



Ōtani Mausoleum (Ōtani Sobyō 大谷祖廟)

## Just As You Are

The ultimate goal of all Buddhist teachings is to free all sentient beings from suffering. Many people, who are looking for a way to lead a happy life, turn to Buddhism in search of methods to achieve this goal.

The Buddhist way to end suffering is described in the Noble Eightfold Path, which consists of 1. Right View, 2. Right Resolve, 3. Right Speech, 4. Right Conduct, 5. Right Livelihood, 6. Right Effort, 7. Right Mindfulness, and 8. Right Samadhi. In other words, by upholding the Buddhist precepts and gaining meditative insight into true reality, it is possible to get rid of one's attachments and illusions and thus reduce one's suffering.

Although the Noble Eightfold Path gives us a clear way to end suffering, it is not an easy path to follow. Even after years of practice some people feel that

they haven't made any progress. They are still bound by their greed and anger that causes them and the people around them suffering.

Even Shinran, after 20 years of studying and practising on Mount Hiei, thought that he was still far from awakening. Realizing that he did not have the capacities to get rid of all of his passions in this life, he climbed down from Mount Hiei and became a disciple of Hōnen who taught him that everybody can be saved just as they are.

Shin Buddhism is not about trying to become a perfect human being, but about realizing who we really are, with all our shortcomings and imperfections, and being transformed by this realization. It is a Buddhist path that opens a way for those who feel that they cannot accomplish the methods of self-perfection of other

Buddhist schools.

By reflecting on our passions and attachments in our everyday lives, we are able to take a step out of our limited ego perspective and recognise the causes and conditions that direct our actions. Through this, we will naturally let go of our ego bit by bit, which in turn allows us to realize our interconnectedness and interdependence with everything in this universe. In this way, our passions and attachments become means to gain deeper insight into our true selves.

Without getting rid of our illusions, we can learn to evaluate them from a new perspective, the egoless perspective of true reality, which we also call Amida Buddha. This is what we mean when we say that everybody is saved by Amida Buddha, just as they are.

(Thomas Siebert)

困ったら  
困るのがよいのです  
それを困るまいと  
我を張るから問題なのです

**“When you’re stuck in a bind and don’t know what to do, you should think it all for the best. After all, if this did not happen to you now and then, your selfish side would just come snaking out and continually make a nuisance of itself.”**

— Takamitsu Kachiyo

In our everyday life we know there are all kinds of people who have all kinds of ways of thinking and different sense of values from ourselves. But we just cannot accept it. Whether we are speaking of our working place or home life, we cannot get it out of our head when things do not go the way we plan. Without any time set aside

every day for us to rest of our minds, we just fret all day and end up all worn out.

But if we can inquire into ourselves and calm ourselves down, saying, Well, that’s just the way things are, love, then we notice we had been getting all worked up over nothing. We have to take time now and then to reflect on

this old heart of ours to keep it in check and see how really important it is for us to inquire directly into what other people think now and then. It is through being stuck in a bind like a stick in the mud that life is giving us a chance to take a really good, hard look at ourselves.

(Minami Midō, April 2015. Osaka: Shinshū Ōtani-ha Nanbabetuin)



## Monto

The monto are fellow followers of the Pure Land path who live together in the teaching of the nenbutsu. While the original word more generally referred to people that shared the same school's religious beliefs, after Rennyo, the eighth head of Honganji temple, frequently used it in his letters to followers, it came to refer to people of the Shin school of Pure Land Buddhism.

Today in the Shin school monto is still widely used, to both refer to people who receive Pure Land teachings together and declare one's identity as a person who relies on the school's teachings.

### What is the garment that monto wear across their shoulders?

When monto go to a temple or recite the nenbutsu in front of their home altar, they wear a kataginu. This formal garment, which shows one's respect to the Buddha, is a simplified form of the upper half of a kamishimo, a type of clothing worn

during the Edo period (1603–1868). Today there are two kinds of kataginu: ones made out of tatami, and simpler ones called ryaku kataginu. Monto use them ceremonially, along with a rosary.

At Higashi Honganji, those who participate in the kikyōshiki ceremony

to become a disciple of the Buddha (held in the Goeidō Hall) receive a kataginu, as do those who accept Shinran's teachings and pledge to revere and protect the Higashi Honganji.



## The Honganji Aqueduct

The Higashi Honganji's fire prevention aqueduct was the first of its kind in Japan. It was a 4.6 km long cast-iron pipe that carried the water from the Lake Biwa Canal in the Higashiyama area to the temple's grounds. With Higashi Honganji's elevation being forty-eight meters less than that of the reservoir, the water could be brought up to the roof of the Goeidō Hall without having to rely on external power. The aqueduct also provided water for the moat around the Higashi Honganji as well as the pond at its Shōsei-en garden.

This unique system was designed by Tanabe Sakurō, who also created the Lake Biwa Canal. After three years of construction that brought together the cutting-edge technology of the time, it was completed in 1897.

However, in 2008, the pipe ceased to be used due to deterioration. Even so, in recent years it has received attention as a noteworthy example of local disaster prevention. Some are calling for it to be repaired and put to use again. Scholars also note that it offers us lessons today regarding how to protect cultural assets from fires.

Hoping to share the wisdom of Kyoto's predecessors with as many people as possible, in 2004 a yearly walking event was launched that follows the route of the aqueduct.

