



GASSHO

November

2012

Issue No. 11-12

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



MUSINGS on GRATITUDE and INGRATITUDE

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

As I repeatedly have stated in past issues of GASSHO, the moment a person entrusts herself or himself and takes complete refuge in the powers of Amida's Wisdom's Light, such a person, in that very instant, is grasped and embraced "never ever to be abandoned" by Amida's All-embracing Compassion that has never rejected any sentient being who has done so.

This Light of Amida's Wisdom is the direct manifestation of the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness that is said to be simultaneously her Unconditional Compassion. According to D.T. Suzuki, therefore, there:

... are two pillars supporting the great edifice of Buddhism: the *Daichi* ..., *Mahaprajna*, the Great Wisdom, and the *Daihi* ... *Maha karuna*, the Great Compassion. The Wisdom flows from the Compassion and the Compassion from the Wisdom for the two are in fact one though from the human point of view we have to speak of it as two. As the two are thus one, not mathematically united, but spiritually coalesced, the One is to be represented as a person, as *Dharmakaya*. The *Dharmakaya* is not the owner of wisdom and compassion, he is the Wisdom or the Compassion, as either phase of his being is emphasized for some special reason. We shall miss the point entirely if we take him as somewhat resembling or reflecting the human conception of man. He has no body in the sense we have a human body. His is Spirit, he is the field of action, if we can use this form of expression, where Wisdom and Compassion are fused together, are transformed into each other, and become the principle of vitality in the world of sense-intellect. *The Essence of Buddhism*. p 47.

MONTH'S THOUGHT



"I hate ingratitude more in a person; than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness, or, any taint of vice whose strong corruption inhabits our frail blood." — William Shakespeare (1564-1616), *Twelfth Night*



Thus, the Dharma's Timeless Selflessness and All-embracing Togetherness manifest as Amida's Inexhaustible Light and Life has, and yet continues to embrace all sentient beings, both the "good" and the "bad," even more so "evil persons" because they are incapable of undoing the karmic consequences of their desecrations and transgressions.

As of consequence, it is my personal view that we human beings, whether we are aware of it or not, are insensitive and indifferent as to how profound and grave are the ramifications of our transgressions of things sacred and desecrations of spiritual truths. Even the most astute, rational

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REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR NOVEMBER 2012

1st SUN Nov 4th:

(Services cancelled)

**FUJINKAI
MINI-BAZAAR**
9 a.m. to noon
(Social Hall)

2nd SUN Nov 11th:

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

3rd SUN Nov 18th:

**ANNUAL
SAMGHA MEMORIAL SERVICE**
9 A.M. English Service
Speaker: Rev. Roland Tatsuguchi

4th SUN Nov 25th:

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

With Deepest Sympathy

Mr. Raymond S. Kitayama 78 yrs. Aug. 29, 2012
Ms. Teruko Kunimura 89 yrs. Sept. 29, 2012
Mr. Glen Y. Doike 60 yrs. Sept. 29, 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

to be continued on p. 8

and sensitive of human beings are not fully aware of what is stirring in the murky subconscious depths of their minds and especially in the deepest unconscious of their hearts that are most embarrassing if not frightening.

By contrast, persons of "genuine gratitude and humility" (*myokonin*) are full of gratitude characterized by reverence, and especially by their sense of "undeservingness" and "unworthiness" as recipients of the very blessings they have been, and yet are receiving all throughout their lives. They see the origin of these blessings to be of sacred and spiritual significance. They are persons who are and continue to be permeated by the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and suffused by its Reality of All-embracing Togetherness. The Light of this Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness in shining and on such a person illuminates to reveal by laying bare especially the consequences of their past hurtful words and harmful actions that cannot be rectified by any act of goodness, restitution or repentance on their part except as their hearts to trust and take refuge in this Source of Light and Life by rightly reflecting in the silence of their inner selves that then grasps and embraces them never to be abandon them ever.

This is why Shinran speaking of the presumptuousness of human beings in their efforts and endeavors said:

... truly rare is it that one can help another as completely as one desires; ... In this life no matter how much pity and sympathy we may feel for others, it is impossible to help another as we truly wish.... T. Unno. *Tannisho*. IV p 9.

When a person, however, has entrusted herself or himself by taking complete refuge in the powers and virtues of Amida Buddha's Sacred Name, such a person is "awakened" to the actuality of her or his not being capable of helping another as s/he completely and truly wishes. Such a person in that very moment of realization, as of consequence, then, like the waters of a river flowing into the ocean, becomes its very waters and currents upon

WORDS OF SHINRAN

Grasped and protected, never to be abandoned: *grasped* means to embrace. *Protected* means that the Buddha protects the person of shinjin without pause — in all places, at all times, and without any discrimination among people. *Protected* means that one cannot be deterred by those who have taken up other teachings and beliefs, nor obstructed by those of different understandings and practices; one is not threatened by the heavenly demon Papiya; nor troubled by evil gods and demons. **Never to be abandoned:** these words teach us that the person of shinjin is embraced by the Buddha of wisdom-light and that he is never abandoned, but always resides within that heart of light. SBT-Series. *Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling*. p 38.

entry, and instantly "transformed" into a person of gratitude, reverence, humility and penitence.

Such a transformation can also be a gradual process like a green bitter persimmon by power of sunlight gradually being "transformed" into a ripe persimmon with each passing day under the sun's radiance and brilliance until all its bitterness has turned into sweetness.

Now, in the persimmon and river metaphors, it is crucial to understand the following points concerning what is an "awakening of faith" according to Jodoshinshu teachings. The first is that Amida's Light of Wisdom shines on all things and creatures, not just on human beings or only a special racial people or a specific geopolitical location. What is to be noted in the metaphor of the green persimmon is that the sun (or Dharma Sun) shines equally on all kinds of fruits without favoritisms until they all of them become ripened (enlightened – awakened = liberated – emancipated). This means that even fruits that are poisonous and inedible (or persons who are evil and incorrigible) are equally illuminated without prejudice, preference, favoritism or rejection. This is a most crucial point in understanding what it is to be "transformed" by the powers of Amida's Light of Wisdom and Life of Compassion, or what are the Dharma's Selflessness and Togetherness.

As mentioned in previous GASSHOs, being "transformed" by the powers and virtues of "faith alone" does not mean that one's person becomes obliterated or disappears upon having undergone

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an "awakening of faith." This fact is appreciated once again through the analogy of a green persimmon becoming a ripe one. Upon becoming "ripe," it still is the persimmon it can only be until it itself finally disintegrates and returns to the basic elements where it seeds (of karma) sprout and become other persimmon trees that bear forth more fruit with their seeds of future persimmons that are yet to bear more persimmons. This metaphor also entails the fact that "everything without exception undergoes process and change" (*anitya*), and that "no substance, entity or person undergoing change and transformation can remain constant and the same" (*anatman*). Therefore, what this means is that the persimmons on the "tree" today are not the persimmons that were on the other "trees" in the past. Nor are they the persimmons that will be on the "trees" yet to be in the future.

We can also see this transformative process in the waters of the various rivers becoming the very waters of the boundless unfathomable ocean, then evaporating to become once again the rising mists that turn into the very white clouds, which then, gradually turn into the dark storm clouds that release a cascade of raindrops falling on the earth. These rain drops then once again become the life-giving waters cascading down the mountain cliffs to become the aquifers that bubble up the artesian wells that become the gushing springs, then gurgling streams and rivulets, which finally, once again, become the rivers meandering over the landscape until their waters finally return to become once again the very waters of the boundless ocean. This process repeated again and again. The Boundless ocean in this sense is likened to the World of Dharmakaya-as-Suchness that is unfathomable and ineffable that is fascinating as well as mysterious.

Each river in flowing into the ocean seems to disappear and become no more, a non-existence. But, in actuality, a river's waters have not been obliterated or destroyed. They have once again become, as mentioned, the very waters and currents of the ocean. This significant point of not being obliterated or incinerated is a most crucial point that needs to be pointed out when explaining what is an "awakening of true and real faith" (*shinjin*) according to Jodoshinshu teachings. There is no annihilation or obliteration in "an awakening of faith," which is not the case in the faith of religions that pit the "forces of good" against the forces of evil" where evil and sinners, of necessity, are to be obliterated, gotten rid of, eliminated, rather than to be "transformed" like green persimmons into ripe ones or river waters into the ocean waters.

According to Mahayana Buddhism, the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of

Together-ness takes the form of Tathagatas endlessly manifesting themselves as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas constantly going back and forth between the World of Dharma and the "six realms of transmigration." The two worlds are depicted as being like the two sides of the single coin called the Wheel of Life one side being *nirvana*, the other side *samsara*. At this point, it is to be noted that *nirvana* and *samsara* are one as are the Buddhas and sentient beings inseparable as the two sides of a coin. This "sameness" of identity can be understood also as ice melting and turning into water. When water freezes it becomes ice. Both ice and water are comprised of H₂O.

This is why Tathagatas are capable of incarnating themselves as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of Great Compassion constantly appearing in the "various worlds of ignorance" (*avidya*) in order to grasp especially karma riddled beings to bring them back into the "world of enlightenment" (*nirvana*). This is also like an "upside down" cup being "turned right-side-up" to be filled with the thirst-quenching and life-giving waters of Wisdom and Compassion. In the process, once again, it is to be noted that the cup is not being crushed, broken, pulverized or replaced by another kind of special cup to replace the upside down cup. In fact, there are all kinds of upside down cups. In the case of Shinran Shonin, he realized he was a cup full of cracks and holes. So he had no way but to leap in the Ocean of Dharma to receive its life giving waters.

A person so illuminated by the Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of all-embracing Together-ness then comes to see her or his actual self riddled through and through by blind passions and foolish vanities (*bonno*), that s/he is undeniably merely a mortal being. In being so awakened, such a person comes to realize that his fellow human beings are also mere ordinary mortals subject to the same uniform and orderly processes of causality, conditionality, interdependency, especially the consequences of their karma as well as that of others. In other words, a cup, upside down or right side up, is still a cup, and there are endless kinds of cups. The ones with cracks and pukas can only take that "leap of faith" into the Dharma's Ocean of Selflessness and Together-ness.

Therefore, according to Shinran Shonin,

In the person of nembutsu opens up the great path of unobstructed freedom. The reason is that the gods of heaven and earth bow before the practitioner of true entrusting, and those of the world of demons and rival paths cannot obstruct his way. The consequences of karmic evil

cannot bear fruit, nor does any form of good equal his. Thus, it is called the great path of unobstructed freedom. T. Unno. *Tannisho*. VII. p 12.

For this reason, Shinran Shonin as a person of nembutsu came to realize that: "... even the good person attains birth, how much more so the evil person" (*loc. cit.* III. p 8). These most astonishing words are not to be taken in the sense as many persons lacking gratitude tend to do and thereby, misunderstand the intent of Amida's Vows. This is because human beings without gratitude assume that they have a natural right and are entitled as human beings to life's many blessings.

Therefore, for people lacking in gratitude, life is taken for granted. This results in much excessiveness and wastefulness in their lives. Such thankless persons also think they can think, feel, say and do whatever they please as long as they are not hurting others! By contrast, a person who has been awakened by "true life" and "real life" becomes fully cognizant of his shortcomings, failings and imperfections, and how they, in the most subtle of unseen ways, have and yet continue to harm and hurt others as well as the environment. Thus they experience a penitence and sorrow for they now have become fully aware of the effects and affects of their transgressions and desecrations. Therefore the source of their joy now is genuine because their consciousness has been transformed into their conscienceness much like a green persimmon that has been transformed into a ripe one or the waters of a river instantly becoming the waters of an ocean upon entry.

The significance of such transformations according to *Jodoshinshu* is contained in the religious story of a King called Dharmakara who, in hoping to save all karma riddled sentient beings, renounced his Kingdom and royal privileges to then vow that he would become a Buddha as other Buddhas have, were and yet were saving all sorts of sentient beings, especially those trapped in the endless rounds of births and deaths in the "six realms of transmigration." For five incalculable aeons did he work to consummate and accumulate an immeasurable amount of ethical virtues and spiritual powers in order to become such a Buddha. Dharmakara finally, in fulfilling all his Vows, became Amida, the Ultimate Buddha of Buddhas of Wisdom and Compassion.

In having done so, Dharmakara now Amida Buddha is now the Ultimate Manifestation of the Dharma's Selflessness and Togetherness. Amida ever since has never rejected or condemned a person, especially the person riddled by transgressions of life and desecrations of the

SHINRAN'S WASAN

Though refuge I take in the
Teachings of *Jodoshinshu*,
Difficult it is to see in myself
a heart true and real;
For this me that I actually am
full of deceit and falsity it is,
Therefore, lacking in me
a heart true and real!

SHOZOMATSU WASAN
No. 94 rkt-trans.

Dharma who has taken refuge in him (as a cup full of cracks and holes). This is why Shinran Shonin said Amida's Vow "is directed to the being burdened with the weight of karmic evil and burning with the flames of blind passion" (T. Unno. *Tannisho*. I p5).

Therefore, it is well for us as Shin Buddhists to read, re-read and keep re-reading the preface to Shinran Shonin's most important work, the *Kyo Gyo Shin Sho* in six volumes. For in his prefatory Shinran not only summarizes but, in fact, fleshes out the basic underlying significance of trusting and taking refuge in Amida Buddha's Vow that is full of All-embracing Togetherness permeated by the Dharma's Selflessness.

Shinran began with the words 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. Ryukoku Translation Series. *KYO GYO SHIN SHO*. p 17.

Amida Buddha, therefore, as the direct manifestation of the Dharma's Selfless Wisdom's Light, in other words, is like the bright sun shining on all living and non-living things that reveals and fulfills their self natures "just as they are" (*sono mama*). This revealing and consummating of a person's self-nature is much like a green persimmon under sunlight not being "converted" into a banana or a cucumber, but being "transformed" into the ripe persimmon that it can only and naturally become, a persimmon full of sweetness and mellowness, or a gratitude and humility characterized by reverence and penitence.

Then, Shinran, referring to the times of Sakyamuni, says of his cousin Devadatta who tried to kill him and take over the Sangha and also of

Ajatasatru who starved his father to death to usurp the throne and, in the process also tried to kill his own mother Vaidehi, that they were all incarnations of the Dharma's Selfless Compassion as follows:

Hereupon, as the conditions were ripe for the teaching of Birth in the Pure Country, Devadatta provoked Ajatasatru to commit rebellious acts; and as the person to be saved by the Pure Act now appeared. Sakyamuni led Vaidehi to choose (her birth to be in) the Land of Serene Sustenance.

This means that the incarnated sages, out of compassion, all sought alike to save the suffering multitude and that the World's Hero, out of mercy, particularly sought to benefit the men who have committed deadly sins, the abusers of the Right Dharma, and the *icchantikas*. *Loc. cit.* pp 18, 19.

The above two paragraphs in one sense are telling us that even though "evil persons" keep ignoring, defying and desecrating the truths of *anatman* (no unchanging self) and *anitya* (all things are constantly changing and never the same). In actuality, it are such incorrigible persons the likes of Devadatta and Ajatasatru who, paradoxically, in another sense, are "sagacious incarnations of compassion" appearing of necessity in this world to "mirror" and "expose" a self complacent person concerning her or his desecrations of life, especially their transgressions of the Right Dharma.

For people like Devadatta and Ajatasatru, according to Shinran Shonin, appeared in this world to serve as "mirrors" to reflect and lay bare the faults and failings hidden deeply in us all. Even people who think they never committed any transgressions or desecrations, in the most subtle and unconscious of ways, have and are committing the five deadly transgressions and desecrations of the Dharma. Such persons like Ajatasatru and Devadatta help us to turn inward to see our unseen, hidden failings and transgressions. Such evil persons are like mirrors exposing for us our very "inner eye" to see our hidden desecrations as well as our tendencies to commit transgressions such as breaking the minimal Five Precepts.

For this reason, Shinran Shonin said:

Hence, it is clear to me that the auspicious Name of the complete and all-merging supreme virtue is the True Wisdom which turns evil into merit and that the Admantine Serene Faith which is difficult to attain is the Truth which removes doubt and enables us to realize Enlightenment.

Accordingly, this 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 equal to this sea of virtue.

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 especially rely on the Tathagata's urging, never fail to take refuge in the supreme Direct Way, exclusively follow this Practice, and uphold only this Faith.

Loc. cit. pp 20-21.

Shinran then, paradoxically, exclaims how difficult it actually is to become a person of gratitude, reverence, humility, especially in becoming a person of penitence permeated with Buddha's commiseration for her or him that awakens a compassion for others:

Ah, how difficult it is to meet with the Universal Vow, the powerful conditions (for our salvation), even in many lives. How difficult it is to attain the True, Pure Faith even in millions of kalpas. If ever one receives the Practice and Faith, he should rejoice at the long past relationships (with Amida). *Op. cit.* p 23.

Because, says Shinran:

If one is still covered with the net of doubt in the present existence, he will have to transmigrate again for myriads of kalpas. Veritable, indeed, are the True Words of (Amida's) embracing and not forsaking and the True Teaching which is unequalled and rare! Let us hear with reflection; let us not hesitate to trust. *Op. cit.* p 24.

Shinran Shonin, in having experienced an awakening of faith, was enabled to exclaim these words as a person living in this world of "burning house" because he indeed had become a person of profound gratitude, humility and a penitence permeated by Amida's commiseration as a person riddled by vanities and passions.

As of consequence Shinran Shonin was able to rejoice as follows:

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! *Op. cit.* p 25.

Thus, Shinran Shonin, then, finally acknowledged of his profound indebtedness to the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of All-embracing Togetherness manifest as Amida's Vow that never rejects or abandons any sentient being.

Therefore, Shinran Shonin declared,

In believing reverently in the Teaching, Practice, and Enlightenment of the True Teaching, I have realized particularly the Tathagata's deep Benevolence. Hereupon, I express my joy over what I have heard and praise what I have heard. *Op. cit.* p 26.

Such then is "... the Tathagata's deep Benevolence ..." that never abandons karma ridden beings because they are full of transgressions and desecrations, because they on their own are incapable of breaking out of the cycles of endless births and deaths.

Let us then, as Shin Buddhists, during this month when Thanksgiving Day is celebrated as an American national holiday and more as a time to take a vacation from work, express our gratitude and profound indebtedness for Amida's Benevolence for all the things and blessings we are enjoying each day throughout the year.

Let us now then end with one of Rennyo Shonin's epistles. It is referred to as *The Epistle on the Shonin's Singular Teaching (Shonin Ichiryu no Sho)*. It can be translated as follows:

The Shonin's key instruction is to make shinjin [true and real faith] most fundamental [in one's life]! The reason being that when a person single-heartedly trusts and takes refuge in Amida by abandoning all superficial and miscellaneous religious practices, then, from the side of Amida, a mysterious, ineffable power that is his Vow [of Unconditional Compassion] determines and settles the rebirth of such a person [into his Pure Land]! This moment is explained as "that singular thought" [through which] a person's status [of rebirth] becomes "truly settled and established." Whereby, the subsequent voicings of O-nembutsu become utterances [of gratitude acknowledging] that the Tathagata has assured such a person's rebirth. Such utterances should be understood as being a person's [voicing of her or his] profound indebtedness and gratitude.

How wonderful that this is truly so Rennyo. []s are mine.

Such is the inner peace full of serenity in a faith in which the sound of two sticks or many steel rods striking each other are not heard. Such is the happiness of a person of *shinjin* full of gratitude that is a penitence full of joy.

According to Rev. Yoshitaka Tamai in his *ICHINYO* [Oneness], a person of ingratitude constantly divides things and people into "opposites" that become confrontational and therefore divisive. A nation then is perceived to be either an "enemy" or an "ally." A person also is seen either as a friend or a foe. Persons of ingratitude, says Rev. Tamai, are characterized by feelings of *atarimae*, or the attitude that one is entitled to the things of life, that one has the right to think what s/he wants, feels and say or do whatever s/he wants, regardless of the effects and affects on innocent environments or on his fellow human beings.

Rev. Tamai long ago said that "the Teaching of the Buddha is based on the idea of "*Okagesamade*" (*loc. cit.* p. 119). *Okagesamade* according to Rev. Tamai means "it is because of the myriad of seen and unseen forces, things, creatures and other unseen people working all together in harmony and unison, that it is possible for each and everyone of us to be living and enjoying the very blessings of modern living as we do."

On a more fundamental level, *okagesamade* means that if even one element or factor in the complex web of life and things were missing, taken away or were made extinct, life then would be that much lessened and impoverished. This actuality is most keenly felt especially when one's soulmate or a lifelong trusted friend passes away.

Such then is the meaning of a life based on O-nembutsu gratitude, humility, reverence and penitence. Let me then once again end with Shinran's *Wasan* as follows:

*Of the Profound Virtues
of Tathagata's Compassion
for us all,
Though our bodies
become dust in the process,
we should express gratitude,
Of the Profound Virtues
of the Sagacious Masters,
Though our bones
be crushed in the process,
Also should we express gratitude.*

Shozomatsu Wasan

No. 59 rkt-trans.

Happy Thanksgiving to you all!

BUDDHIST VERSE or STORY

... Sakyamuni Buddha rejoices in the person of shinjin, saying, "he is my true companion." This person of shinjin is the true disciple of the Buddha; he is the one who abides in right-mindedness. Since he has been grasped never to be abandoned, he is said to have attained the diamond-like heart. He is called "the best among the best," "the excellent person," "the wonderfully excellent person," "the finest of people," "the truly rare person." Such a person has become established in the stage of the truly settled and is declared, therefore, to be the equal of Maitreya Buddha. This means that since he has realized true shinjin, he will necessarily be born in the true and real Buddha Land. You should know that this shinjin is bestowed through the compassionate means of Sakyamuni, Amida, and all the Buddhas in the [ten] quarters.... SBTS-Series. *Letters of Shinran*. pp 24, 25. [] mine.

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: What is shinjin-faith?

ANSWER: In the Glossary of *Notes on Essentials of Faith Alone* (p. 103) shinjin or faith is defined as follows:

The realization of Other Power in which human calculation is negated through the working of Amida Buddha. It denotes the central religious experience of Shin Buddhism, and literally means man's "true, real and sincere heart and mind" (*makoto no kokoro*), which is given by Amida Buddha. This mind has basically two aspects: a non-dichotomous identity wherein the heart and mind of Amida and the heart and mind of man are one, and a dichotomous relationship wherein the two are mutually exclusive and in dynamic interactions....

Fujinkai Mini Bazaar
Sunday, Nov. 4, 2012
9 A.M. to Noon