, reciting just once "Namo Buddhaya," or bowing to an image or doing gasshō, all attain the same enlightenment. [40] All Buddhas vow to cause all living beings to attain the same enlightenment as they do. Hōnen and Shinran both emphasized the absolute universality of enlightenment.

In the Senjakushū Hōnen discounts all those means to gain enlightenment which are based on the accidents of birth, such as wealth, intellectual and moral capacities. He attacked the elitist character of the Buddhism of the time, and declared that the Buddha had only vowed that the recitation of his name was the basis for the enlightenment of all people. Shinran carried this thought forward and in the Faith chapter, he indicates that the great sea of faith, which is endowed and realized in the sea of beings, makes absolutely no distinctions whatsoever, since the trusting mind originates in the Buddha and not in beings. [41]

In his description of transcending crosswise, Shinran states that "in the pure fulfilled land of the Great Vow, grade and level are irrelevant; in the space of an instant, one swiftly transcends and realizes the supreme, perfect, true enlightenment..." [42] It is also significant that Shinran, quoting the Nirvāna Sutra extensively, focuses on Ajātasatru as representative of the people "who are hard to cure," that is to bring to enlightenment. The Sutra describes the complete vileness and degeneracy of this king who had killed his own father and threatened his mother at the instigation of Devadatta. As he struggles for a solution to his ills by consulting with his many ministers, Ajātasatru is led to approach the Buddha. The Buddha defers going into nirvāna, in order to deliver him. He states: "Good sons! I say, For the sake of Ajātasatru, I will not enter nirvāna. You are yet unable to grasp the profound meaning of this. Why? Because for the sake of means for all foolish beings, and Ajatasatru includes universally all those who commit the five grave offenses. Further for the sake of means for all sentient beings of the created state...Ajātasatru refers to those possessed of blind passions...to all those who have yet to awaken the mind aspiring for supreme, perfect enlightenment." [43]

The consideration of the Ajātasatru story leads Shinran to take up the exclusion clause attached to the eighteenth Vow which indicates that those who have committed the five grave sins or slandered the dharma are excluded from the Vow. According to traditional Buddhism, these evil deeds would consign a person to the lowest hell for an inconceivable length of time. However, Shan-tao maintained that the clause intended to warn people not to commit such evil deeds, but through Amida's compassion, they are still embraced by the Vow. In general, Shinran follows Shan-tao, thereby maintaining the universality of deliverance for even the most evil person. In this way Shinran offers a counter to the ideal of universal compassion in the "Lotus Sutra," by appealing to the Nirvāna Sutra and Pure Land principle.

F. The Eternity of Amida Buddha

One of the signal elements in Shinran's thought which reflects his background in the "Lotus Sutra" and Tendai thought is his conception of Amida as the Eternal Buddha, designated as "kuonjitsujō." This term appears in Shinran's wasan. In his hymns on the Pure Land Shinran states: "Since Amida became a Buddha Ten kalpas have passed. So (the Sutra) says. But he seems to be a Buddha Older than the innumerable mote-dot kalpas." [44] Also, in #88 we read: "Amida, the Buddha existing from the eternal past, Pitying the common fools (in the world) of the five defilements, Appeared in the castle of Gaya Manifesting himself as Sakyamuni Buddha.." [45] The background of these hymns may be found in the passage from the Nirvana Sutra which Shinran quotes in connection with the story of Ajātasatru: "Good sons! I therefore say for the sake of such bodhisattvas, 'The Tathagata is eternal, and undergoes no change.' My disciples, who on hearing these words, do not grasp my intent, will surely say, 'The Tathagata after all will ultimately never enter nirvana.'" [46]

Even more clearly, we can see the influence of the "Lotus Sutra" which in chapter VII tells that the life of the Buddha Great-Universal-Wisdom-Excellence lasted five hundred and forty billion nayuta kalpas. [47] and

chapter XVI which has generally been regarded as the paramount source for the principle of the eternity of the Buddha in Tendai interpretation. However, Shinran followed the image given in chapter VII which narrates the parable of the magic city. According to this illustration, the earth element of the universe is ground to make ink. A drop of ink no larger than a particle of dust and equalling a kalpa is deposited in each country of the trichiliocosm until it is completely exhausted.

The length of the Buddha Great-Universal-Wisdom-Excellence is calculated at five hundred and forty billion nayuta kalpas. Further, it has been measureless time since he went into nirvana. Though chapter VII suggests that the Buddha has passed into nirvana, despite his lengthy career, chapter XVI indicates that the Buddha will never pass away. The Buddha declares: "As I said before, it is very long since I became a Buddha. The duration of my life is innumerable, asamkhya kalpas. I am always here. I shall never pass away." [48] In a verse the Buddha also states: "In order to save the [perverted] people, I will expediently show my Nirvana to them. In reality I shall never pass away. I always live here and expound the Law." [49]

Shinran must have been aware of these images and the Tendai interpretation when he affirmed that even though the Pure Land Sutra indicates that it is ten kalpas since Amida became Buddha, he was truly a Buddha of much greater age in the past and in the future. In this context, he used the term "jinden-kuon-gō" referring to this imagery. As the eternal Buddha, he manifests himself as many Buddhas as a compassionate means to guide complacent and ignorant beings to enlightenment. The name "Amitābha" means infinite light and "Amitāyus" means eternal or infinite life. However, the numbers employed to describe him do not compare to those from the "Lotus Sutra."

Shinran apparently felt the disjunction and reinterpreted the meaning of Amida. This reinterpretation was necessary to provide the absolute foundation for his understanding of the universal condition of sentient beings and the source of deliverance. The deeper the incapacity of beings to perfect themselves, the more elevated and absolute must be the ground of that deliverance. Absolute unconditional deliverance requires absolute, universal foundation. Otherwise, there could be no assurance of final enlightenment for such debased beings. This insight derived from his own experience, enabled him to see Amida as the total cosmic reality. As the true representation of Buddha-nature in all beings, it becomes the force within them that arouses their aspiration for final fulfillment and enlightenment.

Hence, Shinran declares: "Nirvana has innumerable names. It is impossible to give them in detail; I will list only a few. Nirvana is called extinction of passions, the uncreated, peaceful happiness, eternal bliss, true reality, dharmakaya, dharma-nature, suchness, oneness and Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is none other than Tathagata. This Tathagata pervades the countless worlds; it fills the hearts and minds of the ocean of all beings. Thus plants, trees and land all attain Buddhahood...Dharmakaya-as-suchness has neither color nor form. From this oneness was manifested form, called Dharmakaya-as-compassion. Taking this form, the Buddha proclaimed his name as Bhiksu Dharmakara and established the 48 great Vows....This Tathagata has fulfilled the Vows which are the cause of his Buddhahood, and is thus called "Tathagata of the fulfilled body." This is none other than Amida Tathagata. [50]

Conclusion

We have attempted in this paper to survey the various ways in which the Lotus Sutra and Tendai thought influenced or provided background to Shinran's interpretation of Pure Land teaching. Here I wish to express my appreciation to Prof. Hisao Inagaki for his insights and suggestions in clarifying various points. In his interpretation of Pure Land thought, Shinran did not directly attack or criticize the Tendai or other contemporary traditions, or quote from the "Lotus Sutra" itself. Rather, he addressed the major issues raised in that tradition and formulated a comprehensive alternative. He deepened the philosophical basis of Pure Land teaching, establishing the supremacy of the teaching as the universal, true way to enlightenment.

On the basis of his own religious experience he explicated the grounds for the assurance of deliverance for even the most evil person. He thus dealt with the external basis of deliverance in the cosmos and the internal expression and witness of deliverance in personal life. The two aspects are joined and united in our endowed trust (shinjin) through the recitation of the nembutsu as the name which manifests the source, and as our grateful testimony to the wisdom and compassion revealed in our lives. The comprehensiveness and spiritual keenness that marks Shinran's interpretation provides us with a firm basis for addressing modern problems of the meaning of life and of religious faith in a dark time. He indicates that we can have firm convictions without vindictiveness; we can be realistic, without despair and we can share the teaching without fear of rejection.

Above all, we can be inspired and challenged by the vast vision of Amida Buddha as the true essence of all reality and the foundation of all our hopes.

Endnotes

1. This term is translated directly. However, it has been pointed out by Prof. Hisao Inagaki in personal correspondence that the two vehicles are led to the Mahāyāna and thence attain Buddhahood.
2. William R. LaFleur, "The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan." Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983. See also Hisao Inagaki. "The Bodhisattva Doctrine as Conceived and Developed by the Founders of the New Sects in the Heian and Kamakura Periods," in Leslie S. Kawamura, ed., "The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhism." Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981. pp. 165-89. For discussion of hongaku see pp. 177 ff.
3. Ichinentanenshomon. Jodo Shinshu Seiten. Kyoto: Hongangji Shuppankyoku, 1988. p. 690. See also, "The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way." Shin Buddhism Translation Series. Kyoto: Hongani International Center. IV, pp. 501-02. (Hereafter SBTS and volume number). Kyōgyōshinshō, Keshindokan Shinshū Shogyō Zenshō (SSZ) II, p. 154.
4. Takada, Jisho, "Shinran Shōnin no Hokkekyō-kan," Ryukoku Kyogaku, #12 (1977, 6), p. 48. His information is based on the article by Yamada Ryujo and Fukuhara Ryogen, "Shinran Kyōgaku to Sono Chōsaku no Inyōsho," Ryukoku Daigaku Ronshu, #365, #366.
5. Senchu Murano, trans., "The Lotus Sutra." Tokyo: Nichirenshu Headquarters, 1974. pp. 28-29.
6. "The True Teaching Practice and Realization," I. p. 65.
7. Ibid., p. 67.
8. "Truly we know, then, that the crucial matter for which the Great Sage, the World-honored One, appeared in this world was to reveal the true benefit of the compassionate Vow..." *Passages on the Pure Land Way*, SBTS, 1982. p. 57. SSZ, II, p. 454. In the Preface to the chapter on "Teaching of the Kyogyoshinsho" (SSZ I p. 4; SBTS I, p. 63, #2), Shinran employs the terminology of the Larger Pure Land Sutra: Shaka shukko ose. The Muryōjunyoraie (SSZ, II, p. 4) gives it as Daishi shutsugen seken.
9. Ikuwa, Kanmyo, "Kyōgyōshō ni sesshu seraretaru Hokkekyō," Takada Gakuho, 36, 1954. pp. 22-23. Also SSZ, II, pp. 222-23.
10. Hoshino, Gempo, Kōge Kyōgyōshinshō; Kyōgyō no Kan. Kyoto: Hozokan, 1982. pp. 372-73. See also Hisao Inagaki, "The Bodhisattva Doctrine as Conceived and Developed by the Founders of the New Sects in the Heian and Kamakura Periods," in Leslie S. Kawamura, op cit., pp. 171-77.
11. Jodo Shinshu Seiten. op. cit., p. 501; 519-20
12. SSZ, II, p. 144
13. Murano, op. cit., p. 33.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 30.
16. Ibid., p. 59.
17. SBTS, I, p. 184, note #84.
18. Alex and Hideko Wayman, trans., "The Lion's Roar of Queen Srimala." New York: Columbia University Press, 1974. p. 92.

19. Prof. Inagaki notes in personal correspondence that the statement "There is no other Tathâgata, there is no other dharma-body" "is a common mistranslation. From the Tibetan text of the Shômangyô, the phrase clearly means, 'That which is Tathagata is not different from dharma-body.' This means that Tathâgata and Dharmakâya are synonyms."

20. Yamabe Shugaku, Akanuma Chizen, Kyôgyôshinshô Kôgi, Kyoto: Hozokan, 1952. I, p. 419.

21. Hoshino, op. cit., pp. 374-75. 22. SBTS, I, p. 148. In Letter #10 of Shinran's Letters [Jodo Shinshu Seiten, op. cit., p. 757] Shinran lists four vehicles. In the chapter on the "Transformed Land, of the Kyogyoshinsho" (SBTS, op. cit., IV, p. 503), Shinran designates the teaching as "the true within the true, the One Vehicle within the [One] Vehicle." The issue of three or four vehicles goes back to China. The monk Fa Yun interpreted the "Lotus Sutra" as teaching four vehicles. It was adopted by Chih I, founder of T'ien t'ai (Tendai) and taught by Prince Shôtoku in his commentary. [Bukkyôgo Daijiten, 3 vol., Kyoto, Hozokan, 1987. I, p. 524]. According to Bukkyô Tetsugaku Jiten, 5 vol., Tokyo: Tosai Tetsugaku Shoin, 1966. III, pp. 204-05, The principle was also adopted by the Hosso and Sanron schools. However, Mochizuki Bukkyô Daijiten, 10 vol., Tokyo: Sekosha, 1932-63. II, pp. 1584-86 states that Sanron does not claim a fourth beyond the three vehicles. The Tendai and Kegon sects see the three vehicles as upaya and the Buddha vehicle as the true vehicle.

23. SBTS, I, p. 149.

24. Ibid., p. 156.

25. SBTS, II, pp. 250-51; 261-62.

26. Ibid., II, p. 261.

27. SBTS, IV, pp. 484-87; p. 506; 507-10.

28. Tessho Kondo, Morris J. Augustine, trans., "Senchaku Hongan Nembutsushu" Pure Land. New Series 3, December 1986, pp. 87-88. Honen states: "Although the phrase 'awaken the bodhi mind' remains the same, its meaning differs according to each sect and school."

29. Kondo and Augustine, trans. "Senchaku Hongan Nembutsushu," The Pure Land. New Series, No. 1, December 1984. p. 6.

30. Ibid., II, p. 250.

31. Ibid., II, p. 236.

32. Ibid., II, p. 235.

33. Ibid., II, pp. 259-60.

34. Ibid., II, p. 238.

35. SSZ, II, pp. 661-62. Jodo Shinshu Seiten, #11, pp. 758-59. SBTS, II, p. 103.

36. Ibid., II, p. 240.

37. Ibid., II, p. 242.

38. Lotus Sutra, XII; Murano, op. cit., p. 179.

39. Ibid., pp. 181-83.

40. Ibid., pp. 36-39.

41. SBTS, II, pp. 249-50.

42. Ibid., II, pp. 261-62.

43. Ibid., II, pp. 291-92.

44. "Jōdo Wasan." Ryukoku Translation Series IV. Kyoto: Ryukoku University Translation Center, 1965. p. 87, #55.

45. Ibid., p. 122.

46. SBTS, II, p. 309.

47. Murano, op. cit., pp. 116-17. See also "Jodo Wasan." Ryukoku Translation Series IV, note 2, p. 87. It is pointed out here that Shinran adopted the image of this chapter in defining his idea of mote-dot kalpas.

48. Ibid., II, p. 220.

49. Ibid., II, p. 22.

50. "Yuishinshōmon'i." Shin Buddhism Translation Series, Yoshifumi Ueda, ed. Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1979. p. 42.