



The Answer

真如心法



Q @ A for Shinshu Buddhists

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FOR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR CONTRIBUTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT: fukumotodsgn@earthlink.net or sensei@vhbt.org

This issue will cover a statement/question that was asked and answered by Paul Roberts in response to the issue on DOUBT. In my private correspondences with Paul, I promise that should I publish any of his words, I would preface with these words first, "It means everything to me to share the True Teaching of our Dharma Master Shinran - and nothing to me to share my own ideas at all." In the article he will reference an individual called Jessie, Jessie was his daughter who committed suicide 2 years ago. It was also a turning point in his life, paving the way for him to encounter the Amida Buddha and the Grace of Amida's Infinite Compassion.

He also makes reference to Rev. Eiken Kobai, Kobai Sensei was born in 1941, the first son of Seiyō Kobai, the 16th-generation resident minister of Unsaï Temple in the city of Ochiai, Oita Prefecture, Japan.

Sensei graduated from Ryukoku University's Doctoral Program in Shinshu Studies in 1969 and from the Shugaku Institute, a postgraduate school maintained by the Hompa Hongwanji, in 1972.

He received a grant to study at Kyoto University from 1971 to 1973.

After a period as a research associate at the Dendo Institute (now Jodo Shinshu Studies and Research Center), he is presently Professor of Shinshu Studies at Soai University in the city of Osaka.

Kobai Sensei is an ordained minister in the Hompa Hongwanji and a shikyo within that organization's scholarly ranking system, the highest rank that can be earned.

I believe Paul is reacting to this short response to the answer to a "Change of Heart," and the words following:

As I have stated at the beginning, I have questions regarding some of the points made by the answer to this question. How can the Amida allow me to do anything? How does the Amida make me live, think, act, speak? Does this absolve me of responsibility for my actions because the Amida has deemed to control my actions? Further, if I am being "manipulated" do I realize it or do I simply live my life normally? What do you think? As for me, sometimes I am not sure what to believe. What I believe surfaces in all of us is DOUBT.

A Response from Paul Roberts?

You write in your newsletter that ALL Shin Buddhists have DOUBT. Ray, my friend, you are wrong. I have NO doubt. Zero, zilch, nada, nothing.

I have NO doubt that when this life is over, I will awaken in Amida's Pure Land of Recompense. I have no doubt that I will see Amida face to face. And I have no doubt that I will immediately be transformed - completing my long journey to Buddhahood at last.

When I say I have NO DOUBT, I am not bragging - not in the least. This state of having NO DOUBT is the gift of Amida Buddha to me. It is the state of diamondlike SHINJIN, adamantine, unbreakable by anything and/or everything that might happen as I continue on in this life.

This SHINJIN has stood the terrible test of time in my life. It has stood when, during the second anniversary of Jessie's death, I began to experience PTSD

- not merely remembering her suffering and her death, but RE-EXPERIENCING it. Regardless of the horrors I was re-experiencing, I had NO DOUBT about my karmic destiny - not for a moment.

This SHINJIN has stayed with me, adamantine, during times so dark that I didn't want to wake up in the morning when I went to bed at night. I had NO DOUBT that if I did not awaken here, I would awaken THERE - in a place where there was NO suffering - and not even a WORD for suffering. Once I finally met a GOOD teacher of the Dharma in Eiken Sensei, I understood exactly what Shinran was talking about in having NO DOUBT, and I received that Dharma transmission - the Dharma transmission of FAITH WITHOUT DOUBT that is the hallmark of Shinran's SHINJIN.

And I am 100% sure that if you email Eiken and ask him directly, he will tell you that he has FAITH WITH NO DOUBT himself.

Eventually Ray, you too will be able to say that you have NO DOUBT. It may happen in this life, or it may happen in the life to come. But you will have NO DOUBT at long last.

I believe one of the reasons that you, and apparently all the Shin Buddhists you know, struggle with DOUBT is that there is this mystical confusion going on. Somehow, Shin Buddhism is seen, not just by you but by so many, as being synonymous with the things you write about in this letter:

- a sense of oneness with Amida Buddha
- the capacity to accept with equanimity

ity "things as they are"

and on and on and on.

A reason why people persist in having doubt as Shin Buddhists is that they are trying to maintain these kind of "good Buddhist" attitudes and perspectives. And of course, we just can't do it. So when we "forget" and revert back to the egocentric people we still are, we wonder if our faith is real - and thus we experience doubt.

Ray, my friend, I didn't have the luxury of those "Good Buddhist" attitudes. I was just screaming in my brain, day in and day out, for weeks and months at a time. If being a person of SHINJIN somehow depended on being able to have, or (worse) maintain RIGHT THOUGHTS or RIGHT ATTITUDES, I would not have been able to receive Amida's gift.

But - as I finally understood clearly after sitting at Eiken's feet and listening - having those kind of "right thoughts" had NOTHING to do with SHINJIN. All I needed to do was take refuge in HIM, entrusting HIM to bring me to liberation at the end of this wretched life.

And that I had already done - and truly it WAS done.

This is, my friend, SHINJIN WITHOUT DOUBT - the SHINJIN of the 18th Vow - the will of Amida Buddha for our lives. It is the certainty that cannot be shaken, whether we're having a good day or a bad day - that we are grasped and we will not be abandoned - that we will be brought without fail to Amida's Pure Land just as He has promised in His Primal Vow.

I have NO doubt Ray - zero, zilch, nada. I am 100% certain, yesterday, today and tomorrow, that this is so.

And I am sure that there are others - besides me, and besides Eiken - who can and will say the exact same thing because they have received the exact same gift of Amida's own faith-mind... the mind of FAITH WITH NO DOUBT.

So - I invite you to publish this - if you'd like - as a response - a corrective really - to your letter. It is not good (in my view) to leave the impression that all Shin Buddhists have doubt. That was never Shinran's teaching, nor Rennyō's,

nor Honen's either.

It is much more important to say (if it is true) that "I, Ray, still have doubts" - and then (the really important part) to ask Amida Buddha to take away the doubts you have, in part through dialogues like this. That, in fact, is what Rennyō instructed.

It is taught that petitionary prayer to Amida is incorrect - and of course it is incorrect to ask Amida to get us a winning lottery ticket. But it is never wrong to ask Amida to do that which is in accordance with His own directly expressed will for us.

And while I cannot say with any certainty that it is Amida's will for me to have any sort of mystical experience of his presence on a moment by moment basis (though I have been certainly graced with many blessed moments like that), I CAN say that it is Amida's will for me - for you - and for all of us who say Nembutsu to have the experience of FAITH WITH NO DOUBT.

I realize that my words are challenging your perspective, my friend. I speak directly, not from any position of superiority, but because THIS is the great blessing available to us in THIS life: the CERTAINTY that is unbroken, regardless of what happens in our lives, that our karmic destiny is signed, sealed and delivered. THIS, and nothing less, is FAITH - FAITH WITH NO DOUBT.

On A Personal Note:

Thank you Paul for your wonderful response. We all have differences in our lives and experiences. The understanding each and everyone of us has of truth can only be tainted by our limited abilities to understand and interpret truth. However, the TRUTH of the Nembutsu as such IS and is beyond our abilities to interpret and is for all.

I claim no special knowledge nor superiority, I only have a desire to share with all who would listen or read, my "taste of the Nembutsu." or AJIWA!

We all project a different color of our understanding of the Nembutsu and only when we share our tastes, can we begin to see the TRUTH meant for all. This TRUTH that is shared and gives us FAITH is the Nembutsu, and that is real and true.

A Final Thought, Intelligent Design?

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I just wanted to end this on a lighter note and write this, I know many who do not DOUBT, this is my flaw. Please send more questions or comments?

NAMO AMIDA BUTSU

