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Dharma-Lecture:

The good merits of Nenbutsu

The State of the Nenbutsu Sanmai

Tsuchiya Masamichi

**One can experience the majesty of the Pure Land
by invoking the name alone.**

What a joy!

This poem has been transmitted to us from Honen Shonin. "If you dedicate yourself to the recitation of 60,000 or 70,000 Nembutsu every day, your mind will naturally become calm and you will be able to see Amida and the state of the Pure Land before your eyes. I am really grateful that I can enjoy it both physically and mentally" Thus, the poem tells us that Honen Shonin was able to enter the state of enlightenment with this one practice of Nenbutsu.

The state of mind in which the mind is harmonized by the whole-hearted recitation of Nenbutsu and protected by the power of the Buddha, and in which one's senses, emotions, intellect and will are purified, is called "Nenbutsu Sanmai" („Nenbutsu-Immersion" or "Nenbutsu-Samadhi").

**The practice of Nenbutsu is,
by feeling the moon of the water -
an ascent and a coming down.**

(from „Senchaku Hongan Nenbutsu-shu“)

Honen Shonin has shown us that through the practice of Nenbutsu invocation, neither the surface of the water, which reflects the moonlight, rises, nor does the moon descend to the surface of the water, but that both meet in the same state ("harmony between our faithful mind and the mercy of Buddha", jap. "kanno doko"). Thus, Honen Shonin showed us the state of Nenbutsu-Sanmai, in which Amida Buddha and the Nenbutsu (reciting) person become one.



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**There is no place that the light of the moon does not reach,
but it only settles into the hearts of those,
who turn to him.**

Just as there is no place that the light of the moon does not reach, there is also no sentient being that is not illuminated by the light of the Buddha. In the hearts of those who look up to the main vow and recite the Nenbutsu, the Buddha will surely reside and the heart will be pure. This poem also shows us that through the Nenbutsu we can complete our personality and reach the state of Nenbutsu Sanmai.

The Dharma World of Amida's Body and Mind

Amida's body and mind are filled with the macrocosm.

Sentient beings speak the nenbutsu and the Buddha thinks of them

If sentient beings have the Buddha in mind, then the Buddha also thinks of them.

Becoming one through single-minded devotion to Nenbutsu from the bottom of your heart

When you offer your nenbutsu wholeheartedly, the distinction between the subject of the offering and the object of offering (the main object) disappears.

In the end, the king appears alone

At the end, you can clearly feel how Amida Nyorai appears alone in front of you.



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This poem was written by Venerable Master Yamazaki Bennei (1859~1920) when he entered the state of enlightenment (and attained Sanmai) on Mount Tsukuba.

The modern revival of Honen's Jodo Buddhism and the return from Buddhism, which was divided into different schools, to Shakyamuni Buddhism, as well as the Komyo ("Radiant Light") teaching, which builds a bridge to the world religions, were continued in the Shinsei ("True Life") teaching of Master Tsuchiya Kando (1887-1969) and the Ichimi ("Fundamental Unity of the Buddha's Teaching") teaching of Master Nakano Zen-ei (1899-1966).

By changing the conventional tendency of faith that conceives of "ojo" ("birth over into the Pure Land") merely as being taken into the Pure Land only after death, we live in the light of Amida Nyorai, based on Honen Shonin's Buddhist view, the connection between this world and the world to come, believing that it is our destiny. We want to manifest the light of Amida Buddha in this world, and continue our Shinsei movement with Amida in its center.

Article 1 of the Shinsei Alliance Creed states that we seek "eternal life, infinite improvement." The answer to this claim is religion. Eternal life is the consciousness of immortality.

Infinite improvement is the perfection of the personality, a life with values.

Let's recite the Nembutsu out of the belief that the Nembutsu practice chosen in Amida's main wish (Buddha's wish to save all sentient beings) allows us to realize a true life (=Shinsei) centered on Amida.

The great Shinsei-Ichimi-Nenbutsu ("the Nembutsu of true life, which is based on the fundamental unity of the Buddha's teaching") by Nakano Zen-ei takes Yamazaki Bennei's song poem for attaining Nembutsu samadhi as "anjin" ("settled mind"), i.e. as the place where the heart and mind find calmness and peace. In doing so, he makes Zen and sitting quietly the basis of the sitting posture, in which the whole body finds unity through a vocal technique based on breath and pulse. Thus the great Shinsei-Ichimi-Nenbutsu permeates the great life activity of heaven and earth. As a vocal nenbutsu technique that brings the body and mind into harmony, it is considered a great revolution of "spoken nenbutsu", which is a great innovation for the religious world.



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Once, during his lifetime, I asked one of my teachers, Master Sekiya Kiyoshi from Shiga Prefecture, to lead a Nenbutsu recitation. I remember how he worshipped the Main Buddha statue in the Kanchi-in temple in Tokyo with reverence. He said to the audience in a loud voice: "Ladies and gentlemen, what a wonderful shape this great Buddha statue has right in front of us! You have to worship this wooden Buddha statue like the real Amida Buddha!"

"If you can't worship the Buddha who is right in front of your eyes in this way, then you don't understand Jodo Buddhism!" In addition to his religious activities, Master Sekiya also worked as a farmer, and in his later years he always said, "I kneel on the ground and pray, then I drive a tractor and plow the fields. The shine of the tractor is like Buddha to me, and the sound of its engine sounds like "Namu Amida Bu, Namu Amida Bu" to me."

My Nenbutsu teacher, Sogao Doei, also once shared his state of mind with me in the following way. It was on June 19, 1999, when the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the Nenbutsu network Shinsei-kai took place in a hotel in front of the Kanchi-in Temple. After the event ended, I drove Sogao Doei back to his house. Then Sogao-san in the passenger seat next to me said as if to himself:

"It's strange. Someone like me, who is so half-hearted and cannot do anything, has somehow acquired the wonderful skills of Japanese kimono sewing. I still don't understand how it happened." Mr. Sogao had worked for many years in the luxury department store Mitsukoshi as a tailor for high-quality Japanese kimonos.

I listened to him and thought how humble he is when he said the following: "I suddenly quit my long-time job as a kimono tailor, didn't I? After that, I never did any sewing again. Now that I think about it, I find that impressive. I consider myself a carefree old man, but it seems strange to me that I quit so suddenly. Why?" I got the strange impression that he was talking about himself on the one hand, but also about a great person. He continued:

"I saw my work as a kimono tailor and realized what a wonderful technique it was. I didn't really understand how I could master this technique. Actually, I wouldn't be able to do that, so I wondered."

People often talk about divine gifts, but that someone himself could not believe what he had done! And he also respects this act himself and feels great joy about it. I really envied him for the feeling he shared with me. While



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driving, I recited the "Namu Amida Bu, Namu Amida Bu", and was happy that I was allowed to be in a car with such a Nenbutsu idol. Full of respect and familiarity, I said to him, "Mr. Sogao, if you have a wish and recite the Nenbutsu, then perhaps Amida Nyorai will make it come true in a very natural way?"

"That's right. That's the only way it can be," the 90-year-old gentleman answered immediately in a youthful voice.

Nenbutsu is recited incessantly until the last breath in the belief that only a Nenbutsu can lead to liberation. Let us believe that we will be protected and nourished by the Venerable Light until the end of our lives.

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