



GASSHO

August
2014

Issue No: 08-14

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



SEAMLESSNESS AND INSEPARABILITY

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

In this issue, I would like to talk again about the universe as being a timeless Oneness in which all things living and non-living are in an inseparable Togetherness and seamless Selflessness. A Oneness in which each thing and life form is governed by the uniform and orderly laws of causality, conditionality, interdependency, inseparability and karma, a Oneness wherein all things are regarded as sacred and seen to be spiritual.

This sense and vision of Oneness has been expressed by a Vietnamese refugee Zen monk now living in France, as follows:

"Whenever I touch a flower I touch the sun and yet I do not get burned. When I touch the flower I touch the cloud without flying to the sky. When I touch the flower, I touch my consciousness and the great planet Earth at the same time. ... The miracle is possible because of the nature and understanding of interbeing. If you really touch one flower deeply you touch the whole cosmos. The cosmos is neither one or many. When you touch one you touch many, and when you touch many, you touch one. Like Shakyamuni Buddha you can be everywhere at the same time. Think of your child of your beloved touching you now. Look more deeply, and you will see yourself in the multitudes penetrating everywhere, interbeing with everything everywhere." Thich Nhat Hanh. *Cultivating Love Everywhere*.

By "interbeing" Thich Nhat Hanh means that all things and forms of life have, are and yet continue

MONTH'S THOUGHT



The most dangerous thing is believing that we are enlightened and that we now understand. It is dangerous to consider ourselves a "good person" because we easily fall into the trap of telling others, "That is wrong faith, that is the wrong way."

... Rather: always keep in mind that we are just ordinary persons full of *bonno*, desires, and passions.

... we should reflect on them, one by one, and see them for what they are.

... Knowing what we are is the most important thing in life. And strangely, it is when we really know what we are, that we become one with the dharma. ...

— Yoshitaka Tamai. *Ichinyo*. p. 19.



to be in a selfless togetherness wherein all things and life forms at once are sacred and spiritual.

I would now like to talk about what is little known about the words that Ellison Onizuka (1946-1986) uttered upon getting a full view of Mother Earth as the space shuttle Discovery orbited the earth 48 times. He, as best I can recall, uttered in great wonder and awe:

"Oh ... the earth is very beautiful!
There are no lines or boundaries!
The earth is a most fragile thing!
We must learn to care for it!"

These words were in a brief article buried and
continued on p. 4

REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR AUGUST 2014

1ST SUN Aug 3rd

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

2ND SUN Aug 10th

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

3RD SUN Aug 17th

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

4TH SUN Aug 24th

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

5TH SUN Aug 31st

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

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

Mrs. Yukie Yamada 97 yrs. April 4, 2014



Rev. Tatsuguchi will be
off-island from August 28
through September 2

THANK YOU

for YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS !!

2014 Memorial Service Schedule

2013	1 Year	2012	3 Year	2008	7 Year
2002	13 Year	1998	17 Year	1990	25 Year
1982	33 Year	1965	50 Year	1915	100 Year

continued on p. 7

REV. SAKAMOTO'S CORNER

A Child's Heart Is Shaken by Mother's Grief

Hello everyone! We are now starting the eighth month of our centennial year. It is terribly hot, so please take care of yourself.

This month, I would like to share an incident that happened in Japan concerning a third-grade student. She confessed her crime as follows:

Teacher, please don't be angry with me. Please, don't be angry with me. We did a bad thing.

We stole some chewing gum in a shop. The first-grade student and I stole it. Soon we were caught. Most certainly the Buddha must have informed the shop woman. I couldn't therefore say a word. I was trembling like a fluttering leaf.

The first-grade student said, "Let's steal some chewing gum."

But because I didn't want to be caught, I said "No!"

So I said to the first-grade student, "You go steal it!" So the first-grade student went ahead and stole it.

But it was all my fault.

I was a hundred or a thousand times more guilty than the first-grade student was.

I was wrong. It is all my fault.

Though I hoped my mother would not find out about the incident, she found out about it. I never saw such a terrible look on my mother's face.

My mother spanked me so bad it hurt me to the marrow of my bones!

So as she was crying, she kept yelling at me: "Such a bad child as you, aren't my child. Get out of this house!"

So I left the house by myself all alone!

Then I went to the park. I felt as though I was in another country. So, I thought I had to get to somewhere.

But no matter how long I kept walking, I couldn't find a place to go. No matter how seriously I thought about it, I really didn't know where to go!

Finally, my legs started trembling. Then I started to walk back to the house and I apologized to my mother.

But my mother kept looking away from me. She would not look at me.

Why did I do such a terrible thing?

Already two days have passed since the incident. My mother was still crying sadly because of what I had done!

So I ask my teacher, "What should I do?"

"Seeing Amida Through a Child's Heart"
by Yoshio Toi.

Now, everyone, after reading this story how do you feel? The girl is suffering much remorse! The girl is reflecting so deeply! Amida Buddha, however, is beside this child and is guiding her in the right direction. Amida Buddha is also saddened and suffering with her.

When I read the part in this story when the child said: "My mother found out about the incident," I felt that that was it! For we also are like this child. For we want to please our parent (*Oyasama* = Amida). We don't want to make Amida our parent feel sad. In the bottom of our hearts, Amida Buddha is always there! I believe that Amida Buddha (our *Oyasama*) is always looking over us and protecting us with compassion. In moments of grief, regret and remorse as experienced by this third-grader, one finds Amida Buddha!

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: July 26, 2014

Contact Rev. Hidehito Sakamoto
at 220-3702 or hidehito128@gmail.com

continued from p. 1

obscured by a plethora of sensational photographs of space shuttle Columbia's explosion on that fatal day, February 1, 2003. All seven astronauts, one a woman, instantly perished when spaceship Columbia suddenly exploded into a thousand spiraling shattered bits of debris billowing flame and smoke.

It is now 2014, our centennial year. Let us for a moment, as this year's O'Bon season comes to its close, ponder these words of Onizuka that imply that our planet Earth, in actuality, is without national or racial boundaries where "all things are seamless and inseparable," and, therefore, of sacred and spiritual significance. Unknowingly, Onizuka was pointing out that no thing or life form can exist and survive on its own without the myriad of things and relationships that support and sustain its very existence. In doing so, Onizuka echoed the very words of Shinran Shonin as follows:

"This Tathagata pervades the countless worlds; it fills the hearts and minds of the ocean of all beings. Thus, plants, trees, and land all attain Buddhahood." SBT-Series. *Notes on Essentials of Faith*. p. 42.

Do not these words of Shinran imply as Thich Nhat Hanh has said that even a flower is of sacred and spiritual significance? That is, if one has the spiritual eye to see one's heart pulsating in perfect harmony with the hearts of all other things.

Now, Rev. Yoshitaka Tamai has also expressed this inseparability between the world of Dharma (or *Nirvana Without Residues*) and the world of sentient beings (or *samsara riddled by conflicts and disagreements*) as follows:

"... the Buddha-dharma is the teaching of 'non-duality,' expressed in Japanese as *funi*. It is the teaching of 'oneness,' expressed in Japanese as *ichinyo*. It is the teaching in which from the beginning, the 'enlightened' and the 'unenlightened' are one. It is the teaching in which the 'Buddha' and 'sentient beings' are one body. It is the teaching in which all creation is one, in which all things have the same basis. And that is why all things are looked upon as being the same." Y. Tamai. *Ichinyo*. p. 6.

Therefore, six kinds of beings are depicted as appearing and disappearing in the "six realms of

transmigration" to show the six kinds of situations human beings can find themselves in. The six are beings who are enjoying heavenly pleasures and states of joy; titanic beings who are constantly bickering, competing and fighting; human beings assailed by contradictions and paradoxes; brute animals devouring each other; ghostlike insatiable beings whose hunger and thirsts are never satisfied; and finally, demonic beings suffering the hellish consequences of their own transgressions.

The fact that unenlightened human beings are wandering and meandering about in the "six realms of transmigration" was noted by Shinran Shonin as follows: "Under the influence of our karmic past, we human beings will do anything" (T. Unno. *Tannisho*. XIII. p. 24). What these words mean is that we all are mere mortal beings riddled by blind passions and impelled by self vanities, especially by natural instincts and obsessive compulsion. As Shinran implies, human beings often inadvertently say and do things they ordinarily wouldn't when things get out of control. In doing so they bring much regret and remorse as long as they continue in their unenlightened ways of thinking, intending, speaking and doing things in the counter clockwise manner. Such is the meaning of meandering through life as though one were a god, titan, human, ghost-like being, animal or a demon.

This is exactly why we need to entrust ourselves to Amida Buddha's Benevolence by taking refuge in the Light of his Infinite Wisdom and her Life of All-embracing Compassion in which we as "mortal beings hopelessly riddled by transgressions and desecrations" are constantly being embraced by Amida Buddha never to be forsaken, rejected or abandoned but brought to our enlightenment and final Buddhahood.

This is why Shinran pointed out that:

"When the thought of saying the nembutsu emerges decisively from within, having entrusted ourselves from within to the inconceivable power of Amida's vow which saves us, enabling us to be born in the Pure Land, in that very moment we receive the ultimate benefit of being grasped never to be abandoned." T. Unno. *Tannisho*. I p. 5.

So saying, Shinran, as did his spiritual mentor Honen Shonin, admonished the common people: "Just

say the nembutsu and be saved by Amida." For Shinran realized that he was "absolutely incapable of any religious practice" and concluded: "hell is my only home." This is why he said: "Besides this "trusting and taking of refuge in Amida there is nothing else" (*Loc. cit.* II. p. 6, [] mine).

When you closely examine the Tibetan mandala depicting the "six realms of transmigration" you will find a Buddha in the very midst of each of the six realms. Then, in the very center of the "six realms" you will see a Buddha unperturbed sitting in perfect serenity and peace. S/he is not intimidated by the antics of the wild black boar chasing a strutting peacock (or crowing rooster) that is chasing a venomous snake which in turn is chasing the wild black boar endlessly round and round this unperturbed Buddha. They are chasing each other in the counterclockwise rotation. The only way to get to the other side of the Wheel is through this Buddha sitting in the center. To go through this Buddha is to pass through to the other side to begin walking the Eightfold Path. The Buddha at the very center is Amida Buddha. To pass through this Buddha is to trust and take refuge in him by first Rightly Contemplating his Primal Vow that is his Sacred Name that is Namoh-amida-butsu.

Now, surrounding this innermost Buddha and three creatures, there is another double ringed circle. The right half of this double ringed circle is in darkness. At the top there is a demon pushing and shoving beings down into the unfathomable depths of hellish existence. At the bottom another demon is receiving them into the very depths of demonic torment. Then, to complete the double circle, the other half to the left is fully illuminated. Beginning at the bottom, a devotee in *gassho* is following another devotee before him in *gassho* following others in *gassho* walking their way to the top. All are ascending upward to the very top of the double ringed circle. There at the very top, a Bodhisattva with open arms is welcoming them yet into higher levels of spiritual consciousness or what is a boundless cosmic "conscience-ness," the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness.

Now, as pointed out, it is to be noted that at the very top of this double circle there is the demon pushing beings down. There is also the Bodhisattva with open arms embracing beings in *gassho* also at the top. Their backs are juxtaposed. What does this back to back positioning of a Bodhisattva and

WORDS OF SHINRAN

The statement, "One will realize nirvana," means that when the heart of the person of true and real *shinjin* [faith] attains the fulfilled Buddha Land at the end of his present life, he becomes one with the light that is the heart of Tathagata, for his reality is immeasurable life and his activity is inseparable from immeasurable light. ... SBT-Series. *Letters of Shinran*. No. 14 p. 44.

a demon signify? They indicate that the world of enlightenment (light) and the world of transmigration (darkness) are distinct and apart and yet, at the same time, they form an inseparable double circle of two halves. Both form a seamless and inseparable double circumference. Though one half is bright and the other half is dark, the two halves form one seamless double circle. They are inseparable as are the light of day and the dark of night.

In other words, the world of Buddhas and the world of demons are "one and yet two" as well as "two and yet one." Therefore, when a sentient being stands before Amida the two are distinct and apart, and yet, both are simultaneously also fully within the Greater Boundless, Infinite Sphere of the Dharma's Selflessness and Togetherness represented by areas lying beyond the tight outermost circumference enclosing the Wheel of Transmigration to fully contain it within what is the Greater Unknown Beyond. Thus, the inseparability between sentient beings and Amida Buddha is yet embraced fully in the Greater Boundless Dharma World which is the significance of the phrase "one and yet three" and "three and yet one."

This is why, as often mentioned, Shinran said: "Amida's Primal Vow does not discriminate between the young and old, good and evil ..." (T. Unno. *Tannisho*. I. p. 5.). This means that Amida Buddha is the ultimate manifestation of the Dharma as the Light of Selfless Wisdom and its Life of All-embracing Compassion. Such then is the significance of the Buddha sitting in the very center of the wheel of transmigration. Amida sitting in the very center of the circle is your innermost being, your heart of hearts. He is waiting for you to trust

and take refuge in him as he is Wisdom's True Light and Compassion's Real Life. This Light has never condemned any being. This Life also has never forsaken any being. For these reasons, Amida sits in serenity unperturbed by the pestiferous antics of the boar, rooster and viper constantly trying to overturn him.

This mysterious relationship between sentient beings and Amida Buddha has been likened to a parent and child relationship. This significance is found in one of Shinran's Wasans as follows:

Sakya and Amida are
Compassionate parents;
Using all means
they skillfully lead us
And the Supreme Faith
do they awaken in us.
Ryukoku Trans. Series.
Koso Wasan No. 74.

This is why in the *Shoshin Ge* Shinran also had the verses:

"Sakyamuni Tathagatha
appeared in this world,
Solely to teach the ocean-like
Primal Vow of Amida;
We, an ocean of beings in
an evil age of five defilements,
should entrust ourselves
To the Tathagata's words of truth."
SBT-Series. *The True Teaching,
Practice and Realization of the
Pure Land Way*. p. 161.

The five defilements are about the incessant conflicts and violence that arise due to man's ignorance as follows: his denial of causation and karma that blemishes his thoughts, words and deeds with selfishness, vanities and resentments. These result in foolishness, mental stress, emotional disturbances and physical debilities which finally end in untimely deaths due to a person's excessiveness in self indulgences.

Then in lines 27 and 28 of the *Shoshin Ge*, Shinran Shonin indicates the need to entrust ourselves by taking refuge in Amida's Benevolence with a "singular, unwavering thought" that "awakens a faith true and real" in which one's passions, vanities, transgressions and desecrations are not obliterated or incinerated but are "transformed" into

pure gratitude and a penitence overflowing with joy as follows:

"When the one thought-moment of joy arises, nirvana is attained without severing blind passions; when ignorant and wise, even grave offenders and slanderers of the dharma, all alike turn and enter *shinjin* [the world of Dharma's Selflessness and Togetherness], they are like waters that, upon entering the ocean become one in taste with it." *Ibid.* [] mine.

This "becoming one in taste" means that a person's ingratitude becomes transformed into gratitude, irreverence into reverence and impertinence into a penitence. Such a person becomes brimming over with joy and gladness for having been so grasped just as the person full of transgressions one is, never to be condemned, rejected or abandoned.

The phrase "offenders and slanderers of the dharma" is pointing out that even monks and nuns supposedly celibate and upholding their vows of chastity and poverty, in reality, are also mere mortal beings riddled by personal failings and short comings. Even so they are fully and equally embraced by Amida's Compassion that never abandons anyone who takes refuge in him. This underlying nature of man riddled by blinding passions and vanities has been confirmed by the analyst Carl Gustav Jung, who once quipped: "We're no different from our mammalian cousins. We have to eat, sleep, move about and procreate."

This was exactly why Shinran Shonin, who once pursued the life of a celibate monk on Mt. Hiei, finally came to the realization:

"... since the person of self-power [like a law-abiding person], being conscious of doing good, lacks the thought of entrusting himself completely to Other Power [meaning Amida Buddha], he is not the focus of the Primal Vow of Amida. But when he turns over self-power and entrusts himself to Other Power, he attains birth in the land of True Fulfillment." Unno. *Loc. cit.* III. p. 8, [] mine.

In other words, the person with presumptions that she or he is going to a heavenly paradise based on her or his good deeds and good will, such a person does not realize as did Shinran that ordinary mortal beings on their own merits and ability are incapable

of attaining enlightenment on their own powers and virtues. This is why he finally exclaimed: "I am absolutely incapable of any religious practice, hell is my only home" (Unno. *Loc. cit.* II. p 6).

Upon hearing the "voiceless voice" of Amida calling out to him to cross a White Path over to the safety of the Other Shore just as the "unsavable person" he was, Shinran also heard the "voiceless voice" of Sakyamuni urging him to do so. The "voiceless voice" of Amida is her Sacred Name, *Namoh-amida-butsu*. This Name is the White Path that connects the "six realms of transmigration" to the World of Dharma's Selflessness and Togetherness, or Amida's Pure Land. The "voiceless voice" of Sakyamuni is from this shore (the six realms). They are his teachings on Amida Buddha. His teachings even now resonate the Dharma's Selflessness and Togetherness from above, below, the sides and all around this world of ours, or what

GASSHO continues on p. 8

continued from p. 2

Donations

SHINRAN'S WASAN

Having a heart full of
vipers and scorpions,
Incapable am I of things
virtuous and good
on my own merits.
Without the Tathagatha's
endowments of her
virtues and merits,
My life can only end in
shameful impertinence!

Shozomatsu Wasan No. 99
rkt translation.

are the ten infinite directions and boundless regions of the universe.

According to Shinran in his *Shoshin Nembutsu Ge* (Hymns of True and Real Faith), the "six realms of transmigration" are under dark clouds that obscure the Dharma Sun above. Even on a clear day, white clouds blanket out the Dharma Sun. Therefore, both Amida's World (the Other Shore) and the world of sentient beings (this shore) under these clouds appear to be distinct and apart. And yet, sentient beings separated by hatreds and selfishness nevertheless are being illuminated by the Dharma World's Selfless Light and its All-embracing Life that unflinchingly keep penetrating the dark clouds, mists and fog that obscure the White Path that connects the World of Buddhas to the world of sentient beings. This is why Amida's "voiceless voice" can be heard from the Other Shore as well as Sakyamuni's voice on "this shore" urging us to do so. Shinran expressed hearing as "hearing the Light" (*mon' ko*).

The following words in the *Shoshin Ge* point to this inseparability as follows:

"The light of compassion that grasps us
illuminates and protects us always.
The darkness of our ignorance is already
broken through,
Still the clouds and mists of greed and
desire, anger and hatred,
Cover as always the sky of true and real
shinjin.

"But though the light of the sun is veiled
by clouds and mists,
Beneath the clouds and mists, there is
brightness, not dark.
When one realizes *shinjin*, seeing and
revering and attaining great joy,
One immediately leaps crosswise,
closing off the five evil courses."
SBT-Series. *Loc. cit.*, Vol. I. p. 162.

Therefore, through these verses, the significance of Master Shan'tao's Parable of the White Path and Rivers of Fire and Water becomes even more significant in understanding Amida Buddha's Infinite Wisdom and Boundless Compassion that has never nor will ever condemn to reject and abandon karma riddled sentient beings until the last one of them has been enlightened and attains Buddhahood.

Shinshu Kyokai Mission

1631 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96826
skm@ShinshuKyokai.org
www.ShinshuKyokai.org

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BUDDHIST STORY OR PASSAGE

"Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared." Buddhist saying.

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: What do you mean by "selflessness" and "togetherness?"

ANSWER: By selflessness and togetherness I refer to the timeless actualities and realities that permeate to animate our lives with manifold blessings. According to the Buddha's Teachings, the ability to visualize spiritual things through Right Contemplation is a blessing. According to Shinran Shonin, in doing so, we are "enabled" to Rightly Reflect on how unworthy and undeserving we are of all the blessings we constantly are receiving, especially in ways unseen. Such a person, of natural consequence, expresses gratitude, humility and a penitence brimming over with joy, not doubts or fears.