



GASSHO

SEPTEMBER

2010

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"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



ASPECTS OF TRUE AND FALSE FAITH

(*Shoshin Ge*: lines 85-92)

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

Shinran Shonin paid tribute to Pure Land Master *Tao-ch'o* (562-645) in his *Shoshin Ge Nembutsu* as follows:

Master Tao-ch'o determined
that the Path of Sages
is difficult to attain
And clearly presented
the Pure Land Path
as the only way of salvation.
He disparaged practicing
thousands of acts
of merits with self power
And urged us to recite exclusively
the Name of perfect virtues.
He kindly taught us
imperfect and perfect faith,
each having three aspects.
He compassionately guided those
of the ages of Semblance Dharma,
Decadent Dharma and
Extinct Dharma alike.
Whatever evils we may commit
throughout our lives,
if we encounter the Universal Vow,
We shall reach the Land of Peace and Provisio
and realize the Supreme Fruition.

[Hisao Inagaki. *The Way
of Nembutsu Faith*. p. 114]

Like Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu in India and Tan'luan in China, Master *Tao'cho* studied the many teachings and practices as taught by Sakyamuni Buddha. According to Shinran Shonin, *Tao'cho* distinguished between the "Path of Sages" (*Shodo-mon*) from the "Gateway to the Pure Land" (*Jodo Mon*). The Path of Sages is for those who are spiritually gifted who possess the moral stamina to fulfill the life of self denial and self purification in order to attain the goal of enlightenment. This path of self-denial requires the renouncing of worldly pleasures and material possessions. This Path requires "self-effort" and practice of "self-control" (*jiriki*).

MONTH'S THOUGHT



... 'there are immutable laws in human nature and human functioning which operate in any culture. These laws cannot be violated without serious damage to personality. If someone violates his moral and intellectual integrity he weakens, even paralyzes his total personality. ...' Erich Fromm. *Psychoanalysis and Religion*. (paperback) p. 72.]



By stark contrast, the Gateway to the Pure Land (*Jodo Mon*) simply consists of "entrusting" one's imperfect self "just as it is" to Amida Buddha who, then, instantly grasps to embrace him with "his" powers of Wisdom and "her" virtues of Compassion. Such a person becomes full of gratitude, tranquility, humility, reverence, especially penitence. Amida's "right hand" of Wisdom and her "left hand" of Compassion take firm hold of such a person to guide him across the White Path to the Pure Land. In doing so, such a person, because he is still human, forever keeps stumbling, but is prevented from falling into the contra-flowing rivers of fire and water that are bottomless. All the while the raging flames keep

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REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR SEPTEMBER-2010

1st SUN. Sep 5th:

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

2nd SUN Sep 12th:

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

3rd SUN Sep 19th:

ANNUAL AUTUMN O'HIGAN SERVICES

9 A.M.
English Service
Guest Speaker:
Rev. Alan Urasaki

4th SUN Sep 26th:

No Service

Chicken & Sushi Sale
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

With Deepest Sympathy

Mr. Sueo Okimoto 83yr July 7, 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

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YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!!**

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singing him and the cascading waves keep numbing him with deathly cold.

Because Amida has such a person walking on the White Path (Gateway to the Pure Land) in "his" firm grasp and "her" unyielding arms. Such a person is never let go of until he or she finally steps into the Pure Land, or what is "Nirvana without residues." You might think of such a person as being like a helpless newborn kitten born blind firmly held by the nape of its neck in the gentle teeth of its loving mother as it is being taken to a safe, secure place, to be then nursed, fed and cared for until it becomes a fully grown cat equal to its mother. The phrase *ojo jyo-butsumi* means "being taken to be born in the Pure Land to become a Buddha the equal of Buddha."

Tao-ch'o's sharp distinction between the "Path for Sages" and the "Gateway to the Pure Land" was influenced by the Pure Land Master Nagarjuna's distinction between the "Difficult Path" (*Nan'gyo do*) and the "Easy Path" (*Igyoo do*). The "difficult path" was likened by Master Nagarjuna to a person walking on treacherous rocky terrain, which Master Shan'tao later described to be full of venomous creatures, predator beasts, thieves, robbers and murderous bandits. The "easy path," by contrast, was likened by Nagarjuna to a passenger safe and sound on a great sailing ship sailing over the "turbulent ocean waves of ceaseless births and deaths" to a final safe harbor called the Pure Land of Amida. The sails on the twin masts of this "great galleon" are powered by the constant, unyielding *Dharma* Winds of Selfless Wisdom and Boundless Compassion.

Tao'cho's comparison was also based on Tan'luan's distinction between "self-power" (*jiriki*) and "Other Power" (*tariki*). The way of "self power," or "self reliance," can be likened to a newborn baby monkey desperately holding on to the underside of its mother for dear life as she keeps leaping from branch to branch in getting to the highest tree branches for safety. Should the newborn baby monkey ever let go of its mother, it will fall to its certain death.

In the *Shoshin Ge* verses quoted, we are also told of the three ensuing periods that would follow Sakyamuni Buddha's peaceful demise. When Sakyamuni was yet living the people could "listen to his voice" and

WORDS OF SHINRAN

... "To be made to become so" means that without the practitioner's calculating in any way whatsoever, all his past, present, and future evil karma is transformed into the highest good. To be transformed means that evil karma, without being nullified or eradicated, is made into the highest, just as all waters upon entering the great ocean, immediately become ocean water. [SBT-Series. *Notes on Essent'ls* ... p. 32]

as they saw him speaking to them. They could see Sakyamuni Buddha face-to-face as they "listened" to him talking about. "*Unadulterated Dharma*" (*Sho-bo*), or the unadulterated Truth.

According to Master Tao-ch'o what Sakyamuni taught remained unaltered and unadulterated (after his death) for the next 500 years due to the "word-for-word-transmissions" by his enlightened disciples. They were exact word for word recitations" of what the Buddha had said. As of consequence, the Buddha's teachings, its practice and the Way to gain enlightenment remained intact for the next 500 hundred years after his death.

Master Tao-ch'o, however, was born about a thousand and five hundred years after Sakyamuni died. By Tao-cho's time the tradition of further word for word "transmission" had deteriorated into mere formal recitations and pompous outward rituals. By this time, there was no one around who was able to attain enlightenment as had Sakyamuni Buddha and his "gifted" disciples. These times of *Extinct Dharma* were called *Mappo*, or times of Decadent Dharma, or times of Corrupted and Corrupt Dharma.

Thus, the *Dharma* had become so tentative that it seemed as though it had completely become compromised. *Mappo*, therefore, means times of *Decadent and Extinct Dharma*, or times when the *Dharma* had gone into hiding (not destroyed). The term *Mappo*, therefore, designates times when the teachings, practices and the way of attaining enlightenment" have become misconstrued, superficial, if not counterfeit. The terms "semblance and decadent," therefore, designate times when the "five deadly transgressions" and "desecrations" and "disparagements" of *Dharma* have especially become blatant and widespread as they have become in our times of modernity. Such degenerate times in human history, past or present, are characterized by people who outwardly appear to be knowledgeable, proper and upright, while "inwardly" full of insincerity, deceptions,

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falsehoods, and, therefore, blatant if not defiant especially in their desecrations of things sacred and spiritual.

The term *Mappo*, therefore, also brings our attention to the "exclusionary clause" concerning those who keep committing the "five deadly transgressions" and who continue to "slanderer the Right *Dharma*." Amida fulfilled his vows especially to save such recalcitrant persons who keep committing such transgressions and desecrations of the *Dharma*. The "exclusionary clause appended to the 18th Vow," therefore, at face value seems to contradict this fact. In actuality, however, the "exclusionary clause" was appended to awaken such people to make them "realize" that as long as they keep committing the "five deadly transgressions" and "disparaging" and "desecrating" the Right *Dharma*, they themselves are the very ones who are rejecting and refusing to accept Amida's Boundless Compassion. The "antidote" for the "three poisons" has been made. All a person suffering from the toxins of greed, hatred and pride has to do is to accept it.

For instance, in our times of global capitalism and unbridled consumerism, even the lesser "ten evils" have become rationalized that individually and collectively, man has become insensitive about "taking the lives of living things; man's appropriation of things he does not even have the right to exploit; his committing of adultery and sexual perversions, his telling of deliberate falsehoods, his being abusive in word and destructive in his deeds; his deliberate spreading of rumors and innuendos with the intention to set one group of people against another; his indulging in idle talk and meaningless gossip; his being overly selfish and insatiable (greedy); his becoming easily irritated and provoked (hostility, resentments); and finally, his cherishing of modern day superstitions (such as "more and more" is better and that "bigger and bigger" is progress). Are not our present times beset by such rationalizations, superstitions and misperceptions that keep us committing the "ten evils," "five deadly transgressions, and especially our "desecrating" things sacred and timeless truths that are spiritual?

According to Buddhist scripture, because present transgressions and desecrations, life has become compromised by the following "five defiling factors." They are 1st: our times of modernity have become beset with droughts, famines, disease, especially man-made calamities due to "faceless corporations" profiteering from perpetual wars. 2nd: these events, in turn, bring about all kinds of misunderstandings and sufferings, especially on innocent populations through corporate misconduct that now has become global in scale. These worldwide consequences of "marketing" and "profiteering" in turn continue to trigger further hardships and suffering,

especially on innocent third world populations. 3rd: the effects and affects of such misdeeds keep arousing and intensifying unwholesome passions and violent emotions that bring about negative reactions and responses in human beings. These outcomes, then trigger further harm and devastation. 4th: In dire and desperate circumstance, people subsequently, commit all kinds of evils and transgressions in utter disregard of causal laws with no regard for the karmic consequences that follow. And finally, 5th, people in dire situations, thereby, fail to uphold even the minimal Five Precepts which are based on the orderly principles of causality and facts of karma. The Five Precepts are not the commandments of some Supreme Being who can contravene causality or nullify the effects and affects of karma. Take for example the precept not to "ingest harmful food and drink." As people keep defying this fifth precept, people today, because of causality and karmic consequence, suffer various health problems as they experience all kinds of related mental and emotional problems.

The three aspects of true faith explained by Master Tao-ch'o are based on the "three minds" found in Amida Buddha's Primordial or Eighteenth Vow. Kenjo Urakami, in his *Amida Buddha and his Pure Land: Three Pure Land Sutras and a Treatise*, translated the three minds as: "... sincerely believe, rejoice, and wish to be born into my land, ..." (p. 27). Hisao Inagaki in his *The Three Pure Land Sutras* translates them in terms of persons: "... who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, ..." (p. 243). In his *Shinshu Seiten*, Kosho Yamamoto leaves out the Mind of Trust in Joy in his translation as follows: "... with the most sincere mind desire to be born in my country, ..." (p. 20). In the BCA *Shinshu Seiten* the "Three Minds" are translated as those: "... Who, with sincerity of Heart hold Faith and wish to be born in my country, " (p. 11). These translations again clearly differ and vary. There is no uniform clear understanding as to just how the "Three Minds" in Amida's 18th Vow should be translated.

For simplicity and clarity, I would like to translate the three minds of the Eighteenth Vow as follows: the "Mind of Sincerity," the "Heart of Joyful Trust" and the "Aspiration for Birth in the Pure Land." This triadic aspect of what is authentic, genuine faith are attributes of Amida Buddha's Infinite Mind of Wisdom and her Boundless Heart of Compassion that are unconditionally being given to all sentient beings to "transform" their mind, body and spirit. All three are given to a person who takes complete refuge in "her" Boundless Compassion. If a person's "trust and reliance" in Amida Buddha is not permeated by "his" Mind of Wisdom and "her" Heart of Compassion, such a person's faith, then, cannot be said to be a "faith" that is true, real, sincere and genuine.

Tao-ch'o's distinction between a faith that is "genuine" and a faith that is "disingenuous" was also based on the *Meditation Sutra's* description of the three characteristics of Deep Faith, or that mind of triadic faith that is the consumation of Amida's wish to save all beings. In order to awaken the "aspiration" and "desire" for birth in the Pure Land, Amida fulfilled his Original Vow to endow karma riddled beings with his consumated "mind of true sincerity" (*shi-jo shin*), his "deep mind" (*jin' shin*) and his "aspiration to have all beings born in his Pure Land" (*eko hotsu-gan shin*). According to the (Meditation Sutra), Amida's Primal Vow to save all beings has been fully realized and consummated as his Deep Mind of Sincerity. Amida's Deep Mind, therefore, is "tireless in working and timelessly active." In the final analysis, it is only Amida's Selfless Wisdom that is "her" Boundless Compassion endlessly active in each person that saves him. They are the origin and the only basis for our salvation and enlightenment.

When Queen Vaidehi trusted and took refuge in Amida's Primordial Vow, her "trusting" and "taking of refuge" was possible because Amida Buddha's Wisdom was tirelessly working as her Compassion constantly "transformed" her troubled mind and despairing heart to assure her of her coming certain birth in the Pure Land. Thus, came about Vaidehi's expressions of her joy and gratitude to Amida for having "grasped" her as the *bonbu* she undeniably was, a mere mortal being riddled by karma. When the "three minds of faith" are understood as being the complete activity and working of Amida's Boundless Compassion, one's everyday life then becomes permeated by Amida's Mind of True Sincerity, Heart of Real Joy and her Desire to fully illuminate and empower us through "his" Infinite Wisdom. In other words, the power of Amida's Wisdom and her virtues of Compassion "transformed" the Queen's mind of insincerity into her genuine sincerity, her lack of joy into her pure joy, and finally, her disoriented, tormented heart into a steadfast, unwavering heart full of serenity and peace, a person assured of birth in the Pure Land.

Therefore, the three aspects of a disingenuous faith, according to Master Tao-ch'o, are as follows. First of all, it is a faith lacking in "purity" and "goodness" and therefore full of pretensions and falsehoods. As of karmic consequence, such a faith lacks "sincerity." Such a "faith" also succumbs easily to the ever changing actors and unpredictable situations on the "stage of life" full of "revolving doors." Second, such a faith, therefore, lacks confidence and decisiveness and consequently easily wavers whenever faced with the least of uncertainties and difficulties of life. There is no bedrock of joy or serenity in such a faith. For such a "faith" is lacking in earnestness, perseverance and purpose. Third, such a faith, in the end, disappears and ceases to exist. Thus, such a "faith" lacks sincerity, finality, reality and truth.

SHINRAN'S WASAN

People who arrive in
the Pure Land
of Peace and Bliss,
Return again to this world
full of five defilements,
evils and transgressions.
Like Sakyamuni Buddha
they constantly benefit
sentient beings endlessly!
Jodo Wasan 20. rkt trans.

Therefore, when seen from Master Tao-ch'o's perception we moderns are living in times of *Extinct and Decadent Dharma*. The only Way to attain birth in the Pure Land of Amida in such times is to solely trust in Amida Buddha's Primordial Vow to save both the "good person" and especially the "evil person." To trust in Amida's Vow and Desire is to become "awake" of the actuality that one is a karma-riddled person. The Mind and Heart of Amida, therefore, especially awaken and embrace all beings without rejections. Such a realization of "universal salvation" is characterized by: 1. a faith that is sincere and pure (*jun'shin*), 2. singular and unwavering (*jin'shin*), and 3. tireless and unending in endowing all beings with the virtues of True Light and Real Life (*eko hotsugan shin*), especially for the sake of karma-riddled persons.

Thus, it is through such an "awakening of true and real faith that we come to realize that in our times of modernity and scientism, it is no longer possible for human beings to follow the active Path of Sages (*Shodo Mon*). The reason why this is so is because "global corporate greed" based on "world banking systems" that have become backed by a faceless entity called the "industrial military complex." The Right *Dharma* (things of sacredness and spirituality) has become obscured and blanketed over by a "network of faceless CEOs" driven by the "profit motive" based on the exploitation of living things in our natural ecosystems. In the process, things eternally sacred are being decimated and truths timelessly spiritual are being desecrated, along with the lives of innocent things and fellow human beings rationalized as "collateral damage"

For this reason Shinran Shonin, in his times of *Semblance, Decadent and Extinct Dharma*, in coming across the writings of Pure Land Masters such as Tao-ch'o" came to take refuge in the "Gateway to the Pure Land." For Tao-ch'o's words: 'even if a person commits karmic evils all his life, if he trusts and takes refuge in Amida Buddha, such a person of faith, by power and virtue of Amida's Wisdom and Compassion, will

unfailingly step into the Pure Land to attain Buddhahood! These words awakened to "transform" Shiran's heart. The lines 85-92 quoted above are expressions of Shinran Shonin's heartfelt and profound gratitude to Master Tao-ch'o for having so revealed this most significant threefold aspect of "genuine faith" and for his having made manifest the significance of Amida's Sacred Name, Namoh-amida-butsu, that can be easily repeated by anyone, especially by the person riddled with karmic evils!

[to be continued]

BUDDHIST STORIES & PASSAGES

What is my mind/heart like? Please read the following and reflect quietly on it.

*Isn't the gasoline of hate and jealousy left
unattended in my heart?*

*Isn't the gasoline of irritation and dislike pouring
out of my heart?*

*Before lighting a single match of blame or
censure, shouldn't I consider my own heart
that is so full of gasoline?*

*The baseness of speaking ill of others. The
shallowness of bragging about myself.*

*The atrocity of finding fault with others and
judging their actions.*

*Quietly taking pleasure in the misfortune of
others, and becoming jealous of the good
fortune of others.*

*Letting everyone around us know how we feel as
soon as something we dislike occurs.*

*Our wretched mind/heart of desire that always
wants everything.*

*Complaining of our misfortunes, lamenting over
our unhappiness.*

All these things are gasoline, the fuel of conflict. If any one of these is present, the conditions for conflict are present, and all that is required is a match to set it off. [Yoshitaka Tamai. *Ichinyo*. pp. 76,77.]

QUESTION ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: What is a *bonbu*?

ANSWER: We have discussed this term amply. *Bonbu* is an "ordinary person" with desires, ambitions as well as failings. In Jodoshinshu a *bonbu* refers to a person who has completely entrusted his karma riddled person to Amida's Boundless Compassion that grasps and embraces him as such a person "just as he or she is" to never be rejected or abandoned until such time one

attains full Buddhahood. As of consequence, such a person without doubt knows that because he or she is a person riddled with karmic evils, he or she will never be abandoned until such time he or she gets to the Pure Land, or Nirvana.

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