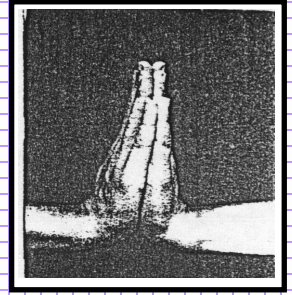


GASSHO

April
2015

Issue No: 04-15

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



BOM'BU and BON'NO

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

The key difference between what it is "to have been converted" and what it is "to have undergone a transformation" is as follows. In a conversion a converter has convinced the convertee that his beliefs are incorrect and that the converter's beliefs are the only correct ones there are. In such a conversion the inner core being of the convertee has not changed. For he is much like a person who has undergone painful facial and anatomical surgery. The changes are merely in appearance. Such a person is much like an actor on the stage of life pretending to be what he is not.

By contrast, a person who has undergone a genuine "inner transformation" experiences a change in his innermost core being, person and self. In Shin Buddhism, such an inner change is referred to as an "awakening of true and real faith" (*shinjitsu shinjin*). Such a "transformation" is not about switching one's religious affiliations. For "an awakening of true and real faith" brings a person an inner serenity and equanimity brimming over with gratitude and humility. Such a transformation entails an "awareness" about one's actual being "just as it is" riddled by shortcomings and failings. Conversion involves a "conscious effort" on the part of a converter to impart and impose his set of beliefs on another person to replace a convertee's set of beliefs.

In a person of "true and real faith" penitence naturally emerges from deep within. Such a penitence is not displayed as one's acts of penance or contrition as a pre-condition for enlightenment or salvation. For it is as

MONTH'S THOUGHT



"In this life no matter how much pity and sympathy we may feel for others, it is impossible to help another as we truly wish; thus our compassion is inconsistent and limited. Only the saying of nembutsu manifests the complete and never ending compassion which is true, real and sincere." Taitetsu Unno. *Tannisho*. IV p. 9.



Sakyamuni Buddha said: "A man pays in himself for the evil he has done and in himself is purified. The good and evil are purified severally. No one purifies another" (Dhammapada 7. p. 161. Praises of The Buddha). In these processes, "receptive perception" is involved. One looks into one's deepest being to see what is really there without making excuses. Such looking and seeing within one's self are devoid of denials.

As mentioned in previous issues of *GASSHO*, "an awakening of true and real faith" entails two simultaneous "awakenings" referred to as a "twofold deep faith" (*ni-shu jin'shin*) in which the person and Buddha are "one and yet two" as well as distinctly "two and yet one." This means that the bond between a person and Buddha is seamless and inseparable, much like the visible and invisible bond between a mother and her newborn infant even though the umbilical cord has been cut.

One side of this "twofold awakening"

REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR APRIL 2015

1ST SUN APR 5th:

HAWAII BUDDHIST COUNCIL'S HANAMATSURI

No services at SKM
Please attend 9 a.m. service
at Soto Mission in Nuuanu
with Prof. Jay Sakashita

2ND SUN APR 12th:

Shinshu Kyokai's Hanamatsuri Service

"Droplets of Wisdom"
9 A.M. English Service
with Rev. Tatsuguchi

3RD SUN APR 19th:

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Dharma Talk for Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

4TH SUN APR 26th:

MONTHLY
FAMILY WORSHIP
9 A.M. Eng. Service
Dharma Talk for Children & Adults

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

KARAOKE SINGERS CLUB Mon 7 – 9 p.m.
Mr. Nelson Yoshioka

KARATE CLASSES Tues & Fri 6 – 8 p.m.
Int'l Karate League – Walter Nishioka

KARATE CLASSES Thurs 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Hawaii Shotokan Karate – Alan Sekiguchi

FUJINKAI LADIES' FELLOWSHIP GROUP
Tues 9 a.m. – noon

With Deepest Sympathy

Mr. Calvin Y. Kamada 74 yrs. Feb 4, 2015



Rev. Tatsuguchi will be off-island
from May 10-20, 2015

THANK YOU

for YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS !!

2015 Memorial Service Schedule

2014	1 Year	2013	3 Year	2009	7 Year
2003	13 Year	1999	17 Year	1991	25 Year
1983	33 Year	1966	50 Year	1914	100 Year

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entails the "realization" that one's self is undeniably a mortal being (*bombu*) constantly being assailed and undermined by blind passions, animosities and foolish vanities (*bonno*). The other side is the "realization" that as such a helpless being one has been and continues to be unconditionally embraced by Amida's Benevolence that has never rejected or will ever abandon him. Until such time one finally attains full enlightenment and ultimate Buddhahood, one will never be let go by Amida. This inseparable relationship between sentient beings and Buddha is much like a mother holding her just-born infant to her bosom as she constantly suckles him with mother's milk. Her undying love that never wanes continues even when the infant becomes an adult.

As such, Amida Buddha is not a creator god manifesting contradictory human sentiments such as loving affection as well as wrathful anger. Amida Buddha by contrast is timelessly manifesting the Truth of Unadulterated Selflessness radiating as Pure Wisdom's Light. Amida also steadfastly manifests its Reality of Togetherness timelessly emanating Immeasurable Compassion. As Wisdom's Infinite Light Amida shines on all things and forms of life without discrimination.

As Compassion Amida suffuses all things and life forms with Immeasurable Life without favoritisms. This state of seamlessness and inseparability between Amida Buddha and all things and all forms of life are governed by the orderly and uniform principles of causation, conditionality, interdependency and facts of karmic consequences. Things and life unfolding as they are of their own accord governed by the process is called *jinen*.

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WORDS OF SHINRAN

"When I ponder on the compassionate vow of Amida, established through five kalpas of profound thought, it was for myself, Shinran, alone. **Because I am a being burdened so heavily with karma**, I feel even more deeply grateful to **the primal Vow which is decisively made to save me.**" —Taitetsu Unno.

Tannisho. Epilogue. p. 35. Words in bold for emphasis.

Shinran Shonin upon experiencing such a state of Selflessness and actuality of Togetherness subsequently realized: "the evil person who entrusts himself to Other Power is truly the one who attains birth in the Pure Land ... " (T. Unno. *Tannisho. III. p. 8*). We see in these words that one side to the single coin of "twofold deep faith" entails a person's "realization" that he is hopelessly riddled by karmic consequences of his past transgressions and desecrations as also those of others. And on the other side the "awakening" that Amida Buddha has always been grasping such beings and has never abandoned them. Man and Buddha, therefore, are like the two sides of a single coin called "the Wheel of Life," one side being "the Six Realms of Transmigration," the other side being "the Wheel of Dharma," that is the "Eightfold Noble Path."

A person who has undergone an "awakening of true and real faith" is much like a green persimmon full of bitterness that is being naturally transformed by power of sunlight into a ripe persimmon full of sweetness. The "bitterness" is constantly becoming "sweetness." Likewise, when a person steps on the Path of Nembutsu leading to the Realms of Ultimate Selflessness and All-embracing Togetherness, his attaining of Buddhahood becomes assured and a certainty.

The transformative powers of this Light and Life is described to be of a "golden radiance and splendor." This is the reason why Buddhist sanctuaries and statuary are set and orna-

mentated in a "mellow golden glow" instead of a "blazing brilliance" that is "scorching" and "incinerating." This quality "warmth" also is to be noted in persimmons being ripened by natural power of sunlight. In doing so they are not being "converted" into apples or bananas. The green persimmon is becoming a ripe persimmon as the bitterness being turned into its very sweetness is still the persimmon it can only be. Such then is the significant difference between "being born in the Pure Land" and "to have become a reborn Christian." For in the latter case a "new self" has displaced one's "old self" to replace it.

In "an awakening of true and real faith" a person's self, being and personality are not being nullified, negated, obliterated, extinguished or incinerated into a "no-thing-ness." Many creationist Christians have misunderstood and often intentionally have misconstrued the meaning of the terms *anatman* and *nirvana*. These two key terms have been rendered to mean "one's self does not really exist." Nirvana has been mistranslated to imply that Buddhists see a person to be nothing more than an empty apparition, a mere mirage. So, the phrases "to be born in the Pure Land" and "to be a reborn Christian" differ in their meanings. In Buddhism "being re-born" means one's being has undergone a transformation, not an eradication. In Christianity "being reborn" means one's old self of sin has died and has been cast off and replaced by a new self. According to St. Paul, "sinners are spiritually dead." "Only those who are born again have their sins forgiven and are to be saved."

According to Shin Buddhism, the Light of Selflessness and Life of Togetherness makes possible the transformation of one's whole being much like a green persimmon becoming a ripe one. Once again, the persimmon itself is not being rejected or nullified. The "Golden Splendor" that mellows all things is not a blazing laser beam that pulverizes all that it deems to be evil and incorrigible. It transforms one's "evils" into the "highest good" much like the "bitterness" in green persimmons being transformed into their very "sweetness" in becoming ripe ones.

Concerning the penitence that is born from such an "awakening of true and real faith," Shinran said: "more the ice, more the water." What he meant here is more the one's karmic transgressions and desecrations, the more they are transformed by Amida's Wisdom and Compassion into one's gratitude and joy that is more than one can contain. Therefore, "more the ice of one's ingratitude, more the waters of Great Joy" in one's utterances of *Namoh-amida-butsu* brimming over with joy!

The contrast between being rejected and abandoned from being grasped never to be abandoned can be further appreciated through the following hypothetical situations. These scenarios are about people running into each other and tripping over folding chairs in the total darkness of an auditorium on a moonless night. The situation is further aggravated because the lights in the auditorium are off due to a power outage. The darkness, therefore, is total and pitch black. People cannot see what is even right before their eyes. They are helplessly feeling and groping their way around in abject darkness. (*avidya* = ignorance).

People are not only falling all over each other but tripping over the chairs as well. They keep running into others all around them. Then suddenly the lights come back on. The chaos, confusion and damage is clearly seen. Some chairs are upright, others are upside down. Some unfolded chairs need yet to be unfolded. Some of the chairs are so broken that they are beyond repair and restoration. The people are bruised, bleeding, confused and bewildered. This hypothetical situation explains the words of Shinran: "living in this impermanent world of burning house, all things are empty and vain...." This is because as Sakyamuni Buddha said: "all things are transitory and impermanent" (*sarva dhamma annica*).

In the first scenario, a person enters to carefully assess what has happened. He begins to set each upside down chair right side up. He also unfolds the unfolded chairs and also sets them right side up. Then he sets them to one side with the upright ones and declares them to be "intact" and "upright." Then, this person

gathers the broken ones beyond repair and sets them to the opposite side of the auditorium and declares them to be beyond repair (incorrigible). They are to be discarded in a dumpster and eventually incinerated by fire. This first situation depicts what "conversion" is all about. It is a process where "believers" are set apart from "nonbelievers." The believers are declared to be "upright" and "just." The nonbelievers are declared to be "fallen" and "unjust" and to be dumped because they are "unsavable."

Then in the second scenario, another person enters and assesses the same situation and does the same thing. He also makes the distinction between intact chairs, chairs unfolded and chairs broken and beyond repair and restoration. The key difference between the first person and this second person is that the broken chairs beyond repair are loaded into his van and taken back to a workshop. He does not "dump" them or "discard" them. Upon returning he begins repairing and restoring the broken chairs beyond repair to the chairs they once were.

Then, he returns with them to the auditorium to set them upright with the other chairs and sets them in a perfect, harmonious togetherness and oneness. Here, in this second instance, it is important to note that each chair, whether it was upright, upside down, folded, unfolded or broken and beyond repair, are all still chairs. This is the meaning of "many and yet one" and "one and yet many." More broadly, that "all life is one!"

This is like seeing the essence of water in all dewdrops, raindrops, snowflakes and hailstones. So too are the people in the auditorium all human beings, whether they be male or female, young or old, rich or poor, monk or layman. As human beings they are all also full of shortcomings and failings as long as they are earthlings in this world that is a "burning house." The significance of the words "many and yet one" and "one and yet many" imply that the world of sentient beings and the abodes of Buddhas are inseparable as are the two sides of a single coin called "two-fold deep faith."

According to Tamai sensei, human beings,

SHINRAN'S WASAN

To refrain from evil ways
a most difficult thing,
For my being is full of
serpents and scorpions,
As well as lies and falsehoods!

Shozomatsu Wasan No. 96
rkt translation.

when in positions of power and wealth, tend to become boastful, if not aloof from those they exploit. Such presumptions of superiority trigger the words one says and does that imply one is better than others. As of consequence, divisiveness and conflicts arise. The reason why, said Tamai sensei, is because human beings think and believe that:

continued on p. 6

To be continued

SACRED BUDDHIST PASSAGES

"People of the world, being weak in virtue, engage in strife over matters which are not urgent. In the midst of abject wickedness and extreme afflictions they painstakingly toil for their living. Whether noble or corrupt, rich or poor, young or old, male or female, all people worry about wealth and property. In this there is no difference between the rich and the poor; both have their anxieties. Groaning in dejection and sorrow, they pile up thoughts of anguish or, driven by inner urges, they run wildly in all directions and thus have no time for peace and rest." Hisao Inagaki. *The Three Pure Land Sutras*. p. 282.

1. their physical bodies are their own.
2. they no longer exist when they die.
3. life in this world is all there is.
4. theirs are the only correct way of thinking and believing.
5. their "faith" is the best. (*Ichinyo*. p. 17)

This is also why, said Tamai sensei, "We commit various crimes ..." because we are unaware that we are captives of superstition, prejudice and ethnocentrism blinded by our insatiable desires, burning resentments and self vanities. These presumptions and passions are the causes of great wars. Man's history has been of one war after war. This is why "life is full of suffering" (*dukkha*).

Once again, Shinran Shonin's words come to mind, "Under the influence of our karmic past, we human beings will do anything" (Unno. *loc. cit.* XIII p. 24). Let us then reflect on these words in the contexts of our contemporary world riddled by ceaseless conflicts and violence fueled by lies and falsehoods. It is said that modern man since the Iberian Expansion alone has done more

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damage to our Earth's flora and fauna than the combined damage over the first 25 centuries of Western civilization since ancient Grecian times. The eras of sticks and stones, swords, spears, bows and arrows, guns and cannon are no match for today's weapons of mass destruction tipped with nuclear warheads.

To be continued

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: What does it mean "to be grasped by Amida never to be abandoned?"

ANSWER: The phrase means that until the last sentient being attains Buddhahood, Amida will not abandon them. This is because Amida is the very manifestation of the Dharma's Timeless Truth of Selflessness manifest as its Reality of Togetherness in which all things and life are sustained. Amida's Wisdom and Compassion, as of consequence, is constantly working and active in guiding sentient beings to their Buddhahood.