



Living Nembutsu Applying Shinran's Radically Engaged Buddhism in Life and Society

Introduction **Rooted in the Buddha-Ground**

1. Have you ever wondered whether Pure Land Buddhism is relevant to contemporary problems?
2. Why did Dr. Wilson write this book?
3. The introduction provides brief explanations of Shinran Shonin, Jodo Shinshu, Namo Amida Butsu, nembutsu, and Pure Land. How familiar were you with these aspects of Buddhism?

Chapter 1 **Radical Shinran**

1. What is the meaning of the story about Rev. Tsuji and his father's letter?
2. Why does Dr. Wilson refer to Shinran Shonin as a radical? What are some examples of his radicalism?
3. What does Dr. Wilson mean when he says that Shinran Shonin innovated by bringing the traditions into a new era where they could be revitalized by new circumstances, rather than abandoned? How could this approach apply to our teachings, practices, and institutions today?
4. What is the progression from an I to a They to a We perspective in Buddhism? How does this fit with Pure Land Buddhism?
5. What does it mean to say that Jodo Shinshu is a religion of fearlessness? Have you encountered the use of fear in religion?

Chapter 2 **Queer Shinran**

1. How does Dr. Wilson use the term "queer" in this chapter?
2. How is the history of Buddhism and LGBTQ+ issues similar to or different from other religions?
3. Who was Prince Shotoku? How does he function as a queer figure in Buddhist history?
4. How does Dr. Wilson explain the meaning of Amida Buddha's 35th Vow? Have you encountered discrimination in Buddhism? How can we work to reduce it?
5. What are the factors that made Jodo Shinshu so accepting of same-sex marriage long before it was legalized? How do those factors play into treatment of other groups facing discrimination or hardships?
6. Why does Dr. Wilson say that LGBTQ+ and other marginalized people are at the heart of Amida Buddha's mission? What would it look like if we practiced Buddhism with such an attitude?

Chapter 3 **Refugee Shinran**

1. What hardships did Shinran Shonin face? How did they affect his teaching of Buddhism?
2. What hardships did Rennyo Shonin face? How did they affect his teaching of Buddhism?
3. How did the World War II incarceration affect Buddhists? What lessons can be taken from that experience?

Chapter 4 **Buddhism in the Age of the Refugee**

1. What are some of the challenges we face in the 21st Century? How have Buddhists been victims and perpetrators of these crises?
2. How do the sangha and the Pure Land serve as models for a more functional and compassionate society?
3. How does the Buddhist vision of interconnection and concern for others inform the examples of social action by Jodo Shinshu Buddhists, such as support for refugees, solidarity with the Muslim community, and care for those experiencing homelessness?

Chapter 5 **Principles for Engaged Shin Buddhism**

1. What does the first principle, “Amida Embraces All Beings Unconditionally” mean? What are the implications for how should conduct our lives and act toward others?
2. What does the second principle, “Even the Good are Saved, So of Course the Evil are Saved” mean? How does this differ from the ordinary logic of society?
3. What does the third principle, “I Too Am a Foolish Being” mean? What are some ways that we might apply it in our lives and relationships with others?
4. What does the fourth principle, “The Indebtedness of Interconnection” mean? How aware are you of the myriad factors that support your life and Buddhist practice?
5. What does the fifth principle, “Action Expresses Gratitude” mean? How do you try to express your gratitude?
6. What does the sixth principle, “Circulation of Compassion” mean? How does it relate to the bodhisattvas of the Pure Land? How can we take it as a model for our own action to help the world?

Chapter 6 **Concepts for Engaged Shin Buddhism**

1. What is meant by Great Compassion? What role does Great Compassion play in the Pure Land tradition?
2. Why does Dr. Wilson characterize the Pure Land way as an active path?
3. What is the sangha of Boundless Life? How can we make our temples and other aspects of our lives more ecologically sustainable?
4. What are the symbolic teachings of the gomyochos bird, peacock, and lotuses of the Pure Land?
5. What is a bombu? Do you have any insightful or humorous stories about realizing your bombuness? How can awareness of bombuness help with conflict resolution?
6. How can deep listening help us recognize the Dharma lessons manifested by the natural world?
7. How does Buddhism provide supportive resources during the age of DharmaFail?
8. What is inner togetherness?

Further Reflections

1. How does Tessa Asato’s cover image illustrate the concepts of sangha and inclusivity?
2. How have Buddhist principles helped you to think and act in relation to social issues in your own life? What problems do you particularly care about?