

# WORDS OF MASTER SHICHIRI

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## I . Introduction

This is a partial translation of the work entitled *Shichiri Wajō no Kotoba* (七里和上の言葉), or *Words of Master Shichiri*, compiled by Eshō Hamaguchi and published by Hyakkaen Publishers, Kyoto in 1954. The present translation is intended to introduce the thought of Master Shichiri to non-Japanese-speaking Shin Buddhists. The translator wishes to publish the entire translation of the book in the near future.

The Reverend Gōjun Shichiri (七里恒順 1835 to 1900) is known for his piercing insight into the Dharma and his down-to-earth and enlightening advice to those who asked him questions about the Dharma. His words show that he was an independent thinker, not bound by traditional and orthodox interpretations of various issues in the Shin Buddhist doctrine. Yet, Master Shichiri was often requested by the Head Priest of the Hongwanji School, His Eminence Myōnyo, to come to the Headquarters and help him govern its vast bureaucratic organization. Shichiri held the position of Shugyō (執行 Executive Director of the Hongwanji School) for five years, but he spent most of his active years in his own temple Mangyōji (萬行寺) in northern Kyūshū, and devoted himself to the propagation of the Dharma and educating young students of Buddhism as well as wives of resident ministers. Even now he is widely respected and his words are the Light of wisdom to many Shin Buddhists.

Master Shichiri's lifetime can be divided into six periods :

- (1) From birth in 1835 to 1847. He was born in a temple family in Niigata Prefecture (northern Japan facing the Sea of Japan). He was ordained to Jōdo Shinshū priesthood at age 11.
- (2) From 1847 to 1864. During this time, he studied Shin Buddhism under several eminent teachers.
- (3) From 1864 to 1880. When he was thirty years old, he became resident minister at Mangyōji Temple in Hakata, Fukuoka Prefecture in northern Kyūshū. That temple became the seat for his lifetime religious activities. He actively tried to educate children of temple families and wives of priests.
- (4) From 1880 to 1882. During this time, he served the headquarters of the Hongwanji School in Kyoto as Shugyō.
- (5) From 1882 to 1893. He returned to his temple to teach and give guidance to others. It was during this time that he established his reputation as a very dynamic teacher of Shin Buddhism.

Master Shichiri was often requested to go to Kyoto by the Head Priest Myonyo, but he kept declining the latter's request.

(6) From 1893 to 1900. In 1893, when he was 58, he suffered from apoplexy and became almost totally bedridden till his death in 1900. Even during his illness, many Shin Buddhists visited him from all over Japan to receive his guidance. He continued to teach from his sickbed by answering questions from visitors. He died in 1900.

Shichiri remained a teacher and a priest of Shin Buddhism all his life and does not seem to have been interested in developing philosophical discourse like Manshi Kiyozawa. However, Shichiri's words show a great contrast with the traditional representations of the Shin Buddhist doctrine.

First of all, Shichiri's teachings are characterized by his emphasis on the nembutsu as inseparable from true entrusting (*shinjin*). He follows the traditional explanation of the nembutsu as an expression of gratitude to Amida's benevolence, but to him, this act of expressing gratitude simultaneously means entrusting oneself to the Vow. In this sense, his thought does not have the dualism inherent in the orthodox doctrine of "Faith as the right cause for attaining birth and the nembutsu as a means of expressing gratitude to Amida (*shinjinshōin shōmyōhōon*).

Second, Shichiri differs from the orthodox teaching of the Twofold Truth of Absolute and Mundane Realities (*shinzoku-nitai*) by describing Mundane Reality as concrete manifestations of the working of the Vow, which is Absolute Reality, in everyday life. For Shichiri, Absolute Reality, or the Primal Vow, should be the only and ultimate reality that cuts through all aspects of life, and by striving to gain a deeper understanding of the Primal Vow, one can naturally become a better person. Thus again, his thought admits no dualism between the two realities, as is seen in the orthodox teaching.

Third, Shichiri's teachings are characterized by richness in similies and metaphors. Using examples from everyday life experiences, he brings the Shin Buddhist doctrine down to earth, while not spoiling its purity and profundity. After all, "truth" cannot be truth if it fails to relate to everyday life. That seems to be the main reason why Shichiri chose to reside in his temple in northern Kyushu and concentrated on propagating Buddhism to local people, although many people visited him for his advice from all over Japan. In this way, Shichiri can be called a true successor to Shinran's teachings.

## II . Words of Master Shichiri

### Two Illnesses

A nembutsu practitioner asked, "It's been many years since I realized that birth in the Pure Land is the most crucial thing in life and have listened to the teaching at every opportunity. But as I reflect on myself, I find myself far from that one decisive moment of true entrusting (*shinjin*). Not a fraction of doubt exists in my mind about the inconceivable power of the Vow or about the singular working of the Name. Then why is it that I cannot feel completely assured?"

Master Shichiri answered, "You have two illnesses. First, you are still clinging to the idea of taking a gift with you to the Pure Land, although you have already heard of the inconceivable power of the Vow. You might no longer think of accumulating merits by self-power practices, but you still are too concerned about feeling settled and assured. In this way, you have forgotten the importance of listening to the true heart of the teaching. You seem to want to think that feeling assured is the same thing as true entrusting. Redirect your mind and try to listen to the heart of the teaching. Instead of worrying whether you will attain birth or not, think of the one who has worried about you for over five *kalpas*. Instead of fretting about your state of mind and yearning to feel assured, think of the Great Compassion of the Tathāgata, who, since attaining Buddhahood ten *kalpas* ago, has been waiting for the moment when *your* birth becomes settled. Instead of becoming downcast with worries, uplift your mind and listen well to the true heart of the Dharma. Then, not a trace of doubt will be left with you. 'Deeply entrust yourself to the Primal Vow of Amida's Great Compassion' means to totally receive and enter into this great power. It does not mean deepening your faith in the Vow by self-effort.

"Secondly, your other illness is placing birth in the Pure Land first in the order of things and the Primal Vow second. True entrusting arises *not* when we focus on the Pure Land, but when we center on the Primal Vow. We can only catch a ride on the Primal Vow. It is the inconceivable power of the Buddha's Vow that finally settles our birth. For example, imagine that you wish to go to Kyoto from Kyushu. You have arrived at the coast of Hakata or Moji, but you are so occupied by the thought of getting to Kyoto as soon as possible that you have forgotten to board a ship. Then you would never be able to cross the ocean between Kyushu and Kyoto. When you have come to the coast of Kyushu, you should forget about Kyoto for a while and first think of boarding a ship. Once you get aboard the ship, your anxiousness to get to Kyoto will not get you there quickly, nor will forgetting about it slow down your trip. Just leave things to the power of the ship, and by that power alone you will get to Kyoto. Entrusting your birth to the power of the Vow is like travelling on a ship. Shinran Shōnin said, 'Once you realize the inconceivable nature of the Vow, you should not try to fathom it by calculative thought.' Looking into the condition of your mind and worrying about your birth is calculative thought, a sign of the illness of self-power. Singularly entrust yourself to the power of the Tathagata's Vow."

True Entrusting (*shinjin*) as the Body

Secular Truths (*zokutai*) as the Clothes

A nembutsu practitioner asked, "Some people say that a person who cannot live up to the teachings of humanity and justice, that is, the truths of the mundane world, does not have true entrusting, so he cannot attain birth in the Pure Land. What do you think about this?"

Master Shichiri answered, "Discussion on attaining birth by living up to secular truths pertains to practitioners of the Nineteenth Vow, whose goal is to accumulate merits through various self-power practices. In the Eighteenth Vow, those who entrust themselves to the inconceivable power of the Vow meet no hindrance to their birth.

"However, just as a person becomes attractive when he or she wears the right clothes, a person of true entrusting must be clothed in constant nembutsu and belted with the secular truths of kindness, love, faithfulness, and goodness. A person who hopes the world to be peaceful and the Buddha Dharma to spread for the welfare of the leaders as well as for the whole nation, and who thus puts the teaching of Dharma into practice, is called a practitioner of true entrusting, a true nembutsu practitioner."

### A Red Snapper Rather Than A Sardine

A priest asked, "Day in and day out, I am sacrificing myself to restore the declining fortunes of Buddhism. What will be the fastest way to achieve this goal?"

Master Shichiri answered, "I highly appreciate your resolve to sacrifice yourself for that noble cause. However, there are different kinds of sacrifices ; they may be sardines, carp, crucian carp or red snappers. Among these fishes, red snappers are superior in value to sardines. I am not saying that you are a sardine, yet I don't think you are equal to a red snapper. Straighten and polish yourself and accumulate virtues for yourself so that you become the best quality red snapper. Only then will you be a worthy sacrifice and your actions will be far more valuable and effective."

### Desire for Fame and Profit

A priest asked, "I am always trying to become free of the desire for fame and profit, but I sometimes feel that that desire could be a means for attaining a deeper understanding of Buddhism. What do you think about this?"

Master Shichiri answered, "We cannot completely rid ourselves of the desire for fame and profit, but we should try to become free of attachment to them. As Rennyō Shōnin said, 'Live as an ordinary person among ordinary people and seek profit befitting a householder,' we do not have to sever ourselves from fame and profit. We should have joy and sorrow just as other ordinary people do. Fame and profit run away from us when we try to chase them, and they chase us when we try to run away from them. You would be making a grave mistake if you sought fame and profit for yourself, thinking of them as a means for attaining a deeper understanding of Buddhism — a mistake arising from the mind of seeking enlightenment through self-power practices."

### An Animal Called Opportunity

Master Shichiri said, "According to a Western saying, an animal called opportunity has strong legs and has hair only on its forehead, while the back of its head is bald. So, you cannot catch the animal by chasing it from behind; you have to stand ahead of it waiting for its coming."

### Don't Let It Spoil

Master Shichiri said, "Spoiled white radishes and turnips are not as poisonous as more nutritious foods like fish and meat that are spoiled. Rennyō Shōnin said, 'In the country of Echizen (present Ishikawa Prefecture) there is a group of people who follow the so-called School of Dharma Transmitted by Secret Means (*Hijibōmon*). But it is not Buddha Dharma at all; it is a cult outside of Buddhism, hence to be shunned, and anybody who follows it will sink into the depth of the bottomless hell forever.'

"Secular teachings like Confucianism may not be harmful if they become rotten, but once we let the profound Mahāyāna teaching rot, it will spread great harm and poison. We must be especially careful about this."

### A Deed of A Hungry Devil

Master Shichiri said, "Once a man had a temple built, and believing that he had done a great thing, he asked an eminent priest what kind of religious merit he would receive. Then the priest said, 'This is a deed of a hungry devil.' Unless you listen to the Dharma carefully, you will be confused about good and evil. For example, there is a large pot full of delicious food. Although it is delicious, you would not be able to eat it if someone put a little poison in it. Building a temple would be an act of bringing merits to you in the self-power teaching and that of expressing gratitude in the Other-Power teaching. But the moment your deed becomes mixed with arrogance, pride, jealousy, or attachment, it would be poisoned and become nothing other than a deed of a hungry devil."

### A Pine Tree and Buddhism

Master Shichiri said, "An expert in growing pine trees said that you cannot reshape an old pine. You can shape a young pine into any form you like if you work on it carefully, but you may end up breaking an old one with the slightest attempt to reshape it. So it is important to find the right time in working on a pine tree. However, you must also be very careful in doing so, because if once you do it wrongly, the tree will develop into a hopelessly ugly form. You must take utmost care.

"In the same way, you cannot easily introduce the Dharma to an old person and lead him to true entrusting. An older person would resist your efforts and may become even worse than before. To have a person truly entrust himself to the Dharma, you must start educating him during his childhood, when he can be transformed easily. However, you must be very careful in doing so, for if once you do it wrongly, he might totally go astray."

### Nembutsu Instead of Quarrelling

When a preacher visited a temple at Kokura in Kyushu, a nembutsu practitioner named Tokueemon Kanzaki came to listen to his lecture and was continuously saying the nembutsu. Then the

preacher said to Tokueemon, "Judging from the way you say the nembutsu, you must be following the heretical view that the nembutsu is the right cause for attaining birth." Then Tokueemon was greatly angered and told the preacher, "What do you mean by heretical view? Rennyō Shōnin said, 'You should say the nembutsu as long as you live, thinking that the nembutsu is to express your gratitude to the Buddha,' and 'Say the nembutsu whether walking, resting, sitting or lying down, regardless of time, place and other conditions.' Then what's wrong with saying the nembutsu continuously?"

After that Mr. Kanzaki visited Master Shichiri at his temple Mangyōji and told him this story. Then Master Shichiri said, "In that case, it's you who are wrong. You are greatly wrong. Let others call you a heretic. You don't have to quarrel with them. Don't you realize that you are neglecting the nembutsu while accusing others? Instead of using your mouth for quarrelling, use it for saying the nembutsu. Then those who have accused you will feel ashamed of their mistake and stop badmouthing you. I, too, used to be accused of being a heretic, a follower of the view that the nembutsu is the right cause for birth, but I never paid attention to those accusations and kept expressing my gratitude to the Buddha by saying the nembutsu continuously. Then people stopped accusing me. This is my own experience, and I want you to follow this example."

Mr. Kanzaki was deeply impressed with Master Shichiri's admonition, and became a true nembutsu practitioner.

### Devils and Evil Spirits

Master Shichiri said, "Shinran Shōnin taught that gods and good spirits will surround and protect persons who entrust themselves to the Vow, and that devils and evil spirits will haunt those who do not. It does not mean that devils and evil spirits harass them directly, but that those devils and evil spirits enter and take hold of them and lure them into evil ways of life. Nobody attempts to take an honest, straight-minded person to places of drinking, squandering or amusement. Also, 'gods and good spirits stay with and never abandon persons of true entrusting' means those gods and good spirits enter and take hold of the persons of true entrusting and lead them to good ways of life, as a result of which those persons are visited by friends and fellow nembutsu practitioners and invited to gatherings to listen to the Dharma."

### Temple Property

Master Shichiri said, "The property of an ordinary householder consists of a house, a storehouse, rice paddies and farms. On the other hand, the property of a temple is a constant flow of visitors who, attracted by the virtues of the resident priest, come to ask about the Dharma. For example, look at those butterflies in this garden. They come here because of the violets and rape blossoms. In contrast, not a single butterfly comes to the gorgeous flowers in the alcove of the study. That is because they are artificial flowers. The ones in the garden, however ordinary and humble they may be, attract butterflies because they are real live flowers."

"Some priests are excellent preachers and always have a big audience wherever they go, but nobody visits them at their residences to ask about the teaching. They are like those gorgeous-looking artificial flowers to which no butterfly is attracted. Yet other priests are not very skillful in delivering lectures, but people continue to visit them to ask about the crucial matter of liberation from birth-and-death. In this way, a priest with true entrusting is like those real but humble flowers in the garden. People constantly visit him, and they are the true property of the temple."

### Nembutsu Is Showing Gratitude to the Tathāgata

Master Shichiri said, "Each and every member of a Shin Buddhist family should worship the Tathāgata with nembutsu in gratitude for the benevolence he or she receives. Each person is the recipient of the Tathāgata's benevolence, so he or she should express gratitude to the Tathāgata individually. However, in some families, the husband scolds his wife for not expressing enough gratitude to the Tathāgata, or for not changing flowers, or for not refilling lamp oil. This is a gravely wrong attitude. Regardless of the size of the family, every one is separately indebted to the Tathāgata. If the husband finds his wife not paying enough reverence to the Tathāgata, he should joyfully do so, thinking that is a good chance to pay back his debt to the Tathāgata. Also, the wife tends to think that she is only her husband's assistant and expects him to feel grateful to her for worshipping the Tathāgata "in his place." Since worshipping the Tathāgata with nembutsu is an act of returning your debt to the Tathāgata, every one should express gratitude to the Tathāgata by saying the nembutsu constantly. No one else can do it for you."

### Grave Offence of Breaking the Harmony of the Saṅgha

Once Yukichi Fukuzawa made a statement, "Blue originates from the indigo tree and is bluer than indigo. Buddhist priests originate from the rank of lay persons in the world and are more worldly than the laity."

Master Shichiri commented on Fukuzawa's statement, "Fukuzawa has said it well. He would be impeccably right if he had true religious faith and had awakened to truth, having left the life of illusion. Then he would be qualified to criticize the priesthood for corruption. But if he has no clear religious faith and lives in the same realm of ignorance and transmigration as others, he is just being pretentious. A priest with sincere faith would say that Mr. Fukuzawa has committed the grave offence of slandering the Great Vehicle and breaking the harmony of the Saṅgha. I really feel pity for him."

### Listen to the Dharma When Busy

Master Shichiri said, "Some people say, 'I am too busy to attend a lecture on the Dharma; I will go to the temple when I have finished my work and have more time.' They are like a person who, wishing to cross a river, stands before the river waiting for the flow of the water to stop. As the water never stops flowing, their work never ends. More work keeps appearing before half of the

previous task is done.

"When you are required to cross the river, you should do so by pushing your way through the swelling water. If you want to listen to the Dharma, you should visit the temple, putting aside your chores and engagements. You should even make extra time for catching up on a Dharma talk which you have missed.

"Rennyō Shōnin said, 'You should listen to the Dharma even if you have to sacrifice your daily activities. It is not right to think that you can listen to the Dharma between your daily activities.'"

### On the Auxiliary Acts and the Rightly Established Act

Master Shichiri said, "Hōnen Shōnin taught that once you have drunk the wine called true entrusting, you will dance to the tune of the Five Right Practices. Those five are reading and chanting the sutras, meditating on Amida and his Land, worshipping Amida, pronouncing Amida's Name (saying the nembutsu), and praising and making offerings to Amida. They are divided into the 'four auxiliary acts' and the 'rightly established act.' The former are so-called 'the first three acts and the last one,' that is, reading sūtras, meditating on Amida, worshipping and praising Amida, and the latter is the fourth act, pronouncing Amida's Name. The auxiliary acts are like the side dishes of a meal and the nembutsu, the fourth act, is like a bowl of cooked rice (the main dish). Even when the rice is not very tasty, with good side dishes, you can eat a lot of rice before you realize it. In the same way, you are able to say the nembutsu continuously when you do the auxiliary acts of 'the first three and the last one.'

"For example, you may not be able to say the nembutsu when you are picking cucumbers and eggplants in your farm, but you will joyfully say the nembutsu when you are picking some flowers to offer them to your deceased son on his memorial day. Also, the nembutsu may not come out while you are wiping the kitchen floor with a rag, but the nembutsu will spring from your lips when you are cleaning your family altar on the anniversary of your grandfather's death. Thus, when you find a great joy in carrying out the auxiliary act of 'praising and making offerings to Amida,' you can say a lot of nembutsu, just as when you have delicious dishes, you can eat a lot of rice.

"Each stanza of the six-stanza *Shōshinge-wasan* (*rokushubiki*) is followed by a few lines of nembutsu. People tend to think that the stanzas are more important than the nembutsu, but actually, the nembutsu is the important part. The stanzas were added between the nembutsu so that people are led to say the nembutsu. In other words, the nembutsu is to cooked rice, the staple food of the Japanese diet, as the stanzas are to side dishes. This is explained in the *Hajakenshōshō* (*A Collection of Passages Refuting the Wrong Views and Revealing the Truth*) of Zonkaku Shōnin in the following way:

The six stanzas were added so that those who cannot read can chant them alternately with the nembutsu and that they can learn the teaching through chanting. Chanting the stanzas is not the rightly established act for attaining birth, but only an auxiliary act, corresponding to the act of praising Amida, the fifth of the Five Right Practices. In this sense it is not different in importance from the rest of the auxiliary acts. It is extremely



hard for illiterate ones to read sūtras but easy for them to learn the teaching through those stanzas. Those stanzas were added to have people chant when they are not in a mood to say the nembutsu, or to give them a break during the discussion of the teaching, or to let them directly taste the Dharma."

### Evil Passions After Attaining True Entrusting

Master Shichiri said, "Even after becoming firmly settled in true entrusting, it is not unusual that you suffer from evil passions, or from still more fierce evil passions. That is like the post-winter cold that lingers after the winter is declared over. You may be told that the period of Extreme Cold (*daikan*) had ended on a certain day of a certain month and that you are now in spring, but you may feel it colder than during the period of Extreme Cold. However, the post-winter cold, no matter how cold it may be, does not last as long as the Extreme Cold. The cold weather subsides little by little, and accordingly you change from thickly padded to thin, layered *kimono*, and finally to one-layer *kimono*.

"After attaining true entrusting, you may sometimes experience fierce evil passions. But like the post-winter cold, they do not last long. Almost at the same time as the eruption of evil passions, you become filled with remorse and regret. After that, the power of the lingering evil passions gradually decreases and you transform into an ever gentler person, having received the benefit of the Vow of Attaining Gentleness Upon Touching the Light. This is one of the benefits of true entrusting."

### Nembutsu As Buffer

Master Shichiri said, "In order to store five or ten china plates in layers, you have to place some paper between each plate to prevent them from breaking. In the same way, your life will not break into pieces if you say the nembutsu whatever you may be doing. However fragile your everyday life may be, you will be all right with the nembutsu as buffer. Be sure to entrust yourself to the nembutsu, the Name That Calls."

### The Name As Locomotive

Master Shichiri said, "We cannot cultivate goodness in ourselves by our own efforts. But when we are guided by the Name, *Namu Amida Butsu*, we will not deviate from the path of morality, just as train cars are pulled on the railway by a locomotive. Make sure that you are pulled by the locomotive named *Namu Amida Butsu*."

### Fame-And-Profit

Master Shichiri said, "Fame-and-profit is like your own shadow. When you try to catch it, it runs away from you, and when you walk your own path without paying attention to it, it follows

you around. When you are too eager to make money, you cannot get it and remain poor all your life. If you sincerely strive to do a good job in the field you are in, money will follow you. If you are a Buddhist priest, you should study Buddhism single-heartedly and transmit the teaching of the Buddha to others, then offerings of money will naturally come to you. The shadow always follows the movement of the body. Hence the old saying, 'Clothes and food come to the seeker of the Buddha path.'"

### Everything is Namu Amida Butsu

Master Shichiri said, "A fish lives in water, drinks water and spits out water. A nembutsu practitioner lives his everyday life holding Namu Amida Butsu in mind, pronouncing Namu Amida Butsu in gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence, and living in the house of Namu Amida Butsu. Rennyō Shōnin said, 'When I hear the sound of my hand tapping the *tatami*-mat, I am reminded of being supported by Namu Amida Butsu.' When I remember that my whole being is embraced by Namu Amida Butsu, I realize how fortunate I am. Whatever condition I may be in, even if I may look like a rotting tree, that's a result of my past *karma* and is beyond my control. But at least my heart-and-mind is a very fine flower that blossoms in both the absolute and mundane realms of truth; having been assured of happiness in this and the future lives, this flower emits a wonderful fragrance."

### I See the Autumn Moon, Freed from Bitterness

Master Shichiri said, "There is a *haiku* poem, 'Kicked outside, I see the autumn moon, freed from bitterness.' Deserted by many buddhas, we have every reason to feel bitter. Yet that misfortune has now turned to the source of happiness; having been touched by the Primal Vow, which is like the autumn moon, we have become freed from bitterness and filled with a new joy."

### Origin of the Twofold Truth of Absolute and Mundane Realities

Master Shichiri said, "Some say that the Twofold Truth of the Absolute and Mundane Realities (*shinzoku nitai*) was originally Shinran Shōnin's idea, not his teacher Hōnen Shōnin's, but this is not true.

"Imagine that a mother has spread a mosquito net for her child about the end of May because the child is bothered by mosquitoes. The child might ask, 'Mother, did you buy this mosquito net today?' The mother would answer, 'No, this was originally bought by your grandmother. I just brought it out of storage today.'

"Likewise, the Mundane Reality is not Shinran's invention. In the storehouse of the Larger Sūtra, the mosquito net of Mundane Reality is found in the passage 'Only to be excluded are those who commit Five Grave Offences and who slander the Right Dharma' alongside with the passage of 'Three True Minds and Ten-time Calling of the Name,' which shows Absolute Reality.

The reason why Hōnen Shōnin did not articulate Mundane Reality, is that he lived, as it were, in February or March when the mosquito net was not necessary."

### Nembutsu Practicer Kiroku's Words

Master Shichiri said, "Kiroku Kon'ya a nembutsu practicer in Fukuoka, kept saying to his family, 'An ordinary resolve will take you to an ordinary hell.' This statement really makes us think. You should reflect on it."

### Oh my! Wow!

Someone said to Master Shichiri, "Since I began to listen to the teaching, I have never been able to pinpoint any particular part of the teaching which gives me great joy. Why is it so?"

Master Shichiri answered, "That is something you should be happy about. When there is a single pine tree in the garden, you make comments like, 'That branch has an interesting shape,' or 'The leaves are so nicely developed.' You can say the same thing about cherry trees. When there are three or five trees only, you will praise one of them for the beauty of its blossoms. But when you are looking at very many cherry trees like those on Mt. Yoshino, all you can say is like the famous *haiku* poems, 'Oh my! Wow! All these blossoms on Yoshino!' and 'Oh, the isles of Matsushima! Ah, Matsushima, Wow!' You are praising not just a single tree or a branch, but something far beyond that."

### A Way To Have An Easy Life

Someone asked, "I want to live an easy life. How can I do that?"

Master Shichiri answered, "In this stormy world, you will experience joys and pains in anything you do. If you limit yourself to only half the joys you are entitled to, you will have only half the pains you are supposed to suffer. In this way, you will be able to live a relatively easy life."

### Entrust Yourself to the Primal Vow

Master Shichiri said, "Your entrusting should be directed to the Primal Vow. In spite of that, you are putting the Primal Vow aside and aiming at the Pure Land, worrying whether or not you can be born there. That's why you can never become free from doubt. You have the wrong direction and the wrong objective. The objective of your entrusting is not the Pure Land. If you truly entrust yourself to the Buddha's Vow, you will not neglect saying the nembutsu. If you do not neglect saying the nembutsu, your entrusting will become firmer and stronger. As you come to entrust yourself to the Vow, you can be free from doubt."

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## [ACKNOWLEDGEMENT]

I would like to thank Professor Vincent Broderick of Soai College and my wife Linda S. Arai for kindly going through my original draft, editing it and giving me valuable comments. I would also like to express my sincerest gratitude to Reverend Ryōyū Nakazawa of Myōnenji (Takatsuki) for allowing me to use the rare copy of the *Shichiri Wajō Genkō Roku*.