

The Nembutsu; getting to know who is arrogant, conceited, prideful and vain

Shinran Shonin wrote in one of the “Hymns on the Pure Land”:
Watching over the followers of the Nembutsu
In the worlds of the ten quarters, as numerous as the dust particles,
He embraces them and does not forsake;
Hence, He is called ‘Amida’.

The Primal Vow(本願)

Bodhisattva Dharamakara

Tathagata Amitabha-Amitayus The Buddha of Infinite Light and Boundless Life

A Record in Lament of Divergences 歎異抄 Chapter 2

As for me, I simply accept and entrust myself to what my revered teacher told me, “Just say the nembutsu and be saved by Amida”; nothing else is involved.

I have no idea whether the nembutsu is truly the seed for my being born in the Pure Land or whether it is the karmic act for which I must fall into hell. Should I have been deceived by Master Honen and, saying the nembutsu, were to fall into hell, even then I would have no regrets.

The reason is, if I could attain Buddhahood by endeavoring in other practices, but said the nembutsu and so fell into hell, then I would feel regret at having been deceived. But I am incapable of any other practice, so hell is decidedly my abode whatever I do.

If Amida’s Primal Vow is true, Shakyamuni’s teaching cannot be false. If the Buddha’s teaching is true, Shan-tao’s commentaries cannot be false. If Shan-tao’s commentaries are true can Honen’s words be lies? If Honen’s words are true, then surely what I say cannot be empty.

Such, in the end, is how this foolish person entrusts himself [to the Vow]. Beyond this, whether you take up the nembutsu or whether you abandon it is for each of you to determine.

Lamp for the Latter Ages 末灯鈔 Letter 20

“There was a time for each of you when you knew nothing of Amida’s Vow and did not say the Name of Amida Buddha, but now, guided by the compassionate means of Shakyamuni and Amida, you have begun to hear the Vow. Formerly you were drunk with the wine of ignorance and had a liking only for the three poisons of greed, anger, and folly, but since you have begun to hear the Buddha’s Vow you have gradually awakened from the drunkenness of ignorance, gradually rejected the three poisons, and come to prefer at all times the medicine of Amida Buddha.”

“In people who have long heard the Buddha’s Name and said the Nembutsu, surely there are signs of rejecting the evil of this world and signs of their desire to cast off the evil in themselves. When people first begin to hear the Buddha’s Vow, they wonder, having become thoroughly aware of the karmic evil in their hearts and minds, how they will ever attain birth in the Amida’s Pure Land as they are. To such people we teach that since we are possessed of blind passions, the Buddha receives us without judging whether our hearts are good or bad.

When upon hearing this, a person’s trust in the Buddha has grown deep, he or she comes to abhor such a self, and lament continued existence in birth-and-death; and such a person then joyfully says the Name of Amida Buddha deeply entrusting oneself to the Vow. That people stop doing wrong as the heart moves them, although earlier they gave thought to such things and committed them as their minds dictated, is surely a sign of having rejected this world.

Moreover, since Shinjin that aspires for attainment of birth arises through the encouragement of Shakyamuni and Amida, once the true and real heart is made to rise in us, how can we remain as we were, possessed of blind passions?”

In our present lives: The State of Non-retrogression of those assured of Birth in the Pure Land,
正定聚不退轉

Hymn of True Shinjin and the Nembutsu 正信念仏偈

MYOKONIN, 妙好人 fervent Nembutsu followers, many who lived simple lives and/or had hardships.
Asahara Saichi of Iwami and Ashikaga Genza of Inaba
妙好人の浅原才市さん、因幡の足利源左さんのことば

Asahara Saichi's sayings:

I heard, I heard. I heard a splendid thing.
A common mortal becomes a Buddha.
Even though I hear repeatedly, nothing changes.
That who doesn't change is who the Buddha seeks to save.
聞いた聞いた
いいこと聞いた
凡夫が仏になること聞いた
聞いても聞いても何ともない
何ともないのが目当てと聞いた

From the Buddha, I received Buddhahood and say Namō Amida butsu.
ほとけから
ほとけをもろうて
なむあみだぶつ

Saichi, where are you?
I was given the Pure Land but I'm still here in this saḥā world.
This is gratitude, Namōamidabutsu.
I've already been shown the Pure Land,
And say the Nembutsu here in this saḥā world.
才市や何処におる 浄土貰うて娑婆におる
これがよろこび なむあみだぶつ
わたしゃ浄土を先に見て 娑婆で申すなむあみだぶつ

I, Saichi, having resolved my death and funeral,
with Namō Amida butsu, I remain in this world.
才市や臨終すんで 葬式すんで
なむあみだぶつとこの世にはをる云々

Sayings of Ashikaga Genza:

Even if I forget, as long as there is Amida who won't forget,
I remain myself, forgetting along the way.
忘れても、忘れぬ弥陀がある故に、忘れながらも、この身このまま。

I, Genza, more evil than any others,
The Primal Vow (Gohongwan) seeks to save me first.
So therefore, there is no one who won't be saved.
「他人より悪いこの源左をなあ、一番真っ先に助けるの御本願だけえ、助からぬ人なしだがやあ」

One episode of Genza when he was 79 years old is notable.
A famous guest speaker was giving a lecture, but Genza having to travel a great distance arrived late and missed it.
In apology, Genza went to the speaker and massaged his shoulders. Upon asking what the contents of the talk was, the speaker replied, "One has to endure whatever happens in life. That was my message."
To this Genza replied, "I'm the foolish simpleton. People are the ones who have always had to endure me."
The speaker was astounded by the words of this Nembutsu follower.

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