



GASSHO

June
2012

Issue No:06-12

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



LEVELS OF AWARENESS

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

The ultimate questions concerning life before birth after and death continue to mystify the best of today's inquiring minds and searching of hearts. A male voice prefaces the song *Haha wo Shinobu* ("In Fondly Remembering Mom") telling of this perennial mystery as follows:

People are born into this world completely naked without a thing! Then, get angry, cry and laugh at each other as they become attached to things and people they love. In doing so, they become fearful of losing their possessions and loved ones. Then, once again, becoming completely naked and without a thing they continue their upward spiritual journey by stepping into the Great Unknown Beyond! a trans.

Then, when the songstress finishes, the male voice closes with the following words:

Yearning for life (birth) and yet not obtaining it! Not expecting life and yet born as a human being blessed with a conscience!

a trans.

Indeed, these words summarize nicely what Buddhists understand as "transmigration" which is not to be confused with "reincarnation" which refers to a person's "disincarnate spirit" that either goes to a "heaven" above or is cast into a "fiery inferno" below.

In actuality, the "six realms of transmigration" are about a person's "streaming consciousness" constantly meandering in and out of conscious and sub-conscious states between the extremes of "heavenly bliss" and "hellish torments." In this life, human beings are constantly experiencing all kinds of sensations, feelings and thoughts between moments of self inflation and moments of self deflation, between the extremes of being happy and unhappy. This is because a

MONTH'S THOUGHT



Buddha did not hold that everything is determined by one's past behavior. Acquisition of merit in the past is only one of the factors that, along with "life in an appropriate surrounding" and "proper self-application" (in this life), contribute to an auspicious or good life.... What Buddhism emphasizes is the avoidance of evil actions, cultivation of morally good actions, and the purification of the mind as the way to attain perfect happiness. David J. Kalupahana. *Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*. p. 132.



person's thoughts, feelings, words and actions are also constantly changing. What was once pleasurable suddenly can turn into something painful. What was painful paradoxically can also become something pleasurable.

Transmigration and reincarnation both point out how the unseen pulsating energies and

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REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES for JUNE 2012

1st SUN JUN 3rd:

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

2nd SUN JUN 10th:

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

3rd SUN JUN 17th:

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

4th SUN JUN 24th:

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

Rev. Roland Tatsuguchi
will be off Island
Jul. 28 to Aug. 8, 2012

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

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

With Deepest Sympathy

Mr. Akio Futakawa 79yr April 12, 2012
Mr. Masaru Ishida 87yr April 27, 2012

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vibrating forces of a person's thoughts, sentiments and volitions, as well as that of a group, society or a nation, are karmically triggering words and actions that have personal, social and societal consequences that affect other people, things and forms of life in seen and unseen ways. The ongoing thoughts, words and deeds of any one individual living in the present are also being affected by the non-visible beliefs and language of his ancestors. He, in turn, is also affecting and influencing the lives of those who are yet to be born and live in the future! Unfortunately, because human beings are basically focused on their present lives, they care mostly about themselves and their families and could care less about their deceased ancestors or about those yet to be born hundreds of generations later.

According to Buddhism, lives past, present and future, in actuality, are not only seamlessly interconnected, but are also spherically and cyclically inseparably connected in terms of their unseen multiplex and multi-dimensional karmic connections through a person's brainwaves and pulsations of the heart. If a person is to become a morally responsible and ethically accountable human being, she or he needs to realize that what she or he is thinking, feeling, saying and doing unfailingly bring about their consequences sooner if not later because of such vibrations of one's mind and undulations of heart.

These karmic energies and forces in the forms of unseen thoughts, feelings and volitions can be seen as stated in the following verses of a Buddhist hymnal:

The consciousness can never die
Although it seems to fade,
It doth but pass to other forms
Which thoughts and acts have made.

There is no death, all nature cries;
The rose will reappear,
Its petals will more perfect be
After the winter drear.

The tiny bird that lifeless falls
A victim to its prey,

WORDS OF SHINRAN

... As for becoming friends with those who are given to wrongdoing, it is only after we go to the Buddha Land and return to benefit sentient beings that we can become close to and friendly with them.... *Letters of Shinran*.
No 20. p. 62.

Returns again in higher forms
Upon its upward way.

Shinkaku D. Hunt. "*Life Never Dies*"
Praises of Buddha. p. 30.

Do not these verses echo the opening and closing words of the male commentator in the song *Haha wo Shinobu* just quoted and translated above?

Human beings are born and blessed with potential for "higher levels of expanding consciousness." That means that the most crucial thing in the transformation of a human being is for her or his "everyday ordinary consciousness" to become "awake" to its inseparable connection with her or his "vertical spiritual conscienceness" that was established in the moment of her or his conception in her or his one and only "mom's" womb.

K.N. Jayatellike explains the Buddhist view of human conception influenced by the Hindu view of "reincarnation" as follows:

... Three factors are necessary for human birth, the presence of the ovum, its fertilization by the sperm of the father as well as the interaction and integration of the zygote (i.e., sperm and ovum together) with the dynamic stream of consciousness ... which is also called "the discarnate spirit (*gandhabbo ca paccupatthoti*). So the new personality after integration ... is a product of the two parents and the dynamic stream of consciousness, which is ... called "the re-linking consciousness".... *The Message of the Buddha*. p. 222.

In Buddhist scriptures this "coming together" or "forming" of a new human being is described as "the meeting of a father's 'white seed' with the 'red seed' of a mother that has to be in season" where in the "instant of conception," the beginning of a new human being is then instantly endowed by the powers of conscience from above, below, the sides and all around it.

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: May 25, 2012

In this sense a person's spirituality or conscience is not a "disincarnate spirit" that is "disconnected" from one's physical person, such as one's brain, heart and vital organs are not discrete separate entities independent of each other because they are connected to one's spinal column which, in turn, also is inseparably neurally connected to every skin surface full of tactile follicular endings sensitive to touch that covers one's entire anatomy.

Nor is, from the Buddhist view, a person an individual disconnected and independent from other persons or from plants, other creatures, or from her or his environment. Nor are a person's "brain" and "heart" disconnected from the "brainwaves" and "heart pulsations" of others. For a person's brainwaves are also affected by the brainwaves of others and vice versa. This also is the case with the pulsations of the human heart radiating with all kinds of feeling vibrations that can be sensed and felt by others though unseen.

The meeting of a father's seed with a mother's seed in season resulting in conception, as of natural consequence, leads a mother to endure and undergo a period of ten lunar months of pregnancy that finally ends with her giving birth to her intact human baby whose mind, heart, body and spirit are innocent and clear of gender biases, ethnic prejudices and religious bigotries. The newborn baby then begins undergoing the necessary humanizing stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. Then she or he finally begins aging. When a person takes that final breath of life, once again, she or he becomes "completely naked" to continue her or his "upward spiritual journey" without a thing.

According to "reincarnation," however, one's "disincarnate spirit" takes the baggage of the karmic consequences of what it has thought, felt, said and done in this and its several past lives. When a such a "disincarnate spirit" incarnates herself or himself into another living form just as it is being conceived (meaning another body), the spirit or soul moves in with all her or his past baggage of good and bad karma.

In "transmigration" it is not a "disincarnate soul" but the non-visible effects and affects of the forces and energies of one's unseen thoughts, feelings and the concrete effects of one's words and actions that are transmitted basically through what are "brainwave vibrations" and "heart pulsations" between individuals from the past to individuals in the present that then affect individuals who are yet to be born in the future. This is why the focus of Buddhism is on a person's present life in which she or he has the conscious choice and

decision of conscience to make as to whether to live by the Eightfold Path or not. The Path, in essence, is the life of O-nembutsu gratitude, reverence and penitence.

Therefore, a newborn baby begins taking on its family's ancestral traditions and its culture's mores and values first through its one and only mother, then it's family and then the society it is born into. This process of streaming thoughts, feelings and volitions in the form of brain wave energy become karmic determinants that are seamless from the past, in the present and into the future as a "collective unconscious." The effects and affects of these thought waves and feeling pulsations manifest themselves yet in the future to become the very words and actions of those who are yet to be born. These brain energies and pulsating forces of the heart in a person's "streaming consciousness," can be felt according to Carl G. Jung, comprises man's "collective unconsciousness."

The "six realms of transmigration," therefore, are depicted as being enclosed and governed by the "twelve links of causation" that form a tight karmic enclosure seemingly impenetrable that is constantly turning in the counterclockwise rotation. This means that sentient beings are endlessly repeating the rounds of births and deaths because of the karmic transgressions and desecrations of Dharma. It is only by breaking through and out of the "the repetitive cycles of these negative karmic vibrations of the mind and pulsations" of the heart that one will be able to "get out" into the Unobstructed Dharma World that always has, is and yet forever continues forever to fully embrace, contain and sustain all things and life with its powerful vibrations of Selflessness and its virtuous pulsations of Togetherness. Therefore, the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness mysteriously forever keeps manifesting itself as Amida Buddha's Compassion that never forsakes or abandons any sentient being in the "six realms of transmigration," no matter how grave their transgressions and desecrations may be until they, by power of his Wisdom and her Compassion, become finally enfolded by its Divine Togetherness as Buddhas.

Now, though there are variations in the explanations of the "twelve causal links of transmigration." There is a sequence of graphics dealing with the beginnings of a new human being. It begins with a man whose eye has been deeply pierced by an arrow full of barbs. He is unable to extract it. This graphic represents the state of a man whose carnal desires have been so aroused that he has become "obsessed by" what he is looking at. In this case it is the sight of a woman attractive, alluring and sexually desirable.

Romantically this arrow also depicts Cupid's arrow of love that has struck a person's heart dead in the center.

Then follows the graphic of a woman offering enticing foods and intoxicating drinks to make the man even more obsessed with her sexuality. This graphic illustrates what are the elements and conditions that further keep arousing and inflaming a male's carnal desires by making them even more impelling and compelling.

This state of being overwhelmed by carnal desire is one of near madness (or delusion). This state is depicted by the next graphic in which "a restless monkey" (or a human being) is frenetically picking the five kinds of fruit from the five different kinds of branches on the tree of life," or the five kinds of pleasures of life. They are pleasurable to a person's sense of touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste. In this case it refers to the sight of a woman, her fragrance, her caresses, her whisperings and her kisses. Though the monkey's hands already are full and spilling over with the five kinds of sense pleasures. The monkey, nevertheless, keeps plucking even more fruit. This graphic of a monkey depicts a human being's insatiable nature fueled by his self vanities that often become excessive and overly wasteful (spilling over with "stuff").

This graphic, of course, then is followed by the graphic of the woman and man in full embrace consummating the sexual act in which the "white seed" of the father to be then gets to meet the "red seed" of the mother to be that must be in season. Because, if the woman's "red seed" is not in season and ready to be impregnated by the "white seed," then conception naturally does not occur even though the sexual act has been consummated.

When conception does occur, then, "instantaneously," in that very moment, the new human being to be is blessed with a "conscience-ness," or what is the Mind of Buddha and Buddha's nature in the nascent, dormant state. In Hindu sacred scripture this gift of conscience in man has been described as an "intact autonomous soul" carrying the baggage of its several past lives taking up residence in the just conceived life form. Regardless of whether one's karmic past is explained in terms of "transmigration" or "reincarnation," when a woman becomes pregnant, she then, must carry her "fetus" for the next "ten lunar months" in her womb to full completion before it can be born as a complete human being.

In the view of transmigration the infant is born with a clear slate. In the view of

SHINRAN'S WASAN

Those who arrive in
the Pure Land of
Serenity and Bliss,
Return to this evil world
of Five Defilements,
And like Sakyamuni Buddha,
benefit endlessly
all sentient beings!

JODO WASAN No. 20,
rkt trans.

"reincarnation" the newborn's slate is already "weighted" and "fated" by the karmic baggage of the "disincarnate spirit" that has taken up residence in it. Both these views, however, certainly are not to be confused with the Biblical view that human beings are all born as sinners due to the "original sin" of Eve, the first woman who seduced Adam, the first man created in the image of God, to eat also of the "Tree of Good and Evil." As of consequence, all subsequent generations of their children were condemned to be born sinners. Karma, on the other hand, means we have and are all the result of what we are thinking, feeling, saying and doing, therefore, we need to be responsible for what we are saying and doing and be accountable for what we have said and done.

According to Buddhism, if the three, elements of sperm, ovum and "streaming consciousness" and conscience (or gift of spirituality), do not come together, then conception does not occur. Then, the next graphic of "a woman giving birth" also cannot occur. The conception and birth of a human being, according to Hindu folklore and Buddhist cosmic mythology, is determined either by the "fruits of the old" (past karma) that a disembodied "disincarnate spirit" carries with it upon taking up residence in a new body.

So, according to reincarnation a person's "disembodied spirit" is "attracted and drawn to its new set of parents" who have just conceived a new life in a mother's womb. The words of the song quoted above about "being born completely naked without a thing," then finally, "to once again become completely naked without a thing" to step into the Great Unknown Beyond," these words imply reincarnation and not the transmigration of karmic energy in the form of unseen "brainwaves" and "pulsations of the heart" vibrating over the endless generations in the form of a person's "streaming consciousness."

As we enter this year's three-month O'Bon season in Hawaii, I would like to make a few comments concerning our confused and difficult times, especially after 9/11, let us remember that we are all human beings with basic instincts, physical, emotional, moral and spiritual needs that have to be met if we are to survive and live in peace, harmony and in a genuine selflessness and togetherness.

All genuine religious teachers of sincerity over the ages have provided common sense guidelines and rules for their adherents to abide and live by to this goal. However, newly and recently established religions often differ in their competing claims as to what is the truth and who is really telling the truth. They also differ in their beliefs about a life before birth and after death. Unfortunately, because of their disagreements, their teachings, often there are arguments as to what is "good" or "evil" as well as conflicts as to who is "right" or "wrong." This untenable situation often ends in racial bigotry and religious hypocrisy in the most subtle of ways, often ending unexpectedly in violence and bloodshed, such as in the present ongoing are the acts of indiscriminate terrorism by extremist jihadists and conflict between Israel and Palestine justified by doctrine and dogma.

Many today, therefore, have become disenchanted with religions. They have chosen to indulge themselves in the endless joys of modern living by taking advantage of high tech conveniences and creature comforts. They are drawn to "this-worldly religions" that promise their "converts" good health, prosperity, fortune and long life. Many believe that the material offerings of this present life is the only things in this life to live for. They do not believe in a life before birth or after death! Therefore, this life, they say, should be indulged in to the hilt because it is the only life there is to enjoy and live. In doing so, they not only transgress the facts of causality and karma, but desecrate, thereby, things that are sacred and truths that are spiritual. Such persons often become atheists, agnostics or skeptics, if not blatant hedonists.

As of consequence, they see no connection between what they are thinking, saying and doing as having been affected by the lives of others in the past who were born several generations before them. Neither do they really understand how their thoughts, words and deeds in their present lives are connecting to the lives of others who are yet to be born and yet to live long after they themselves have died. As of consequence, they, as "consummate consumers," are consummate hedonists living only for the immediate "pleasures"

and "joys" of their present lives. As a person once told me: "I live in order to eat, Reverend. I do not eat just to live!" In other words, gluttony and conspicuous consumption of endless stuff and gadgets characterizes such a person's life who has chosen to indulge herself or himself in endless self-gratifications. This is what I mean by those who have become "consummate American consumers."

Today, it is most difficult, especially for spoiled children and adolescents as well as for the well pampered elderly enjoying their so-called twilight golden years, to make the distinction between what are merely passing momentary pleasures from those genuine moments of happiness that remain forever in one's heart of hearts that border on the spiritual if not the divine. For the young are exposed to television, CDs, videos, electronic games and gadgets that have, are and continue to undermine the traditional views concerning one's gender, sexuality, and one's responsibilities in marriage, family, parenting, and as a citizen in one's community.

Therefore, if you spend the time to analyze what begins to happen to a child born in complete innocence, you will immediately realize that a human being, right at birth, begins constantly to be bombarded and exposed to a wide range of self indulging pleasurable sensations, especially the bodily warmth of its mother and her mother's milk.

Today, unfortunately, the minds and hearts of our youth are even all the more being filled with the three basic poisons which are "selfishness" (wild black boar), "resentments" (venomous snake), and "self vanities" (crowing rooster) which continue to undermine what are the basic human relationships that began with mother and child that are essentially sacred and spiritual.

Therefore, the Buddha's Teaching on family concerns what are the wholesome relationships between a male and a female, a husband and a wife, a parent and a child, between siblings, relatives and finally acquaintances. They also are about the relationships between employers and workers, teachers and students. Finally, most importantly, they are about how a person should live the religious life as well as the moral and ethical householder's life.

This is why Sakaymuni Buddha said,

The man of restless mind, of passions fierce,
with eyes only for the pleasing — craving in
him grows great. He forges a heavy chain.

The man who takes delight in the stilling of

thoughts, who lets his mind dwell on the unpleasing, by this verily will he cut through, destroy Ignorance. Dhammapada No. 7. *Praises of Buddha*. p. 161.

These words point to the necessity for a person to break through, as mentioned, the tight circumference that comprises "the twelve links of causation," the rim that "imprisons" a person in the endless rounds of ceaseless births and deaths in what are the "six realms of transmigration."

Let us, then, once again turn to the *Sigalavada Sutta* in Walpola Rahula's *What the Buddha Taught* (pp. 78-80). This *sutta* (Buddhist scripture) is about a filial and dutiful son named Sigala who offers daily prayers and food offerings to the four cardinal directions, the *zenith* and *nadir* that point beyond the very blue of the skies into a all-embracing expansive universe that is a boundless sphere. According to Hinduism they are the heavens above where deities and celestial beings provide divine protection by raining down endless blessings on sentient beings. Others then bring punishments and destruction as malevolent gods and goddesses. Therefore, Sigala offered daily food and drink to each of the six directions for blessings and protection to deities of the "six directions."

In his "What the Buddha Taught," Walpola Rahula says Sakaymuni, however, corrected Sigala by indicating that these six cardinal directions, in actuality, are pointing to the "six basic human relationships" which are: "*east*: parents; *west*: teachers; *south*: wife and children; *north*: friends, relatives and neighbors; *nadir*: servants, workers and employees; and *zenith*: religious men..." Walpola Rahula then explained that the term *namasseyya* means to revere and worship "... something sacred, something worthy of respect and worship..." which implies something not imagined, imaginary, false or fabricated.

Let us remember that Sakyamuni Buddha said:

Good is it to honor mother. Good is it to honor father. Good is it to honor the homeless one. Good is it to honor the Teaching. Dhammapada No. 7. *Ibid*.

Most certainly, one's one and only father and especially one's one and only biological mother, are they not worthy of a child's reverence in her or his regard for them as being sacred and divine?

Therefore, please note that Buddhist precepts are not the commandments of some

almighty deity whose judgments and punishments are to be feared should one disobey, defy and break them. Nor is Sakyamuni's guidance of Sigala to be equated with the words of Jesus as found in Matt. 10:33, 34 & 37.

By contrast, the ideograph *oya* in *Oya* expresses the undying love and concern of parents for their children, especially a child who has become wayward, rebellious and lost. The ideograph in *on* in *Oya no on*, therefore, implies a child's profound indebtedness to her or his one and only father and especially to her or his one and only birth mother because she is the one who carried her or him in her body and nourished her or him in her very womb, all the while enduring discomforts, until she or he was born with an intact mind, heart and a complete body endowed with a conscience.

For without having being blessed with a conscience in the instant of our conception we could not and would not have been born as human beings with a sense of moral and ethical awareness of things that are sacred and spiritual. We, instead, would have been born no different from our mammalian cousins driven only by their raw instincts as they struggle to survive, live and reproduce their own kind in a situation where the strongest and the fittest get to survive and live on. Was not this actuality observed and documented by Charles Darwin, a botanist and biologist?

If human beings were born without a conscience, then they also would be incapable of "honoring" the Dharma, the Buddha and the Sangha, much less their parents, fellow human beings, as well as regarding living and non-living things as being sacred and spiritual. It is because of this empowerment to see things sacred and spiritual in the most simplest of things like a weed flower or a grain of sand that makes us different from the rest of our mammalian cousins.

This is why human beings are also able to think of and to visualize even those who are yet to be born! For as Shinran points out, we all have, are and yet will be brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, as well as children and grandchildren, over the timeless passing generations. Ah, indeed, as the gatha says, "may we all learn to know this truth, this might riddle of life and death solve!"

BUDDHIST STORIES AND PASSAGES

As one born blind who gropes along without assistance from a guide, chooses a road that may

be right at one time, at another wrong, so while ignorant man pursues the rounds of births without a guide, now to do merit he may choose and now demerit in such plight. But when the Dhamma he comes to know and penetrates the Truths beside, then Ignorance is put to flight. At last, and in peace would he abide. Buddhaghosa. *Visuddhimagga* (P.T.S. Text, p. 544)

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: Shin scholars avoid translating *shinjin* (having trusted and taken refuge in Amida) as faith. Why is this?

ANSWER: The reason is as the Christian theologian Paul Tillich in his *Dynamics of Faith* (p. ix) has pointed out:

There is hardly a word in the religious language ... which is subject to more misunderstandings, distortions and questionable definitions than the word "faith" It confuses, misleads, creates alternately skepticism and fanaticism, intellectual resistance and emotional surrender, rejection of genuine religion and subjection to substitutes....

The Shin Buddhist Translation Series people point out further that:

The fundamental difference between *shinjin* and faith is that while the concept of faith stands on the duality of God (the creator) and man (the created), *shinjin* is the oneness of Buddha and man, or man's becoming a Buddha.... "Buddha and foolish being becoming one" in realization of *shinjin* ... are inseparable ... meaning the oneness of Buddha and man, ... the point of realizing *shinjin* when the Buddha's mind and the mind of the sentient being *become* one, which is none other than the nembutsu....
SBT-Series. *Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls*.
p. 78. () mine.