

GOJŪ-SŌDEN

THE FIVEFOLD TRANSMISSION OF THE NEMBUTSU

The third patriarch of Mount Hiei was Ennin, also known as Jikaku Daishi (794-864). In 848, he returned after a ten-year spiritual quest in Wu-t'ai-shan, China, bringing with him a special method of nembutsu recitation. In his Sanmondoshaki, he wrote that monks should continuously recite the nembutsu. This tradition was transmitted in 1691 from Jōjun, 18th Abbot of Senzōji, a Tendai temple in the city of Inzai, Chiba Prefecture. In this temple, there is a stupa dedicated to the completion of a nembutsu recitation lasting for over two-thousand days by the 19th abbot. Additionally, there is a wood-block print containing the Fivefold Transmission of the Tendai Nembutsu. This practice was continued until 1932, when Shinnō, the grandfather of the current abbot, Ichishima Shōshin, was the Head Priest of Senzōji. According to the Eshinryū, the text of this specific nembutsu transmission is the following:

GOJŪ-NEMBUTSU-KANJŌ-NO-DAIJI

The first kind of nembutsu is dedicated to the development of the supreme bodhi mind.

Bowing at his feet, I wish to take refuge in the Buddha. I wish to take refuge in the Dharma, being free of desires. I wish to take refuge in the Sangha.

The mantra is the following:

OM BODHICITTAM UTPADAYAMI

I devote myself to cultivating the mind of unsurpassed enlightenment.

The second kind of nembutsu is the sudden and perfect nembutsu encompassing the wonderful Three Types of Pure Precepts.

NAMU AMIDA BUTSU

I devote myself to Amida Buddha.

I say unto you that those who recite the nembutsu with deep concentration and follow the pure precepts, will attain the way of the Buddha in the world to come. The word AMIDA which is the Japanese name for Amitabha, consists of three characters: A, MI and DA. The first character (A) is understood as Emptiness or KU in Japanese. The one who keeps those precepts which encourage people to perform good deeds, will enjoy the benefits of the Sambhogakaya, the Reward Body of the Tathagata (this set of precepts is known as Shōzenbokai and represents one of the Three Types of Pure Precepts in Mahayana Buddhism). The character MI represents the conventional truth or KE in Japanese. The person who follows those precepts which encourage deeds beneficial to other beings, will attain the Nirmanakaya, the body of the Tathagata realising supreme bodhi in this world (Nyoyaku-ujokai). The character DA is interpreted as the Middle Way or CHU in Japanese. The one who keeps the precepts without succumbing to evil deeds like murder, theft, pride, anger et cetera, will attain the Dharmakaya (this third set of precepts is known as Shoritsugikai). In the voice reciting the nembutsu, the virtue of the five precepts is immanent. Consequently, every single recitation of the name of Amida Buddha, encompasses the Three Types of Pure Precepts in the Great Vehicle of Buddhism as explained above.

The third kind of Nembutsu is the Lotus Nembutsu. The mantra chanted is the following:

NAMAH SAMANTA BUDDHANAM BHAH - NAMU MYOHO ISSHIN KAMBUTSU

I wholeheartedly devote myself to discerning the Marvelous Dharma of the Buddha.

This way, I practice the Dharma of the Buddha in this world. When this life of mine reaches its end, I will certainly be reborn in the serene realm of Amitabha Buddha, surrounded by great bodhisattvas seated on lotus thrones.

Once, a Pure Land patriarch said that the world of peace is the transformation of illusions which leads to the attainment of the pure field of Amitabha Buddha. This way, we can calmly walk through the wonderful Gate of the Lotus Dharma.

The fourth kind of Nembutsu is the Secret Nembutsu. The mantra is the following:

OM AMRITA TEJE HARA HUM

OM! I devote myself to the deity pouring forth the nectar of Eternal Life. HUM!

Amitabha Buddha who resides in the West is of golden colour and embodies the wind chakra. In Mahavairocana Sutra, we read that the element of life is wind. According to the Samyukta Sutra, the nature of the fundamental body is diamond-like. The Sanskrit root-syllable or bija of Amitabha is HRIH. In Sanskrit, H corresponds to hetu or cause of unobtainable karma. The R corresponds to rajas or unobtainable tendencies. The I corresponds to *iti* or unobtainable adversity. The AH corresponds to the Sanskrit concept of *astamgamana*, the unobtainable means for being free from destruction. What we call *means for attaining freedom from destruction* is freedom from greed, hatred and ignorance. This way, we can attain cessation, the realm of perfect nirvana. When the wind of the Sanskrit syllable HRIH blows, the clouds and mists [of ignorance] are dispersed and Amida Buddha appears.

The fifth kind of nembutsu is the nembutsu welcoming the practitioner to the Pure Land.

NAMU AMIDA BUTSU

The name indicates the svabhava nature of Amitabha. According to the sutra, if we want to be born in the Pure Land of the Buddha, we must ceaselessly recite his name: *Namu Amida Butsu*. A patriarch said that those who pronounce the name of the Buddha even once, will be born in the Lotus Land, perpetually residing there without retrogression. A lotus seat will wait for them in the Pure Land. Everyone should aspire to receive birth in the Land of Peace. Let us all meet at the realm of Amitabha Buddha.

A noble name of honour known as Seiyo or Purified Glory is granted to those who complete the practice of Gojū-sōden at Senzōji.

Gondaisōzu Ryōkei of Tenryūzan Senzōji
October 1855

Here ends the description of the text. The oral transmission was being performed from the Edo period up until 1932 at Senzōji, temple of the Tendai School.