

## Chapter I

### **Faith is the sole means by which to enter into the great ocean of the Buddha's teachings**

There is an old Buddhist proverb which reads as follows: "Faith is the sole means by which to enter into the great ocean of the Buddha's teachings." The meaning of the whole sentence is something like "it is only faith that helps one enter the ocean of His teachings".

As far as what happens in the world of the five senses is concerned, faith or disbelief does not make any difference, for you can directly experience facts which occur before your eyes.

On the other hand, it is only faith that enables you to awaken to the truth of the teachings of the Buddha, because it is beyond your ability to experience it as long as you remain in your present state of mind.

#### **1 The Five Kinds of Eyes**

In the Buddhist teachings frequent references to the five kinds of eyes are found. Eyes mean all five sensory organs, the eye being made to represent these organs, for reasons of convenience of illustration. Tradition says, and we do believe, that Shakyamuni Buddha was endowed with all these five kinds of eyes, and Ben-nei Seija, the sage to whom we look up as the Shakyamuni Buddha of the day, was also blessed with them.

He never referred to the fact himself. Nevertheless we cannot but regard him as the latter-day Shakyamuni Buddha for the ability and seriousness of purpose with which he worked the salvation of all sentient beings.

If we could see with our own eyes Shakyamuni Buddha who

passed away two thousand and five hundred years ago, we would be able to find in him the original image of Buddhahood which was projected in the person of Ben-nei Seija. The Seija was in truth fully endowed with the five kinds of eyes.

What are the five kinds of eyes? They are *Nikugen*, the bodily eye, *Tengen*, the clairvoyant eye, *Egen*, the eye which perceives the non-discriminating aspect of the spiritual world, *Hōgen*, the eye which perceives the discriminating aspect of the spiritual world, and *Butsugen*, the Buddha's eye that unites and harmonizes non-discrimination and discrimination into one.

Let me begin with the explanation of the first two eyes, *Nikugen* and *Tengen*. The object of *Nikugen*, the bodily eye, and *Tengen* is the natural world. The world of nature is a world of changes, where birth and death take place alternately, a world we know through daily experiences. It is a world of *Shaba*, secular the world of life and death. It is a world contrary to the world of infinite life, *Jōdo*, the Pure Land, a Buddhist Elysium. It is a world in which you can never attain complete satisfaction in whatever you may desire, and you are to be transformed into an icy corpse sooner or later.

*Egen*, *Hōgen* and *Butsugen* have for their object the spiritual world. In other words, the *Nehankai*, the world of Nirvana. The five kinds of eyes imply that two different kinds of object of perception exist. That is to say, two kinds of worlds, natural and spiritual, exist which we are capable of perceiving by means of these five kinds of eyes. But it is a matter of course that the realm of nature and that of spirit are not separately located in different places.

The spiritual world, in other words, the Pure Land is not a region, as is commonly believed, one trillion *Do*'s distant from this world we live in. *Do* (Land) in the sense of the word used in the above context may be compared to an entire solar system in dimensions. Once *Egen*, *Hōgen* and *Butsugen* are opened, you find yourself in this realm of spirit, even though you remain in this natural world as ever before. Here you are in the world of endless life, the Elysian Land.

In short, if neither *Nikugen* nor *Tengen* properly operates, no realm of nature would exist, or is virtually non-existent so long as it is not perceived, even if it does exist. In this way, in case we have no *Egen*, no *Hōgen* and no *Butsugen* opened, we are unable to perceive the Pure Land, so that it is virtually nonexistent. So long as we lack any of these five kinds of eyes, we are unable to see the universe in its entirety. Even if we may have *Nikugen*, the bodily eye, and *Tengen* opened, we are only able to perceive part of the great universe. Thus it is not until we have our *Egen*, *Hōgen* and *Butsugen* fully opened as well, that we can perceive the universe in its wholeness.

Therefore, those who have only their *Nikugen*, the bodily eye, and *Tengen* opened are called *Tamban-kan*, namely “foolish trainees,” who can see only one side of a thing like those who carry view-blocking boards on his shoulders. “Kan” which literally means a fellow, or a rogue, is a term common in the Zen Sect to denote such a person, though you may think the word sounds a little too derogatory. In ancient China boards-carrying was a form of punishment inflicted on a wrong doer. The criminal had his neck held between two boards of timber, made fast with cramps, each of the pieces had semicircular holes so as to make just enough room for a human neck. The fellow is able to see only the upper surface of the boards, while the under side is hidden from his sight. Similarly, those who have only their *Nikugen*, the bodily eye, and *Tengen* opened are no more than *Tamban-kan*. They can perceive merely one aspect of the universe, that represents the realm of nature. They are unable to perceive the whole cosmos.

It is only when *Nikugen*, the bodily eye, and *Tengen* and also *Egen*, *Hōgen*, as well as *Butsugen* are opened, then you become able to perceive all and everything that exists in the universe. You can see the world of colour and form, so to speak, because you have eyes. To those who were born blind, however, there is no world of colour and form. If however, it becomes possible for them to recover their eyesight by taking effective medical treatment, then the world of

colour and form appears right before their eyes. The Pure Land is in no way a place remote from *Shaba*, the world of form we live in. It exists right here.

Once *Egen*, *Hōgen* and *Butsugen* are opened, the Pure Land manifests itself right before your eyes. It is in this sense that a sutra says *Koshi-fuon*, meaning “it is not far from this world.” *Kan-muryō-ju-kyō*, a sutra setting forth meditation on Amida Buddha, teaches that the Pure Land, the spiritual world is not remote from where you are. Then some may make objection to this description, quoting from a time-honoured traditional belief that the Pure Land is a *Do* (Land), which is at a great distance of a trillion *Do*'s from this world.

In truth, it is simply because the people of ancient India held the conviction that the Ideal Land, a Utopia, existed far to the west of their country as the Buddha had preached that the Pure Land was at a distance of a trillion *Do*'s from this world. That Ideal Land was generally known as *Sukhāvati*\* among the Indian people in those days, who believed that it existed in the west. This Utopia was the object of their longing and the ideal which they pursued.

However, though they had an unshaken faith in the existence of the Utopia in the west, they did not know how to get there, and the Buddha taught them how to find their way to the Ideal Land. One is able to reach it by means of practicing obedience to the precepts of the Buddha, and the moment one attains it, one comes to realize that the Pure Land is not remote from this world but right there before one's eyes.

For, in truth, once *Egen*, *Hōgen*, as well as *Butsugen*, are opened, the Pure Land manifests itself right before your eyes, because it is in no way a remote place. Shakyamuni Buddha was fully endowed with all five kinds of eyes, so that he never failed to perceive the universe in its entirety and in all its directions. And I am convinced that this applies to Ben-nei Seija as well.

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\* *Sukhāvati* : the Pure Land

In effect, the existence of five kinds of eyes implies that there are two kinds of objects of perception. In other words, two kinds of worlds, the realm of nature and that of spirit. But as the spiritual world is a world beyond our direct experience, there is no other means by which to get access to it except through receiving the faith of Buddha.

## 2 The Three Kinds of Beliefs

Buddhism teaches three kinds of beliefs, namely *Gōshin*, *Geshin* and *Shōshin*. *Gōshin*, which has also been referred to as *Monshin*, means the single-minded faith of Nyorai, our divine parent, a kind of faith one comes to embrace with no misgivings on hearing a sermon preached by a priest of high virtue.

*Geshin* denotes a religious faith fostered by a process of reasoning. Though not being convinced enough to embrace a faith by the sermons one hears, if a person takes to applying himself to careful study, thinking a great deal and reading numbers of books, he can come to receive faith in Nyorai. It is this kind of belief based on intellectual satisfaction that is called *Geshin*.

Even in case you come to embrace the faith of the Buddha by a process of reasoning, you can bring yourself around to devote your time to the Nembutsu practice, the invocation of his sacred name, so that you may receive a welcome from Nyorai, our prime parent if he really exists. And by applying yourself single-mindedly to it, you will certainly be welcomed by Nyorai and convinced all the more firmly of his existence through personal experience instead of by means of reasoning.

The belief confirmed in this way is known as *Shōshin* or *Shūshin*, “shō” being a word translated from the original Sanskrit which means objective perception. Some may ask me how those who are yet to achieve *Gōshin* or *Geshin* can give themselves up to the Nembutsu. My answer is that the object is for them to simply apply themselves to the invocation of the sacred name of Amida Buddha,

distracted by no other thought, in company of with the same-minded devotees. The practice for Buddhahood works in a mysterious way. By repeating Amida's holy name together with all others, you will certainly be able to achieve *Gōshin* and *Geshin* in time. We see these cases very often.

It is said that in Western countries, when a person applies for a job, the first question he is asked by the prospective employer is usually about the church he attends. In case he replies that he goes to no church, there is little hope for the applicant to get employment. Therefore, everyone goes to church not so much out of pious motives as for a possible solution of the bread and butter problem. In church the congregation participates in the service, bowing their heads with their hands on their foreheads and singing hymns in chorus, but it may be for the sake of livelihood rather than in devout worship.

Curiously enough, however, as they continue offering worship and singing hymns, they become inspired with genuine sentiment of piety. Even if they may not receive faith in their life time, the generations following theirs will find their children and grandchildren born with religious belief in their nature. In this way, unbelieving though you may be at present, listen well to sermons, and apply yourself to the Nembutsu, and you will be able to achieve *Gōshin* or *Geshin* in a miraculous fashion.