

Naoya Shiga and Spirituality

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1. Preface

Naoya Shiga was a writer in modern Japan, born in 1883 and died in 1971. His writing is very concise with simple Japanese and short sentences. He was a master of short stories though his main book was the long story, "A dark night passing" which got the subject matter from half his life. His concise writing style was influenced by the works of Saikaku Ihara, Patrick Lafcadio Hearn, Henri Maupassant, Anatole France and Anton Chekhov.

He was able to describe scenes with fresh words which sprung up from his deep mind rather than from conceptions based on intelligence. Moreover, he had a sharp dynamic vision so he was able to capture quick motion or the expressions of small animals and the subtleties of human nature. He wrote as he saw and as he felt, however his writing was

revolutionary and fresh for ordinary readers. So much so, he was labelled a god of novels in Japan.

After looking at the TV news of Apollo 11 when man landed on the moon when he was 86 years old, he said “Intelligence has come to the point of going to the moon, but the wisdom for living is completely equivalent to none”. We think in this book, the wisdom for living is a converted phase of minds.

According to the teachings of “唯識”, “Yui-Shiki” Buddhism, or also known as Buddhism psychology, the deep mind under unconsciousness is constructed by two minds “末那識”, “Mana-Shiki” and “阿賴耶識”, “Araya-Shiki” recognized by Buddha about 2400 years ago. In this case, “識”, “Shiki” means the mind.

We will discuss later the relation between the spirituality and the deep minds, and discuss the conversion of minds. We focus on spirituality in this essay and discuss finally its significance in our life while referring to Naoya’s way of life and also referring to Yui-Shiki Buddhism. We

think Naoya was a man of spirituality and Nara where he lived for 13 years is the sacred place of Yui-Shiki Buddhism.

2. What is spirituality?

Japanese spirituality has quite different from European spirituality. Thinking of the mind, European spirit seems to focus on intelligence. The argument of Bruno Snell in “Discovery of mind” converges to logical thinking and the spirit of science in intelligence. The leading part of mind for them seems to be intelligence. They don’t seem to distinguish clearly between intelligence and unconscious a-priori knowledge gained through evolution and passed down from generation to generation. Such a biased mind toward to intelligence may be the traditional tendency of European peoples since Plato in ancient Greece. The a-priori knowledge is being confirmed now by the study of eye tracking of infants in the field of brain science. Plato thought that the whole mental thing including a-priori knowledge could be immortal even after death, which was mentioned as the words of

Socrates in “Phaedo”. It could be true for only a-priori knowledge. Buddha didn’t preach about the afterlife. He focused on how to live.

Plato’s ideas were inherited by mediaeval European Christianity. Kant also didn’t distinguish intelligence including the reason to a-priori knowledge which he named “pure reason”.

In Christianity, the mind was installed by God as a simulation of God’s mind. Then whole mind which includes intelligence seems to be itself spiritual for Christian peoples. Certainly, there is no doubt that the whole mind is a miracle thing, so that intelligence could research space and reflect the self. Reason has brought many scientific results, however, excessive faith in reason has historically created many tragedies.

On the other hand, in Buddhism, people recognized long ago “業”, “Gou” which is something accumulated in the bottom of our mind as the results of every actions as something waiting for retribution. It doesn’t come from God. It is a broader concept than

“original sin” and sometimes passed down across generations. It might be a deterrent to the development of reason for Asian peoples.

To remark on the significance of the unconscious deep mind which couldn't be captured through intelligence alone, we wish now to divide clearly the mind into three elements, referring to Yui-shiki Buddhism. The elements are sensitivity, intelligence and spirituality. Sensitivity includes 5 minds, which correspond to five senses, “眼識,”Gen-Shiki”, mind of eye sight,”耳識,”Ni-Shiki”, mind of hearing, “鼻識,”Bi-Shiki”, mind of smell, “舌識”,”Zetsu-Shiki, mind of taste, “身識”,”Shin-Shiki”, mind of touch. They were directly connected to the body through the 5 senses. Intelligence is made up of consciousness, “意識,”I-Shiki”. Spirituality means unconscious deep mind which is mentioned in section 1.

Every mind has 4 sides or appearances, “相分,”So-Bun”, a mapping of an object in mind, “見分,”Ken-Bun”, myself looking at object, “自証分,”Jisho-Bun”, another self, realizing myself looking the object and “証自証

分”,”Sho-Jisyo-Bun”, even other self, reflecting former self “Jisho-Bun”. We can’t reflect self-denial by ourselves. Sho-Jisho-Bun needs the help of Buddha or God through faith. The external world that we think we are looking at objectively is also a part one’s own “So-bun” and it is shaping a virtual world in our mind. This teaching of Yui-Shiki Buddhism is being demonstrated today in brain science.

Intelligence is the function of separating and comparing things in the environment. At the center of intelligence, we have reason which functions to infer things based on the conceptions.

Spirituality is the unconscious deep mind now and consists of two elements, Mana-Shiki which is the mind of self-centered egoism and Araya-Shiki which memorize all afterimages of our past experiences and a-priori knowledges. The afterimage was called “種子”,”Shu-Ji”, seed which causes a new action. We could not recognize an object if there is no Shu-Ji which concerns this object in our Araya-Shiki.

Therefore, we can say that the outside world is a silhouette of our minds.

In Yui-Shiki, the a-priori knowledges were called “本有種子”, “HonNu-Shuji”, innate memories. Then, Araya-Shiki is responsible for our personality. These 8 minds work simultaneously. When we run across something, sensitivity catches the shape, color or so on of the object, and intelligence recognizes the meaning of it through the information researched in our memories by Araya-Shiki without any value judgement. Araya-Shiki is a pure innocent mind. Then, Mana-Shiki determines whether it is in our own interest and informs our intelligence and sensitivity for the reaction to the object. Intelligence thinks relying on selfishness of Mana-Shiki. All of these works are memorised anew in Araya-Shiki.

The biggest challenge we have to overcome in life is our obsession with ourselves. Mana-Shiki is responsible for this obsession and to make sure of self, reflecting “刹那消滅”, “SetsuNaSyouMetsu”, the momentary

appearance and disappearance of every made things, therefore Mana-Shiki makes a virtual self-image in Araya-Shiki, because Araya-Shiki seems to be stable and continuous with the passage of time. Annoyances are always working with Mana-Shiki, concerning with itself with “obsession with self”.

How to manage the spirituality and change it to un-obsessed mind and obtain true freedom is the main subject of Buddhism.

3. Spirituality of Naoya Shiga

Naoya was respected by critic Hideo Kobayashi as a person of action. His honest thinking and positive reaction came from unconscious deep mind rather than his intelligence. Japanese people sometimes call deep mind “肚”, “Hara”, or heart or bosom. “切腹”, “Seppuku”, known as “Harakiri”, was committed by samurai to appeal the innocence in his deep mind. They thought Hara was the place of the deep mind. Samurai focused on the deep mind and the tacit understanding between Hara to Hara.

Naoya was raised by his grandfather, Naomichi who was a samurai of Soma clan in what is Fukushima prefecture today. When Naomichi was young, he volunteered to become a disciple of Sontoku Ninomiya. Sontoku lost his parents as a boy. He started his life as a poor young farmer and after making remarkable efforts, in he established 1822 a unique agricultural cooperative association “仕法”, “ShiHou” which was founded ahead of the Rochdale association in England. The most important spirit of ShiHou was “推譲”, “SuiJyo” which means giving the surplus to others. Because of this achievement, he was promoted to become a samurai by Edo shogunate. Naoya respected Sontoku more than any politician who accomplished the Meiji restoration. By spreading this method to many rural areas the ShiHou method, he saved many farmers from famine. In the old Japan, every junior school had the bronze statue of young Sontoku, whose childhood name was Kinjiro, in the square. The statue represents the young Kinjiro, reading a classic book while carrying heavy luggage on his

back. We have missed them since they were used as a material for bullets during the war.

A samurai was a person of action who values practical reason “道理”, “DouRi” since 1232 “御成敗式目”, “GoSeiBai-SikiMoku” which was established by Yasutoki Hojou who was a head of Kamakura shogunate as the agreement for samurai society that began to rule Japan.

Naomichi was as hard core a practitioner as his master Sontoku. He selflessly made remarkable efforts for the financial reform of the Soma family. Naomichi raised Naoya. Naoya grew up watching the practices of grand-father Naomichi. He learned the un-biased mind, un-obsessed mind and un-captured mind. These minds were necessary originally for samurai in order to respond to an enemy's sudden attack. 宮本武蔵, Musashi Miyamoto, a great swordsman in 17th century, described these minds in “独行道”, “Doku-Gyo-Dou”, “The way to go alone”. These minds are connected to the teaching of Buddhism, the purpose of which is perfect freedom.

Naoya advised one of his disciples “it’s important to write honestly”. He advised his children “take care of yourself and love yourself” in his essays. “Yourself” didn’t mean selfish ego but the self in the deep mind. Yasujiro Ozu was a screenwriter and film director, and one of avid reader of Naoya’s work. After watching his internationally famous film “The story of Tokyo”, Naoya commented on it by saying “There is no lie”.

An example of his expression based on this conviction is “When I watched the statue of Kuze-Kannon of Yumedono, I don’t have a thought about who made this statue at all”. We usually miss a momentary impression which is unexpectedly creative, however Naoya could catch it. He could be called an impressionist in literature. Many artists of ShiraKaba-Ha party loved so much the picture of impressionist in France. Naoya was a member of the party. One of the best friends of Naoya was Ryuzaburo Umehara who was student of Pierre Renoire.

In order to represent a hidden deep mind, Naoya sharpened his dynamic vision like a

wild man and left out conceptual modifiers from his writing as much as possible. Consequently he was called the master of leaving out. He seemed to be a minimalist.

Kanji Hatano described in his argument as a psychologist “Naoya’s writing tries to follow the thing itself, rather than trying to make things understand. It required the reader to jump into things. His words are only hints, and all detailed explanations are left to the reader’s imagination”. This writing style might be along with objectivism in literature which was also insisted on by Chekhov in his works.

Naoya preferred the appreciation of painting. He never read the explanation of the exhibited works in museum. He respected the emotion that arose from direct contact with artistic works

He himself designed his former residence in Nara, considering the habitability of his family and a work of 3-dimensional art. He described in his essay “About the residence”, “If you simplified only what you need for the house and if the house had beautiful parts in it, it will be a

comfortable house to live in”. The keen reader of his work gets the impression of the atmosphere of Art Deco-style dining is his writing style itself.

In “At Kinosaki” one of his famous masterpieces, he described the quick movement of a cornered mouse and also hidden annoyance working in the deep mind Mana-Shiki of people looking at the mouse. “At Kinosaki” is so often adopted in Japanese textbooks of high school. It is used to learn the preciousness of lives, individual lives and common lives.

He sometimes confessed that he was moved to tears by the story of the religious mendicancy of a monk Tokusan in 9th century. One lunchtime, Tokusan came out from his retirement room, offering alms on his hands when he was 83 years old. Seppou, his disciple saw his old master coming and asked him “Where are you going, old master, offering alms, even though the signal bell and drum didn’t ring?”. Hearing this, Tokusan went back to his room obediently. Naoya might be moved by the unaffected

attitude of Tokusan, who was an outstanding Zen master who raised many disciples.

What Naoya brushed often was a calligraphic writing “如実知自心” when he was asked it. “如実知自心”, “NyoJitu-Chi-Jisin” is the word described in a sutra “大日経”, “Dainichi-Kyo”. The literal translation is “Know your own mind as it is”. It is a message every part of which is mysterious. What is “如実”, “as it is”? What is “知”, “knowing”? What is “自心”, “own mind”? We will discuss later. Anyway, he described in his diary at 29 years old that “I have to spend my whole life digging up what I have in my mind”.

Through these episodes, we can believe that Naoya was exploring “平常心”, “HeiJyoShin”, calm mind. It maybe the essence of Naoya’s literature to represent a calm mind as it is, through a concise style of writing. He must have thought that the concrete context was more suitable for expressing “calm mind” than by conceptions.

When Jyoshu asked that “How could you know the way to a calm mind without a reliable

signpost?", his master Nansen responded to his disciple "Buddhism has nothing to do with knowing or not knowing". We could not understand the calm mind by the explanation offered by intelligence. However, we may be able master it by practicing spirituality.

Naoya was also interested in another unintellectual world, night dream or coincidental event. He selected so often for the motif of his short stories and essays, the night dreams or coincidental events which he experienced. He described in one essay "I have experienced dream prediction or I met so often my friends after thinking I would meet the friend today. I believe that humans have that kind of ability". During sleep, intelligence doesn't work, however Mana-Shiki and Araya-Shiki operate all the time, so when we are dreaming, our ego and annoyances work and the content of our dream is also remembered. In "Morning, afternoon and evening", he used the phrase "psychological analysis of Freud", it could be estimated that he had some knowledge of deep psychology. Though, he did not

mention his thoughts on the deep psychology after this. It is also mysterious to us that he didn't write down "Yui-Shiki" at all, despite living in the sacred place Nara for 13 years. This comes from the fact that he was probably a nominalist. In nominalism, "deep mind" is just a name of phenomena and not directly related to something real. This is also the fundamental understanding of Buddhism, confirmed by Nagarjuna in 2th century India as "諸法無我", "ShoHo-MuGa" which means that "Everything exists by being interdependent on each other".

Naoya also often mentioned coincidental events. In "盲亀浮木", "MouKi-FuBoku", "A blind turtle stuck his head into a floating wood by chance", he mentioned his coincidental experience that he came across again a pet dog by chance. "MouKi-FuBoku" was come from a tale of Buddha to teach the gratitude of being a human. Naoya hated superstition, but he seemed to be attracted to inexplicable events.

Naoya's master piece is "暗夜行路", "AnYaKouRo", "A dark night passing". It is like a record of the existence of the first half of

his life. He mentioned that the theme was how to get through fate wisely. The dark night, fates for him were his mother's death at childhood, discord with his father, dying injury due to an accident, early death of the eldest son and eldest daughter, brother-in-law's financial mismanagement, Japan's entering and defeat in the Pacific War and his illness. “暗夜”, “Dark night” is not commonly used in daily Japanese. We can suppose that this word as revived from his memories of when he was a Christian. His teacher was a protestant pastor, Kanzo Uchimura. Naoya went to Kanzo's residence every Sunday between 17 and 24 years old. Kanzo belonged to the non-church faction. He studied biology at university and later aspired to be a cleric studying in the United States for two years. He was influenced by T.Carlyle and R.W.Emerson. His preaching was demonstrative and therefore persuasive. His preaching about “the Book of Job” was famous. We can suppose that Naoya also listened to part of it. He had been through so many absurd experiences, that

he was called a Japanese Job. He said also “Salvation is linked to misfortune in this world”.

St. John of the Cross in 16th century Spain had a writing “Noche Oscura”, “Dark Night”. He wrote “Putting the soul in darkness, thirst, suffering and emptiness is the most indispensable thing”. We can imagine that Naoya had a chance to remember “Noche Oscura” in the preaching of Kanzo. What can’t be ignored in relation to our motif is Loyola’s “Ejercicios Espirituales”, “Exercise of Spirituality”. His exercises are in common with practices of Buddhism, that is listening to the preaching, contemplation of the “calm mind”, zazen sitting, invocation of “Namu Buddha”, walking through the holy mountains praying Buddha or so.

4. Conversion of minds

We have studied that spirituality works in the unconscious deep mind which is distinguished from intelligence. We should recognize that our deep mind has been defiled by egoism or obsession with ourselves and

defiled spirituality distorts the direction of focusing of intelligence and sensitivity. We think many serious accidents and wars are caused by collectively defiled spirituality. It is being revealed in brain science that the unconscious mind seems to have higher priority of decision-making rather than intelligence. It is difficult to control spirituality by feedback from intelligence, because they don't have a common logic, though watching spirituality with intelligence is always necessary. Kanzo said that "Religion is in charge of people's spirituality".

Young writer Kei Wakasugi mentioned the impression of Naoya, when he suddenly visited Naoya in Nara to get some advice for his cornered situation. That is "I have never met a person who advised me so candidly as him. I have not met a person who talks with frank affection for me in addition to him. I was deeply moved thinking that this was true courtesy". Naoya's this response must have been based on selflessness in his mind.

Buddha taught that one of five declines of heavenly being is “不樂本座”, “FuRaku-HonZa”, being not able to enjoy now your own situation. It is very difficult to overcome the emptiness of life, being longer in the realm of the blissful state. Then, Buddhism teaches that the human realm is closest to the realm of enlightenment among the six realms where we usually transmigrate moment by moment. The six realms are Heavenly beings, Humans, Asura, Hells, Hungry Ghosts and Beasts.

Rather than being enthusiastic about the present, our mind of regretting the past and our mind of relying on the future always work actively. One critic said that “Naoya always reacted quickly”. We can see that he had a strong concentration on everything and this might come from his temperament as a samurai and also from his spirituality usually focusing on the present.

Then spirituality should be converted to a matured state through its proper exercise. It is like that mentioned in “Ejercicios Espirituales” by Ignatius of Loyola. We have been disturbed

by the virtual self image made up by Mana-Shiki, now we have to meet our true self who is able to adapt to this virtual world and actively work with hope and joy in deep mind.

Next, we wish to study the meaning of “如実知自心”, “Nyojitu-Chi-Jisin” which Naoya often stroked as mentioned in section 3. DaiNichi-Kyo is the sutra devoted by Esoteric party of Buddhism started by Kukai in Japan at 9th century. Naoya mentioned that he studied so much about Kukai at around 30 years old. After leaving Kanzo, he approached Rinzaï Zen Buddhism for a while, however his study on Buddhism doesn't seem to have progressed. We could only infer about his thoughts on “Nyojitu-Chi-Jisin”.

Through studying the three elements of our mind, sensitivity, intelligence and spirituality referring to the Yui-Shiki Buddhism, we find the teaching about another fundamental character of our mind “依他起性”, “Etaki-Sho” which means the strong reliance of our mind on environmental conditions. For example, the walker is troublesome to the driver of a car, on

the other hand the car is troublesome when we are walking on the side of the road.

The accumulation of such “Etaki-Sho” is karma of our daily life. At first, we have to continue the practice to recognize karma just as it is, that we exist by “因縁”, “Innen”, the grace of network connections with everything not by the essential something inside us like that of animism. The grace of network connections is also expressed as “空”, “Kuu”, “Sunya” or “無我”, “selflessness” in Buddhism. Polish Buddhist scholar, Stcherbatsky interpreted “Sunya” as “relative”. The expression “如実”, “just as it is”, means that not only by the demonstration through the intelligence, but by practices seeking the enlightenment in spirituality.

The practice to cultivate spirituality include following minimum exercise. Trying to desire little and being content with little gain. Always remember “calm mind” and our being is “Kuu” and try to be free from the obsession with self and the obsession with the existence of our body and mind on the practices even in dark night. The base of the altruistic practice is

communication by spirituality between peoples. We should be much more interested in and close to spirituality of other peoples. Through these practices, the conversion of minds would be realized as mentioned in next section.

We can understand now that “如実知自心” means “break the obsession with self by the practices and open your calm mind”. The calm mind should be based on the conversion of minds.

5. The wisdom for living

What is the wisdom, when Naoya said “the wisdom for living is completely equivalent to none”? The answer along with “Yui-Shiki” is wisdoms which are realized through the conversion of usual minds by the practice and Buddha’s mercy.

- 1) Araya-shiki converts to purified mind, a fundamental wisdom “大円鏡智,”DaiEnKyo-Chi” by the practice to find the actual situation of self which exists only by causes and connection to other things,

which means the selflessness or being without a unique nature in our deep mind.

- 2) Through the conversion of Mana-Shiki which relies on Araya-Shiki converts to another wisdom “平等性智”, “ByoDoSyo-Chi”. Through this wisdom, everything could end up looking equal. This wisdom may use the same module in amygdala for the opposite function.
- 3) Intelligence which relies on Mana-Shiki converts to a wisdom “妙觀察智”, “MyoKansatsu-Chi” through which you can appreciate the unhidden real figure of everything.
- 4) Sensitivity converts to a wisdom “成所作智”, “JyoShosa-Chi”. Using this wisdom, Jizo Bodhisattva saves people who are in spiritual darkness in six ways. The saving is called “代受苦”, “Dai-Jyu-Ku” which means saving people as a substitute. It is also the wisdom accompanied by positive practice to respond and serve the people. This is the most important wisdom. In Esoteric Buddhism, they said it is the goal of life to

have the wisdom with the ability to respond actively to the world. Kant's "practical reason" would also correspond to this wisdom.

Naoya accepted around 50 visitors a month as guests to the residence in Nara, without distinction. He might use this wisdom in order to raise junior artists.

6. Conclusion

Humans suffer from the self. There is a big gap between the virtual world made in our mind and the real life which is not quite satisfied. This gap is the cause of our suffering. Naoya also suffered from the self to the extent that he isolated from his father. On the other hand, the self is necessary for social life. As long as you are a member of the social system, you could not escape from your responsibility in the system, though there is an uncertain boundary area between the self and social system. Anyway, how to manage the self is the most important challenge in our life. That's why Buddha left a will "Rely on yourself".

Naoya could select the option to abandon his self as teaching in Buddhism , however he dared to go straight inside the dark night. It was his way to rely on himself. It was a western style of response to things. It's probably the influence of Kanzo. In western culture, the self seems to be respected much more, therefore excessive self sometimes leads to conflict. However, the truth can only be conveyed between two independent selves, as Paul's conversion was due to one-on-one encounter with the resurrected Jesus. The spiritual communication between Zen master and his disciple, “感応道交”, “KanOuDouKo” is also performed face-to-face.

Faith based on selflessness should control the self at the same time.

According to Yui-Shiki Buddhism, our usual image of the self is the virtual image of the self which Mana-Shiki made on Araya-Shiki. We obsess over this virtual image as a certain existence. We should recognize first that this virtual image is “Kuu”, just illusion by the network connections, through practices. Then

our minds could convert to wisdoms for living, mentioned above.

Wisdoms for living induce you to a positive and appropriate response toward outside world. Even if the outside world is a virtual illusion, we are able to believe that it is actually at one with the truth of space thanks to the overwhelming brilliance of wisdoms.

Kanzo said that the spirit which was realized by grafting Christianity onto the spirit of samurai must bring peace to the world. We suppose now that Naoya acquired this spirit.

Author appreciates Mr. Tim West in England, who kindly took time to check the English and logic in this small book.

Author dedicates this small book to author's wife Kazue. Thanks to her dedication, author was not abandoned from Buddhism.



nyoirinkannon
如意輪観音

made by author and his wife

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