

**Lecture Series (March 20, 2024)**  
**(Higashi Honganji Mission of Hawaii)**

## PART TWO

### Shinran's View of Birth in the Provisional Land

#### I. Introduction

##### Shinran's View of the Two Types of Birth

##### 1. Birth in the Provisional Land:

- (a) The 19<sup>th</sup> Vow type of birth: Birth in the “realm of indolence and pride”
- (b) The 20<sup>th</sup> Vow type of birth: Birth in the “castle of doubt” and “womb-palace”

##### 2. Birth in the True Land: The 18<sup>th</sup> Vow type of birth

##### Shinran's Definition of the “Provisional (or Transformed) Buddhas and Lands”

At the beginning of the volume six of his *Kyogyoshinsho*, Shinran defines the transformed Buddhas and lands as follows:

To reveal, with reverence, the transformed Buddha-bodies and lands: The Buddha is as taught in the *Sutra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*: the Buddha in the “contemplation of the true body” is such a Buddha-body. The land refers to the Pure Land as described in the *Contemplation Sutra* and is also as taught in such sutras as the *Sutra of the Bodhisattvas' Dwelling in the Womb*; the “realm of indolence and pride” is such a land. Or again, it is taught in the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life*; the “city of doubt” and “womb-palace” are such.

(CWS, p. 207)

#### II. Birth in the “Realm of Indolence and Pride”

A passage in the *Sutra of the Bodhisattvas' Dwelling in the Womb*, says,

In the western quarter, twenty *kotis* of *nayutas* from this Jambudvipa continent, is the realm of indolence and pride.... Sentient beings who have awakened aspiration and desire to be born in Amida Buddha's land are all deeply attached to the land of indolence and pride and cannot advance to birth in Amida's land. At times only one of millions upon millions of beings is able to attain birth in Amida's land.

Shan-tao comments on this passage by saying,

The next passage in the sutra [i.e., the *Sutra of the Bodhisattvas' Dwelling in the Womb*] states, “For since they are indolent and complacent, their resolve lacks firmness.” Thus we know that those who engage in sundry practices are people of infirm resolve. For this reason they are born in the realm of indolence and pride. If you do not engage in sundry practices, but solely perform this act, then you are firm of

resolve and will definitely attain birth in the land of bliss.... Further, those born in the fulfilled Pure Land are extremely few; those born in the transformed Pure Land [i.e. True Land] are many.

(CWS, p. 211 and pp. 647-648)

### III. Birth in the “City of Doubt” and “Womb-Palace”

The following is an excerpt from the second volume of the *Larger Sutra*, in which Shakyamuni talks about the two types of inhabitants in the Pure Land. In his *Passages on the Types of Birth in the Three Pure Land Sutras* (CWS, pp. 637-648) Shinran quotes this excerpt, but does not quote the italicized sections.

#### Text

[42] *At that time, the Buddha said to Ananda and Bodhisattva Maitreya, ... “Did you not also see that the inhabitants in that land, aboard their seven-jeweled flying palaces measuring a hundred thousand yojanas, travel freely in all the directions of the ten quarters to make offerings to all the Buddhas?”*

*Ananda replied, “Yes, we did.”*

*“Did you not also see that some of the inhabitants in that land had attained “womb-like birth?”*

*Ananda answered, “Yes, we did.”*

(*The Three Pure Land Sutras*, Shin Buddhism Translation Series, Vol. II, pp. 95-96)

(N. Haneda’s Note) In his *Passages on the Types of Birth in the Three Pure Land Sutras*, Shinran quotes the following section that he calls “the passage declaring the fulfillment of the 20<sup>th</sup> Vow.”

“Those who attain womblike birth dwell in palaces a hundred *yojanas* or five hundred *yojanas* in extent. Within, they each enjoy pleasures like those of Trayastrimsa heaven, all of which arise naturally.”

[43] Then Bodhisattva Maitreya said to the Buddha, “World honored one, what cause of condition leads to the distinction between womblike birth and transformative birth [i.e., True Birth] among the human beings of that land?”

The Buddha said to Maitreya, “Suppose there are sentient beings who, with minds full of doubts, aspire to be born in that land through the practice of various meritorious acts; unable to understand the Buddha-wisdom, the inconceivable wisdom, the ineffable wisdom, the all-encompassing wisdom of the Mahayana, the unequaled, peerless, and supremely excellent wisdom, they doubt these wisdoms and do not entrust themselves. And yet, believing in [the recompense of] evil and good, they aspire to be born in that land through cultivating the root of good. Such sentient beings will be born in the palace of that land, where for five hundred years they will never see the Buddha, hear the dharma of the sutras, or see the sacred host of bodhisattvas and sravakas. Hence, in that land this is known as womblike birth.

[“*However, if there are sentient beings who resolutely believe in these kinds of wisdom, from the Buddha-wisdom to the supremely*

*excellent wisdom, and perform meritorious acts, directing their merit with firm belief, then they will spontaneously attain the transformative birth within the seven-jeweled lotus flower, seated with their legs crossed. In an instant they will acquire the same physical features, radiant light, enlightened wisdom, and virtues as those of bodhisattvas.”*

[44] *“Moreover, Maitreya, if great bodhisattvas in the Buddha-lands of other directions aspire to see the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, and revere and make offerings to the Buddha as well as the assembly of bodhisattvas and sravakas, then when their lives come to an end, they will attain birth in the land of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, where they spontaneously receive transformative birth within the seven-jeweled lotus flower.”*

*“Know, Maitreya, that those transformative birth are superior in wisdom; that those of womblike birth lack wisdom, [and for five hundred years, never seeing the Buddha, hearing the teaching, or seeing the sacred host of bodhisattvas and sravakas, they have no way of making offerings to the Buddha. Neither do they know the rules of conduct of bodhisattvas, nor can they perform meritorious acts. You should know that this is brought about by a lack of wisdom and the harboring of doubts in their former lives.”]*

[45] The Buddha said to Maitreya, *“Consider the case of the noble cakravartin-king, who possesses a prison embellished with the seven precious substances. It is adorned in manifold ways, furnished with a canopied bed, and hung with many silken banners. If young princes commit offenses against the king, they are imprisoned there and bound with gold chains. [“They would be provided with food and drink, clothes, bedding, flowers and incense, and music, no less than the cakravartin king is. What do you think of this? Would these princes enjoy being in such a state of not?”*

*Maitreya replied, “No. They would only try to use various means to seek out someone of great power in order to escape from there.”]*

The Buddha said to Maitreya, *“These sentient beings are precisely like that. Because they doubt the Buddha’s wisdom, they are born in a womb-palace. [There they do not receive any punishment or experience even a moment of discomfort. However, for five hundred years, they will neither be able to see the Three Treasures, nor cultivate various roots of good through making offerings to Buddhas—this is distressing to them. Though all other pleasures are available to them, they do not enjoy staying there.] If these sentient beings become aware of their past offenses and deeply repent, they desire to leave that place. [Then immediately as they wish, they will be able to go to the place of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, where they can worship and make offerings to the Buddha. In addition, they will be able to visit all the other countless and innumerable Buddhas and cultivate various meritorious acts.]*

*“Know, Maitreya, that if there are bodhisattvas who give rise to doubt, they will lose the great benefit.”*

*(CWS, pp. 649-650 and The Three Pure Land Sutras, Shin Buddhist Translation Series, vol. II, pp. 95-99.)*

## A. Two Types of Inhabitants in the Pure Land

1. Inhabitants who attain “womb-like birth,” provisional birth
2. Inhabitants who attain “transformative birth,” or True Birth

## B. Two Causes of Womblike Birth

1. Doubt of the Buddha-wisdom (*bucchi-giwaku*)
2. Belief in the recompense of evil and good (*zaifuku-shin*)

### Shinran’s View of Two Types of Doubt

- (a) Doubt that takes the form of no faith. This is doubt before believing in Buddhism. We can be conscious of having this doubt in ourselves.
- (b) Doubt that takes the form of faith. This is doubt after believing in Buddhism. We cannot be conscious of having this doubt in ourselves. Unless others (or teachers) point it out to us, we cannot be conscious of having it.

## C. Being Chained with Gold Chains

## D. Repentance

1. The “doubt of the Buddha’s wisdom” that causes birth in the womb-palace: a problem that we cannot easily recognize
2. What makes repentance possible
3. What is repentance?
4. The two types of people who are in the womb-palace
  - (a) Those who are in the womb-palace and do not know it: These people think that they have true faith, but they do not have it.
  - (b) Those who are in the womb-palace and know it: These people think that they do not have true faith, but they have it.
5. Verses from Shinran’s “Hymns on the Offense of Doubting the Primal Vow”

(1)

As a mark of not apprehending Buddha-wisdom,  
People doubt the Tathagata’s various kinds of wisdom,  
Believe in the recompense of good and evil, rely on their practice  
Of the root of good, and hence remain in the borderland.

(2)

Doubting the inconceivable Buddha-wisdom,  
People devote themselves to saying the nembutsu in self-power;  
Hence they remain in the borderland or the realm of indolence and pride,  
Without responding in gratitude to the Buddha’s benevolence.

(3)

Practicers who believe in the recompense of good and evil  
Doubt the inconceivable Buddha-wisdom.

And therefore remain in the city of doubt or the womb-palace;  
Hence they are separated from the three treasures.

(6)

People who say the Name in self-power  
All fail to entrust themselves to the Tathagata's Primal Vow;  
Because the offence of doubting is grave,  
They are chained in a prison of seven precious materials.

(9)

People who, doubting the inconceivable Buddha-wisdom,  
Rely on their practice of the root of good and the root of virtue  
Are born in the borderland or the realm of indolence and pride;  
Hence, they fail to realize great love and great compassion.

(13)

They are born in a palace made of seven precious materials,  
And there pass five hundred years;  
Being unable to see or hear the three treasures,  
They are wholly incapable of benefiting sentient beings.

(15)

Those who practice the root of good  
While believing deeply in the recompense of good and evil  
Are good people whose minds are possessed of doubt;  
Hence, they remain in the provisional, transformed lands.

(21)

Because they take the mind of self-power as essential  
And do not entrust themselves to inconceivable Buddha-wisdom,  
They are born in the womb-palace and for five hundred years  
Are separated from the compassion of the three treasures.

(23)

The fault of doubting Buddha-wisdom is grave.  
Becoming fully aware of this,  
You should, with deep repentance,  
Entrust yourself to inconceivable Buddha-wisdom.

*The above twenty-three hymns were composed in order to  
awaken people to the offense of doubting the Primal Vow that  
embodies inconceivable Buddha[-wisdom].*

(CWS, pp. 413-417)

## 6. Shinran's repentance

Truly I know this.  
How sad I am, Gutoku (Foolish Bald-headed) Shinran!  
I am sunk deep in the ocean of attachments and desires.  
I am totally lost in enormous mountains of fame and material gain.  
I do not rejoice in entering the stage of the truly settled.  
I do not appreciate approaching the realization of true enlightenment.  
How shameful!  
How miserable!

(CWS, p. 125, with modification by N. Haneda)

Although I have taken refuge in the true Pure Land way (i.e., Jodo Shinshu),  
I do not have a true and sincere mind at all.

This self is false and insincere;  
I completely lack a pure mind.

In outward bearing,  
I make a show of being wise, good, and diligent.  
But so great are my greed, anger, perversity, and deceit,  
That I am filled with all forms of malice and cunning.

(*CWS*, p. 421, with modification by N. Haneda.)

#### **IV. Shinran's View of the Practitioners Described in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Vows**

##### **A. Those of the 19<sup>th</sup> Vow: practitioners of other Buddhist traditions, such as Tendai, Kegon, and Zen. This category includes Pure Land practitioners who take up sundry practices.**

- 1. The spiritual basis: self-power (or dualistic human wisdom)**
- 2. Motivation: self-benefiting—hating and leaving samsara. They don't doubt their motivation. Their main focus is on practice and attainment.**
- 3. Different teachings, practices, and goals depending on the practitioners' abilities**
- 4. The difficult path: sundry practices**

##### **B. Those of the 20<sup>th</sup> Vow: practitioners of the Jodo-shu**

- 1. The spiritual basis: self-power (dualistic human wisdom)**
- 2. Motivation: self-benefiting—longing for the Pure Land. They don't doubt their motivation. Their main focus is on practice and attainment.**
- 3. Different teachings, practices, and goals depending on the practitioners' abilities**
- 4. The path of easy practice: one practice, the nembutsu**