The great compassion, without tiring, illumines me always.

(Hymns of the Pure Land Masters)

This month's quote comes from *Genshinsan* 源信讃, a section of the *Koso wasan* (*Hymns of the Pure Land Masters*) in which Shinran Shonin lauds Genshin, the sixth of the seven Masters of the Pure Land teaching.

In Shoshinge, Shinran writes in praise of Genshin's virtues.

Genshin, having broadly elucidated the teachings of Shakyamuni's lifetime, Wholeheartedly took refuge in the land of peace and urges all to do so; ...

Genshin, while on Mount Hiei, is said to have read numerous times all the sutras pertaining to Sakyamuni's teachings, numbering over five thousand and several hundred. Among that broad range of sutras, he discovered the path aspiring toward the Pure Land, the land of peace, and urges us, all sentient beings, to take refuge in it.

Shinran continues in Shoshinge

The person burdened with extreme evil should simply say the Name:

Although I too am within Amida's grasp,

Passions obstruct my eyes and I cannot see the light;

Nevertheless, great compassion is untiring and illumines me always.

Genshin also saw himself as "obstinate Genshin" and "burdened with extreme evil." However, he came to simply accept and rejoice that because all persons without fail are recipients of the great working of Amida's constant light of compassion that nurtures and enables us to intone the Nembutsu, the person burdened with extreme evil should simply say the Name, *Namo Amida Butsu*.

Moreover, the term *bombu* (which has the meaning of both "foolish" and "ordinary" beings) that was coined by Genshin, is the realm in which all barriers are transcended, enabling even you and me to encounter the working of Namu Amida Butsu. By examining the past and seeing how individuals of that period lived enables one to gain a wonderful sense of the connection and bonds that we have with them that transcend time.

大悲ものうきことなくて つねにわが身をてらすなり

(『高僧和讚』)

七高僧第六祖にあたる、源信和尚の教えを讃仰された親鸞聖人がお作りになられた、 「源信讃」十首のなかの一つが、今月の言葉であります。

親鸞聖人は、源信和尚のお徳を「正信偈」には、

源信広く一代の教を開きて、ひとへに安養に帰して一切を勧む。

(『註釈版聖典』206 ページ)

と讃嘆されています。

源信和尚は、比叡山にあって、五千何百巻という、お釈迦さま一代の経覚を何逼もお読みになられ、その広い一切経のなかから、安養浄土を願う道を見出され、一切の衆生、私たちにお勧めくださったと言われますのが、この二句であります。

お正信偈にはさらに、

極重の悪人はただ仏を称すべし。われまたかの損取のなかにあれども、煩悩、龍を ででしたてまつらずといへども、大悲、倦きことなくしてつねにわれを照らしたまふ といへり。

(『同』207ページ)

と顕されました。

また、源信和尚が、「顔魯の源信」「極重悪人」と自らを見据えられ、お意仏申す身にお育ていただいている、まぎれもない光明の大きなお働きを実感されたお方なればこそ、

エミィニッジ タţィႼム 極重の悪人はただ仏を称すべし。

(『同』 207 ページ)

のお勧めは、素直に受け止められ、また慶ぶことができるのであります。

それにつけても、源信和尚が開かれた「凡夫」という地平は、垣根を越えた「私も」「あなたも」の出会いの世界でありました。時代を照らし出し、時代のなかに生きる人、一人ひとりが、時間を超えて繋がり合うことのできる不思議さを実感するのであります。

Amida's Vow is a great torch in the long night of ignorance; do not sorrow that your eyes of wisdom are dark.

(Hymns of the Dharma Ages)

Ignorance, mentioned in the first part of this month's quote, means lack of knowledge of truth or logic, which is the basis of *bonno* (self-centered desires) and the source of delusion. *Long night* indicates that since people do not know truth or logic, they have to repeat over and over the cycle of birth-and-death, wandering lost in the darkness of delusion. *Great torch* is a huge light or beacon that dispels the darkness, and Shinran Shonin defines this as:

Amida's Primal Vow is likened to a torch.

Eyes of wisdom in the second part of the quote means eyes to see wisdom (truth). In full context it means that we humans, although we have eyes to see, without the light of Amida's compassion are unable to see and realize wisdom.

Many of the expressions in the *wasan* touch our hearts because they are full of emotion and are beautifully composed. Unfortunately, we are living in an era in which it is difficult for many people to get a real feeling for a *long night of ignorance*. Since shops stay open until the middle of the night and city streets are brightly illuminated, we are no longer able to see the darkness of night. Metaphors such as this are no longer easily understood. For youth who linger around convenience stores late at night are not only unable to see the darkness of night, they are unable to perceive authentic light. Further, since youth of today's world have few occasions to come in contact with religious perspectives, I hope they will come to understand and know the significance of this quote.

In encountering the teaching of truth, I have also encountered the working of the Primal Vow, through which I have come to sense my own ignorance and its accompanying darkness, enabling me to realize that my eyes of wisdom are indeed dark and unseeing of the truth. By coming across the light of truth, the illumination by this great light allows me to see my own darkness. It is by knowing the gloom of total darkness that one is able to know true light.

(『正像末和讃』)

一行目の「無明長夜の灯炬なり」の「無明」とは、真理に暗いことで、根本的な質がであり、迷いの根源ともいえます。「長夜」とは、真理を知らないために、衆生が生死流転を繰り返して迷いの闇にいることを示します。「灯炬」は、大きな灯火のことですが、「無明長夜の灯炬なり」には、親鸞聖人が、

常のともしびを弥陀の本願にたとへまうすなり。常のともしびを灯といふ。大きなるともしびを悼といふ

(『註釈版聖典』607 ページ)

と註釈を書かれておられ、灯り続ける大きな光のことをいいます。

二行目の「智眼くらしとかなしむな」の「智眼」とは智慧の眼のことで、真実を見る 私たちの眼のことをいいます。その眼によって智慧がよく見えていないということです。

和讃の表現は情的で、美しい文が多く、私たちの心をうちます。しかし「無明長夜」といわれても、なかなか実感としてわかりにくい時代になりました。深夜も店は開いており、光あふれる街も夜の暗さを見せてはくれません。比喩が通じなくなってきているのです。深夜のコンビニにたむろする若者には夜の闇は見えず、本当の灯りに気づくこともありません。宗教的な環境に接することの少なくなった現代の若者たちにこそ、この和讃の心を知って欲しいと思うのです。

真実の教えに出遇うと、本願に出遇うまでの無明の私の、その暗さが実感として感じられ、私の智慧の眼は、あいかわらず真実を見きわめることができずに暗いままだ、と感じることができるのです。真実の光に出遇い、その大きな光に照らされると、私の暗さがよく見えてくるのです。本当の闇の暗さを知るものこそ、本当の光がわかるのです。

