

Assessing Shinran's *Shinjin* from an Indian Mahayana Buddhist Perspective: With Focus on *Adhimukti* in Tathāgatagarbha Thought

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Preface

Shinran (1173-1263), the founder of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism is well known for his doctrine of *shinjin* (信心; faith, true entrusting, faith-mind, etc.) rooted in the absolute Other Power of Amida Buddha. On account of the central role that it plays within his doctrinal framework it is crucial that *shinjin* be correctly understood.

However, this task is not as simple as it may seem because *shinjin* is multivalent in meaning. Shinran defined it as “truth, reality, sincerity, fullness, ultimacy, accomplishment, reliance, reverence, discernment, distinctness, clarity, and faithfulness.” Despite this fact, contemporary scholars have taken a particular dimension of the meaning and rendered it into such English terms as “faith,” “faith-mind,” “true entrusting,” and “awareness,” but no single term can do true justice in capturing the whole range of meaning of *shinjin*.

An accurate understanding has been further complicated in the West as many writers have sought to understand the meaning of *shinjin* from a comparative perspective, referencing the teachings of prominent Western theologians and philosophers. For example, *shinjin* has been compared to the doctrines of “faith only” (*sola fide*) of Martin Luther and “leap of faith” of Søren Kierkegaard among others. “Faith” has, thus, become the primary lens for a Western understanding of *shinjin*.

Further, Shinran's paradoxical rejection of *shinjin* as an efficient path to spiritual awakening or enlightenment has reinforced the perception of *shinjin* as representing a very different mode of seeking than from the rigorous spiritual practices that are demanded in most of the other Buddhist traditions. Consequently, *shinjin* is often perceived as being “merely” devotional in nature, rooted in a dualistic and polarized relationship involving, on the one hand, Amida Buddha, a buddha of infinite capacity and, on the other hand, a seeker (a term I shall be using for a human being who seeks enlightenment) who has no capacity whatsoever to perform an effective practice. And this devotional *shinjin* is seen to be devoid of any element of wisdom (*prajñā*), which is required for realizing ultimate enlightenment. *Shinjin* is, thus, not seen as being in the same league as wisdom.

This misconception has, at times in the West, led some to regard Shin Buddhism as not being authentic Buddhism and, at its extreme, gone so far as to regard its teachings as an aberration of Buddhism. For example, Albert Schweitzer in 1936 commented, “Of course the doctrine of Shinran is an outrage on Buddhism.”¹ More recently, a scholar of Buddhism, Heinz Bechert, remarked, “It takes the ideas of the Buddha and, in a way, twists them into their opposite. The most radical spokesman for this approach is Shinran Shonin”²

Given the existence, albeit extreme, of this kind of assessment, particularly within the contemporary Western context, I have embarked on a project to reevaluate and clarify the nature of *shinjin* from a broader Buddhist perspective. There have, of course, been numerous studies of *shinjin* within the traditional Shin sectarian studies (*shūgaku*, 宗学) framework, but given their narrow approach and limited reach beyond

Shin studies they have done little to refute the criticism shown above. In contrast, the works of Takamaro Shigaraki and Kōtatsu Fujita have overcome the shortcomings of sectarian studies and have introduced a deeper and more accurate understanding of *shinjin* to a wider readership.³ Building on the valuable findings of their research, I hope to focus on some of the areas not addressed in their studies.

As the first step in my overall project, I will in this paper take up a particular text from an Indian Tathāgatagarbha tradition called *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* (『宝性論』, henceforth, *RGV*) to examine its understanding of terms that can be rendered as “faith,” particularly that of *adhimukti* (信、信解、勝解; *mos-pa*).⁴ It is hoped that the findings from this examination will help to cast a new light on our understanding of *shinjin*, for I am not aware of any substantial study relating the topic of *shinjin* in Shinran’s thought to the topic of faith in Tathāgatagarbha thought.⁵

Tathāgatagarbha Thought and Pure Land Buddhism

In order to begin to address the above-stated objective, I shall, in this paper, focus on earlier Mahayana thought, referred to as Tathāgatagarbha (“Buddha womb” or “embryo,” or in a broader sense, “Buddha nature”). “Tathāgatagarbha thought” refers to a constellation of ideas that is found in a group of Mahayana sutras and treatises that goes back as early as the 2nd century C.E. This includes sutras such as the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra*, *Lankāvatāra-sūtra*, *Avatamsaka-sūtra*, *Nirvāna-sūtra* and *Srimāladevī-sūtra* as well as such treatises as the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* and the *Awakening of Faith*.⁶

One reason for taking up Tathāgatagarbha thought in relation to Shinran’s *shinjin* is due in part to the fact that there are quite a number of references to Amitābha within Tathāgatagarbha literature, a fact that probably would be surprising to many contemporary readers. For example, in the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*, a concluding verse on the merits accrued from authoring the treatise states:

By the merit I have acquired through this,
 May all living beings come to perceive
The Lord Amitāyus endowed with infinite light,
 And, having seen him, may they, owing to the arising,
 Of the immaculate vision of the Doctrine in them,
 Obtain the Supreme Enlightenment.⁷ (Chap. 5, Verse 25)

(Note: Throughout this paper, certain words have been underlined by the author for emphasis.)

A similar thought is found in the concluding passage of the *Awakening of Faith* (『大乘起信論』). In it the seekers are encouraged to contemplate on Buddha Amituo (阿彌陀, Amitāyus/Amitābha) and transfer the merit they have accrued toward birth in the Western Pure Land.

Further, a number of eminent Japanese scholars have pointed out the parallels between Tathāgatagarbha and Pure Land thought, including Ui Hakuju, Takemura Shihō, Hirakawa Akira and Takasaki Jikidō. For example, Ui points out that both the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* and *Mahāyanasūtra-ālamkara* (Paramārtha translation) conclude with a passage in which it is said that to witness Amitābha becomes the basis for one’s full enlightenment. Ui Hakuju then concludes, “It is customary for Tathāgatagarbha-related (texts) to show a close relationship with the (teachings of) birth in the Pure Land through *nembutsu* (念仏).”⁸ Hirakawa goes even further in suggesting a possible *historical* connection when he states, “In summarizing the above, it is possible to regard the *Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable [Light and Life]* as having been compiled as a result of the Tathāgatagarbha thought being synthesized with the concepts of

‘transcendent realms’ and ‘realms of extreme bliss.’”⁹ Although there has been no evidence to substantiate Hirakawa’s suggestion, there is adequate evidence pointing to doctrinal affinity between Amitābha Pure Land teachings and Tathāgatagarbha thought.

The second and more substantive reason for taking up Tathāgatagarbha thought in relation to Shinran’s *shinjin* lies in the extremely important role that faith plays in the overall doctrinal framework of Tathāgatagarbha thought. This point has been made by previous researchers, notably Takasaki Jikidō and Mizutani Kōshō, whose articles focusing on faith in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* provided the doctrinal insights necessary for my embarking on and pursuing research on the theme of this paper.¹⁰

The Text: *Ratnagotravibhāga*

The full title of this text is the *Ratnagotravibhāga-mahāyānottaratantraśāstra*. It is the most systematic treatise extant on Indian Tathāgatagarbha thought. This work is available in its Chinese and Tibetan translations as well and has played a particularly important role in Tibetan Buddhism.¹¹ No author is identified in the Sanskrit text, but the Chinese text attributes the authorship to Sāramati (沙羅末底、堅慧). As for the Tibetan text, Maitreya is believed to have composed the verses and Asanga is believed to have composed the prose section. It is thought that the Sanskrit text was compiled sometime between the late 5th and early 6th centuries, since it was translated into Chinese in 511.¹²

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* is comprised of 5 chapters: 1) Tathāgatagarbha, 2) Enlightenment (*bodhi*), 3) Properties (*guna*) of the Buddha, 4) Acts (*kriyā*), and 5) Merits of Faith (*adhimuktyanuśamsa*). The text sets out to examine the 7 Adamantine Subjects, which are the 3 Jewels of 1) Buddha, 2) Dharma, and 3) Sangha, plus 4) Tathāgatagarbha, 5) Enlightenment, 6) Properties, and 7) Acts. The last four subjects correspond to the topics of the first four chapters of the text, respectively. The fifth and final chapter is devoted to the importance of faith (*adhimukti*) and, as noted earlier, ends by encouraging refuge in Buddha Amitāyus.

I find it extremely interesting that the author in its opening section of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* consciously sets out to rectify what he sees as the shortcomings associated with the doctrine of emptiness as taught in the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*. The author describes these shortcomings as being 1) depressed mind (*līnam cittam*), 2) contempt for those who are judged as being inferior, 3) clinging to unreal things, 4) speaking ill of Truth, and 5) affection for one’s self. It then concludes, “[The teaching about Tathāgatagarbha] has been taught in order that those who are possessed of these defects might get rid of them.”

The Importance of Faith in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*

I would like to begin discussing the role of faith in this treatise by introducing passages that extol the virtues of faith, which, at times, are said even to surpass those of devotional, ethical, and meditative practices. The second verse in Chapter Five, which is entitled “The Merits of Faith” (*adhimukty-anuśamsa*), sets the tone of the entire chapter by praising the advantages of faith.

Buddha’s realm, Buddha’s enlightenment, Buddha’s dharmas, and Buddha’s action are inconceivable even to those of the purified mind (*śuddhasattva*), being the exclusive sphere of the Leaders (i.e., Buddhas). (Chap. 5, Verse 1)

But the wise one, whose intellect

accepts faith (*adhimuktabuddhi*)

In this exclusive sphere of the Buddha,
Becomes a receptacle of the whole collection of properties,
And being possessed on [*sic*] the desire [to obtain]
The inconceivable properties of the [Buddha],
He surpasses the abundance of merits of all living beings.

(Chapt. 5, Verse 2)

Here we see that a person with faith is highly praised even more than the people of purified mind. While there is no direct explanation of who the “people of purified mind” (*śuddhasattva*) are, it is safe to regard them as those who are at higher levels on the Buddhist path (*mārga*), including bodhisattvas. Thus, a person of faith is valued as much as, if not more than, some bodhisattvas (without proper faith) for the person of faith may obtain numerous positive qualities, including motivated desire to realize the inconceivable properties of the Buddha.

The text goes on to compare the merits of faith (*adhimukti*) with those who engage in 1) making offerings, 2) keeping ethical purity, and 3) attaining mystic absorption, respectively.

Suppose there were one who, being anxious to obtain Enlightenment,
Would offer golden lands, constructed by jewels
As innumerable as the sand in the Buddha’s lands,
To the Lord of Doctrine, always, day after day;
Another if he hears but one word of this teaching,
After hearing of it, would have faith in this

Doctrine (*śrutvādhimucyē*);

The latter would reap merits far more than the merits of offerings.

(Chap. 5, Verse 3)

Suppose a wise man, being desirous of the Highest Enlightenment,
Would maintain pure moral conduct of his body, speech and mind,
Without effort, in the course of innumerable aeons:
Another if he hears but one word of this teaching,
After hearing of it, would have faith in this

Doctrine (*śrutvādhimucyē*);

The latter would reap merits far more than the merits of morality.

(Chap. 5, Verse 4)

Suppose one would give himself up to the mystic absorption,
Which suppresses the fire of defilements in the three worlds,
And, having been transferred to the abode of Brahman in heaven,
Would be irreversible from the means of Enlightenment;
Another if he hears but one word of this teaching,
After hearing of it, would have faith in this

Doctrine (*śrutvādhimucyē*);

The latter would reap merits far more than even the merits of mystic

absorption. (Chap. 5,

Thus, as these three verses argue, a person who has faith in this doctrine of Tathāgatagarbha surpasses in merit those who engage in generous offerings, strict precepts or even strenuous meditative *samādhi* practices.

Further, faith is one of the Four Causes of Purification along with wisdom (*prajñā*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and compassion (*karunā*). Faith is referred to as “the practice of faith in the teachings of Mahayana” (*mahāyānadharmādhimukti-bhāvanā*) and is regarded as an antidote to the enmity some people harbor toward Mahayana teachings (*mahāyānadharmapratigha*). It works by rectifying people’s aversion to the Mahayana teachings (i.e., *tathāgatagarbha*), a quality found in its extreme form among the Icchantikas.

The other three practices of the Four Causes of Purification – wisdom, meditation and compassion – are also seen as antidotes to the following three obstructions, respectively: 1) conception of the self, 2) fear of suffering, and 3) aversion to or indifference to the benefits to sentient beings. And each of the Four Causes of Purification, are, respectively, identified with the analogies of seed (faith), mother (wisdom), womb (meditation) and nursing mother (compassion).

Those whose seed is the faith in the Mahayana teachings,

Whose mother is the transcendental wisdom,

On account of the origination of Buddha’s teachings:

Whose abiding womb is the blissful meditation

And whose nursing mother is called compassion;

They are the sons, the after-comers of the Buddhas.

(Chap. 1, Verse 34, p. 207)

The importance of faith is further expressed in the passage in which the truth of the teachings of *tathāgatagarbha* is touted as being true whether or not the Tathagata appears in the world:

This essence itself is not accessible to imagination or to discrimination. It is accessible only to faith (*adhimoktavya*). (Chap. 1, p. 296)

The text then goes on to claim:

The Highest Truth of the Buddhas

Can be understood only by faith

Indeed, the eyeless one cannot see

The blazing disk of the sun. (Chap. 1, Verse 153, p. 296)

The “eyeless one” includes 1) ordinary beings, 2) Śrāvakas, 3) Pratyekabuddhas, and 4) Bodhisattvas who have recently entered the Bodhisattva path (or gotten on the Bodhisattva vehicle). Hence, even some Bodhisattvas are unable to understand the teachings of *tathāgatagarbha*; thus, the text tells all four categories of people who are deemed blind or “eyeless” that faith is their only path to realizing the truth. This is consistent with the position of *RGV* that “even the Bodhisattvas of the tenth Bhumi cannot fully see *tathāgatagarbha* (*daśabhūmisthitā bodhisattvas tathāgatagarbham īśat paśyantīty uktam*).”

Three Terms of Faith

We have so far looked at and confirmed the importance of faith in *RGV*. There are, however, three Sanskrit terms in this work that carry the meaning of the English word “faith” and are commonly rendered into Chinese as “*hsin*” (信) or its derivatives (e.g., 信心、淨心、信行、信解、勝解). The three are *śraddhā*,

adhimukti and *prasāda*. Since *prasāda*, with only two occurrences, does not figure prominently in the thesis of this paper, it will not be dealt with here.

We now direct our attention to *śraddhā* and *adhimukti*, which as will be shown reveal clearly differing qualities. Each of the occurrences of the terms will be examined in the context of 1) its Chinese rendering, 2) its object, 3) the type of seeker or person exhibiting faith, 4) practices that accompany faith, and 5) the level or kind of attainment that result from faith and attendant practices.

Śraddhā Faith

	Term	Chinese	Object	Seeker	Attendant practices	Attainment
1	<i>śraddhā</i>	信	Tathāgata	Ordinary beings, Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas	---	Tathāgatagarbha, Dharmakāya, etc.
2	<i>śraddhā</i>	信	Tathāgata	Ordinary beings, Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas	---	Tathāgatagarbha, Dharmakāya, etc.
3	<i>śraddhā</i>	信	Tathāgata	Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas	---	Tathāgatagarbha, etc.
4	<i>śraddhā</i> (adj.)	信	Buddhist teachings (3 Jewels)	Non-traditional Buddhists and Pudgalavādins	---	---
5	<i>śraddhā</i>	信	自在者	Ordinary beings, Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, new Bodhisattvas	---	Affirmation 順知 of Tathāgatagarbha
6	<i>śraddhā</i>	信	(Buddha)	sentient beings	Limit desire, raise vow, precepts, charity, etc.	See 32 and 80 marks and realize a bodhi level with some desire left
7	<i>śraddhā</i>	信	(Buddha)	sentient beings	(same as above)	(same as above)
8	<i>śraddhā</i>	信	Words of the Buddha 仏語	One with wisdom	---	Confirmation of the Four Noble Truths
9	<i>śraddhendrya</i>	信根	---	all sentient beings	---	heightened purity of mind

10	<i>Śraddhādhimukitas</i>	信	The teaching that the realm of Tathāgatas exists, can be attained and has virtues	a person with wisdom	<i>adhimukti</i>	Become Buddha's child with Bodhicitta and in a state of non-backsliding
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Based on the above 10 occurrences, we are able to make the following observations about *śraddhā*.

1) The objects are all either a person or his teachings. And the persons are invariably the Tathagata or the Buddha. Hence, one directs his *śraddhā* not to the teaching itself but to the person who delivers the teachings on the strength of his trust in the person.

2) The seekers in these occurrences include a wide range of beings from “all sentient beings” to “one with wisdom.” However, one can make the case that they mostly include those who are not advanced or even those not considered exemplary Mahayana Buddhists, such as Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, “ordinary beings,” “non-traditional Buddhists” and Pudgalavādins. Occurrence #10 is somewhat of an exception, thus, will be dealt with later in this essay.

3) In most of the examples, the act of *śraddhā* is not attended by any other practices, and when it is attended by other practices they are ethical in nature as in occurrences #6 and #7. In occurrence #9, it appears that *śraddhā* leads the seeker to cultivate wisdom, if not immediately, then down the road on the path. Occurrence #10, as noted above, is anomalous, so will be dealt with later in this essay.

4) As for the attainments connected to *śraddhā*, the seekers attain most of the traditional Buddhist goals, but the most prominent, as would be expected, is Tathāgatagarbha. However, it should be stressed that *śraddhā* by *itself* does not *directly* lead to these attainments.

Based on the above observations, it is safe to say that *śraddhā* does not entail any qualities of insight or wisdom, particularly based on the fact that its object is the Buddha. It is, therefore, a faith in the teacher as a person.

Adhimukti Faith

	Term	Ch	Object	Seeker	Attendant practices	Attainment
1	adhimucya	· ---	dharmas are illusion	bodhisattva	---	1) not be lethargic toward Dharma, 2) possess insight, 3) awaken to the true nature of dharmas
2	adhimoktavya	信	Dharma	---		(observation of mind)

			nature		---	(purification of mind)
3	adhimoktum	信	Undefined realm	Young ordinary beings	---	---
4	adhimucyeta	信	如来藏、性、菩提、諸功德、業	Others (bodhisattva)	聞	Attain benefits superior to those of 布施, 戒, or 禪定
5	adhimucyeta	信	如来藏、性、菩提、諸功德、業	Others (bodhisattva)	聞	Attain benefits superior to those of 布施, 戒, or 禪定
6	adhimucyeta	信	如来藏、性、菩提、諸功德、業	Others (bodhisattva)	聞	Attain benefits superior to those of 布施, 戒, or 禪定
7	trayādhimuktāms	信	三供養	信解者	---	---
8	karādhimuktān	信	Offerings to Buddha	信解者 (equal to bodhisattva)	---	---
9	karādhimuktān	信	Offerings to Dharma	信解者 (equal to pratyeka-buddhas)	---	---
10	karādhimuktān	信	Offerings to Sangha	信解者 (equal to śrāvakas)	---	---
11	adhimuktānām	信	因緣法	pratyeka-buddhas	---	---
12	anadhimukta	不信	第一義諦	non-Buddhists within 佛法	---	---
13	anadhimukto	不信	空性	non-Buddhists within 佛法	---	---
14	adhimuktānām	信心	四處 (如来性)	(菩薩)	---	Benefits of 信解
15	adhimukta	信	四處 (如来性)	有智慧者 (菩薩)	---	1) receiver of benefits 2) superior to benefits from other acts.
16	dharmādhimukti	信	大乘法	bodhisattva	般若、三昧、大悲	(tathāgatagarbha)
17	adhimuktyādaya	信	大乘法	bodhisattva	般若、三	Overcomes Icchantikas'

					味、大悲	faults and 4 kinds of barriers, and realize tathāgatagarbha
18	adhimuktibhāvanā	信	大乘法	bodhisattva	般若, etc.	Overcomes Icchantikas' fault
19	adhimuktyādīn	信	大乘法	bodhisattva	般若, etc.	Realize dharmakāya, Be Dharma prince in Buddha's home
20	agrayānādhimuktiyādīn	信	最乘法	(bodhisattva)	般若, etc.	Be Buddha's child
21	adhimuktyādayas	信	大乘法	bodhisattva	般若, etc.	Benefits of Parāmitā's Purity, selfhood, bliss, permanency
22	adhimuktibhāvanāyāh	信	大乘法	bodhisattva	般若, etc.	Pure Parāmitā
23	adhimukti	信	大乘法	bodhisattva	般若, etc.	Pure Parāmitā, Utmost Dharma realm
24	adhimuktibhāvanāyāh	信	大乘最上法	bodhisattva	般若, etc.	Utmost purity, Utmost Dharma realm
25	adhimukti	信心	One of 3 Vehicles	Icchantika	See Buddha nature	見
26	adhimuktibhāvanā	信	大乘法	bodhisattva	Realize 仏性	Purity of Dharmakāya,
27	adhimuktibhāvanāyā	信	大乘法	bodhisattva	Realize 仏性	(Purity of Dharmakāya)
28	adhimuktau	信				
29	adhimuktau	信		衆生		
30	visayādhimukti	信	仏の境界	Those who doubt and misunderstand Buddha's unconditional conduct 自在		Elimination of misunderstanding and doubt
31	adhimuktitas	信	実性・可能性・有功德性	具智者 (bodhisattva)		Qualification to eventually attain Buddhahood, i.e., bodhicitta and non-retrogression
32	dhiyādhimuktyā	信		bodhisattva	善業	

		受				
33	adhimukti	信	白法（大乘）	(those who slander the Dharma)		
34	śraddhādhimukti ta	勝智	勝者の不可思議界	有智者 (bodhisattva)	信	Become Buddha's child endowed with bodhicitta and non-retrogression

Based on these 34 occurrences, we are able to make the following observations about *adhimukti*:

1) The objects of *adhimukti* are not Buddha himself as in the case of *śraddhā* but are teachings themselves. The most numerous occurrences are “Mahayana teachings,” which include Tathāgatagarbha, emptiness, and various other terms pointing to the realm of enlightenment.

2) The seekers in virtually all occurrences are bodhisattvas. Thus, they are further advanced on the path compared to the seekers in the case of *śraddhā*.

3) In most of the occurrences, *adhimukti* is attended by other practices at a much higher rate than with *śraddhā*. The most frequently cited attendant practices are the cultivation of wisdom, samādhi and great compassion. In these examples, *adhimukti* is part of a set of category of practices that require more rigorous effort and realization.

4) As for the attainments connected to *adhimukti*, the seekers in most of the examples attain realms associated with enlightenment, expressed by such terms as Parāmitā, dharmakāya, and tathāgatagarbha. Noteworthy are the occurrences #31 and #34 wherein *adhimukti* on its own, without any attendant practices, leads to attainment that includes the generating of Bodhicitta and the state of non-retrogression.

The generating of Bodhicitta is of especial interest for it reinforces one of the other features associated with *adhimukti* in that the seekers often exhibit a desire to aspire with greater zeal. This can be further seen in other occurrences where *adhimukti* is part of an integral set of practices serving as a starting point or a seed for deepening one's cultivation of wisdom, samādhi and great compassion.

Thus the differences between the two kinds of faith have become more apparent. While *śraddhā* exhibits traits that are devotional in nature, *adhimukti* entails on the part of the seeker a higher level of insight and an enhanced motivation to aspire to enlightenment.

Analysis of *Adhimukti*

Based on the basic characteristics of *śraddhā* as faith and *adhimukti* as faith, derived from the analysis of their occurrences within the text, I now wish to direct our attention to analysis of a passage in which both types of faith are found (#10 *śraddhā* occurrence and #34 *adhimukti* occurrence). The passage appears in Chapter Five and reads as follows:

The person of insight (有智者) has become full of faith (*adhimukti*)

With regard to its existence (*astitva*), potentiality (*śaktatva*)
and virtue (*gunavattva*).

Therefore, he immediately attains the potentiality
to acquire the state of Tathāgata. (Verse 8)

Indeed, as he is full of devotion and faith (*śraddhādhimuktī*)
 That there ‘exists’ this inconceivable sphere,
 That it ‘can’ be realized even by someone like him, and
 That this he would be ‘endowed with such virtues’
 once it is attained. (verse 9) (Chap. 5, pp. 382-83)

In verse 9, the object of the compound of *śraddhā* and *adhimukti* is that “it” exists, has potentiality, and has virtues. What then is the “it” here? It refers to the “realm of the Buddhas.”¹³ And in verse 8, the person of insight is said to exhibit *adhimukti* with regard to the three qualities of the realm of the Buddhas, i.e., its existence (*astitva*), potentiality (*śaktatva*) and virtues (*guṇavattva*).

Previous studies by J. Takasaki and K. Mizutani have shown that this particular passage is based on a very similar passage found in earlier texts, particularly in Yogacara texts, such as the *Vijñaptimātratā-trimsīka-bhāṣya*¹⁴ and *Chengweishilun* (『成唯識論』).¹⁵ Of great interest to us is that the *RGV* has undergone a change from the Yogacara passages, wherein it changed the order of the latter two of the three qualities of existence, virtues and potentiality to read existence, *potentiality* and *virtues*.

Both Takasaki and Mizutani have interpreted this switch as one of the evidences of *RGV*'s greater emphasis on the potentiality on the part of *the seeker* to realize the realm of the Buddhas. Mizutani, in particular, feels that the Yogacara passage was ambiguous as to whether the potentiality lay in the object (i.e., the realm of the Buddhas) or the subject (the seeker) who displays *adhimukti*. However, with this *RGV* passage, the potentiality lies with the seeker (the subject) rather than with the realm of the Buddhas (the object). Thus the seeker comes to experience an enhanced sense that one is capable of realizing the realm of the Buddhas, for he knows that it exists within himself and that he would be endowed with its virtues once it is realized. This highlighting of potentiality is consistent with the overall emphasis of Tathāgatagarbha thought on the enhanced potentiality of seekers to realize full enlightenment based on the view that all beings essentially possess the *same* quality as the Buddhas.

Takasaki provides an explanation for what he regards as one of the reasons for this enhanced potentiality. It is to be found in the Buddhas' actions (業) to benefit others out of their compassion for sentient beings. These actions have the power to instill in the seeker a greater sense that he has the potential to realize Buddhahood. The key to this line of thinking lies in the view that the Buddhas actually possess the power or the capacity to have an impact on the seeker by instilling an enhanced sense of potentiality to realize full enlightenment.

Now, this shift in understanding is also made possible in the *RGV* on account of its view that the Buddhas and the seeker are *in essence* the same. The apparent difference between the two lies in the simple fact that the Buddhas are those who have *realized* the qualities of wisdom and compassion, while the seekers are those *who have not yet realized* their qualities of wisdom and compassion. Hence the two groups are essentially the same, for the Buddhas have attained the results while the seekers have simply not attained them yet. This view that the two groups are essentially not two but one can be seen in the following *RGV* passage:

The multitudes of living [beings] are included
 In the Buddha's wisdom.

Their immaculateness is non-dual by nature,
 Its result manifests itself on the Nature of the Buddha;
 Therefore, it is said: all living beings
 Are possessed of the embryo of the Buddha. (Chap. 1, Verse 27, p. 197)

In regards to the first sentence of the above passage, “the multitudes of living [beings] are included in the Buddha’s wisdom,” the commentary helps to clarify its meaning. It explains, “It’s meaning is that the Dharmakāya of the Buddha penetrates everywhere” (*tathāgatadharmakāya-parispharaṇārtha*). This idea, then, is said to be based on the well-known metaphor of “the one dust includes the entire Three Thousand Great Thousand Worlds” found in the Chapter on the “Arising of Tathagata” in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* (『華嚴經性起品』).

I wish now to unpack the meaning of the use of the two kinds of faith (*śraddhādhimukti*) in the passage under examination. Takasaki translates this compound as “devotion and faith,” and adds that they are essentially of the same meaning. However, based on the findings in this paper of our examination of the nature of these two types of faith (*śraddhā dhimukti*), I believe we can arrive at a different and a more nuanced understanding.

Given what we learned above about the nature of *śraddhā*, it would be more likely that the seeker exhibits a sense of trust or reliance on the Buddha as a person but that there would be no personal *understanding* yet of the teachings. We saw in the above examples that in the act of *śraddhā*, the seeker cannot vouch for the veracity of the teachings based on his own understanding but would find the teacher and his message to be trustworthy. In contrast, *adhimukti* entails a higher level of understanding about the doctrine that is being taught and is usually manifested by someone with a higher level of insight.

Hence, in this passage, it would be better to interpret the two terms as describing two different modes of action on the part of the seeker. In the act of *śraddhā*, the seeker trusts that the words of the teacher are true, or, at the very least, worth investigating.

At a later stage of the process, what we can call *adhimukti* “kicks in.” After one has taken this first step in *śraddhā*, one gradually matures in one’s understanding of the teachings and comes to be impacted by the workings of Buddha’s action (*krtyā*) in some form of spiritual encounter as expressed in the passage cited earlier, “... the Dharmakāya of the Buddha penetrates everywhere.” Thus, human beings may experience a sense of being *penetrated* by the Dharmakāya of the Buddha within the process of their spiritual development, confirming for the seeker that the teaching is, indeed, true. Hence, I believe we can see in *adhimukti* the following qualities in the seeker: 1) one’s deepening insight, 2) one’s encounter with the Buddha’s workings, and 3) one’s confirmation of the truth of the teachings.

Based on the above discussion, the compound *śraddhādhimukti* is better rendered as “entrusting and realization.” The term *adhimukti* involves personal insight and spiritual realization. *Adhimukti* confirms to a greater degree the veracity of the teaching in which the seeker had earlier entrusted in his act of *śraddhā*. Moreover, this realization was *made possible* by the workings of the Buddha’s action, which empowered the seeker to generate an enhanced level of aspiration to realize full enlightenment; this is, indeed, the *potentiality* that the *RGV* stressed, in keeping with the overall thrust of Tathāgatagarbha thought. Finally, that *adhimukti* entails a higher level of personal insight or realization can be supported by the fact that the passage describes the seeker as “the person of insight (有智者).”

In Closing: Implications for *Shinjin* in Shinran's Thought

I would like to close by making some brief remarks about the implications of our findings on our understanding of Shinran's view of *shinjin*, a topic that, as mentioned at the outset, served as the basis for embarking on this study.

For Shinran, it is clear that *shinjin* entails elements of wisdom, for he talks about the "wisdom of *shinjin*" (信心の智慧) in his *Hymns of the Dharma Ages*.

Through the compassion of Sakyamuni and Amida,

We have been brought to realize the mind that seeks to attain Buddhahood.

It is by entering the wisdom of shinjin

That we become persons who respond in gratitude to the

Buddha's benevolence.

(Verse 34, *The Collected Works of Shinran*, henceforth *CWS*, p. 407)

Shinran explains the phrase "wisdom of *shinjin*," by noting next to the verse, "Know that since Amida's Vow is wisdom, the emergence of the mind of entrusting oneself (i.e., *shinjin*) to it is the arising of wisdom." Other similar terms such as "*shinjin* of supreme wisdom" (無上智慧の信心) and "*shinjin* of wisdom" (智慧の信心) are also found numerous times throughout his writings. I should, however, mention at this point that this wisdom is not the product of the seeker's cultivation through self-power but is the outcome of the workings of Amida's Vow, which is none other than the expression of Amida's wisdom. Nevertheless, I maintain that the seeker realizes in *shinjin*, if not wisdom, some level of *personal* insight into one's own nature (as ordinary foolish being) as well as the nature of Amida even if the source of insight derives ultimately from Amida's Vow.

Another evidence of the wisdom element in Shinran's understanding of *shinjin* is seen in the level of attainment by the persons of *shinjin*. Shinran states that *shinjin* invariably leads the seeker to the Stage of Joy, which he sees as being equal to the First Fruit in the Path of the Sages:

Thus, when one attains the true and real practice and *shinjin*, one greatly rejoices in one's heart.

This attainment is therefore called the stage of joy. It is likened to the first fruit: the sages of the first fruit, (*Kyōgyōshinshō*, *CWS*, p. 54)

Not only does the person of *shinjin* attain the Stage of Joy, but that stage is equal to the first level of the Sages, which entails some level of wisdom. Another value of attaining this realization is that the seeker no longer backslides or, stated differently, is assured of realizing Buddhahood. In explaining this level, Shinran quotes the words of Nāgārjuna ("immediately enter the stage of the group of the truly settled") and of Danluan ("enter the group of the truly settled").

Thus, we see that Shinran's *shinjin* includes 1) wisdom and 2) being empowered by Buddha's working, the same elements as those found in *adhimukti* in the *RGV*. While Shinran may not have explicitly stated his indebtedness to Indian Tathāgatagarbha thought for his doctrinal formulation, I believe that studying the concept of *adhimukti* in a key Mahayana text provides the basis for a more complete understanding of Shinran's *shinjin*. We can then go on to clarify the meaning of *shinjin* within the context of contemporary Buddhist studies and inter-religious dialogue.

In closing, I end with a passage that Shinran quotes from the *Nirvana Sutra* in his *Kyōgyōshinshō*

Buddha-nature is great *shinjin*. Why? Because through *shinjin* the bodhisattva-mahasattva has

acquired all the *paramitas* from charity to wisdom. All sentient beings will without fail ultimately realize great *shinjin*. Therefore it is taught, “All sentient beings are possessed of Buddha-nature.” Great *shinjin* is none other than Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathagata. (*Nirvana Sutra*, CWS, p. 99)

¹ Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development*. Translated by Mrs. Charles E.B. Buswell (1936. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1957), p. 154.

² Küng, Hans, et. Al. *Christianity and the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), p. 373.

³ Shigaraki Takamaro. *Jōdokyō ni okeru shin no kenkyū*. Nagata bunshodo, 1975. Fujita Kōtatsu, *Genshi jōdo shisō kenkyū*. Iwanami shoten: 1970. Even these have not been translated into Western language, limiting its wider circulation among scholars beyond Japan.

⁴ I am well aware of the criticism by the proponents of the so-called Critical Buddhism that Tathāgatagarbha cannot be considered authentic Buddhism, but this is not the place to address this issue. I find their assertions unwarranted.

With regard to the use of the term “faith,” I have elected to use this as a term that refers to a wide range of Buddhist terms including *adhimukti*. “Faith” is required in this paper as an overarching category to not only compare the various Sanskrit terms of “faith” but also to enable to participate in a wider discussion about this key psychological and religious phenomena of faith.

⁵ Mizutani Kōshō, “*Nyoraizō to shin*,” in Hirakawa Akira, et. all, eds, *Kōza daijō bukkyō* (1982, Shujusha), pp. 117-149. Mizutani makes references to the affinity of the two thoughts (Tathāgatagarbha and Pure Land) but does focus on Shinran’s *shinjin*.

⁶ Based on Takasaki Jikidō’s views that are expressed in his numerous writings on the subject.

⁷ Jikidō Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra) Being a Treatise on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, S.O.R. 33 (Roma, IsMEO, 1966), pp. 389-390.

⁸ Ui Hakuju, *Indo-tetsugaku-shi* (Iwanami-shoten, 1965), p. 395.

⁹ Hirakawa Akira, “*Nyoraizō to shite no hōzōbosatsu*,” in *Etani Sensei Koki Kinen: Jōdokyō no Shisō to Bunka* (Dōbōsha, 1972), p. 1303.

¹⁰ Takasaki Jikidō, “*Nyoraizō-setsu ni okeru shin no kōzō*,” *Komazawa daigaku bukkyōgakubu kenkyū kiyō*, 11 (1964), pp. 86-109. For the article on Mizutani, see above.

¹¹ The Chinese title is 『究竟一乘宝性論』, and the Tibetan is *Theg-pa chen-po rgyud bla-mahi bstan-bcos*.

¹² Takasaki Jikidō, “On Hōshō-ron,” in *Butten Kaidai Jiten* (Shujusha, 1966), pp. 144-145.

¹³ This realm of the Buddhas is further described as having four features, which are Buddhas’ nature or realm (*dhātu*), enlightenment (*bodhi*), dharmas (*dharmāḥ*) and action (*krtyā*).

¹⁴ Text edited by Sytan Levi, p. 26.

¹⁵ Taisho 31, p. 29b.