



GASSHO

October 2011

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"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



MAN'S MANY FACES

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

There is an innocent idea being ingrained by parents in the impressionable minds and innocent hearts of their children whenever they take them out for "tricks or treats" on Halloween nights. It is the notion that "it's perfectly okay to pretend to be someone you are not" in order "to get what you want" and that you have "the perfect right to play tricks on people or deface their property" if they do not comply with your demands. As a parent, have you ever given serious thought as to the long range implications of dressing up your children in "disguise" in order to obtain "trick or treat" candy, loose change or other items like stickers, crayons, pencils and coloring books?

First of all, the idea of "guising" ("dis-guising") one's person and "masking" one's identity engenders the notion that it is okay "to pretend" or "to pose as someone that you're not." This innocent notion in later adult life can become a rationalization for presenting a face of outward correctness while inwardly harboring a false one. According to Buddhism, this is why people see "horns on a rabbit's head," or mistake a "dimple" for a "wart." Many adults, as a matter of fact, are besieged by unwarranted misperceptions as well as misconceptions which have been engendered in them ever since their childhoods.

Second, the reasoning that it's okay to respond with mischief (retaliation) to a homeowner's property or to play a trick on a person, this nationalization also is unacceptable. The long range negative consequences of such reasoning should be more than obvious. The sinister aspects to such thinking that it is "all right to deserve or respond with force and violence" if one does not get what he wants or his way, they are self evident.

The verb "to disguise" means "to masquerade." The Japanese verb "to put on makeup," *keshoo suru*, translates "to paint one's face with a ghostly white foundational makeup." This is what *Kabuki* actors and

MONTH'S THOUGHT



Teaching is not a one way street; one teaches and at the same time is taught, one gives and at the same time receives. ... The feeling of mutual trust among men is unchanging; it was the same in the past as it is today. ... the pure heart of man is unchanging. ... We must be aware that, be it at work or in the home, man teaches and is taught, gives and at the same time receives. Koin Takada.
The Spirit of Buddhism Today. p. 7.



geisha do. They paint on a foundation of ghostly white makeup and then add on the features of masculinity or femininity according to the scripted role they are to act out on the stage.

In 1896 children of poor families in Scotland and Ireland went around "guising" ("dis-guising") themselves in costumes and holding lit "jack-o-lanterns" made out of hollowed-out turnips instead of pumpkins. They went from door to door begging for food and

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REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR OCTOBER

1st SUN Oct 2nd:

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

2nd SUN Oct 9th:

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

3rd SUN Oct 16th:

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

4th SUN Oct 23rd:

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

5th SUN Oct 30th:

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

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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With Deepest Sympathy

Mr. Fukuichi Fujimoto 89yr Sept. 2, 2011

coins. In other words, they were "masqueraders" in "disguise" concealing their "poverty" as they went about knocking on the doors of the well to do to be rewarded with cakes and coins. This practice did not appear in Ontario or Massachusetts until 1911. Much of what has become part of American tradition such as Halloween have their origins in Europe.

Today, many Americans see no harm or religious significance in Halloween. Halloween has become merely another secular holiday like the Mardi Gras. It is a day merely of handing out treats and other small gifts to children who come knocking at the door to say "trick or treat." However, conservative Jews, Catholics and Christians do not participate, for they see the pagan and heathen origins of Halloween. They consider Halloween to be completely unacceptable because of its roots in the "Festival of the Dead," or the worshippers and honoring of the "ghosts" and "spirits" of the dead.

Anthropological and archeological research show that ever since ancient times, people have observed in concrete as well in symbolic ways the "spirits" of their deceased ancestors and even the skeletal remains of the deceased to be sacred. This is especially true of the Chinese whose Confucianism and Taoist heritage heavily influenced even the Koreans and Japanese in their revering and honoring of their living parents as well as the remains of their deceased parents and ancestors to be sacred.

O'bon memorial services as observed by Japanese Buddhists are also based on Sakyamuni Buddha's teaching: "Good is it to honor mother. Good is it to honor father." (*Dhmmppda 7. Praises of Buddha*. p. 161). Why? Because they are not only sacred, but without one's parents connected to one's ancestors one could not have been born and be living the life one is enjoying now as his very own. This fact and actuality has not changed over the passing generations. Did you know that in the times of ancient Incas, the entire month of November was full of thanksgiving festivals honoring their deceased parents and ancestors?

WORDS OF SHINRAN

... know that we are not good men, nor men of wisdom; that we have no diligence, but only indolence; and within, the heart is every empty, deceptive, vainglorious, and flattering. We do not have a heart that is true and real. ... SBT-Series. *Notes on Essentials of Faith Alone*. pp. 49, 50.

Both Confucianism and Taoism have more to do with living one's present life in conformance with the celestial energies and forces of the universe or the "heavens above" working in harmony with the natural forces of this earth that keep providing the very things and conditions that make all life and existence possible. In Buddhism the universe above, below, and all around this earth of ours is seen as a boundless, all-embracing sphere of Selfless Light and Boundless Life without favoritisms or discriminations. Heaven and earth are seen as a singular and inseparable reality. The "heavens above" are not apart from "this earth" for both are yet contained within the greater cosmic sphere that is even more boundless that is endlessly expansive.

In Taoist and in Buddhist thought, all is one and of the same reality as are "all the waves emerging and returning to the sea that are the very waters of the one and same ocean". "Life and death also are simultaneous and inseparable processes. They are not two separate processes". Taoists, like Buddhists, do not believe that death ends a person's life. Birth of a newborn, for example, is connected to two lives before it. That is, we each are connected to our one and only father and especially to our one and only birth mother who is carried us until our birth into this very existence. This is an undeniable fact. Thus, the process of endless births and deaths over the passing generations stretches into a beginningless past as well into an endless future that is called the "Ever Revolving Wheel of Life."

Therefore, odd numbers like "3," "5" and "7" are especially seen to be full of ethical and spiritual significance. Such numbers are significant in that they point to a third dimension that is not visible, tangible, and yet a real part of life and living. They are the non-tangible moral, ethical, sacred and spiritual dimensions that harmonize and unify the tangible opposites like "male and female," "good and evil," and "light and darkness" into a spiritual significance full of intangibles

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and unfathomable! Such unfathomables maintain the balance between the positive and negative energies. Odd numbers, therefore represent the unseen forces that unite what are the opposites like "good and bad," "male and female." Such then are the unseen virtues of compassion, reverence, and penitence that transform our lives. Thus the significance of the odd numbered years in which Buddhist memorial services for a deceased loved one observed. Such services point out that birth and death indeed are inseparable processes and to realize that we are dying and living at the same time, therefore, frees us from illusions concerning one's worldly attachments. So too then are the three, the past, present, and future are also inseparable. They become inseparable in each "living and dying" and "dying and living" passing moment of one's life.

The Chinese as well as the ancient Hawaiians saw terrestrial, celestial and cosmic significance in their various gods and goddesses of fertility, and even in things like rain, clouds, mountains, the sun, the moon, stars and especially in the very things and elements of the earth itself referred more to as a "mother" rather than a "father". So did the others like the Mayas, the Incas, the Aztecs and Native American Indians. That Lao-tzu saw great meaning in a "family of four generations living in love, harmony, understanding and forgiveness," this is of great significance. This was why Confucius also taught that children should respect their elders and be filial to their fathers and mothers. Such a vision and spirituality are a credit to the Chinese, their genius, imagination and creativity. Their respect and reverence for parents and ancestors is especially seen in their translations of Buddhist scripture such as "Our Profound Indebtedness to Our Fathers and Mothers" (*Fu Boo On'juu Kyo*).

Let us now return to the implications of wearing a Halloween "masks" and "costumes." What did Sakyamuni Buddha mean when he declared: "... all things and forms of life are impermanent ..." and that "... life is full of suffering?" What made Shinran Shonin declare that "... this impermanent world ..." is like "... a burning house..." and that "... all things in it therefore are empty and vain, therefore, untrue. ...?"

We get a significant clue from Shakespeare who composed the following prosaic words:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. Macbeth.

Shinran Shonin, in one of his *Shozomatsu Wasans* (paens) speaks of failings and frailty in human beings as follows:

Each of us outwardly appears
To be wise, good, and diligent,
While inwardly harboring much
Greed, resentments and lies!
We are full of self deceptions!

No. 95. rkt trans.

That Shinran was able to fully examine and see his such failings and shortcomings in himself, this is verified by his words as follows:

This shameless self that I am
Without penitence or remorse,
lacking in truth and sincerity!

No. 96. rkt trans.

In Ryukyo Fujimoto sensei's *Shin Buddhism's Essence; The Tannisho*, the following words of Shinran Shonin and other passages as translated by him present the underlying reasons as to why this is so.

... sentient beings, burdened with the most powerful of lusts and torn by great evils. ch. I p. 12.

... rare that we are able to help others as thoroughly as we would like.

... No matter how great a pity and love we may feel toward other sentient beings in this life, in the end, our compassion fails us, for as you are aware, in this world, we are unable to help others as thoroughly as we would like. ... Ch. IV. p. 16.

... 'foolish beings torn by afflictions.' ... Hard it is to forsake our native land of suffering, where, for myriads of kalpas to now, we have passed through endless cycles of birth, misery and death; [moreover] we feel no longing for the pure Land of Bliss, where we have yet to be born. Strong and powerful indeed is our affliction! ... Ch. IX. p. 21.

... we are unaware that what frees us is [not our own ethical good but rather, the inconceivable Wonder of the Original Vow. ... Ah! Man will do anything if so moved by the force of] his implacable karma."
 ... And yet, [despite these words], there are nowadays certain people who affect a pious air and presume only good people are worthy of reciting the Nembutsu ... announce that those who have done such and such a thing shall not be admitted. Are such people only seemingly and outwardly wise and good, all the while inwardly harboring untruth and deceitfulness'? ... Ch. XIII. pp. 31, 32.

Let us then reflect upon these words of Shinran Shonin as translated above by Fujimoto sensei..

Now that I have lived for some eighty years, I have in my twilight years come to realize what Shinran Shonin must have personally experienced and endure when he was living in Echigo as a defrocked exiled monk living among the common people. For his writings at this time reveal his awareness that he too was a mere mortal no different from the common people constantly afflicted by all kinds of shameful moods, desires, passions and compulsions.

Psychologically, human beings, regardless of who they are, take on attitudes and moods according to the immediate, natural conditions and events they find themselves in and the demands imposed on them by their peers. They have to adjust and endure as the circumstances dictate. If they do not, they will be crushed by feelings of despair and negativism, especially, feelings of being excluded, abandoned and ostracized.

Sociologists dealing with the problem focus on the "masks" and "costumes" that a person must and needs to put on in each situation he enters if he is to survive and earn a decent livelihood and be accepted by his peers. Psychology deals with the various adjustments that a person has to make in his thoughts, strategies and sentiments if he is to be mentally alert, competent, functional and emotionally viable. Buddhism as a philosophy and religion enables a person to be morally responsible and ethically accountable to his conscience as well as to what his fellow human beings expect of him as a member of a viable society.

As of late, I have come to realize that in the most subtle and sophisticated of ways, modern man in contemporary society is not only a complex "creature" but, in actuality, a "multiple personality" because of

SHINRAN'S WASAN

The ocean of suffering is endless,
 ceaseless with births and deaths,
 forever immersing us all in it!

Only in boarding the ship
 called Amida's All-embracing Vow
 can one unflinching cross this sea!

Koso Wasan No. 7
 rkt trans.

the many things he must do that keep alienating him from his inner person and conscience. For example, as a law abiding citizen he must abide by the rules not to kill, steal, lie or engage in any sexual improprieties and so on. And yet, when drafted as a soldier to defend his country and its freedoms, he is required to kill, outwit, deceive and even plunder the resources of the enemy, often taking advantage of their women. No conquering army has been guiltless on these various counts of hurting and harming innocent citizens.

To put it simply, the problem of "marginal man" in social-psychology deals with the natural tendency in human beings to resolve troublesome conditions and conflicting situations by adjusting to them as the given situation demands rather than by exacerbating them. Indeed, for "hatred is not overcome by hatred, but by love alone is quelled" said the Buddha.

There are now peoples of different racial origins, languages, cultural traditions, beliefs and religious affiliations being thrown together. Many continue to conflict with each other. Personal likes, dislikes especially as spawned by religious dogmatism keep people at odds with each other instead of bringing them together. But more ominous and sinister are the bio-physiological compulsions that drive human beings into non-rational behaviors that are self devastating and desecrating of others.

As discussed in previous issues of *GASSHO*, the Noble Eightfold Path is free of religious dogmatism and bigotry that breed divisiveness and conflict. As I often repeat, the Noble Eightfold Path is the Universal Way to the Truth that frees a person from egoism, racism, ethnocentrism, anthropocentrism, illusions and self-delusions. The Noble Eightfold Way is rooted in and based on the Four Noble Truths that are irrefutable facts based on the facts of causation that are free of hypocrisy and bigotry. The Truth of the Dharma's

Selflessness and the Actuality of its Togetherness, therefore, are universal realities that embrace all conflicting opposites to transform them with Wisdom and Compassion. Therefore, the "Dharma as such is not the monopoly of any one man, race, creed, culture, religion, point in time or any given specific geographical site or historical point in time."

When Shinran Shonin said: "... Nothing is true or real; only the nembutsu is true and real," he was not claiming that Amida Buddha is like the One and Only God of the Old and New Testament who distinguishes between Israelites and Gentiles or between "good olive trees" and "wild olive trees."

What Shinran was claiming was that the Truth of the Dharma's Wisdom and Compassion in the form of Amida's Light and Life reveals the undeniable fact and actuality that:

... we are all foolish beings, filled with evil and dwelling in a transient world, which is as fleeting as a burning house. Moreover, all things [of this transient world] without exception are false and devoid of any real substance. Nothing is true or real; only the Nembutsu is true and real. Ryukyo Fujimoto. *loc. cite.*, p. 46.

So in Buddhism, especially in Shin Buddhism, to have "faith" is to trust and take refuge in Amida's Universal Wisdom's Light and her Boundless Compassion Life that embrace all sentient beings, including us human beings, with the Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness that do not reject, abandon or exclude to condemn any sentient being to some kind of eternal infero.

Faith in Buddhism is not based on a belief system or a doctrine that accepts only what is pure and upright to reject what is impure and degenerate. This is why Shinran Shonin said:

.... We should know that the Original Vow does not distinguish between those who are young or old, good or evil. It is Faith alone that is of supreme importance. For it is the purpose of the Vow to save us sentient beings, burdened with the most powerful of lusts and torn by great evils. To believe in the Vow, therefore, neither do we need any other good, because there is nothing superior to the Nembutsu. Nor need we be afraid of any evil, for no evil is capable of obstructing the Original Vow of Amida.

Ch. 1, *loc. cite.*, p. 12.

These words of Shinran Shonin clarify and make it clear as to why, he said "... only the Nembutsu is true and real. ..." This is because the Light of Wisdom shines on all things and living beings without favoritism for its Compassion embraces all beings without discrimination. This is especially so of the person who has become "awake" and "aware" that he, undeniably, is a person "riddled by karmic evils."

Man in his one-sided self-centered states of mind usually sees the inanimate things of environment to be lifeless. Other lesser living things are also to be exploited. Such were the Eurocentric justifications to enslave Africans to work the plantations in the South. So also were the justifications to segregate "contract laborers" on sugar plantations into camps by ethnicity where Asian laborers were treated as "indentured servants" under a feudal like plantation systems that were set up by the "Big Five" under European or American managers and their Portuguese overseers called *lunas* who in turn saw to it that each Asian field worker did his allotted days work.

When religion is merely utilized to justify ethnocentric lines to segregate and separate people according to the pigmentation of their skin, the process of assimilation, acculturation, accommodation and integration become discriminative, divisive, exploitive, if not abusive and oppressive as well. The beliefs, family traditions, language, culture and ethnicity of those in the minority, though they may be in the numerical majority come to be considered foreign and inferior in comparison to the people in dominance who are in control of the politics and economics of that society or nation, even if they are a numerical minority.

Therefore, much of the traditions, beliefs and practices of immigrant minorities were rejected by the dominant group who were in control of the political, economic, educational and religious institutions. This is how the goals and rules of the "Big Five," came to be enforced. Even now in Hawaii, supposedly a multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-religious 50th state, there are yet overtones as well as undertones of prejudice and discrimination rooted in Hawaii's plantation past, much of it that is subtle and unseen. Especially is this so with recent immigrant arrivals with their different beliefs, customs, languages and lifestyles. The reality of prejudice, discrimination and segregation invariably continues to persist for it is as the saying goes, "birds of a feather flock together." While, on the other hand, the opposites have attracted and come together, especially through intermarriages.

Convergence of peoples, languages, cultures and religions, however, does not necessarily mean full acceptance and integration which "assimilation" means. "Acculturation," on the one hand, means accepting and integrating the culture and ways of others into one's own by accepting and utilizing only that which are useful while faithfully maintaining and retaining the integrity of one's own culture, belief systems, language and traditions. "Accommodation" means to adjust, more in the sense of tolerating and enduring cultural differences imposed and forced on a person that come in conflict with one's most cherished tradition and ways. Therefore, accommodation refers more to those subtle and unseen ways of rejecting elements of the dominant culture that threaten to undermine one's traditional culture, especially one's language and religion.

Thus, all these psycho-social processes make for the dilemma for what Ezra Park coined the "marginal man" (or a multiple personality) who is caught in cross-cultural situations of conflict and in tension with the dominant group's values and ways that he must either accept, adjust to, or tolerate. Thus psychologically and sociologically, today, we as participants in modern society are confronted with the problems of bi-polar and split personalities, fringe personalities, sociopaths and psychopaths as well as outright racists, blatant bigots and fanatics.

Human beings, therefore, continue to be adept in taking multiple social roles and have become "quick change artists" in switching roles and speaking the jargon of transaction of the situation that they happen to find themselves in. As of consequence, we see much contriving, deception, exploitation, manipulation and even betrayal between people and nations. So, today, the problem of "marginality" has become quite complex, subtle and insidious because of its many subtle and unseen effects and affects that have become global.

Just because a Japanese person participates directly in Hawaiian culture and traditions, this does not mean that he has suddenly become a Hawaiian, a *kanaka maoli*. Just because a raven haired Asian colors his or her hair blonde or brunette doesn't mean he or she has become suddenly a Caucasian. Nor does a "haole" who braids his hair in an Afro-hairdo become somehow an African. This is the same with religious "conversion" which is different from a religious "transformation." In "conversion," one's religious affiliation is changed much like switching one's outer garments and putting on another. While in the ease of "transformation" a profound inner change takes place

in which one's egoism and tribalism are transformed by the truth of Wisdom's Selflessness and its Reality of Compassionate Togetherness. Just because a person claims to be a Buddhist, Christian or a Muslim, this does not mean that his thinking has become selfless and compassionate. This is evident in many who claim to be "converted" but speak and act otherwise.

Today, people are transients on a global stage of instant communication and travel. They act and respond according to the emergent situation of the circumstances they find themselves without any permanent roots in any one place. Rather than being true to one's self and one's inner conscience, people today easily give in to the demands of the given moment of the ever changing outer circumstances that they "electronically" find themselves in.

Morality and ethics likewise, also function differently in differing situations. For instance, in peace time a religious leader or guru exhorts his followers to love even their enemies. In war, however, they justify the obliteration of one's enemies, even the killing of innocents glibly referred to as "collateral damage". In peace time criminals are distinguished from law-abiding citizens. In wartime adversaries are dehumanized to justify their obliteration as being demons. The focus is not on one's inner self, person, being and conscience, but on our own perceptions of others as our allies or our enemies. In other words, they profiled as "good" or "evil," "just" or "unjust" or as those who are "with us" or "against us."

So, from a Shin Buddhist perspective, there is a difference in a religion that "saves" only the "good person" while condemning the "evil person" to an eternal damnation. Such a religion differs from Shin faith that is based on the "Truth of Selflessness" and "Reality of Togetherness" that cannot be monopolized by any one man, race, culture or religion because such a faith in Amida is based on a Wisdom and Compassion that does not discriminate between "good" and "evil" but works to unite and harmonize all opposites. Shin faith is not a faith that separates the left eye, hand, foot and brain from the right eye, hand, foot and brain of your person. Nor is it a teaching that splits to separate one's mind, body and spirit, the one from the other two.

Robert Ezra Park was one of the founders of American sociology. He began the Chicago School of Sociology. He was an urban sociologist who studied the influx of European immigrants in his time and how they were adjusting and being absorbed into American

cities. He defined the problem of European immigrants as one of being socially and psychologically "marginalized" as follows:

The marginal man ... is one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies and into, not merely different by antagonistic cultures. ... his mind is the crucible in which two different and refractory cultures may be said to melt and, either wholly or in part, fuse. Robert E. Park, 1937 > in Turner, Ralph H. 1967. *Robert F. Park: On Social Control and Collective Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (an Anthology of Park's writings.

In this quote, we get what this urban sociologist distinguished to be the difference between "assimilation," "acculturation" and "accommodation" such as when the immigrant Chinese and Japanese as plantation field workers were under the control of European plantation managers and their Portuguese lunas. The Chinese, Japanese, Korean and finally the Filipinos lived in two basic cultural systems. One was the feudal like system of a tightly enclosed plantation community and the other, the camp system that segregated families by race that further enclaved each group their ethnic heritage, customs and lifestyles. They had to either "assimilate" (meld) completely or to "acculturate" (accept only what they had to) or "accommodate" (tolerate and endure) the situation and conditions imposed and forced on them that were often harsh, abusive and exploitive.

The term assimilation is used with regard to various ethnic immigrant groups who settled in a foreign land as a minority group. New customs and attitudes are acquired through personal contact and communication. The transfer of culture, however, is not simply a one-way process. Each immigrant group contributes some of its own cultural traits to the overall dominant culture.

The Kamakura feudal system also separated the illiterate peasants from the upper class nobility and warrior class. However, it appears that Shinran Shonin transcended the differences of caste, class and gender that separated the sophisticated court nobles, samurai and learned monks from the lesser merchants and illiterate peasants of his time. From a standpoint of Selflessness (oneness) and Togetherness (unity of opposites), Shinran declared:

... There is no difference [whatsoever] among those who make their living by catching fish, using a line or a net, in rivers or the ocean or those who eke out an existence by hunting

game or fowl in the fields or mountains or those who live from day to day by engaging in trade or tilling the soil. Ah! Man will do anything if so moved [by the force of] his implacable karma. R. Fujimoto. *loc. cite.*, Ch. XIII. p. 32.

What Shinran is pointing out here is the fact that regardless of whether one be a literate and educated or an illiterate and uneducated, we are all undeniably mere human beings constantly plagued by greed, hatreds and blinding passions that are endless. In fact, this is what Shinran meant when he referred to himself as: "Shinran, a person neither monk or lay who is plagued by raw desires and burning passions." In other words, a person who was "all too human" full of imperfections and failings.

Fernando Ortiz coined the term "transculturation" to describe and explain the process in which the dominant culture and opposing cultures of minorities complement each other. By this, he meant that opposing cultural understandings and religious strategies (such as Buddhism and Christianity, for example), do not only oppose each other, but also complement each other 'to generate and work out a new cultural phenomena that embodies the ideologies of the other culture or cultures through the interactions between its individuals.' Can this possible be what Albert Einstein meant when he said Buddhism was a "cosmic religion" much needed if man today is to avoid WW III? For, he said, WW IV would be fought with sticks and stones.

Ortiz put it this way:

Transculturation encompasses more than transition from one culture to another; it does not consist merely of acquiring another culture (acculturation) or of losing or uprooting a previous culture (deculturation). Rather, it merges these concepts and additionally carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena (neoculturation). Fernando Ortiz. *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*. Durham. Duke University Press.

Ortiz also referred to the devastating impact of Spanish colonialism on Cuba's indigenous native peoples as a "failed transculturation" similar to the aftermath that followed the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy and annexation of Hawaii as a territorial trust of the U.S. That was during the era of the "Big Five." However, paradoxically, according to Ortiz, transculturation, can often follow colonial conquest and subjugation, especially in a postcolonial era as the native peoples struggle to

regain their own sense of identity that results in transcending mere multi-culturalism. This process can be seen in the ongoing Hawaiian Renaissance Movement by *kanaka maoli* attempting to regain and re-establish their Hawaiian identity, culture, heritage, language and spiritual ways of life.

In simple terms, what Ortiz envisions as transculturation reflects the natural tendency of people (in general) to resolve conflicts over time, rather than to incite them by intentionally focusing on conceptual and racial differences that set people apart rather than bringing them together. In the contexts of our modern times, both conflicts and their resolutions, according to Ortiz, are either enhanced or undermined by the amplifications of instant communication and transportation that exaggerate the external differences rather than the inner commonalities. Today, the tendency of traditional cultures and religions to drift or remain isolated has been replaced by transcultural forces of modernity in the forms of over arching global satellite systems and multi-national corporate complexes that globally control much of the political, financial, industrial and military institutions of the world.

In a sense, this global phenomenon can be seen in its focus on superficial "differences" as well as "commonalities". Thus, the tendency to focus on external "differences" has not changed over the passing generations in my opinion. For clearly, as there were in Shinran Shonin's time as well as in colonial times, today there are still the focus on distinctions even more far reaching that have become the extremes between today's "haves" and "have nots," or the so-called "filthy rich" and the "extremely destitute."

That Shinran Shonin (1772-1263) during the Kamakura Era (1186-1333 A.D.) came to hold a "transcultural" view of man in spite of the feudalism of his times. This is indicated by his declaration as follows:

... There is no difference [whatsoever] among those who make their living by catching fish, using a line or a net, in rivers or the ocean or those who eke out an existence by hunting game or fowl in the fields or mountains or those who live from day to day by engaging in trade or tilling the soil. Ah! Man will do anything if so moved [by the force of] his implacable karma. R. Fujimoto. *loc. cite.*, Ch.XIII. p. 32.

These words were stated in the years he spent as an exile in remote desolate Echigo Province as a defrocked monk. In those days, the Buddhist hierarchy backed by the imperial court, aristocratic nobles and warrior classes saw themselves as being "culturally literate,

privileged and sophisticated" in comparison to the "lowly" peasants who they saw to be "culturally crass and illiterate."

Robert Ezra Park (1864-1944), as mentioned was living in a time when an influx of persecuted and poor immigrants from southern and eastern Europe began flooding into the United States in the late 1880s. From 1880 to 1924, around two million Jews had moved to the United States to escape persecution. The Immigration Act of 1924 was passed to deny the influx and overflow of such European immigrants. Similar laws at the same time were enacted to prevent East Asians and Asian Indians from entering the U.S. while American native Indians simultaneously were being displaced and decimated. The legislators in Congress were in fear that America would become too much of a "melting pot" of racial minorities.

Robert E. Park in a strange way as a scientific pragmatist and a social psychologist realized, as did Shinran Shonin, that individuals in a social situation become fused by common beliefs and aspirations or else divided by their "fears" and "suspicions" of each other's traditions, practices and beliefs. If one is to overcome this situation, one needs to observe, study and mingle directly with the very people they fear and discriminate against on their level. So, instead of arm chair theorizing and philosophizing Park said:

Go and sit in the lounges of luxury hotels and on the doorsteps of the flophouses; sit on the Gold Coast settees and on the slum shakedown; sit in the Orchestra Hall and in the Star and Garter Burlesque. In short go and get the seat of your pants dirty in real research. (Robert Park, 1927 [Turner, Ralph H. 1967. *Robert E. Park: On Social Control and Collective Behavior*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (an anthology of Park's writings)]

I believe that when Shinran Shonin was exiled to the remote province of Echigo in doing so, he actually discovered that beneath the "masks" we human beings all wear according to each situation he came to discover his own feelings and shortcomings. Underneath it all he saw that, we all are merely the *bombu* who are full of *bonno*.

This is why if there is to be a viable future for those who are yet to be born and yet to live, we, in the present, must become persons of nembutsu. In other words, we need to become persons who "put our hands together in *gassho*" to express deep gratitude and profound indebtedness for all that gives, supports and ensures ongoing life, instead of pointing our fingers

at each other in accusation, or clenching our fists to strike the other down in order to get only what we want and our way in life. For, in Buddhism, even "... plants, trees and soil ..." are sacred and spiritual, therefore, to be revered with indebtedness. For all things and forms of life are sacred and to be revered.

and sorrow, but also through guidance makes us understand the real purpose of life and shows us the way to live in the most meaningful way"... that is, in Selflessness and Togetherness. (by Rev. Wasui)

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BUDDHIST STORY & PASSAGES

Rather than passively existing from day to day, we should consider our life as something received. Time passes faster than the flight of any arrow. Life is more transient than the morning dew. I do not know why, but I was given another day in which Buddhas, sentient beings and non-sentient things are interconnected and inseparable. This means that all things have Buddha's nature and are to be respected, revered and considered sacred. Therefore, all wars, in spite of their reasons and goals are actually characterized by a defiance of the Five Precepts. Wars are wrong because they involve the destruction of culture and principles that others live in the assumption that one's own principles and way of life are superior.

Second, wars are wrong because the minds and hearts of innocents on both sides of the conflict are stricken and because of the long term physical effects that linger several decades after a war ends. The karmic outcomes of killing, stealing, lying, plundering, raping and addiction to drugs and alcohol that become rampant and indiscriminate during wartime have long term physical and psychological after effects.

This is why it is most crucial that we follow a religion that brings things and people together and not a religion that sets things and people against each other. Religions based on the Truth of Selflessness and Reality of Togetherness see non living and living things and human beings as interdependent and inseparable. Buddhism teaches that if one aspect of the whole is destroyed the remaining parts will begin to crumble and fall apart. The world today desperately needs a religion based on the Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness. (Source Anonymous)

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

Question: Is Amida Buddha a God?

ANSWER: According to the *Jodoshinshu Handbook for Laymen* [p. 15], Buddha and God "... are totally different just as the fundamental teachings and the ways to the attainment of true faith are different."

"Amida Buddha unlike God, does not control man's destiny. Nor does a Buddha inflict punishment. Amida Buddha not only gives deliverance from suffering