

FOUR OUTSTANDING FEATURES OF SHINTO

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According to the religious consciousness of the theanthropic type it is a matter of course that man ascends to God, and God descends to man. The philosophy of theocratic religion is monotheism, rising from monolatry, while pantheism is the natural outcome of theanthropic religion originated from naturism or nature worship in its primitive stage. In theocratic religion, there is creation of man and nature by the One Supreme God; and, in theanthropic religion, not creation but emanation of the world from the Divine. According to the latter religious consciousness Heaven and Earth, man and nature, or broadly speaking, organic and inorganic objects of the universe are begotten by God or gods, just as men are born of their parents. Nature worship, ancestor worship, necrolatry, hero worship, Emperor worship, generally speaking, are religious expressions of the theanthropic type. Hero worship of the Ancient Greeks, Emperor worship among the Romans of old, the deification of the Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, all appear in the history of religions of the theanthropic type. Now, I am going to consider Shinto, with the distinction of both types of religion, theocratic and theanthropic in view. Throughout both stages of religious development, natural and cultural or ethico-intellectualistic,

Shinto in its salient features is theanthropic; it does not belong to the theocratic type. In Shinto at the stage of nature religion, we have several personages deified, as, for instance, Emperors, Empresses, Imperial Princes, Heroes, one's ancestors, and so on. The Emperor Jimmu was called "Ame-no-Oshigami" or "Heaven-Conquering God", according to the Nihongi, and in documents of olden times, each Emperor is described as a visible deity or a god incarnate. Minamoto-no-Yoshiie, a brave warrior and skilful archer of the 11th century, is revered as a god because in the skill of his archery he had no equal, he stood aloof above any man, in short, he is super-human, i.e., he is a deity in flesh and blood, according to the *Fusoryakki*, a Japanese history of old. The Empress Jingo was also a deity, according to the *Kojiki*. Therefore, Motoori-Norinaga of the 18th century, a famous commentator of the *Kojiki*, says:—

"True household gods we in our parents see;
Revere and honour them whole-heartedly!"

In a Buddhist canon, entitled the *Forty-two Chapter Sutra*, anthropolatry of the same kind is taught as regards one's parents thus:

"To be obedient to one's parents with filial piety is better than to worship all the deities in Heaven and earth: for one's parents are for him the supreme deities."

The development of Shinto did not stop here, theanthropic Shinto has grown into a religion of a higher order, i.e., a religion of the ethico-intellectualistic stage. In 718 A.D., when a high Government official, Michi-no-Kimi-no-Obina by name, died, he was deified and a shrine was erected to his memory, because he did his utmost to promote the people's welfare by means of improving their modes of life and making them happy: in short, he was indeed a man of a godlike character, and the result was his apotheosis after

death, in the religious consciousness of the theanthropic type of the Japanese. In the same way, to Kusunoki-Masashige (died 1336), an incarnation of loyalty to the Emperor, and to the late General Nogi (died 1912), another type of loyalty to the Imperial ruler, Shinto shrines are dedicated, to the former at Minatogawa in Kobe and to the latter at Akasaka in Tokyo. The worship of the Emperor came to be conducted in the ethical sense of the term. Therefore, in the 14th century the royalist Kitabatake-Chikafusa saw the essence of the theanthropic nature of higher Shinto in the worship of the Emperor in this ethical sense, when he says:—

“Since a righteous man, pure in mind and just in conduct, is himself a deity, we understand a visible deity (Akitsu-Kami)—so often mentioned in the Imperial Edicts—in this ethical meaning of the words” (*Niju-issha-no-ki*).

In the same spirit the Buddhist priest Jihen of the 14th century says:—

“Heaven’s grace enlivens different grasses in an impartial manner, and Mother Earth justly and benevolently offers to all beings in her bosom equal opportunity to enjoy uninterrupted natural growth. The virtuous sovereign may well be compared to Heaven and Earth for his justice and equity, so that we call him not the son of man, but the son of Heaven, because of his righteous government” (*Kujihongi-Gengi*).

According to the *Buke-Kandan*, Tokugawa-Hidetada, the second of the Tokugawa Shoguns, is quoted as saying that he could not consent to the project of the Buddhist Abbot Tenkai to worship him after death by erecting a Shinto shrine in his honour, because he was not conscious of having acted in the virtuous manner of a deity, and so he did not, like his father Ieyasu, deserve a shrine. For-

eigners who have visited Nikko, may probably be aware of the shrine in which Ieyasu was eventually canonised with the name of "Toshodaigongen" (East-Shining-Great-Incarnate Deity).

A noble character laying down his life on the battlefield for his sovereign and his country is canonised, so to speak, as a kami or deity, in the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, because such noble self-sacrifice suggests something divine to the Japanese religious consciousness of the theanthropic type, even when the religious consciousness of the theocratic type might not be so affected. Such being the case, the theanthropic religious mind of the Japanese makes a visible deity of the Emperor himself in the stage of ethico-intellectualistic religion and calls him a Divine Ruler (Jinno), and Shinto in its cultural or ethico-intellectualistic stage culminates in the faith of the Divine Ruler of the nation, and herein lies the life and essence of Shinto, the national religion of the Japanese people, past and present, throughout all stages, natural and cultural alike, completely in accord with the Japanese mind of the present age of enlightenments, as it has always been in the past.

CHAPTER IV

SHINTO, AS A NATIONAL RELIGION, NOT ENTIRELY DEVOID OF A UNIVERSAL ASPECT

As I have tried to make evident Shinto in a thorough-going national religion throughout each and every phase of its long development, from the stage of nature religion to that of culture religion, with the Jinno or Divine Ruler of the nation at the centre of worship, keeping pace with the

progress of Japanese civilization in general, so that the mental texture of the people and their religious faith and national consciousness have been so closely interwoven as now to be incapable of separation. The consciousness of the Japanese or their attitude of patriotic reverence towards the Mikado has been raised to the extent of intensely religious fervour. Lafcadio Hearn calls it the Religion of Loyalty, but he confesses that so trite an English word as loyalty cannot cover all the connotation of the original Japanese, and the word loyalty is an utterly dead rendering; he wishes to call it "mystical exaltation" or "a sense of uttermost devotion" to the Jinno or Divine Ruler of the nation.

Shinto, characterised as faith in the Jinno or Divine Ruler of the nation, is not a religion *a posteriori* adopted purposely by the State as in the case of the State religion in a Western country, but the religion *a priori* of the heart and life of every Japanese subject, male and female, high and low, old and young, educated or illiterate. This is the reason why a Japanese never ceases to be a Shintoist, i.e., an inborn steadfast holder of the national faith, or one who embraces the national faith of the Way of the Gods as a group religion, as distinguished from a personal or individual religion, even though he may accept the tenets of Buddhism or Confucianism—probably Christianity here in Japan not being excepted—as his personal or individual religion. In effect this amounts to saying that abjuration by Japanese of the beliefs taught by Shinto, the national faith, would mean treachery to the Empire and disloyalty to its Divine Ruler. The late Professor Royce of Havard University very happily explains in his book *Sources of Religious Insight* how this national Shinto faith, vehemently alive, and constantly stimulating the sentiment of every Japanese

towards the heaven-descended sovereign of his native land is a characteristic phase of national religion, when he says:—

“However far you go in loyalty, you will never regard loyalty as a mere morality. It will also be in essence a religion. Loyalty is a source not only of moral but of religious insight. The spirit of true loyalty is of its very essence a complete synthesis of the moral and of the religious interests. The cause is a religious object, it points out to you the way of salvation.”

As demonstrated above Shinto is truly the faith of the Japanese people from times primeval. It is thus a national religion and so has an aspect of particularism or separatism or exclusionism like Judaism, but at the same time it is by no means devoid of a noble spirit of religious tolerance and something of religious universalism. Religious tolerance, to my mind, is in the main one of the remarkable features of theanthropic religion. So accordingly is Buddhism very tolerant in character; whereas Judaism and Mohammedanism—Christianity not an exception—are exceedingly intolerant, because each of these is a theocratic religion. As Shinto is characteristically theanthropic and *ipso facto* tolerant, there has resulted the *rapprochement* between Shinto and Buddhism, which actually took place quite easily, immediately after the introduction of Buddhism into Japan. The earliest consequence of this reconciling tendency, harmonization and syncretism in both religions, was to be seen at the time of the Imperial Prince Regent Shotoku (574–622), and afterwards, thanks to the genius of the celebrated Buddhist priests Dengyo (767–822), Kobo (774–835), Jikaku (794–864), Chisho (814–890) and many other religious leaders in Japan, Shinto was by degrees formulated as Ryobu or Dual Shinto—a compromise or syncretism of Shinto and Buddhism—by the beginning of the 13th century

or so. Thus, the reputed author Kitabatake-Chikafusa says:—

“If examined carefully, there is no antagonistic difference at all between foreign teaching and our own” (*Tokahiden*).

In the same way Ichijo-Kaneyoshi declares:—

“Buddhism never differs from the original teachings of our country and thus there is perfect coincidence of the teachings of the foreign texts and our own” (*Shodan-Chiyo*).

Lastly, let us add a few words on the universalistic phase of Shinto. Sectarian or denominational Shinto reveals an aspect of universalism much more than the Shinto of the national faith, because the former is rather less closely connected with the nation than the latter and in consequence some of the Shinto sects have a Kami or Shinto God, who has no reference to the history of this country. For instance, the Kami or God which the Konko Sect worships, has little or no connection with the *Kojiki* or the *Nihongi*, the time-honoured authentic historical chronicles of Japan, and so far it is not national but universal, fairly free from national tradition. The God of this sect is called Tenchi-Kane-no-Kami, which means “Heaven-and-Earth-Including Deity,” i.e., the Absolute Divinity, the Boundless One, with Heaven and Earth within its own Divine Self. Such a God, like the God of Christianity, transcends the boundaries of any particular nation or country, so it is quite natural that the Shinto sect, with such a universal god at its centre of faith, is also of a universal nature. The same may hold good in some other Shinto sects, the Kurozumi Sect, for instance. Kurozumi-Munetada (1779-1849), the founder of the sect, preaches that the Ancestral Sun-Goddess, Divine Ancestress of the Imperial House, is nothing but a manifestation of the

Ethico-cosmic Principle of Sincerity, once taught in Chinese classics of olden times, and introduced into this country long before the days of Kurozumi-Munetada, although the sect says that Kurozumi-Munetada promulgated it without any apparently traceable connection with any Chinese philosophical system then prevalent in Japan, as, for instance, the philosophy of Oyomei or Wang Yang-Ming (1472-1528). If Kurozumi-Munetada sees the Shinto Deity in the spiritual light of ethics, it hardly needs mentioning that the Kurozumi sect preaches in some way or other moral universalism in the Shinto religion, like the prophetism of Israel whose essence is religious moralism, which naturally led it to universalism in ancient Israel. So, Kurozumi-Munetada declares:—

“Blest be Sincerity, of virtues chief!
Alone in it the world shall seek relief
From doubt and fear—till men of every land
In universal brotherhood do stand.”

This at once recalls the world-renowned poem from the pen of the Emperor Meiji, as follows:—

“Whereas I deem this as an age
Wherein the world in brotherhood is bound:
Whence is it that the fierce winds rage,
And dash and spread wild waves around.”

An oracular utterance of the Deity of Suminoe, the Modern Sumiyoshi, breathes the same spirit:—

“Responsive to sincerely offered prayer,
Full of sympathy and pity, will be
The Deity in Suminoe,
To one and all, to friends or foes,
Granting heavenly blessings freely.”