



GASSHO

May
2012

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"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



FOR ALL TIMES, FOR ALL PLACES, AND FOR ALL PEOPLES

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

The Timeless Truth of Selflessness and its Actuality of Togetherness that is the Eternal Dharma has, is and continues to manifest itself over timeless time and spaceless space. The Dharma manifested itself as a King called Dharmakara. By consummating some forty-eight Vows of All-embracing Compassion as an aspiring Bodhisattva, Dharmakara, thereby, finally became Amida, the Ultimate Buddha of Immeasurable Life and Inconceivable Light full of Boundless Compassion and Infinite Wisdom. Amida, therefore, is the highest manifestation of the Dharma's Selfless Light that has and yet continues to unfailingly sustain all things and forms within its All-embracing Life of Beneficence full of Benevolence. For this very reason, the Dharma cannot and has never been the monopoly of any one man, race, ethnicity, creed, culture, religion, or a specific geographical site, or only a designated time in history.

The Dharma constantly radiates to bring True Light and Real Life in "all places, things and sentient beings" without partiality or favoritism. The Dharma constantly keeps penetrating to permeate every nook and cranny throughout the "ten-quarters" of the universe that is a boundless cosmos. This vision of the Dharma World is that of an unobstructed and unhindered universe full of Selflessness and all-embracing Togetherness to be found even beyond the visible blue of the skies above.

The Dharma, therefore, is much more than what the senses can perceive and therefore what one's brain can conceptualize and rationalize. So the skies above from wherever you may be looking up at them, in reality, are the same skies of this one and only universe there is. Regardless of whether you are looking up at them in the light of day from the North Pole or in the dark of night from the South Pole, or wherever on the face of

MONTH'S THOUGHT



To imagine an invisible, supernatural realm is to unconsciously come into contact with the very root of religious feeling. Although we may not always be aware of it, we live in surprisingly close contact with the realms of spirit. When we feel an indescribable emotion watching a beautiful sunset, or feel a deep forest is eerie and frightening or are moved by the sight of a weed pushing up through a crack in the asphalt, we are coming into contact with an invisible world. — Hiroyuki Itsuki. *Tariki*. p. 19.



this earth you may be looking up at them! They are all the same skies in this singular universe because the cosmos is a sphere of timeless time and spaceless space. This is what is meant by the Dharma's Infinite Light and its Immeasurable Life!

To see, reflect and contemplate on what lies beyond the visible blue of the skies from wherever you may be in this manner awakens you to the

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REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES for MAY 2012

1st SUN May 6th:

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

2nd SUN May 13th:

Commemorating Shinran's Birthday

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Guest speaker:
Rev. Sandra Hiramatsu

3rd SUN May 20th:

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

4th SUN May 27th:

MONTHLY
FAMILY WORSHIP
9 a.m. Eng. Serv.
Dharma Talk
for Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

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

KARATE CLASSES Tues & Fri 6 - 8 p.m.
Shihan - Walter Nishioka

FUJINKAI LADIES' FELLOWSHIP GROUP
Wed 9 a.m. - noon

HAWAII EISA CHIMUGUKURU DAIKO
Wed & Thurs 6.30 - 8.30 p.m.
Mr. Van Shimabukuro

With Deepest Sympathy

Ms. Faith Y. Tanna 64 yrs. March 16, 2012

THANK YOU
for YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS !!

2012 Memorial Service Schedule

2011	1 Year	2010	3 Year	2006	7 Year
2000	13 Year	1996	17 Year	1988	25 Year
1980	33 Year	1963	50 Year	1913	100 Year

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actuality that there is yet an Endless Unknown Beyond that cannot be seen by the naked eye or explained by the logic of one's reasoning mind. Such a realization, then, awakens a person to the Boundless Sphere of the Dharma's Selflessness and Togetherness embracing all things, life forms and all their opposites. Therefore, when a person's perceptions become illuminated by the Dharma's Infinite Wisdom and its Immeasurable Compassion such a person's consciousness instantly becomes "transformed" into her or his conscience-ness in which the things of everyday life come to be filled with gratitude, humility, and especially a penitence full of joy and happiness.

Such then is the religious significance that underlies to the mythological story about a King who became an aspiring Bodhisattva called Dharmakara who set forth and fulfilled some 48 Vows of Compassion for the sake of karma riddled sentient beings, promising to enlighten them equally without rejections. He, therefore, in having consummated his Vows became Amida Buddha who now is forever manifesting the Light of the Dharma's Benevolent Selflessness and its Life of Beneficent Togetherness that have never abandoned or will ever forsake sentient beings, especially the "unsavable" ones riddled by irreversible karmic transgressions and desecrations.

In the *Larger Sutra on Immeasurable Life* these Vows of Dharmakara are summarized in a *gatha* as follows:

My spiritual power will send out a great
light
That will shine throughout the boundless
universe
To remove the darkness of the three
defilements [of greed, hatred, and
ignorance]
And to extensively provide relief from all
disasters and distress.

Kenjo S. Murakami. *Amida Buddha and His Pure Land: Three Sutras and One Treatise.*
p. 38. [] mine.

Just as the Buddha's unimpeded wisdom
Shines everywhere without exception,

WORDS OF SHINRAN

Namu-fukashigiko-butsu ... means ... manifesting form, revealing a name, and making itself known to sentient beings. It refers to Amida Buddha. This Tathagata is light. Light is none other than wisdom; wisdom is the form of light. Wisdom is, in addition, formless; hence this Tathagata is the Buddha of Inconceivable Light. This Tatha-gata fills the countless worlds in the ten quarters, and is called "Buddha of boundless light".... SBT-Series. *Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling.* p. 46.

I vow that the power of my merits and
wisdom
Shall be equal to the Supremely Honored
One. p. 39.

Then in another subsequent *gatha* are the verses:

The number of the Buddha lands
in the eastern direction
Are as many as the sands
of the Ganges River.
All Bodhisattvas in those Buddha lands
come and revere the Infinitely
Enlightened One.
Also the Bodhisattvas from the lands
in the south, west, north, and the
four directions in between.
Come and revere
the Infinitely Enlightened One.
All the Bodhisattvas offer heavenly
wondrous flowers and treasures,
incense, and priceless clothing
to the Infinitely Enlightened One.
Ibid. p. 60.

This *gatha* presents the four cardinal points of the compass and the points in between as constantly revolving around a vertical axis, the top of which is the Zenith of Boundless Selflessness and the bottom of which is the Nadir of All-embracing Togetherness. These ten directions also represent all possible points in the expansive universe converging into the centermost point in a person's heart of hearts which is the nexus where a person's consciousness and conscienceness intersect and meet to awaken a person to things eternally sacred and timelessly spiritual. Therefore, where one's consciousness intersects with one's conscienceness becomes the "center of the universe" connecting to all points of and in the universe.

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Clearly, this depiction of cosmic boundlessness and expansiveness is not a rectilinear or one-directional one. It suggests that the World of Dharma is "spherical" without a beginning or an ending indicating that "cosmic time" is timeless and "cosmic space" is spaceless. Meaning the World of Dharma is also unobstructed and unimpeded. Therefore, cosmic "time" and "space" and Infinite Life and Immeasurable Life are unfathomable and beyond human understanding, philosophical concepts or theological doctrines as well as mathematical formulations.

The Innumerable Buddhas and their Pure Lands, as of consequence, are praised by Sakyamuni as being also timeless and boundless as follows:

(The) various Buddhas numberless.... Each in his own Buddha land, covers three thousands mega-world-systems with his broad and long tongue and speaks sincerely and truthfully saying: All of you should believe in this Sutra that praises the inconceivable merits [of Amida Buddha] And is protected by all the Buddhas. K.S. Urakami. *Loc. cit.*, pp. 189-191.

These words of Sakyamuni are his "visualizations" and "envisualizations of" the World of Dharma to be a sphere in which all opposites are embraced in an inseparable sacred and spiritual relationship governed by the uniform principles of causality, conditionality, interdependency manifesting the Harma;s Benevolence and Beneficence for all!

Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) in his introduction to his *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space* said these words:

Reviewing with unprejudiced eye the religious traditions of mankind one becomes very soon aware of certain mythic motifs that are common to all, though differently understood and developed in the differing traditions.... (p. xiii)

Campbell then said post-modern man needs a "new mythology" which needs to be that "of the whole human race." This is because said he:

... the old Near Eastern desecralization of nature by way of a doctrine of the Fall will have been rejected; so that any such limiting sentiments as expressed in 2 Kings 5:15, "there is no God in all the earth but in Israel, will be (to use the biblical term) an abomination. The image of the universe will no longer be the old Sumero-Babylonian, locally centered, three-layered

affair, of a heaven above, and abyss below, with an ocean-encircled bit of earth between; ... but (as of today at least) an inconceivable immensity of galaxies, clusters of galaxies and clusters of clusters (super-clusters) of galaxies, speeding apart into expanding distance, with humanity as a kind of recently developed scurf on the epidermis of one of the lesser satellites of a minor star in the outer arm of an average galaxy, amidst one of the lesser clusters among the thousands, catapulting apart, which took from some fifteen billion years ago as a consequence of an inconceivable preternatural event.... (p. xxi)

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) as a physicist and mathematician also said, "modern man needs a cosmic religion" and implied that Buddhism could possibly provide the basis for such a cosmic vision because of its cosmological principles of Selflessness and Togetherness.

Most interestingly, Campbell noted that:

In the old Near East ... the idea appears to have first been implemented of politically exploitive wars of territorial conquest, contending armies of the only three monotheistic monads [Judaism, Christianity and Islam] of the planet (each dedicated to a notion of its own historically conditioned idea of "God" as having been from all eternity, in very fact, that to which, not words, nor the eye, nor the mind can reach) in this delicate moment of imminent global unification, "Year of Our Lord" (A.D.) 1985, **are threatening the whole process of global unification with the adventure of their scripturally prophesied Armageddon.** (p. xxv. [] and bold mine)

These words of Campbell point to the danger of religious myths that become doctrinal dogmas organized by institutionalized religions designed to control the thoughts, beliefs, speech and actions of their believers. Compliance is rewarded and disobedience is punished. As mentioned in former issues of *GASSHO*, Buddhist precepts are not based on rewards or punishments meted out by an omniscient, omnipotent deity who, paradoxically, is also as being an omni-benevolent supreme being as well.

Therefore, the "mythological story" about the Eternal Dharma manifesting itself as King Dharmakara for the benefit of good persons and especially to save persons hopelessly mired in hellish and demonic circumstances, such a Buddha, most definitely, cannot be equated to the supreme deities

as depicted in Judaism, Christianity or Islam. This is what Campbell's words imply.

The reason why is because Amida is a Buddha of Unconditional Compassion and not a deity who metes out rewards only to "good persons" and punishments to "evil persons." The Dharma as the Truth of Selflessness and Actuality of Togetherness also is not an anthropomorphic "deity" because the Dharma's Light and Life cannot be personalized as on e's deity because it cannot be monopolized like trying to bottle the rays of the sun or packaging the moon's luminations as though they were commodities that could be dispensed or sold for personal profit or gain. The sunlight of Wisdom and the moonlight of Compassion cannot be made to shine and illuminate just on good persons, or on only on certain races and nations, or on just one religion.

In the popular mind, notes Campbell, celestial and terrestrial themes of "transcendence" over time have become "local inflections" and, therefore,

... remains locked to local practical aims and ethical ideals ... chiefly of controlling, socializing, and harmonizing in strictly local terms the primitive bio-energies of the human animal, to the popular ends of health, progeny, and prosperity as the proper aims of human life.... (pp. xxiii-xxiv)

These insightful words of Campbell help us to clarify the meanings of Shin Buddhist terms and concepts such as *zai-aku jinju no bombu* ("the ordinary human being full of transgressions and evils"), characterized by *bon'no* ("burning passions and self inflations") that plague all humankind with egotism, racism, ethnocentrism, anthropocentrism, and, therefore, the tendency to be exclusivist and elitist in their localizing their claims and folk gods and goddesses such as that characterizing the monotheistic religions claiming that there is no God other than their One and only Yahweh, or their Creator God the Father, or Allah that all must submit to! To worship and bow to idols and graven images, therefore, are abominations to the One and Only God.

Surprisingly, in describing the World of Dharma Campbell quotes the *Kena Upanishad* as follows:

There the eye goes not, speech goes not, nor the mind. We know not nor can we imagine how to convey it. For **it is other than the known; also beyond the unknown.** Thus we have heard from the

SHINRAN'S WASAN

Those born and being reborn
over past, present and future,
Are not only the beings
of this sensate world,
But also beings who keep coming
from their Buddha Lands
in the "ten directions,"
Immeasurable, incalculable,
as well as innumerable!

Jodo Wasan No. 57,
rkt trans.

ancients who have told of it.... *If known here, then there is truth; if not known, there is great destruction.* The wise discerning it in all beings, become on departing this world, immortal. (p. xxiv. Bold for emphasis.)

This point about the World of Dharma is further clarified in the *Chandogya Upanishad* as follows:

When [in this world] one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, recognizes nothing else; that is [participation in] the Infinite. But when one sees, hears and recognizes only otherness; that is smallness. The Infinite is immortal. That which is small is mortal.

.....
This Infinite of which I speak is below. It is above. It is to the west, to the east, to the south, to the north. It is, in fact, this whole world.

Or again, with respect to the Self (*atman*): The Self (the Spirit) is below, above, to the west, to the east, to the south, and to the north. The Self (the Spirit), is indeed, the whole world.

Verily, the one who sees this way, thinks and understands this way, takes pleasure in the Self, dwells with the Self and knows bliss in the Self; such a one is autonomous (*svaraj*), moving through all the world at pleasure (*kamacara*). Whereas those who think otherwise are ruled by others (*anyarajun*) know but perishable pleasures, and are moved about the world against their will (*akamacara*). (p. xx)

Clearly, "the Great Self" being referred to here is the Dharma's Selflessness and its Togetherness full of sacredness and spirituality. The "small self" refers to those who are caught in the pursuit of

things perishable and, therefore, governed by others who are in control of their lives.

According to Professor Katsumi Yoshiyama's *Shoshinge Wo Yomu (To Read the Shoshinge)*, the opening two lines: *Kimyo muryo-ju Nyorai* (Having taken refuge in Immeasurable Life) and *Na-moh Fuka-shigi Ko* (I trust in its Inconceivable Light) contain the significance of the verses that follow in the *Shoshinge*. They are about Amida Buddha who never forsakes, condemns, rejects or abandons any sentient being, they are about sentient beings who can be saved only by "saying," "reciting" and "repeating" Amida's Sacred Name by having trusted and taken complete refuge in Amida's Eighteenth Vow to never forsake and abandon especially those who are "miserably karma ridden."

In the preface to his *Kyo Gyo Shin Sho*, Shinran states the reasons as to why he himself came to believe, trust and take complete refuge in Amida Buddha's Immeasurable Life of Togetherness and Infinite Light of Selflessness as follows:

As I humbly contemplate matters, I see that the inconceivable Universal Vow is the great ship which conveys us across the sea which is difficult to cross and that the unhindered Light is the sun of wisdom which dissipates the darkness of ignorance. Ryukoko Translation Series. p. 17.

Shinran then expresses his gratitude to the Seven Pureland Masters (incarnated sages) and especially his profound indebtedness to Sakyamuni Buddha (the World's Hero), who,

... out of mercy, particularly sought to benefit the men who committed deadly sins, the abusers of the Right Dharma, and the Icchantikas [incorrigibles]. *Loc. cit.*, p. 19. [] mine.

In past issues of *GASSHO* I have tried to explain that the most significant point about Shin faith is that the "evil person" who trusts and takes refuge in Amida's Sacred Name especially grasped never to be rejected, condemned or abandoned, precisely because of her or his irreversible transgressions and desecrations of the Dharma.

Shinran refers to the virtues and powers of the Sacred Name of Amida as "transforming" a person's transgressions and desecrations with the power of True Light and virtues of Real Life as follows:

... the auspicious Name of the complete and all-merging supreme virtue is the True

Wisdom which turns evil into merit and that the Adamantine Serene Faith which is difficult to attain is the Truth which removes doubt and enables us to realize Enlightenment. (p. 20)

Therefore, said Shinran, those who believe, trust and have taken complete refuge in the Truth and Reality of Amida's Sacred Name naturally, then, begin to utter it in gratitude because their rebirth in the Pure Land after their deaths has become assured and settled beyond all doubt.

This is why, said Shinran, the Nembutsu is:

... the true teaching that can be easily practiced by ordinary, inferior men; **it is the shortest way easy to follow for the ignorant, stupid people.** In all the lifetime teachings of the Great Sage, nothing is more equal to this sea of virtue. (p. 21) In bold for highlighting that Nembutsu is for karma ridden beings.

This is why Shinran declared the need for a karma riddled person to trust and take complete refuge in the powers and virtues of Amida's Sacred Name *Namoh-Amida-Butsu*.

This is why Shinran, himself, in having entrusted and taken refuge in Amida's Sacred Name, admonished:

Those who would abandon this defiled world and aspire for the Pure Land, who are perplexed over the practices and beliefs, who are darkened in mind and lacking in wisdom, and who have heavy sins and many hindrances, should particularly rely on the Tathagata's urging, never fail to take refuge in the supreme Direct Way, exclusively follow the Practice, and uphold only this Faith. (p. 22)

The Tathagata's urging is the "voiceless voice" of Amida urging us to take refuge in the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Actuality of Togetherness from deep within one's deepest conscienceness that is none other than Amida constantly calling and beckoning to us to trust and take refuge in the powers and virtues of His Sacred Name without any further delay.

That Shinran could say such a thing in complete confidence was because he himself, as a hopelessly karma riddled person, had been grasped and embraced never to be rejected by the Dharma's power and virtues manifest through Amida's Sacred Name. This is why, said he: "... I have realized particularly the Tathagata's deep Benevolence" (p. 26). As of consequence, he was able to say:

How happy am I, Gutoku Shaku Shinran, to have now been able to meet with the holy scriptures from India and the commentaries by Chinese and Japanese masters, which are difficult to meet, and to have already been able to hear their teachings which are difficult to hear. (p. 25)

The "holy scriptures" referred to here are the *Larger Sutra*, the *Meditation Sutra* and the *Amida Sutra*. The commentaries referred to are the treatises of the Seven Pure Land Masters.

In closing, let us then deeply ponder and reflect as to how Shinran Shonin was enabled to utter the following words:

As for me, Shinran, there is nothing else except to believe, under the guidance of the Teaching of the Venerable Master, that "We are saved by Amida merely through reciting the Nembutsu alone." Ryukyo Fujimoto. *Shin Buddhism's Essence: The Tannisho*. Ch II. p. 13.

If there exist conditions that bring us together, we must come together; should there exist conditions that require separation, then we must separate from each other... *Loc. cit.*, Ch VI. p. 18.

Other teachings may be superior to ours; we cannot, however, fulfill their demands, as they are beyond our capabilities. At any rate, it is the purpose of all the Buddhas that both we and others shall be emancipated from birth-and-death.

Myriad evils appear wherever quarrels and disputes prevail. Therefore, a wise man would do well to avoid them. *Loc. cit.* Ch XII. p. 28. Bold for focal emphasis.

Remember, whatever evil we may commit, be it as minute as the grain of dust on the tip of the hair on a lamb or a rabbit, is the result of evils committed in our past karma. *Loc. cit.*, Ch. XIII. p. 30.

... Ah! Man will do anything if so moved [by the force of] his implacable karma. *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

When looking deeply into Amida's Vow that had been meditated upon for five kalpas, I discover that it was for me, Shinran, alone! My heartfelt gratitude goes out to the Original Vow, which has the salvation of this self that is overburdened with [the weight of an evil]

karma as the primary concern. *Loc. cit.*, *Concluding Words*. pp. 45, 46.

Shinran Shonin was able to say these words because he had been "enabled" to realize that he, in actuality, was "... a foolish being filled with blind passion, living in the impermanent world of burning house, where all things are empty and vain; therefore untrue. Only the nembutsu is true, real and sincere. (Tannisho Epilogue).

It was because that his own mortality, moral confusions and spiritual blindness had been fully laid bare right before his own eyes to see that Shinran was "enabled" to also fully acknowledge that:

On the whole, I know nothing of good and evil ... the truth is 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. *Op. cit.*, p. 46.

It was through these very "realizations" that Shinran became "awake" and "aware" that the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Actuality of Togetherness had grasped and embraced him "just as the mortal he was," a person riddled by blind passions and vanities, and that this exactly was why he had never been or would ever be abandoned by Amida.

Because the Dharma has, is and continues to manifest itself in the formless form of Amida's Light of Wisdom and its Life of Compassion shining and embracing all sentient beings without favoritism or rejections, Shinran was able to say:

... 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 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 to be afraid of any evil, for no evil is capable of obstructing the Original Vow of Amida. *Loc. cit.*, Ch. I. p. 12.

For this reason, Shinran was "enabled" and therefore was "able" to realize that:

Even a good man attains Rebirth in the Pure Land, how much more so an evil-doer!"

Op. cit., Ch. III. p. 15.

This is why "trusting" and having "faith" in Amida Buddha cannot be equated to a "belief" in a Supreme Deity who accepts only those who obey his commands and rejects those who defy his will and break his commandments.

BUDDHIST STORIES AND PASSAGES

Water is round in a round receptacle and square in a square one, but water itself has no particular shape. People often forget this fact, if they ever even realize it. BDK. *The Teaching of Buddha*. (Eng/Japanese edition) p. 18.

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: Why is the world so divided and conflicted?

ANSWER: The underlying reason is because human beings within themselves are basically conflicted by selfishness, resentments and vanities. According to the Buddha's analysis, a person's inner being is constantly being affected by her or his "likes" and "dislikes," whether they be obvious or hidden.

her or his thoughts, words and acts with selfishness, resentments and vanities.

Such a human being comes to commit the "five deadly transgressions" to even "slander the Dharma. To kill one's father, mother, a monk or nun, etc., these are deadly transgressions with irreversible consequences. To disparage and desecrate the Dharma is to defile things that are eternally sacred and timelessly spiritual.