

To the reader,

The short Dharma messages in this series of four pamphlets appeared in the *Daijō* (Hongwanji Shuppan Press) from April 2003 to March 2011. They are excerpts from the publication *Tsukizuki no kotoba*, which contained articles written by eminent Jodo Shinshu ministers and scholars who elaborated on the meaning of the Dharma quotes featured on the Shinshu Kyodan Rengo calendar for those years. The Dharma quotes were from a variety of sources, including Shinran Shonin's writings, the sayings of Rennyo Shonin, passages from the Pure Land Sutras and scriptures, and notable Nembutsu practitioners.

When I was translating the Dharma messages, I incorporated the text from the *Collected Works of Shinran* and the Shin Buddhist Translation Series whenever possible. There were occasions, however, when I felt that a mere translation of the Dharma message would not be understood by the reader, so I took the liberty of adding some explanation and background information when necessary.

It is the hope of our Jodo Shinshu institution that these pamphlets will foster interest and appreciation of the Nembutsu teaching, and further its propagation in society, throughout the world, and to future generations.

Gene Sekiya

Translator
Hongwanji International Center
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*Humanity yearns for goods, but the Buddha attempts
to provide insight to see them.*

ASHIKAGA JO'EN

“Intoning* [and being in accord with*] the Name [of Amida, *Namo Amida Butsu*], enables one, especially the person himself, to hear it with his heart. (Translator’s note: Here, the character 称, which has a dual meaning, is used. When read as *tonaeru*, it means ‘intoning,’ and when read as *kanau*, it means ‘in accordance with.’) When I was a child, whenever we had services together as a family, I was always told that I should listen carefully to my own voice as I chanted. In *Kyogyoshinsho* it is written,

...When one is in accord with the Buddha’s intent, the Buddha will give his sanction, saying, ‘So it is, so it is.’

Being in accord means being consistent with the heart of Amida Tathagata, and being completely in accord with the heart of the Tathagata enables me, right now, to [truly] hear the Nembutsu which arises from within me. For the Nembutsu to come out of someone as unlikely as me is not because I am extraordinary; to the contrary, it is because the working of Amida Tathagata has reached me.”

Rev. Ashikaga used to say, “The Buddha provides us with insight to take notice of things.” Indeed, how true this statement is.

When there is no light, though we humans are unable to see things, our faculty of rationalizing comes into play to allow us to decide if something is good or bad. Although we may strive as we should to raise the level of good, the sad part of it is that all we can do is act according to our own convenience and self-centeredness.

On that point, for as long as we are unaware of the Buddha Dharma’s insight, we will never realize that the working of a truly hospitable ‘world’ has already reached us. The Buddha Dharma is the working that does not neglect any living thing, but enables everything to live. Thus in the Buddha Dharma, light is the manifestation of Amida Buddha’s wisdom. That light of Amida’s wisdom is always working, constantly with those who feel vulnerable and sad, and filling the hearts of those who are suffering and troubled.

人間はものを要求するが
 仏は物を見る眼を与えようとされる

あしかが じょうえん
 足利 浄圓

み名を称えることは、だれよりも本人が、わが心に聞かしてもらうことです。子どものころ、親とともに勤めするとき、しっかり自分の声を聞いて読みなさいと教わりました。『教行信証』に「もし仏意に称へば、すなはち印可して<如是如是>とのたまふ」とありますが、称えるとは、阿弥陀如来の心にかのうたそのまま、はかりの如く如来さまの心が、今、この私から出てくださっていると聞くことが、お念仏を称えることであります。お念仏の出るはずのない私からお念仏が出るのは、私がえらいのではなく、阿弥陀如来のはたらきが届いているからであります。

足利浄圓師は、「仏は物を見る眼を与えてくれる」と申されています。まさにその通りであります。

光なくしては、人間は物を見ることかできないのですが、理性がはたりますので、物の価値を善か悪かという判断をもって考えます。その上に善をより向上するべく努力をしますが、悲しいことには自分の都合、考えを中心にしてしか動くことはできません。

その点、人間は仏法の眼に気づくことがない限り、深く温かい世界のはたらきが、この私にすでに届いてくださっていることに気づくことはありません。仏法はすべてのものを見捨てないで生かすようにはたります。だから仏法で光とは、阿弥陀さまの智慧をあらわします。その阿弥陀さまの智慧の光は、常に弱く悲しい者の上に、苦悩するものところに添うように、いつもはたらいてくださいます。

(『他力一大悲のひかり』本願寺出版社刊より)

My living is never due to my own power.

TAKAMATSU SHIN'EI

The Japanese word *engi* 縁起^{えんぎ} (dependent origination) is actually an abbreviation of *innen shōki* 因縁生起^{いんねんしょうき} (coming into existence by depending on other things), with *shō* 生 (lit. “living”) having the meaning of “all things that exist at the present time,” and *ki* 起 (lit. “arising”) having the meaning of “all things that occur in the real world.” All things that exist and all things that occur are due to causes and conditions. Since various causes and conditions are involved, all things that exist and all things that occur are because of all the direct causes and indirect causes that interact with each other. This is the explanation of true dependent origination that Sakyamuni Buddha expounded.

Let us take a look at an example that we are quite familiar with. If we do not sow rice seeds, then there will be no rice to harvest in the fall. However, even if there are rice seeds, the paddies have to be prepared and filled with water in the spring before the seeds can be sown. Then, there are many other conditions that are involved, such as the light and warmth of the sun, the water, soil, fertilizer, and the care given by the farmers. Without these, there would not be any harvest in the fall.

If we think about the fact that we are alive right at this moment, there is no one who can say that he is able to live because of his own strength. The Monshu explains this as “...I am alive because many conditions of which I am unaware have come together. This is expressed as ‘I am alive because I am being enabled to live.’”

My life is not a mere point that exists someplace. Rather, my life exists at a crossroad of a line of innumerable life that extends horizontally and intersects with a line of innumerable life that extends vertically. I have received a truly precious life.

(Excerpt from the Hongwanji Shuppansha publication *Daijō*, August 2004.)

生きているという事は決して私の力ではないのだ

たかまつ しんえい
高松 信英

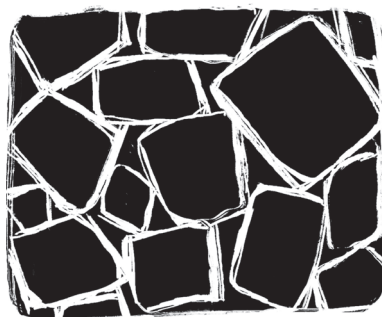
「縁起^{えんぎ}」とは「因縁生起^{いんねんしやうき}」という四文字を略していつているのですが、まず「生起」とは「生」は「現世に存在するすべてのもの」、そして、「起」は「現実の世に現象するすべては」ということです。すべての存在も、すべての現象も「因縁」によるということです。その因縁とは「いろいろな条件」ということですから、一切の存在・一切の現象は、すべて直接の原因と数多くの間接の原因が、お互いに作用し合って、すべての存在があり、すべての現象が起こる、ということです。これがお釈迦さまが説かれた正しい縁起の理ということでもあります。

ごく身近な例を考えてみますと、^{もみ} 籾だねがなければ秋のみりを収穫することはできません。けれども、その籾だねがあっても、春に苗代をつくり水をはり、籾だねをまきます。そして、太陽の光や暖かさ、水の力、土の力、肥料のはたらき、農家の人びとの手入れなど、このような多くの条件が整わなければ、秋のみりは収穫できないのです。

今、私がここに生きているという事実を考えてみても、自分一人の力で生きているものは、ただの一人もいないということでもあります。これをご門主さまが「私個人は計り知れない多くの条件が整って生きています。私たちは生かされて生きている、と表現しています」と述べられているのです。

私のいのちの一つの点として存在するわけではありません。横につながる無数のいのち、という横の線と縦に連続する無数のいのちという縦の線との交点に存在するのが私のいのちであります。本当に尊いいのちをいただいているのであります。

(『他力—自分を知る』本願寺出版社刊より)



Failure is the necessary element in knowing myself.

HIRASAWA KO

Rev. Hirasawa, who lived a full and rich life because his was a life of the Nembutsu, said, “There is not a single occurrence in life that is meaningless. Indeed, no matter what the outcome may be, each is an experience that is hard to come by,” which is the lesson of this month’s quote. From this message that tells us that there is not even one incident in life which has no meaning, we are able to imagine just how full and rewarding Rev. Hirasawa’s life of the Nembutsu truly was.

Rev. Hirasawa authored a book titled *Mitamama, Kanjitamama* (lit., “seeing things just as they are, impressed by things just as they are”). He composed it in his latter years, after he had already entered his seventies, and it expresses his deep gratitude [of life]. In it, one quote states, “Life is like a mountain of limitless treasures.” These words are always in my mind and I will never forget them. This book contains many important and meaningful messages for Nembutsu practitioners. I believe that the heart of this quote is the same as that for this month. “Life is like a mountain of limitless treasures” – what a wonderful description! A treasure for someone is something that one feels is precious and irreplaceable. In order to be able to discern a treasure as a treasure, it is important to have an eye and heart that can do so. In order to nurture that kind of eye and heart, the guidance of a professional that can show the way is required. A foolproof method for learning about life is to study Buddhist scriptures. [However,] if the scriptures are not learned correctly, then it is not possible to discover for oneself the wonderfulness of the Dharma. Jodo Shinshu has a wonderful, living tradition of listening to the Dharma. Through this, we can know the treasures of life.

Rennyō Shōnin explains that the Namo Amida Butsu is the treasure of Nembutsu practitioners. He said, “The true treasure according to our tradition is Namo Amida Butsu. This is the one thought-moment of the heart that entrusts [to Amida Tathagata].

It is said that after having been fortunate to receive life as a human in this world and being enabled to live that life within the aspiration of Amida Tathagata, if we do not ever become aware of the mountain of treasures of Namo Amida Butsu as we live our lives, then that life will be empty and meaningless.

失敗はむしろ自分を知るために必要な材料である

ひらさわ こう
平沢 興

念仏生活を通じて人生を深く生きた平沢先生が、「人生には無駄な出来事は一切ないのですよ。どんな結果も得難い経験なのですよ」と教えている今月の言葉です。人生の出来事には無駄なものは何ひとつとしてないのだということを伝えているこの言葉に、念仏生活の中に豊かに生きた先生の姿が思い浮かんできます。

先生に『見たまま・感じたまま』という著書があります。人生70歳を越えた晩年のものであり、とてもありがたい本です。そのなかに「人生は限りない宝の山である」の一節があります。この言葉がいつまでも心に残り忘れることができません。念仏者の含蓄あるメッセージが詰め込まれている本です。先生のこの言葉は今月の言葉と同じ心でありましょう。「人生は宝の山」とはなんと含蓄かんちくのある言葉でしょうか。その人にとっての宝は、その人にとってかけがえのない大事なものです。宝は宝と見極める眼と心が大切です。眼と心を養うのには、その道のプロの指導が必要です。人生の学びは聖典せいいてんに学ぶのがまちがいない方法です。聖典を正しく学ばなければ、そのすばらしい教を身につけることができません。浄土真宗にはお聴聞じょうどしんしゅうというすばらしい伝統が息づいています。そこで人生の宝を知ることが大切です。

当流とうりゅうの真実の宝といふは南無阿弥陀仏なむあみだぶつ、これ一念の信心いちねん しんじんなりと云々。¹

と、蓮如さまが念仏者の宝はナモアミダブツだと明示しておいでです。

この世に人身を恵まれ、阿弥陀さまの願いの中に生かされている命でありながら、南無阿弥陀仏の宝の山に気づかない人生を過ごしているのは空しい人生だといわれているのです。

(『他力—自分を知る』本願寺出版社刊より)

1. 『註釈版聖典』 1309ページ

