

Other Power is what is real



Self Power is another trip

The world of Samsara, of delusion and self-deception is not a part of the world we know – it is the world we know.

In Buddhism, reality lies elsewhere, called Nirvana, the Pure Land, etc. Samsara then includes every hellish thing we can imagine up to and including any heavenly thing we can imagine, the heavens, gods, and goddesses symbolizing the more positive aspects of the world of delusion. The Six realms of Samsara as depicted in the Wheel of Life include the 19 realms of hellish existence (hells); the realm of insatiable hunger (Hungry Ghosts); the realm of basic animal urges (Animals); the realm of calculation and conniving (Man); the realm of competition, conflict and control (Fighting Spirits); and the realms of the intellect and art (Heavens). The worst and best of human activity are depicted in this Wheel of Life. For Jodoshinshu, the Samsara realms are the realms of self-power, of ego-assertion. Whether for good or bad, ego assertions are self-centered calculations that leave us unaware of the Nirvana realms. The Nirvana realms are the Samsara realms free of the workings of the ego-self. For Jodoshinshu, these are momentary awarenesses since we are deemed incapable of being completely free of our beloved ego. And they are moments that cannot be pursued by the ego-self since it is in the nature of the ego-self to maintain itself at all costs. Hence the Nirvana/Pure Land moments are due to the power of the real breaking through the shell of ego – a power other than the power of the ego-self. This other power is the reality beyond but not separate from the ego-world. This is represented by a Buddha figure in each of the realms of delusion. When we use the term “awareness of self”, it is in reference to the ego-self that is buoyed up by the ocean of reality, the ocean of the Vow, Amida Buddha, etc. The self-power ego-self and the other-power Amida/Pure

Land/Primal Vow are connected in the same way the the worlds of Samsara and Nirvana are connected, opposites and yet the same.

Jodoshinshu is not about firmly believing in a set of dogmas. It is awakening to the fact that my ego-self is hopelessly infatuated with itself, even while outwardly painting pictures of humility, thoughtfulness, being considerate, etc. etc. And while these values are positive enough on the exterior, it is to the interior self that Jodoshinshu addresses itself. That secret self Shinran Shonin calls “a congealed mass of self-afflicting passions”. In this emphasis, Jodoshinshu is not a manual for the outer self, but rather a teaching that tries to expose this fraud to our own self. That power to expose and embrace comes from reality, a power other than our own. Ego self-power cannot effect non-ego other power, the latter is the absence of the former. Ethics, morality, concern, goodness, etc. are still in the realm of Samsara. Shinjin is to awaken to all of this while being cradled in reality – the ocean of the Vow to keep us afloat. Samsara /Nirvana. Namo/Amidabutsu, self-afflicting passions/Bodhi awakening, left/right, inner/outer, above/below – I see clearly and don't have a clue.

Gassho,

Rev. Mas