

PURE LAND NOTES

Journal of the Shin Buddhist Fellowship UK

IN PRAISE OF KANNON 2&3

COMPOSED BY REV ZUIO H. INAGAKI, DEC 12TH 1982

With the assistance of Rev George Gatenby and Rev John Paraskevopoulos, “*In Praise of Kannon*” and nine more similar pieces, all written originally in Chinese by Rev Inagaki, have been compiled into a small book entitled “*A Dragon sings on a Withered Tree*” (*Koboku Ryūgin*). All ten poems are presented in their original Chinese form, preceded by Japanese readings and followed by a translation into English.

Rev Inagaki dedicates the collection “*to the memory of my father and mentor, Rev Zuiken Inagaki (1985-1981) and Mr Harold Stewart, my teacher from Australia (1916-95)*”. An extract from Rev Inagaki’s Foreword follows:

“It was not until my father Zuiken died in 1981 that I thought of composing a Chinese poem. When I saw him on his deathbed and marvelled at the glorious scenery attending his cremation, I felt that I could not express my deep emotion in Japanese, whether in prose or in a waka poem. After some time, I found myself writing a poem in classical Chinese. I was amazed by the depth of my feelings that could be expressed in that way. Besides, I was able to follow the lingering pathos created by the mystical Chinese words.”

This small collection is a classic of religious and philosophical truth expressed in Zen-Shin Buddhist terms that goes beyond the written or spoken word

An extract (the first half) from the author’s notes on “*In Praise of Kannon*” is reproduced on the next page of this purelandnotes.com archive piece. PDF doc ‘In Praise of Kannon 1’ shows the original centre spread of the piece from the hard-copy journal including (left to right) Romanised Japanese, English text and Chinese Calligraphy.

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AN EXTRACT FROM REV ZUIO H. INAGAKI'S NOTES

It is stated in the Heart Sutra that when Kannon (Avalokeshvara) Budhisattva practiced deep Prajnaparamita, he realised that the five *skandas* (the five constituent elements of one's existence), beginning with form, were void. He realised that *rūpa* (form) was *shūnyatā* (voidness) and that *shūnyatā* was *rūpa*.

Additionally, he realised that the other elements, that is, perception, conception, volition, and consciousness, were equally void. He further realised that other elements, such as objects and other spheres of perception were also void.

The Mahayana asserts that all existing things are non-existent. If one realises the total negation of all existents, one gets rid of all attachments and attains Nirvana. This realisation is a reversal of the general Hinayana (Theravada) theory that all *dharmas* (elements) do exist. Mahayana breaks this view and clarifies the truth of universal voidness. This reversal of the common-sense view brings to light the Mahayana teaching that nothing really exists.

Next, in the general Mahayana view, bodhisattvas make vows of saving all beings. Without clinging to the earlier realisation of *shūnyata*, they plunge into the realms of samsara and undertake the work of removing causes of suffering. This shows that *shūnyata* is *rūpa*.

In the advanced Mahayana teachings, such as Tendai, *dharmas* are seen in the light of absolute reality as well as *shūnyatā*. Here nothing is negated or abandoned. Things are accepted as they are.

In other words, one perceives *rūpa* as *rūpa*.

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they know each other and have sympathy for each other. A true community has faith and wisdom that illuminate it. It is a place where the people know and trust each other and where there is social harmony. In fact, harmony is its life and real meaning ...

The theme "Jodo Shinshu in Everyday Life" took on a new meaning on the second day of the conference because overnight we were informed that having been admitted into Southampton General Hospital in the previous week, our good friend and Tendai priest Reverend Ganshin Rock passed away at 5.10 on Monday 1st September. We were reminded that everyday won't happen for ever.

It is noticeable that Pure Land Buddhist do appreciate the notion of 'everyday encounter'; put simply, the string of cause and effect that leads to one person to be in the same place as some other person - at the same time. I feel truly honoured that I encountered Ganshin Rock in this way and was able to benefit from his clear and sometime quite blunt guidance. It was by his example that I was inspired to start the weekly Buddhist meeting in my home, so it could be said that if it were not for the fact that in 1988 he decided to retire to the Hampshire Market Town of Romsey which is just a few miles from my home in Southampton; and if it were not for his insistence that "you are Jodo Shinshu" I might not have attended the 13th ESC held in 1996 in Oxford, took Kikyoshiki (Buddhist Confirmation) there and went on to become ordained as a Jodo Shinshu priest in 2012 and by then be supported by so many good Dharma friends we were able to accept the responsibility to ourselves organise and stage the 17th ESC 17th ESC here in the UK for only the second time in its 34 year history. We have yet to see what will come of the numerous and marvellous personal encounters that occurred at this years' conference.

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