



GASSHO

OCTOBER

2010

Issue No: 10-10

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



DEEP FAITH HAS TWO ASPECTS

(*Shoshin Ge* lines: 35-40)

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

In September's *GASSHO* the three inseparable functions of Amida Buddha's "MIND of SINCERITY" (*shi-shin*) were discussed. This Mind (Unending Concern) manifests itself in three ways (as his "authentic faith," or *shinjin*). First, it manifests itself as man's trust in Amida's Wisdom and Compassion. Second, then, it becomes man's utterances of great joy as a person who has taken complete refuge in Amida. And finally, it continues in the form of his unwavering aspiration for birth in the Pure Land (Nirvana). These three unailing functions of Amida's Mind of Sincerity are manifestations of the Dharma's Selfless Wisdom and All-embracing Compassion.

The phrase *san'pu-san-shin* deals with "the three aspects of faith 'with' and 'without' true faith (*shinjin*)," or this Mind of Amida's Sincerity (*shi-shin*). The phrase specifically deals with what are man's professions of faith that are "disingenuous" as "illuminated" and "exposed" by the Truth of Selflessness that has fully embraced such a person in its Reality of Togetherness to never forsake or abandon him ever.

A person not illuminated and permeated by Amida's Wisdom's Selflessness and embraced by her Compassion's Togetherness is a person of faith unaware that he is tainted by the three poisons (greed, hatred and pride) as well as affected by the five venoms (lust, rage, stupidity, arrogance, and jealousy). For expressions of faith without the Dharma's Selfless Wisdom and its All-embracing Compassion are manifestations of faith compromised by man's egoism and self-presumptions as to what he himself sees as "true and false," "just and unjust," as well as to who he thinks is a "good person" or an "evil person."

This is due to the fact that man's mind, in and of itself, is crafty, devious, contriving and, therefore, full of deviance and deceptions (*hakara*). Furthermore, man's thoughts, feelings and intentions constantly keep changing as do the people and circumstances in his life. *Bombu*, in these various unenlightened aspects of self-indulgence, self-justifications and self-inflations, refers to us human beings who are incapable of

MONTH'S THOUGHT



The definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over and to expect different results.

Albert Einstein



ascertaining the unfathomable depths of our own past karmic transgressions and ongoing desecrations of the Right Dharma due to our spiritual ignorance.

A person of true faith (*shinjin*), on the other hand, is a person who, by power of Clear Wisdom and virtue of Pure Compassion, has been made "fully aware" beyond all doubt that he is a person of karmic evils. (See T. Unno. *Tannisho: Chap. 13 p.24 and Epilogue. p. 36*)

Because human beings are also governed by the uniform orderly laws of causation and conditionality, they, as of consequence, are subject to the physical effects and psychological affects of their insensitive transgressions and mindless desecrations of things that are sacred as well as their defiance of truths that are spiritual. Amida's Mind of Wisdom and her Heart of Compassion,

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REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR OCTOBER 2010

1st SUN Oct 3rd:

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

2nd SUN Oct 10th:

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

3rd SUN Oct 17th:

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

4th SUN Oct 24th:

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

5th SUN Oct 31st

MONTHLY
FAMILY WORSHIP
9 A.M. Eng. Service
"Dharma Talk"
Rev. R. Tatsuguchi

Rev. Roland Tatsuguchi
will be off Island
Nov. 9, 2010 to Nov. 16, 2010

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

KARAOKE CLASS Mon - 7 - 9 P.M.
Mr. Nelson Yoshioka

KARATE Tues/Fri - 6 - 9 P.M.
Shihan - Walter Nishioka

FUJINKAI SEWING CLUB Wed - 9 - 11 A.M.
J. Kobuke / A. Murata

HAWAII EISA CHIMUGUKURU DAIKO
Mr. Van Shimabukuro
Wed/Thur 6.30-8.30

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continue on page 8

likewise, are also equally governed by the same irrefragable laws of causation and subject to the same rules of moral causation or karma. However, the workings of Amida's Wisdom and activity of Compassion are not the stuff of man's dubious conjurations, imaginations or fabrications full of falsehoods and rationalizations that are tainted by selfishness, jealousy and vanities. Nor are they affected by man's blind passions and obsessions (*bonno*) triggered by rage or feelings of anger. For Amida set forth and consummated his Vows of Compassion in complete compliance through the very same laws of causation, conditionality, interdependency and karma in Perfect Selfless have unblemished by *bonno*. The 48 Vows of Amida manifest the clear powers of Wisdom transforming others within the very contexts of impermanency as based on the actuality that there are "no permanent unchanging things or selves." This is how Amida keeps appearing in man's "deepest consciousness" as a "Voiceless Voice" constantly resounding as his Sacred Name: Namoh-amida-butsu in this world that is a "burning house" to embrace all therein within her Pure, Boundless, Unconditional Compassion.

This is "why" and also "how" Amida keeps manifesting herself in man's "everyday consciousness" as the Truth of Wisdom's Selflessness and actuality of Compassion's Togetherness that have always and yet continue to illuminate and embrace each thing and all sentient beings (including us human beings) "just as they are" to never forsake or abandon them ever. In doing so, Amida, in full accordance with causality and karma "transforms," both the "good person," and especially the "evil person," each according to their karma-bound situation by "equally bestowing" on them both his Mind of Sincerity (*shi-shin*) to "awaken" a Joyful Trust (*shin-gyo*) and an Unwavering Desire to be born in his Pure Land (*yoku-sho ga-koku*).

Amida's Mind of Sincerity emerges from a deep, unfathomable, inconceivable SOURCE. Having so "emerged" from this ineffable SOURCE, Amida keeps appearing in man's "deepest conscienceness" as her Unconditional Compassion that has never rejected, abandoned or will ever condemn anyone (*jiri rita em'man=s* "your suffering is my suffering, your happiness is my happiness"). This Source of Light and Life clearly lays bare to fully expose the folly of and limitations in man as it transforms his words and actions

WORDS OF SHINRAN

... The holy Name of the Tathagata surpasses measure, description and conceptual understanding; it is **the Name of the Vow embodying great love and great compassion, which brings all sentient beings into the supreme nirvana**. The Name of this Buddha surpasses the name of all the other Tathagatas, for it is based on **the Vow to save all beings**. [SBT-Series. *Notes on Essentials* ... p.30. Bold for emphasis]

into expressions of love and kindness illuminated and guided by his "Mind of Sincerity."

Because expressions of human love are invariably tainted by a person's conscious "likes" and "dislikes" and subconsciously and unconsciously influenced by his hidden motives and secret agendas, they of consequence, are tainted human expressions of love and acts of kindness. They produce physical effects and psychological affects in the form of a person's egoism, ethnicity, beliefs, convictions and prejudice. Therefore, human declarations of love and loyalty are undependable because, in reality, they are self-centered on "me" and "mine."

When it comes to the justification of one's own personal beliefs and convictions, human beings look to the tenets of the religion they were born into for validating and justifying the questionable things they say and do. Especially is this true in times of war. Instead of looking to the Truth itself, they selectively seek out scriptural passages to find the reason to justify whatever they are thinking, feeling, intending, saying and doing to obliterate their enemies into oblivion.

By contrast, when a person looks to the Unfathomable Source of Selfless Wisdom and Boundless Compassion that embraces all things and life forms, such a person comes to "realize" just how one-sided his presumptions based on creed and doctrine are, and how arbitrary are their judgments as to what is truly "right" and "wrong," what is "good" and "evil," or what is "just" and "unjust." A person illuminated by Selfless Wisdom then comes to see how the judgments of those in authority and power are the underlying cause for dissension, conflict, violence and bloodshed among human beings. (Such as in the justification of jihads, crusades, holy wars, the military-industrial-complex.)

Boundless Compassion, based on the Truth of Selflessness, instead, melts away such one-sided perceptions and presumptions by "untying the knots" of attachment to one's self, family, race, creed, culture

GASSHO is the Monthly Newsletter of

SHINSHU KYOKAI MISSION of HAWAII

1631 S. Beretania Street, Honolulu, Hawaii,
96826-1105 Temple 973-0150;

Editor: Rev. R. K. Tatsuguchi

Circulation: SKM Staff

PUBLICATION DATE: September 26, 2010

and country, especially the ethnocentric “knots” of one’s religion. Amida’s Clear Wisdom and Pure Compassion, on the other hand, enables a person to embrace differences by untying the very “knots” of egoism, tribalism, racism, ethnocentrism and nationalism to embrace all things and creatures (including one’s fellow human beings) “just as they are” without favoritisms and prejudice, especially as driven by hypocrisy and bigotry.

To take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (Three Treasures) is to live by the Truth and Reality that “the suffering of others is at once one’s very own suffering,” and that, “one’s happiness, in truth, depends on the safety and well being of all things and other living things.” This is why the Truth of Selflessness and Reality of Togetherness as manifest by the Ultimate Source of Light and Life (Dharma-as-Suchness) is not the monopoly of any one man, race, creed, culture, ideology, religion, or specific historical point in time or special geographical location. This, then, is the underlying reason as to why Shinran Shonin said: “Amida’s Primal Vow does not discriminate between the young and old, good and evil; **true entrusting alone is essential**. [Taitetsu Unno. *Tannisho*. I. p. 5. Bold for emphasis.]

In his *Shoshin Nembutsu Ge*, Shinran clearly states that:

When we receive Faith,
we revere the Dharma
and attain Great Joy,
We immediately transcend
the five evil realms.
If ordinary people,
whether good or evil,
Hear the Dharma
and trust Amida’s
Universal Vow,
Sakyamuni praises them
as men of great and
“superior understanding.”
Such people are called
“white lotus flowers!”

Hisao Inagaki.
The Way of Nembutsu Faith.
p. 48.

Such an “awakening of real faith” (*shinjin*), or “superior understanding,” happens through the sole working and activity of Amida’s “Mind of Selfless Sincerity” that is also the Truth and Reality of Togetherness that has never “ejected” or “rejected” any sentient being, including us human beings, because all beings by virtue of Boundless Compassion are heading for the Pure Land. That this Truth of Selflessness and Reality of Togetherness yet is tirelessly working to awaken all beings, this fact are confirmed below by the Passages

confirming the Consummation of the Vow (*Hongan jojumon*).

Such an awakening power of faith brings about a twofold self awareness in a person concerning his karma-riddled condition. First, it brings about the awareness that one is “... absolutely incapable of any religious practice,” and that “hell,” therefore, is his “only home” [T. Unno. *op. cite.*, p. 6]. In other words, without a Source of Truth’s Light, the “darkness” of selfishness, arrogance and pride in man keeps him groveling in the darkness of his sensuality, vanities and dubious self-justifications. Thus, it is only by power of the Light of Selflessness and its Warm Illumination of Togetherness that a person’s “misunderstandings” are “transformed” into a “superior understanding,” that is, his “right understanding” of Amida who is now enabling him to become the only all too human being he undeniably is, a mere *bombu* full of moral and spiritual turbidity who has been unconditionally grasped by Amida.

Therefore, the problem of whether one’s faith in Amida Buddha is sincere or insincere, genuine or disingenuous, wavering or unwavering, this problem is dealt in *Jodoshinshu* as the question concerning what is referred to as *san’-pu san’-shin*, or what are “the three aspects of trusting ‘without’ and ‘with’ true faith (*shinjin*), or what is Amida’s Mind of Sincerity.” This phrasing concerns also the doctrinal questions as to “when” and “how” a person’s faith “is without” or “is with” Amida’s Mind of Selfless Sincerity full of Togetherness. The question deals as to whether a person’s “trust” and “faith” have not or have been transformed by the Truth of Selflessness and Reality of Togetherness (Amida’s Mind of Wisdom and Heart of Compassion).

In other words, it deals with whether a person’s faith is feigned, contrived, crafted and pretentious (*jiriki no hakarai*) and, therefore, whether it is superficial, false, or true and real. For if a person’s expressions of “good will” and “doing of good deeds” are based on superstitions, misconceptions, falsehoods or obsessions, then his “professions of faith” and “doing of good deeds” become a selfserving faith tainted and unsettled by uncertainty, doubt, guilt, superstition, falsehood and especially by elements of despair and fear. There is in such a person’s mind, however, a sense of entitlement and expectation of a reward, whether material, moral or spiritual from some kind of omnipotent god or deity that works miracles that contravene the laws of causality, conditionality, interdependency and, therefore, the consequences of one’s karma.

In the first half of the *Larger Sutra*, is found Amida’s Primordial or Eighteenth Vow, as follows:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten directions who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and call my Name even

ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. **Excluded, however, are those who commit the five gravest offenses and abuse the right Dharma.** [Hisao Inagaki. *The Three Pure Land Sutras*. p. 243. Bold for emphasis.]

These passages are the Eighteenth Vow, the most central of Amida's Forty-eight Fundamental Vows set forth by Amida as the mendicant Dharmakara.

The consummation of this Vow confirmed by the passage below. They are called "the Passages Confirming the Consummation of the Primal Vow" (*hongai joju-mon*). They are as follows:

All Buddhas, Tathagatas, in the ten directions, as numerous as the sands of the River Ganges, together praise the inconceivable, supernal virtue of Amitayus. All sentient beings who have heard his Name, rejoice in faith, remember him even once and sincerely transfer the merit of virtuous practices to that land, aspiring to be born there, will attain birth and dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression. **But excluded are those who have committed the five gravest offenses and abused the right Dharma.** [Inagaki. *op. cite.*, p. 268. Bold for emphasis.]

Once again, the exclusionary clause (the final sentence), has been appended, as they then have to the Eighteenth Vow. What then is the reason for appending this "exclusionary clause" once again?

For the question arises, if the Primordial Vow was set forth and consummated for the explicit purpose of liberating and saving "evil persons," why then was the "exclusionary clause" attached to the Vow and to these passages of consummation?

A clue as to why it was necessary to do so is found in the words of Shinran Shonin as follows: "... whether you accept the nembutsu, entrusting yourself to it, or reject it, that is your decision." [Unno. *loc. cite.*, II. p. 7.] These words of the Shonin imply that a person who has come by the most "rarest of rare chances" to actually "hear" and "listen to" the "voiceless voice" of Amida constantly calling him from deep within, such a fortunate person, then, can either choose to keep "listening" until he comes to actually experience an "awakening of faith." This crucial decision, however, is his to make for he is the only one who can "turn a deaf ear" and refuse to "listen" (or to trust and take refuge in it). Or, he may even consider such a "voiceless voice" to be imaginary, fictional, something superfluous and not relevant to his everyday life. Or, even worse, he can also wrongly begin to disparage its Truth and Reality through a life that mindlessly desecrates the very sacredness and spiritualness of life.

SHINRAN'S WASAN

For sentient beings
with defilements, evils
and wrong views
in these times
of *Decadent* and
Extinct Dharma,
Buddhas, as numerous
as the sands of Ganges,
As they tell of Amida's Vow
Keep urging us all to say
his Sacred Name!!

Jodo Wasan 86
rkt trans.

Shinran Shonin, therefore, saw the "exclusionary clause" to have a "hidden" rather than a literal significance. The hidden significance in reality is beyond human explication, understanding and comprehension. For the very thought that an "evil person," more so than a "good person," is the true object of Amida's Boundless Compassion, such an astonishing thought for the logical minded is too fantastic and morally unacceptable. Such a possibility is also incomprehensible in the minds of ordinary people, especially for those who believe in a Supreme Deity who "rewards" good people and "punishes" bad people. For the thought that an "evil person" as well as a "good person" equally gets to a "heavenly paradise," such a thought goes against "commonsense logic," especially of those who believe in a "heaven" for saints and a "hell" for sinners. For are not heinous, incorrigible criminals to be summarily executed and be rid as dangerous sociopaths or psychopaths to a civilized society? In the minds of people whose judgments are based on such hardfast religious convictions, "sinners" deserve to be punished and cast into an "everlasting fire" to suffer their just deserts. Therefore, the thought that an "evil person" or a "sinner" is also saved or even more so than a "good person," such a teaching appears to be illogical and irrational, if not heretical and blasphemous. (See Tannisho Ch. III).

This seemingly contradictory thought that an "evil person," this is saved even moreso than a "good person" is best understood through the analogy of a mother's undying love for her one and only child, especially when her child strays into ways of harm and self destruction. For, Amida is said to be more like a mother whose love is both boundless and equally unconditional for all her children. Because of the uniform principles of causation, conditionality and interdependency that also why the laws of karma, Amida knows that man has, is and yet is bearing the painful consequences of his cumulative past history of

hurtful and harmful words and deeds as triggered by his selfish thoughts, impulses and rampant desires.

The origin of the negative effects and affects of a person's past karma, according to Buddhism, can be traced over his countless past lives as well as his ongoing present misperceptions, misconceptions and misunderstandings. This is exactly why the "exclusionary clause" was appended to both the Eighteenth Vow and the Passages Confirming that the Primal Vow was Consummated. The exclusionary clause in actuality is admonishing man and telling him to stop thinking, speaking and doing hurtful and harmful things based on his selfish thoughts and impulsive desires. For as long as he does so, he must continue to bear their irreversible consequences and, thereby, undergo ceaseless births and deaths. This then is the hidden significance of the "exclusionary cause."

Amida, to reiterate, is more like a mother always worrying especially about her wayward child. Amida is a Buddha concerned about man's continuing transgressions and desecrations of the Dharma, both individually as a person and collectively as a participating member of society in terms of his culture and religion. For Amida has never abandoned or will ever condemn a person who has and is being riddled and stricken by the negative consequences of his past and ongoing bad karma. Persons riddled by karmic evils are not rejected or cast out by Amida as, being hopeless degenerates and incorrigibles, who, on a day of Final Judgment, are to be cast out into an everlasting inferno of fire. Like a mother who becomes all the more concerned about her child who has and continues to be deviant and defiant, Amida becomes all the more concerned about persons who keep sinking and are drowning in the "turbulent ocean of endless births and deaths," or what are the six realms of transmigration, or the "six basic ways" in which human beings keep living and are conducting themselves in self-debasing and destructive ways!

In this most profound maternal sense, Amida is more like a concerned mother than a discerning father. In reality, Amida's Selfless Wisdom (masculine aspect) and Boundless Compassion (maternal aspect) in being inseparable, keep working together and never abandon any person, especially the "evil person." Amida keeps tirelessly working to make man truly "aware" that he, in reality, is undeniably a *bombu* full of *bonno*, a person full of self-debilitating passions and compulsive self vanities who has, is and yet will be brought into the full embrace of Amida's Unconditional Compassion. Does not the undying love of a mother for all her children both good and bad best exemplify Amida's Unconditional Love that never judges, condemns, forsakes or abandons anyone?

As for Shinran Shonin's words: "whether you accept ... or reject" Amida's Wisdom and Compassion

for all beings, this dilemma of whether to accept as reality or reject as fiction Amida's "Voiceless Voice," this is illustrated by Sakyamuni Buddha's parable of a man shot by a poisoned arrow out of nowhere (like the "arrow of birth" from nowhere from whence we were born and the "arrow of death" into nowhere, beyond the Great Unknown). The person who persists in committing the "five deadly transgressions" and who keeps "desecrating the Right Dharma" can be likened to this man struck by an arrow whose barbs are tipped with the three deadly venoms of "desire, resentment and pride." Such a person keeps stubbornly resisting the aid of those who wish to extricate the arrow and apply the proper "antidote" to neutralize the poison that is sapping away his life. Like this dying man insisting that he will not have the arrow removed until he is told all the fine details of the arrow's construction, which direction it came from (the past or from the future), and so forth, so too, a person who refuses to trust and take refuge in Amida's powers of Wisdom and virtues of Compassion, must continue his endless rounds of births and deaths in the six revolving realms of transmigration.

People who keep rejecting the Truth of Selflessness and who keep desecrating its Reality of Togetherness, they are like this person mortally wounded by a poisoned arrow stubbornly refusing to have it extricated and the proper life saving antidote applied. Such a person is not aware that he, as he lives each moment, is also dying in each passing moment of his one and only life. Such a person wrongly assumes that there will always be a tomorrow for him. Thus, he is not aware that he is wasting away his life that was made possible by his one and only father and one and only mother connecting to his endless line of incalculable ancestors.

Such a person lives in denial and defiance of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. As of consequence, such a person himself is the very one who is excluding himself from becoming a beneficiary of Amida's Wisdom's Power and Compassionate Virtue that can "break" him out of the endless rounds of births-and-deaths. All a person has to do is to trust and take refuge in Amida's Sacred Name full of Wisdom and Compassion by simple saying and repeating his Sacred Name, *Namoh-amida-butsu* in gratitude, humility and penitence.

The actual significance of the "exclusionary clause," therefore, is further to be found in the following words of Shinran Shonin:

... if a person is deceitful in his relations with others doing what he should not and saying what he should not [ten evils], because he thinks it will not hinder his birth, then it is not an instance of being maddened by passion. Since he

purposely does these things, they are simply misdeeds which should never have been done

...

One must seek to cast off the evil of this world and to cease doing wretched deeds; this is what it means to reject the world and to live the nembutsu. When people who may have pronounced the nembutsu for many years abuse others in word or deed, there is no indication of rejecting this world. ... we should be careful to keep our distance from those people who are given to evil. ... [SBT-Series. *Letters* ... No. 16 [] mine. p. 52.]

It is clear that these words are based on the facts of karma as governed by the orderly and uniform laws of causation, conditionality and interdependency that characterize the facts of "no permanent thing and unchanging self" and the reality that life is "ever shifting and conditional." For the reasons mentioned, it is self-evident and explicit that persons who keep disparaging and desecrating these facts of *Dharma* are the very ones who, in actuality, are slandering the Truth of Selflessness as they continue to defy its Reality that is the Togetherness of all things and beings in a divine, harmonious relationship as governed by causality and conditionality.

Therefore, it is not in the nature of Amida to condemn, reject and abandon any sentient being. For, the nature of Amida is to keep working until the last of the most unsavable of sentient beings is brought over to the Pure Land. This Heart of Compassion is seen even in his Vowing to keep descending into the deepest of hells to retrieve beings who have fallen therein (Vows one and two). Amida, therefore, has tirelessly and is yet calling out to all beings. Even now, Amida is patiently and tirelessly working to bring enlightenment and Buddhahood to all sentient beings.

Therefore, Shinran says you should understand that the underlying purpose of the "exclusionary clause" is to bring those who keep committing the five deadly transgressions and who continue to slander the Dharma to trust and take refuge in the wonders of his Boundless Compassion working to embrace all sentient beings. Therefore, says Shinran:

You should understand that the moment of settling of the person who entrusts himself to Tathagata's Primal Vow is none other than the settling into the stage of non-retrogression, because he receives [and accepts] the benefits of being grasped, never to be abandoned. Whether we speak of the settling of true shinjin or the settling of the diamond-like shinjin, both come about through being grasped never to be abandoned. Thus is awakened the heart and mind that will attain the supreme enlightenment. This is called the stage of non-

retrogression, the stage of the truly settled, and the stage equal to the supreme enlightenment.

....

Thus, the person of true shinjin is said to be equal to Buddhas. ... [SBT-Series. *Letters* ... No. 7 [] mine. p. 33.]

Such then is the hidden meaning of the "exclusionary clause." It is actually telling us of Amida's Great All-embracing Compassion that never abandons even those who stubbornly keep committing the "five grave transgressions" and who keep "desecrating the Right Dharma." The exclusionary clause, therefore, is not to be seen as a contradiction of Amida's Primal Vow. Nor is it to be taken as justification to purposely do evil just because it is the intention of Amida to "save" persons who have committed karmic evils!

This is exactly why Shinran Shonin admonished:

... You should not be anxious that the Tathagata will not receive you because you do wrong. A foolish being [*bon'bu*] is by nature possessed of blind passions [*bonno*], so you must recognize yourself as a being of karmic evil. On the other hand, you should not think that you deserve to attain birth because you are good. You cannot be born into the true and real Buddha Land through such self-power calculations [as based on your presumptions of good will, loving words and benevolent deeds]. ... **Truly know, therefore, that without differentiation between good and bad people, and regardless of one's having a heart of blind passion, all beings are certain to attain birth** [in the Pure Land]. ... [SBT-Series. *Letters* ... 2. Bold type and []s mine. pp. 23, 24.]

These words of Shinran then make it very clear, do they not, that the explicit purpose of the "exclusionary clause" is not to be taken literally as condemning and rejecting transgressors and slanderers, but to be understood as an admonishment to stop committing further karmic evils, especially that of desecrating the Right Dharma and, instead, to trust and take refuge in Amida's Mind of Sincerity without any further delay and leave everything up to Amida's powers of Wisdom and her Virtues of Compassion.

For as long as a person keeps transgressing and desecrating the Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness, he is keeping himself from being grasped by the hands of Amida Buddha who is constantly reaching out to grab him with his right hand of Wisdom and her left hand of Compassion, to then embrace him in her arms to never ever forsake or abandon him until he becomes a Buddha. That is, as soon as a person realizes that he is a being hopelessly riddled by the consequences of his past and ongoing

karma and takes, thereby, complete refuge in Amida, in that very instant he becomes set in the "truly settled state." He becomes a person of unwavering faith and becomes firmly established in the "group whose birth in the Pure Land" is then assured beyond all doubt.

According to these words of Shinran Shonin, true and real faith (*shinjin*), therefore, has a twofold significance referred to as *ni-shu jin'shin*. The first involves the "deep realization" (or awakening) that "one is undeniably a being of karmic evils unworthy and undeserving of Amida's Great Compassion." The second is the simultaneous "deep realization" (or "superior understanding") that "it is because one is undeniably riddled by hopeless karmic evils that Amida has grasped him 'just as he is,' never to forsake or abandon him" till such time he comes to attain complete enlightenment and full Buddhahood. This, then, is the meaning of being "truly settled" in the "rightly established group."

[to be continued]

BUDDHIST STORIES & PASSAGES

Though the Pure Land is the place for taking rest, it is not the place for idleness. Its beds of fragrant flowers are not for slothful indolence, but are the place for refreshment and rest, where one regains energy and zeal to continue the Buddha's Mission of Enlightenment.

Buddha's mission is everlasting. As long as men live and creatures exist, and as long as selfish and defiled minds create their own worlds and circumstances, there will be no end to His mission.

The children of Buddha who have crossed to the Pure Land by means of the great power of Amida, may be zealous to return to the land whence they came and where they still have ties. There they will take their part in the Buddha's mission.

As the light of a small candle will spread from one to another in succession, so the light of the Buddha's compassion will pass on from one mind to another endlessly. [Numata Foundation. *The Teaching of Buddha*. (English/Japanese) p. 500.]

QUESTION ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: Why recite Amida's Sacred Name?

ANSWER: Beginning with Sakyamuni Buddha, Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu in India, then Tan'luan, Tao-ch'o and Shan-tao in China, and finally Genshin and Honen in Japan, Shinran Shonin sings of their praises in his *Shoshin Nembutsu Ge* for having revealed the benefits of trusting and taking refuge with a sincere

heart in Amida Buddha's Infinite Light full of Wisdom's Selflessness that has, is and yet tirelessly keeps shining on all beings to sustain them all in its Boundless Compassion that holds them in a Sacred Togetherness (interdependency) in the Light of Wisdom's Selflessness! For this reason, Amida Buddha's Light of Selflessness and Life of Togetherness embraces not only "good persons" but especially the "evil person" who has become aware of his blind passions and foolish vanities.

By intoning and uttering Namoh-amida-butsu, the profound thought of Amida's Selfless Wisdom and her All-embracing Compassion emerge in one's "deepest conscienceness." As a person keeps "intoning," and "repeating" Namoh-amida-butsu, he, conversely, becomes all the more aware of how his thoughts, feelings, words and actions are undeniably tainted by selfishness, and deviousness. Such a person then begins to "awaken" to the actuality that he cannot claim to be a person who is pure and just. More importantly, he cannot claim to know what is absolutely "good" or "evil."

This is the reason as to why Shinran Shonin, said: "... in this foolish being filled with blind passion, living in this impermanent world of burning house, all things are empty and vain; therefore, untrue. Only the nembutsu is true, real, and since." (T. Unno. *Tannisho: Epilogue*. p. 36)

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