

## **Right Moment**

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This is my second Buddhist article built around a lyric by Gerry Rafferty. I will append a (probably correct) lyric sheet at the end. His point in the song is that we search for spiritual illumination, for a center, for direction in our lives and we find what we are looking for and yet...“(We) remember, then we forget all along the way.”

Actually, it is the more (psychologically) reflective and (spiritually) adept amongst us who do that. The rest of us never do get it. We “watch and wait for a sign.”

These have been our problems ever since Sakyamuni Buddha started teaching us the way to Awakening some twenty-five centuries ago. The monks and nuns used to worry, “I thought I had it. Where did that illumination go? When will I live constantly in the light of the Dharma? When will the back sliding stop? When’s dinner? Where did I put that bookmark?...”

Jodo Shinshu is a development within Mahayana Buddhist tradition designed in large part to deal with these problems (not the timing of dinner or location of the bookmark though). In this stream of Buddhist tradition the matter of our Buddhahood in the next life and the matter of composure in our lives now can be settled. This occurs in the moment when our hearts open to that deeper source which calls us, “Namo Amida Butsu” (“I rely upon the Awakened source of limitless Wisdom-light and Endless Life.”). We are never alone again after that moment, if we just don’t forget it. Our lives are absorbed within the Buddha’s life of joyously helping illumine others. From that moment of faithful receptivity (Shinjin) our imperfection and the Buddha’s perfect wisdom and caring are inseparable. Gradually over time there is less dullness and self-centeredness to be absorbed and more compassionate discernment doing the absorbing.

There are various ways of trying to recognize that this process is already taking place. It can be as simple as finding “Namanda, Namanda,...” to be precious. It can be a moment of being impressed by the beauty of Buddhist statues and paintings, the naijin perhaps. There are as many ways of coming to faithful receptivity as there are Buddhists in the Nembutsu stream of tradition. (Currently, probably, about 300 million) This doesn’t happen only for Jodo Shinshu Buddhists. (Currently there are about 25 million of us)

Maybe we need a bumper sticker that says, “Shinjin Happens”. Shinjin does happen. Trust in this path does flower. Put in a general religious perspective the question is, indeed, “When will you surrender and wake up to the Real?” What are you waiting for? What am I waiting for? We must not keep waiting. As the song lyric says, “...you know that it’s all borrowed time, and still you waste another day.” Let’s not waste another day. I won’t confirm your Shinjin and you don’t need to confirm mine. Someone, something, some wonderful and caring source of strength has been confirming it all along. Can’t you hear the voice confirming your Shinjin, telling you that there already is a faithful and receptive part of yourself? It may be in the back of your mind just now, or in the depths of your heart. It might sound like a rock ballad. More likely it sounds like, “Namo Amida Butsu.”

“The Right Moment” – Gerry Rafferty (1982)

Spinning on another wheel,  
You're going 'round in slow motion.  
Caught up in another dream,  
Drifting on a blue ocean.

When you gonna reach out?  
Only you can turn your world around.  
When will you surrender, wake up to the Real?

But you don't want to start just yet,  
You watch the Seasons come and go,  
You remember then you forget,  
All along the way.

You can make a better life  
You're just waiting for the right moment.  
You can find another way,  
You're just waiting for the right moment.

When you gonna let go and forget about the life you knew?  
When will you surrender, wake up to the Real?

Now you know that it's all borrowed time  
And still you waste another day.  
But you watch and you wait for a sign,  
All along the way.