

THE ENLIGHTENED MIND OF THE BUDDHA AND THE SHIN TEACHING

WHEN the content of the Buddha's enlightened consciousness is analysed, there we find thatness opposed to thisness, that is, the simultaneous existence of "me" and "thee." This I have already explained in one of my previous articles published in the present magazine. The ego, therefore, was not the sole and whole content of the enlightened mind of the Buddha when he realised in himself the absolute truth of Buddhism; there was in it the thought of "otherness" whereby the notion of selfhood grows intelligible.

The philosophy of the Shin sect is constructed upon this dualism of "me" and "thee" as existed concretely unified in the mind of the Buddha, and the teaching and faith of the Shin sect are cut and sewn together from this philosophical broadcloth.

By "the teaching" I mean the doctrine taught by the Buddha throughout his fifty years, missionary peregrination after the Enlightenment, and there is no doubt that this teaching is a reflected glow of his enlightened mind and what is popularly known as Buddhism now flourishing mostly in the East. But we may distinguish three phases in one body of Buddhism. When the truth was still dwelling as it were in a nascent form in the mind of the Buddha, we call it the truth revealed; when it came forth in the words of the Buddha, it is his own teaching or the truth expounded; when after the Nirvana the truth expounded by him is propagated by his followers throughout the world, it is the truth transmitted. In spite of these distinctions, variously designable, the truth of Buddhism must remain the same in them all; for they are invariably the overflows of one identical water, first as spring, then as cataract, and finally as river.

The water that is ever the same in its overflowing and never-ceasing course, however multifarious forms it may assume in the meantime, is to be known as the "Saddharma" or simply as "Dharma". What I wish to consider in the present article is the teaching or the truth expounded by the Buddha, and this teaching may generally be defined thus: (1) It is the doctrine taught by the Buddha, (2) It is the doctrine that will make us Buddhas, and (3) It is the doctrine that teaches what Buddhism is.

While the Buddha's teaching later developed into various schools of Buddhism, its principal tenets will be seen all summed up in the foregoing definition which, when fully expanded, will answer our questions concerning the why, how, and what of Buddhism. The teaching of the Shin sect whose basis is laid in the enlightened consciousness of the Buddha, thus also is an endeavour to answer these three questions. It is quite natural then that Shinran Shōnin, the founder of the Shin sect, attempts in his text-book to explain the teaching of the Buddha according to the light of the definition of Buddhism as I suggested above. By the text-book is meant his principal work, *Doctrine, Practice, Faith, and Attainment* (教行信證), the full title of which runs: "Classified Passages relating to the Doctrine, Practice, Faith, and Attainment, which reveal the Truth of the Pure Land." The work consists of six parts treating of the Doctrine, Practice, Faith, Attainment, the True Buddha-land, and the Land of the Transformed Body.

The "Book of Doctrine" explains the first part of our definition of Buddhism and tells us what is the true teaching of the Buddha, understanding by the Buddha the Muni of the Śākyas who attained Buddhahood.

The "Book of Practice, of Faith, and of Attainment" refers to the second part of our definition of Buddhism pointing out the way to Buddhahood. Here the Buddha stands

contrasted to all beings, every one of whom is a possible Buddha endowed with all the virtues of Buddhahood.

This being the case, what is after all the Buddha? we may ask. Is the Muni of the Śākya the only Buddha? or Are we the Buddhas too? When we speak of a true Buddha, whom shall we understand? To answer this question, the author of the *Doctrine, Practice, Faith, and Attainment* distinguishes between the Buddha true and the Buddha transformed, and concludes that Amitāyha Buddha, the saviour of the world, is the true one, telling us at the same time where is the Pure Land of the True Buddha and that of the Buddha of Transformation. The last two books are devoted to this subject.

The purport of my article is to explain what is the teaching of the Shin sect as based upon the doctrine of the Buddha and made manifest in the "Book of Doctrine."

When we know that in the inmost consciousness of the Enlightened One there was a concrete unification of "me" and "thee", and that all his teachings are founded upon this spiritual truth of unity, we know where lies the true signification of the Buddha's appearance on earth. This has been one of the knottiest questions of Buddhism for scholars to give a satisfactory solution. Of all the numerous Sutras which are uniformly ascribed to the Buddha, which carries his true spirit? The answer has been variously given by scholars, and we have not yet come to any definite settlement. But the settlement will be found much easier when we realise the ultimate content of the enlightened consciousness of the Buddha himself. And this we have found to be the duality of thisness and thatness coalesced in truth and standing in opposition. If this is the true interpretation of the enlightenment, the Buddhist scriptures, however varied in content and subject-matter, must be all regarded as expounding the inner meaning of the Buddha-consciousness. Some of the Sutras

are thus devoted to the interpretation of the "that" aspect of Buddhahood, some others are more concerned with the "this" aspect, and still others with the interpenetration in its various forms of "thisness" and "thatness." Naturally, therefore, some aspects of Buddha-nature are more fully developed in some sutras than in others. Taking all in all, the essence of Buddhism as religion must lie in fully and comprehensively shedding light not only in the exposition of "this" side and "that" side of the enlightened consciousness of the Buddha, but in the religious meaning of their interaction. Among the very few of the Buddhist texts definitely and in an all-sufficient manner treating of this subject, Shinran Shōnin, the founder of the Shin sect, discovered the Larger Amittayuh Sutra to be the "true teaching" of the Buddha in its strictest sense. This Sutra was preached by the Buddha on the Mount of the Holy Vulture to a congregation of his disciples headed by Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. The Buddha addressed the Sutra principally to Ananda and Maitreya. According to Shinran, we read: "Now to disclose the true teaching of the Buddha, this is none other than the Larger Amittayuh Sutra. The essential doctrine of this Sutra is that in Amida vows were awakened, the treasury of the Dharma was widely opened, and taking pity on the ignorant and lowly, he selected and distributed the jewels of merit [or bliss] among them; while Shaka coming on earth illuminatingly expounded the teaching of truth as he wished to save the masses and bless them with the merits of truth."

In this passage Shinran refers to Amida as the revelation of the "Thou" aspect of the Buddha-consciousness, and to Shaka as the revelation of the "I" aspect. While Amida as "Thou", the saviour of the world, retains his position eternally, "I", the world-honoured Śakyamuni, assumes in the "Book of Doctrine" an objective attitude towards all sentient beings, and this objectification of "I", puts Śākya-

muni on the side of the saviour, "thou", ending in a co-partnership of the Saviour and the Teacher or Revealer. The real form of Amida is thus seen in some way altogether concealed behind Śākyamuni the Revealer. But as he has not lost his original identity, he sometimes all of a sudden comes out to our full view, his glory shines forth in its native grandeur. When hidden behind the Revealer, however, Amida is so enshrouded that it takes an eye of enlightenment to discern him existing in his "thouness" in the selfsameness of the Buddha-consciousness. When on the other hand Amida reveals himself in his mysterious way, even the simple-hearted and ignorant are able to come to his presence. When the Buddha was preaching on the Mount of the Holy Vulture, Ānanda, one of his disciples, saw Amida revealed behind the Master; and to Queen Vaidehī, while she was shut up in confinement, appeared the Buddha attended by Ānanda and Maudgalyayana, and when the Buddha finished his sermon on the meditation on Amida, the queen was enabled to see the Land of Bliss as inhabited by Amida. In one sense this seeing Amida may not be such a rare event as one may imagine, but that it is no easy task is readily seen in the fact that even Ānanda, one of the most favoured disciples of the Buddha, could not realise the presence of Amida, "Thou", in the enlightened consciousness of the Buddha, until he participated in the assembly on the Mount of Holy Vulture, where the World-honoured One revealed the secrets of the Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra.

Shinran Shōnin quotes from the Sutra: "Ananda said to the World-honoured One: The organs of sense of the World-honoured One are today so composed; the colour of his body is so clear; the majestic splendour of his face is like unto a bright and clean mirror whose reflections are perfectly even; his august form, bright and illumining, infinitely surpasses [anything of the world]; such an extraordinary bright-

ness as I see today I have never yet observed [in the Buddha]. O really it is, O the Great Sage; the thought comes to me that today the World-honoured One dwells in some supernatural state, that today the World-Hero dwells in a state where the Buddhas are dwelling, that today the Eye of the world dwells in the walk of the leader, that today the Great One of the World dwells in the all-surpassing path, that today the Heaven-honoured One practises the virtues of a Tathagata.

“‘All the Buddhas of the past, future, and present contemplate one another, and may it not be true that the present Buddha is contemplating all the Buddhas?’

“‘How happens it so that the awe-inspiring splendour of the World-honoured One is such [as I see today]?’

“‘Thereupon, the World-honoured One said to Ānanda: ‘Did the gods tell you to come and ask this of the Buddha? Or do you ask, through your own spiritual insight, concerning the august countenance [of the Buddha]?’

“‘Ānanda said to the Buddha; ‘No gods have ever come to me to ask this of you. Through my own understanding alone, I ask you this matter.’

“‘The Buddha said; ‘Well said, O Ānanda! Excellent indeed is your question! In you awakened is the deepest understanding and the subtlest eloquence, and out of compassion for all sentient beings you ask this spiritual matter.

“‘The Tathagata in his great unimpeded love feels compassion for the triple world, and the reason why he has appeared on earth is because he wishes to save the ignorant by an enlightening exposition of the truth of religion so that they will be blessed with its real benefits. The difficulty of getting into the presence of a Tathagata who appears on earth only once in innumerable kalpas is like the appearance of the sacred auspicious flowers blooming on a most rare occasion.

“In what you now ask, there is much that will do good [to the world], it will enlighten all the gods and men. O Ānanda, let it be understood by you that the highest enlightenment attained by the Tathagata is infinitely beyond the understanding, there is much that will lead and control, its spiritual insight knows no impediment, there is nothing that will obstruct its sway.’”¹

These passages here quoted in full by Shinran teach in a most exquisite manner the following three facts as regards the teaching of the Shin sect:

1. That the teaching of the Shin sect is based on the enlightened consciousness as it originally dawned upon the mind of the World-honoured One;

2. That the Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra reveals this original consciousness of the Buddha;

3. That consequently the teaching of this Sutra was the ultimate object of the Buddha's appearance on earth.

That Shinran, the founder of the Shin sect, took special care in quoting these passages from the Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha, conclusively proves that the foundations of the Shin sect are firmly laid upon the conception of the Buddha-ego which was realised in the enlightened mind of the World-honoured One. The Buddha-ego, that is, the “Thou” aspect of his consciousness from our point of view, is pictured in this Sutra by making the World-honoured One assume a divinely majestic personality, which was recognised by Ānanda in one of his inspired moments. The Buddha was then more than himself, his “ego” reflected the “Thou” dualistically

1 The translation is done from Sanghavarman's Chinese, text for the basis, of the teaching of the Shin sect is in this and not in the Sanskrit text, Whether this agrees with the latter as restored by Max Müller and published in the “Buddhist Texts from Japan” does not affect the Shin sect in any way. For Max Müller's translation see *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XLIX. “The Land of Bliss”, PP. 3-4.

and yet perfectly unified in his concrete person. In the case of Queen Vaidehī, however, the "Thou" aspect of the Buddha-ego assumed a separate existence to her vision as Amitābha in the Land of Perfect Happiness. This separation was of course merely apparent and not fundamental. Therefore, in the case of Ānanda, there was the transfiguration of the World-honoured One himself, in whom was concretely exemplified the truth of the self-sameness of the "I" and "Thou" principle in the enlightened mind of the Buddha. When Ānanda realised the mystery of the many in the one and of the one in the many, his understanding went beyond its own limits and he was infinitely blessed. Naturally, the Buddha endorsed all the statements made by Ānanda, saying, "Well said, O Ānanda! Excellent indeed is your question! In you awakened is the deepest understanding and the subtlest eloquence."

It was due to Ānanda's intuitive knowledge that penetrated into the deepest recesses of the Buddha-consciousness where the "I" element was found essentially and inseparably conjoined with the "Thou" element. And therefore the Larger Sukhāvati-Vyūha Sutra which was preached by the World-honoured One to Ānanda and Maitreya must be regarded as the fundamental text-book of the Shin sect, and in this we are to trace the revelation of the Buddha-consciousness which is beyond the ken of our logical understanding. The vision of Vaidehī as described in the Meditation Sutra was possible only after Ānanda's insight into the mystery of Buddhahood. In the Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha which is divided into two parts in our Chinese translation by Sanghavarman, the first part deals with Amida as the Saviour of the world, and his Land of Bliss, while the second deals with the "I" element in us common mortals who are conceived as objects of salvation standing in antithesis to the Buddha-consciousness of the Enlightened One.

In a word, as the philosophical basis of the Shin sect rests on the teaching of the Larger Sukhāvati-Vyūha Sutra, the object of the sect is to make clear the truth of a concrete synthesis of "I" and "Thou" in the enlightened mind of the Buddha, as well as the relationship of the two elements in the universal work of salvation through the love and wisdom of Amida. It is only when *this* interpenetration and interdependence of the one and the many is successfully grasped, we can all live in the glory of the enlightened Buddha-consciousness.

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