



GASSHO

September

2014

Issue No: 09-14

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



NO SELF, APPARENT SELF, ACTUAL SELF

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

In this issue, I would like to dwell on some problems in trying to explain such Buddhist terms like *anâtman* (P. *anattâ*), which literally translates as "no-self," and *anitya* (P. *annica*) as since "all things are constantly changing," some have translated it as "nothing exists" or "everything is not real." Trying to rectify such misinterpretations embroils us in controversies as to whether one's physical self is real or merely an illusion and so forth. Furthermore, the debate as to whether one's soul survives one's bodily death to take up residence in another has become a perennial question.

So allow me to begin with a story of Queen Mallika, of whom there are several. She being a beautiful woman was sought after as a wife by many suitors. She was just married to King Pasenadi of Kosala. He was burning with the desire to consummate their marriage.

The *Raja Sutta* records the following exchange of words between the two.

"Thus have I heard.

"At one time the Lord was staying near Savatthi at the Jeta Wood at Anathanpindaka's monastery. On that occasion King Pasenadi of Kosala had gone to the upper story of the royal palace with Queen Mallika. Then King Pasenadi of Kosala said to Queen Mallika, 'Is there anyone, Mallika, dearer to you than yourself?'

" 'There is no one, great King, dearer to me than myself. But is there anyone, great King, dearer to you than yourself?'

MONTH'S THOUGHT



"Are you frightened of solitude — the emptiness and loneliness you may find when you face yourself alone?" Thich Nhat Hanh. *Peace Is Every Step*. p. 13.



" 'Neither is there, Mallika, dearer to me than myself.'

"Then King Pasenadi of Kosala descended from the palace and went to visit the Lord. On approaching the Lord, he prostrated himself, sat down to one side, and reported the conversation.

"Then on realizing its significance, the Lord uttered on that occasion,

'Our traversing all directions with the wind

One finds no one anywhere dearer than oneself.

Likewise anyone holds himself most dear.

Hence one who loves himself should not harm another.' "

(from the *Undan & Itivuttaka*)

Here, we get the Buddha's understanding of a person as a being and personality with instinctual desires and human feelings (*nama-rupa* = psycho-physical personality) vulnerable to sickness, aging and death. According to Buddhist analysis, a human

continues on p. 4

REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR SEPTEMBER 2014

1ST SUN Sept 7th:

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

2ND SUN Sept 14th:

Autumn Higan Service
9 A.M. Eng. Service
Centennial Celebration
to follow the service

3RD SUN Sept 21st:

Chicken & Sushi Sale
9 A.M. to 1 P.M.
pickup in the parking lot

4TH SUN Sept 28th:

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
Tues 9 a.m. - noon

With Deepest Sympathy

Mrs. Carol Kanda 92 yrs. July 20, 2014
Mr. Thomas K. Settsu 78 yrs. July 20, 2014

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	33Year	1965	50 Year	1915	100 Year

continued on p. 7

REV. SAKAMOTO'S CORNER

Myogo (The Name)

Hello everyone! We are now in the ninth month of our centennial year. How are you doing?

This month, we will be observing Fall Ohigan Service. When I was in Japan, it was customary at this time of year to visit members and chant a sutra before their family Buddhist shrines for the family's ancestors and other deceased loved ones.

On one such occasion, as I was chanting a sutra, I gradually became interested in a scroll hanging in the alcove (*tokonoma*). It was a very old scroll and it was brushed in calligraphy. It had six Chinese characters, "Na-mo A-mi-da Butsu" (南無阿彌陀佛). Later I asked about it.

The family has operated a sake shop since olden days. A friend of the family once borrowed money to build a house. After, he returned the money and also presented the scroll as a token of his appreciation and gratitude. This scroll ever since has been in the family to this day.

Being curious about who brushed the scroll, I recommended that the family have it appraised by an expert. The scroll proved to be one of Rennyō Shonin's calligraphy.

We then became quite excited about it: "Oh, this scroll is in Rennyō Shonin's handwriting! This calligraphy of Rennyō must be a valuable thing!" But according to the professional, Rennyō Shonin frequently visited Shiga-prefecture (my home town) many times. He frequently gave his calligraphic writings as a token of his gratitude. This scroll was one of many such scrolls given as gifts by Rennyō Shonin.

In Jodo Shinshu, Amida Buddha is worshipped in three forms: 1) the statue of Amida in human likeness, 2) painting of Amida in human

form on a scroll, and 3) the Name (*myogo*) Na-mo A-mi-da Butsu written in Chinese characters. According to Rennyō Shonin, a painting of Amida is preferred over a statue of him. Even more preferred than the painting is the Name. Amida for the Name was to teach Jodo Shinshu followers that Amida is not a divine being, but a symbol of understanding and caring. If this were not so, we as sentient beings would worship Amida as an image and become a captive of Amida as though he were a person.

Na-mo originated from a Sanskrit word which means "to take refuge." And A-mi-da-but-su means the Buddha whose name is Amida. So together Namō Amida Butsu means "I take refuge in Amida Buddha." When the seeker fully trusts and awakens to Amida, the seeker and Amida become one. This Oneness is embodied in the six syllables of Na-mo A-mi-da-Butsu. So this can be expressed as "Amida and I are one."

Then we have two means through which we can experience Amida Buddha in this life: 1) through visual form in meditative visualization and 2) by saying the Name: Na-mo A-mi-da-Butsu that can be heard. Meditation involves concentration that requires special training. Monks and nuns undergo many years of rigorous training to be able to do this. Anyone, however, can just say Namō Amida Butsu.

So Shinran Shonin the founder of our Jodo Shinshu focused on thinking of it as seeing Amida Buddha itself. So, in saying the Name, we laypersons who are incapable of rigorous meditation are also able to connect with Amida by just saying the Name. The reason why is in our tradition the Name Na-mo A-mi-da-Butsu is preferred over the other two graphic forms of Amida as a person.

Everyone, therefore, when you see a calligraphy of Amida's Name in a Buddhist family shrine, please recite it in your hearts with this understanding it is Amida Buddha. I hope you now understood why the Name (*myogo*) is preferred over images of Amida. I believe then you and Amida will easily connect and become one in a special world of Na-mo A-mi-da-Butsu in your recitations of nembutsu.

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: September 26, 2014

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

being (in the bio-physiological sense) is no different from his mammalian cousins in an existence of "ceaseless births and deaths."

As of consequence, sensations, perceptions, mental processing and subsequent conscious reactions and responses in human beings are tinged with their personal inclinations and proclivities that influence what they as individuals decide to say and do. Therefore, a person's mind is constantly working and contriving to obtain sense gratifications, advantages and affirmations in enhancing his images of self, being and personhood. Therefore, there is yet even a deeper meaning to Queen Mallika's response: "There is no one ... dearer to me than myself." For in reality, each one of us is out to get what we personally want according to our way, regardless of the short or long term consequences.

According to Shinran Shonin, people normally want to be good. However, because of their "love of self," they are unable to be truly good and genuinely loving of others because of their own self attachments. This fact was honestly stated by Queen Mallika. Shinran, even more profoundly yet awakened to the most "frightening fact" that even a normally good human being, given the unexpected turn of events, can suddenly, out of the clear blue, erupt in rage and violence. This is why Shinran said: "Under the influence of our karmic past we human beings will do anything." (Tannisho, XIII). What this means is, even though we do not want to injure anyone, we may, as Shinran said, given the circumstances, be led to kill even a hundred or a thousand people (*ibid.*).

According to Theravada Buddhism, suffering arises because of one's clinging to one's sense of being independent of the support of other things and forms of life because of our self vanities and attachments. In our love of self, we are not aware that we are full of likes and dislikes blemished by passions and foolishness. Therefore, the goal in Theravada Buddhism is to cut off one's attachments to sense gratifications and desires for personal recognition and worldly fame by renouncing all worldly life.

In Mahayana Buddhism suffering, therefore, also arises when we cling to one's sense of self importance. In Mahayana even such a person can obtain "ultimate freedom" by awakening to the actuality that all things and forms of life are

seamless and inseparable and, therefore, are to be regarded as sacred and spiritual. According to Shinran Shonin, such a person comes to live the life of *nembutsu* when he realizes that "... no self-working is true working ..." (Tannisho X).

The life of *O-nembutsu* is based on what Sakyamuni Buddha taught that "nothing in life can be called truly 'mine' or 'not mine' for all things and life forms are in a seamless and inseparable relationship of co-existence in which all things and forms of life keep appearing and disappearing over timeless time." Furthermore, no thing or person can exist on its own without the innumerable support of others. Nothing in life, therefore, can be called permanently "mine" or "yours." Therefore, said Sakyamuni, the thought of "I," "me," "myself," or "mine" is an illusion, if not a delusion. For no one thing or life form on its own can survive and exist in and of itself.

According to the *Vacchagotta Sutta*, the wanderer ascetic Vacchagotta confronted the Buddha with several unanswerable questions to which the Buddha remained silent without saying "yes" or "no." The list contained questions such as "whether the soul is a separate and independent entity from the body," "whether the cosmos is finite or infinite," "whether Buddhas exist or not," and so on endlessly. Such questions are like asking, "Which came first, the egg or the hen?" To all these rhetorical questions the Buddha amazingly kept his silence. As of consequence, Vacchagotta finally left in great disappointment.

Then Ananda asked the Buddha why he remained silent. Sakyamuni then said:

"Ananda, when asked by Vacchagotta, the Wanderer: 'Is there a Self?' if I had answered: 'There is a Self,' then, Ananda, that would be siding with those recluses and brahmanas who hold the eternalist theory (*sassata-vada*).

"And Ananda, when asked by the Wanderer: 'Is there no Self?' if I had answered: 'There is no Self,' then that would be siding with those recluses and brahmanas who hold the annihilationist theory (*uccedavada*).

"Again, Ananda, when asked by Vacchagotta: 'Is there a Self? If I had answered: "There is a Self,' would that be in accordance with my knowledge that all dhammas are without Self?"

"Surely not, Sir.

"And again, Ananda, when asked by the Wanderer: 'Is there no Self?' if I had answered: 'There is no Self,' then that would have created a greater confusion in the already confused Vacchagotta. For he would have thought: 'Formerly indeed I had an *Atman* (Self), but now I haven't got one.' "

This is why the Buddha regarded such metaphysical speculations as useless and unsatisfactory. This is why he said,

"Only through ignorance and delusion do men indulge in the dream that their souls are separate and self-existing entities. Their heart still clings to Self. They are anxious about heaven and they seek the pleasure of Self in heaven. Thus they cannot see the bliss of righteousness and the immortality of truth."

Such questions appear in modern man's mind because his consciousness continues to be riddled by bio-physiological urges, cravings and meta-physical illusions concerning what is true or false.

So Albert Einstein's comment concerning a deity who can be wrathful as well as loving becomes significant. For he said:

"Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hopes of reward after death." *New York Times* 11/9/30.

What Einstein means by these words is that "true religiosity" (or "true and real faith") cannot be based on a fear of life or death as based on blind faith. For he says genuine religiosity can only come through "striving after rational knowledge." However, it is to be noted that in Buddhism, Wisdom (Bodhi) is more than mere "rational or scientific knowledge." This is because Wisdom also entails a Compassion arising from the mystery (*fukashigi*) that is the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness that are ineffable (*fukasho*).

The Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda Maha Thera in his *What the Buddhists Believe* has said:

"Belief in an eternal soul is a misconception of the human consciousness."

WORDS OF SHINRAN

The master Shinran said, "in the nembutsu no self-working is true working; it is beyond description, explanation and conceivability."
T. Unno. *Tannisho*. X. p. 16.

To confirm this assertion, he quotes the *Dhammapada* as follows:

"All conditioned things are impermanent,
All conditioned things are Dukka —
Suffering,
All conditioned or unconditioned things
are soulless or selfless.
(*Dhammapada* 277, 278, 279.)

Furthermore, he also quoted from the *Anatta-Lakkhana Sutta* in which the Buddha said:

"The **body**, O monks, is not the Self. **Sensation** is not the Self. **Perception** is not the Self. The **mental constructions** are not the Self. And neither is [streaming] **consciousness** the Self. Perceiving this, O monks, the disciple sets no value on the body, or on sensation, or on perception, or on mental constructions, or on consciousness. Setting no value of them, he becomes free of passions and he is liberated. The knowledge of liberation arises there within him. And then he knows that he has done what has to be done, that he has lived the holy life, that he is no longer becoming this or that, that his rebirth is destroyed." Underlined and in bold to indicate the five inter-connecting processes comprising a person's conscious being in and of themselves are not the Self. Underlining and in bold for emphasis.

This is why Sakyamuni Buddha once said,

"Only through ignorance and delusion do men indulge in the dream that their souls are separate and self-existing entities. Their heart still clings to Self. They are anxious about heaven and they seek the pleasure of Self in heaven. Thus they cannot see the bliss of righteousness and the immortality of truth." *Ibid*. Underlining and italics mine.

Notions of a soul existing independently apart of one's self appear in such a person's mind [consciousness] because of his desires for personal affirmations of his soul seeking happiness in heaven.

Candrakirti (600–c. 650) was a disciple of Master Nagarjuna. Nagarjuna is revered as one of the outstanding Pure Land Sages of India. Candrakirti set forth the notion of a person in understandable terms. He said the human being is a psycho-physical person with an intrinsic nature, meaning a self characterized by certain proclivities and idiosyncrasies. Candrakirti also said that a human being is a non-permanent entity because the self is physically and psychologically a person constantly changing. (see Candrakirti's *the Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path of Enlightenment*).

Therefore, when Mahayana Buddhist concepts and ideals of interdependency and inseparability as characteristics of a "no-self working" were transmuted into the forty-eight vows of Amida Buddha, it was then that the very nature and essence of *Nirvana Without Residues* was finally seen to embrace and include the self hopelessly riddled by irreversible *karmic* transgressions and desecrations instead of being rejected and abandoned. The Ultimate *Dharma's* Selflessness and Togetherness without discriminations or favoritisms timelessly grasps the "good person" and especially even more so the "evil person" without condemnations or exclusions.

Therefore, Shinran's lengthy explanation of how Amida Buddha's Wisdom's Light and Compassion's Life came to permeate throughout the entire endless directions and regions of universe ("the ten quarters") is presented below. It is quite involved. However, you will appreciate even more deeply as to why Amida Buddha has never or will ever reject the likes of you and I who are riddled by implacable transgressions and desecrations. That is, if you read and keep on re-reading his words as quoted below, until you grasp the reason why Amida Buddha appeared from the World of Dharma into this world of ours.

His involved words are:

"... there are two kinds of dharmakaya in regard to the Buddha. The first is called dharmakaya-as-suchness and the second, dharmakaya-as-compassion. Dharmakaya-as-suchness has neither color nor form; thus,

the mind cannot grasp it nor words describe it. From this oneness was manifested form called dharmakaya-as-compassion. Taking this form, the Buddha proclaimed his name as Bhikshu Dharmakara and established the forty-eight great Vows that surpass conceptual understanding. Among these Vows are the Vow of immeasurable light and the universal Vow of immeasurable life, and to the form manifesting these two Vows Bodhisattva gave the title, 'Tathagata of unhindered light filling the ten quarters.' This Tathagata has fulfilled the Vows, which are the cause of his Buddhahood, and is called 'Tathagata of fulfilled body.' This is none other than Amida Tathagata. 'Fulfilled' means that the cause for enlightenment has been fulfilled. From this fulfilled body innumerable personified and accommodated bodies are manifested, radiating the unhindered light of wisdom throughout the countless worlds. Thus appearing in the form of light called 'Tathagata of unhindered light filling the ten quarters,' it is without color and without form. This is identical with the dharmakaya-as-suchness, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and unobstructed by karmic evil. For this reason it is called 'unhindered light.' Unhindered means that it is not obstructed by the karmic evil and blind passion of beings. Know, therefore, that Amida Buddha is light, and the light is the form taken by wisdom." SBT, pp. 42-44.

Though the paragraph quoted above is quite lengthy and difficult reading, if you keep reading and re-reading each sentence, phrase and word until you finally grasp the profound significance of Amida's compassionate Vows, you will come to realize that it was just for you, yourself alone. Most likely then you will experience an "awakening of faith that is true and real" that transforms your whole being, person and personality.

In his *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, D.T. Suzuki refers to this transformative significance of Amida's Benevolence that has and continues to be timelessly active and working in unraveling one's ego, egoism and egoity full of denials, shortcomings and failings. This is because most human beings in their presumptions of self sufficiency and personal adequacy are thoughtless and mindless of their transgressions of things that are eternally sacred and timelessly spiritual.

Suzuki therefore said:

“Most people fail to distinguish the moral life from the inner transcendental life, which, it may be asserted, has a life of its own and lives altogether separate from an individually differentiated life which has its values in a world of utilitarian purposiveness.” p. 145.

This distinction, however, does not mean that the transcendental and utilitarian dimensions in one's life are completely cut off and unrelated one from the other (i.e., “heaven” and “hell”). According to the principle of “two and yet one” and “one and yet two,” the two worlds of one's “inner” and “outer” lives are inseparable and seamless as are moonlight from sunlight, man and woman, especially as are a mother and her newborn child sucking at her breast. This inseparability also can be likened to the two sides of a single coin. One side does not exist if the other side does not exist: this is the single coin of one's being, person and personality, one side in samsara, the other embraced by Nirvana.

The following poems of myokonin Asahara Saichi translated by D.T. Suzuki express this “two and yet one” and “one and yet two” relationship

GASSHO continues on p. 8

Donations

continued from p. 2

SHINRAN'S WASAN

By virtue of Amida's transference
of Wisdom through his Vows,
Those truly receiving its faith
that is true, real and sincere,
Are embraced never to be abandoned,
Until they attain that perfect state
of equal enlightenment!

Shozomatsu Wasan No. 25
rkt – translation.

between Amida and Saichi as being inseparable though completely opposite in nature, like water and ice. They are:

Ki and ho, are of one body, which is the Namu-amida-butsu.
However much this is recited, it is inexhaustible.

How wretched! —
This comes out spontaneously.
How grateful for Buddha's favor! —
This too spontaneously.
Ki and ho, both are Oya's working:
All comes out in perfection.

Saichi's Nyorai-san,
Where is he?
Saichi's Nyorai-san is no other than the oneness of ki and ho.
How grateful I am! "Namu-amida-butsu!"
"Namu-amida-butsu, Namu-amida-butsu!"

Ki means sentient beings, specifically Saichi himself. *Ho* means Dharma, the Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness. *Oya* means a parent, here Amida Buddha. The term *Oya* especially brings images of a mother nursing her just-born infant. They are two and yet one in spirit.

So, by trusting in the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and in having taken refuge in its Reality of Togetherness, all opposites become inseparable and seamless by power and virtue of Amida's Infinite Wisdom and All-embracing Compassion.

Please attend this centennial year's

Autumn O'Higan

service at 9:00 AM, and

Centennial Luncheon

to follow on

Sunday, Sept. 14

at our **Temple social hall**



Shinshu Kyokai Mission

1631 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96826

skm@ShinshuKyokai.org
www.ShinshuKyokai.org

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HONOLULU, HI
PERMIT NO. 231

Return Service Requested

BUDDHIST STORY OR PASSAGE

"Him I call indeed a Brahman who calls nothing his own, whether it pertains to past, present, or future, who is poor and free from grasping." Irving Babbitt.
The Dhammapada. No. XXVI. p. 61.

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

Question: What is the meaning of "selflessness?"

Answer: According to Tyler Dewar: "the 'selflessness' discussed in Buddhism does *not* refer to a character or personality trait.... The Buddhist investigations related to selflessness are in no way a type of self-denial or suppression. At no point in our meditation journey are we asked to stop using the first-person pronoun in conversation, or to not have a sense of care and respect for our precious human life, or to dim down our personalities to become something less vivid. The aim of the exploration here is to become free from the tendency to bind ourselves up in confused thoughts."
Selflessness as a Reality, not a Character Trait.