

BUDDHISM DOCTRINE



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Question 1

“Even if we cannot comprehend it with our own wisdom, if we devotedly follow what Master Shinran taught, we will certainly be saved.” Write the words of Master Rennyo in which he taught this, and give the source too.

Answer(s) 1

“Nor do I know. Even if we cannot understand why he did so, we should do as our founder did.” This is what he said.

— *The Words of Rennyo Heard and Recorded During His Lifetime*



Question 2

How should we respond when we are told to do something by a true Buddhist master? Write the words of Master Rennyo in which he taught this, and give the source too.

Answer(s) 2

To think “I cannot do it” when a true Buddhist master tells you to do so is immensely deplorable. Therefore, even if the master should say to you, “Dōshū, fill up Lake Biwa on your own,” you should respond, “Certainly.”

— *The Words of Rennyo Heard and Recorded During His Lifetime*

Explanation

Lake Biwa: The largest lake in Japan.

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Question 3

Who made the *Parable of the Two Rivers and the White Path*? For what purpose did he teach it?

Answer(s) 3

- Master Shan-tao
 - In order to teach us the spiritual path of pursuing Buddhism up until the attainment of faith
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Question 4

Answer the following Questions on the *Parable of the Two Rivers and the White Path*:

1. What is the western bank?
2. What is the eastern bank?
3. What is the white path?
4. What are the bandits and vicious beasts?
5. What is the river of fire?
6. What is the river of water?
7. What is meant by “proceeding to the west”?

Answer(s) 4

1. Amida Buddha's Pure Land
2. The Saha world (The realm of endurance)
3. The desire to seek the truth; faith
4. Anything that stands in the way of seeking truth and listening to Buddhism
5. Anger
6. Desire
7. Seeking happiness



Question 5

Write the words on the three settled deaths.

Answer(s) 5

He thought to himself, "If I turn back now, I shall die; if I stay here, I shall die; if I go forward, I shall die. There is no way for me to escape death."



Question 6

At what point did the traveller hear the call from the western bank? Write the call that he heard.

Answer(s) 6

- When he was afraid he would fall into the calamities of water and fire.
- “Come at once single-heartedly with right mindfulness. I will protect you. Do not fear that you may fall into the calamities of water or fire.”



Question 7

Compare the call from the western bank in the *Parable of the Two Rivers and the White Path* with the words of the Primal Vow.

Answer(s) 7

You – Sentient beings of the ten directions

Single-heartedly – Faith and joy (*shingyō* [信樂])

Right mindfulness – Recite the *nembutsu* of gratitude

Come at once – If I cannot make them be born

I will protect you – May I not attain supreme enlightenment

Do not fear that you may fall (compassion) – Excluded (wisdom)



Question 8

In the split-second of *ichinen* when one hears the call of Amida Buddha, one attains absolute happiness. Write out a hymn that teaches this, and give the source too.

Answer(s) 8

In the instant

When faith of diamond-like firmness is settled

The Mind's light of Amida embraces and protects the
believer

Parting him forever from birth-and-death

— *Hymns on the Masters*



Question 9

What is the meaning of *kimyō*? Quote Master Shinran's work *In Praise of the Sacred Name and the True Image*.

Answer(s) 9

Kimyō means to have followed the direct command of Amida Buddha.



Question 10

“We can attain supreme faith wholly thanks to the benevolent workings of Amida Buddha and Śākyamuni Buddha.” Write out the hymn that states this, and give the source too.

Answer(s) 10

Śākyamuni and Amida,
our compassionate father and mother:
With skilful means of every variety
they raise supreme faith within us.

— *Hymns on the Masters*

Explanation

It is thanks to the various skilful means of Śākyamuni and Amida that supreme faith is made to arise within us. It does NOT happen through our own power.

= Without the expedient means of Amida and Sakyamuni, there is no way supreme faith could arise within us. There is no way we could attain absolute happiness.

Question 14

“The greatest way to repay the debt of gratitude that we owe to Amida Buddha is to convey true faith.” Write the hymn in which Master Shinran taught this, and give the source too.

Answer(s) 14

Those who have attained other-power faith,
in order to repay their debt of gratitude to Amida Buddha,
must spread the two kinds of gifts that are granted by Amida
broadly and equally throughout the ten directions.

— *Hymns on the Three Ages*

Explanation

The two kinds of gifts that are granted by Amida

The gift of going (to the Pure Land): The state of getting closer and closer to the Land of Utmost Bliss with each day. Once you have attained true faith, with each day that you live, you are approaching the Pure Land. (Benefiting oneself.)

The gift of returning (to the defiled land): The state of returning to the *saha* world (realm of humans) and actively engaging in saving all people. One who was saved by Amida and was then born into the Pure Land returns to the *saha* world and freely works for the benefit of all sentient beings. (Benefiting others.)

The ten directions: The universe.



Question 15

Write out the Song of Praise for Amida's Grace, and give the source too.

Answer(s) 15

The grace of Amida's great compassion

I must repay, though I wear myself to bits.

The grace of the teachers who led me

I must repay, though I work myself to the bone.

— *Hymns on the Three Ages*



Question 17

Master Shinran taught that those who emphasise the teaching of turning only to the Buddha of Infinite Life will face harsh suspicion, censure, and persecution. Write the hymn in which he said so, and give the source.

Answer(s) 17

With the advent of the age of the five defilements

Both monks and laymen harshly attack

Those who believe in the *nembutsu*.

Fierce animosity, censure, and persecution flourish.

— *Hymns on the Last Age*



Question 22

Write out the words from the Nirvana *Sūtra* which state that those who do not refute wrong teachings are not disciples of Buddha.

Answer(s) 22

A monk who witnesses someone violating the Dharma yet only looks on in silence, not admonishing or refuting such an act, is an enemy of Buddhism. If a monk does refute or admonish such an act, he is my disciple, a true disciple of Buddha.



Question 25

The teaching of *hairyu* (Renunciation and Embracing) makes clear what we must discard and what we must take up. Master Shinran's teachings are the doctrine of *hairyu* (Renunciation and Embracing). Write out the words of Master Shinran and Master Kakunyo that express this, and give the source for each quote.

Answer(s) 25

The teaching of *hairyu* (Renunciation and Embracing) is the vital linchpin of our sect.

— *Last Words*

In the gate of Pure Land Shin Buddhism, the top priority is to practice *hairyu* (Renunciation and Embracing) over and over again.

— *Notes Rectifying Heresy*

Question 26

Master Shinran never taught anything other than the doctrine of the three *hairyu* (Renunciation and Embracing). List the three things that must be discarded and three things that must be embraced, and give simple Explanations for each.

Answer(s) 26

1. Renouncing the outer path and Embracing the inner path — Discard all religions that go against the law of cause and effect and believe in Buddhism.
 2. Renouncing the Path of Sages and Embracing the Pure Land Way — Discard the Buddhism of Sages and embrace Pure Land Buddhism.
 3. Renouncing the Provisional and Embracing the True — Discard the other sects of the Pure Land Way and embrace the true sect.
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Question 27

Write out the words in which Sakyamuni Buddha taught that all religions other than Buddhism are false teachings that make people fall into hell. Give the source too.

Answer(s) 27

The World-Honoured One instructed, “All the ninety-five non-Buddhist teachings make people fall into the evil realms.”

— *Nirvana Sutra*



Question 30

Prince Shotoku declared that Buddhism is the only religion that is absolute. Write out the words in which he said this, and give the source too.

Answer(s) 30

Sincerely revere the Three Treasures. The Three Treasures are the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha; Buddhism is the final refuge of the four modes of birth and the one and only path for all humanity across all times and places to be saved.

— Prince Shotoku, *The Seventeen-Article Constitution*



Question 32

Write out the hymn in which Master Shinran said that all religions other than Buddhism are false and lead people astray. Give the source too.

Answer(s) 32

Ninety-five varieties pollute the world.

The path of Buddhism alone is pure.

Only true Buddhism can save us from this burning house.

— *Hymns on the Three Ages*



Question 38

Master Shinran cautioned that we should never believe in or bow before any being other than Amida Buddha. Quote three passages in which he said this, and give the source for each.

Answer(s) 38

Going to the Path of Sages or false teachings, engaging in other practices [than the *nembutsu*] and contemplating other buddhas [than Amida], selecting lucky days, liking fortune-telling and rituals: all of this is the outer path and relies solely on self-power.

— *Concerning Single Invocation and Many Invocations*

The teaching of turning single-mindedly to Amida Buddha is the essence of birth and the backbone of Pure Land Shin Buddhism.

— *The Biography*

Do not mistakenly serve the attendant bodhisattvas (Kannon and Seishi). Turn to the master buddha (Amida Buddha).

— *The Biography*



Question 39

Master Rennyo declared that there is absolutely no way for us to be saved other than through the power of the master of all buddhas, Amida Buddha. Give two quotes in which he said this, as well as the source for each.

Answer(s) 39

Apart from relying exclusively on Amida Buddha, there is no way at all for sentient beings in the Age of Dharma Decline to be born in the Land of Utmost Bliss.

— *The Letters*

Other than that, whatever teaching they may believe in, there is absolutely no chance they will be saved from the crucial matter of the afterlife.

— *The Letters*

Question 40

With what words did Master Rennyo teach “Turn only to the Buddha of Infinite Life”? Give the source too.

Answer(s) 40

Therefore, “single heartedly and steadfastly” means that we take no other buddha as peer to Amida Buddha.

— *The Letters*

Question 48

In Buddhism, the time after Śākyamuni died is divided into three ages. Write the three ages, give simple Explanations of each, and name the *sūtras* that teach of these ages.

Answer(s) 48

- The *Sūtra* of the Great Assembly, and many other *sūtras*.

1. Age of the Right Dharma: The 500-year period after the Buddha's death.
2. Age of Semblance Dharma: The 1000-year period after the Age of the Right Dharma is over.
3. Age of Dharma Decline: The 10,000-year period after the Age of Semblance Dharma is over.
4. Age of Extinction of the Dharma: The eternal period after the Age of Dharma Decline is over.

Explanation

1. Age of the Right Dharma: The 500-year period after the Buddha's death.
The teachings of the Buddhism of the Sages (self-power Buddhism) are being taught. There are people doing ascetic practices, and people who attain enlightenment.
2. Age of Semblance Dharma: The 1000-year period after the Age of the Right Dharma is over.
The teachings of self-power Buddhism are being taught, and there are still people doing ascetic practices, but no-one is attaining enlightenment.
3. Age of Dharma Decline: The 10,000-year period after the Age of Semblance Dharma is over.
The teachings of self-power Buddhism exist, but there is no-one practicing them. Of course, there is also no-one attaining enlightenment through them.

4. Age of Extinction of the Dharma: The eternal period after the Age of Dharma Decline is over.
The Buddhism of the Sages is completely gone. Only the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha remains

The Age of the Extinction of the Dharma is not included in the three ages.

The Age of the Extinction of the Dharma will come 11,500 years after Śākyamuni's death.

Age of the Right Dharma: Teaching, Practice, Enlightenment

Age of Semblance Dharma: Teaching, Practice

Age of Dharma Decline: Teaching

Age of Extinction of the Dharma: The Buddhism of the Sages is completely gone. Only the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha remains.

Teaching: The Buddhism of the Sages

Practice: Those who do ascetic practices

Enlightenment: Those who attain enlightenment



Question 49

List five schools of the Buddhism of the sages that still exist in the present.

Answer(s) 49

- The Tendai school
- The Shingon school
- The Zen school
- The Kegon school
- The Hosso school

**Question 50**

Give the names of the schools of Buddhism founded by Dengyo, Kukai, Dogen, and Nichiren. Also list the ages at which each of them died.

Answer(s) 50

- Dengyo — Tendai school — 56
- Kukai — Shingon school — 62
- Dogen — Zen school — 54
- Nichiren — Nichiren school — 61