



# GASSHO

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*"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"*



## AMIDA'S COMPASSION EMBRACES ALL SENTIENT BEINGS

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

Once again I wish to reiterate that the Dharma is the Truth of Selflessness timelessly shining on all things and forms of life "just as they are" to permeate them with its Reality of Togetherness that continues to sustain them in an inseparable relationship that is eternally sacred and spiritual.

According to Shinran Shonin, the Dharma's Truth is inseparable from its Reality constantly resounding in the depths of our very consciousness as a "voiceless voice" urging us all to trust in its Light of Selfless Wisdom by taking refuge in its All-embracing Compassion that is without rejections or condemnations. Since beginningless time Amida has never rejected any sentient being, especially those riddled by hopeless transgressions and desecrations.

The Dharma's Truth of Selflessness keeps manifesting itself as the Light of Wisdom constantly suffusing all things and forms of life with its Life of Compassion that is a Togetherness embracing them all, not only human beings. This source of Inconceivable Light and Immeasurable Life emerges in our deepest consciousness to permeate our whole being as Amida Buddha embracing all opposites with a golden radiance without discriminations or favoritisms. In these senses, Amida Buddha is not some detached deity such as depicted in the Abrahamic religions who favors one person or one race over all others.

For example, in the Old Testament we

## MONTH'S THOUGHT



A human being is part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. —Albert Einstein.



read of a Creator God who savors the aroma of Abel's burnt animal sacrificial offerings and is pleased by its fragrances. In Genesis 4:1-17, God accepts Abel's unblemished yearling sacrifices and "did not respect" Cain's offerings of fruits, grain and vegetables. Because God rejected Cain's offerings of fruit, nuts, grain and vegetables, he became so upset that he, out of jealous anger, kills Abel. Throughout the Old Testament is this theme of a God being pleased with the "burnt animal flesh," more so than with the fragrance of "burnt grain and vegetables" (see Exodus 29:15, 19 & 22-24).

In the Abrahamic religions, deity is obviously depicted as an authoritarian male for he is referred to as "God the Father," the "King of Kings and the Lord of Lords" who created the heavens and the earth and everything in the skies, on the land and in the oceans out of the Great Void (*ex nihilo*). The image of God is that of a judge who is on a throne on a final judgment day. Such an image is a most striking

# REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SERVICES FOR MAY 2015

### 1st SUN May 3rd

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

### 2nd SUN May 10th

#### Commemorating Shinran's Birthday

9 A.M. English Service  
Rev. Tatsuguchi

### 3rd SUN May 17th

No service

### 3rd SUN May 24th

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

### 4th SUN May 31st

9 a.m. Dharma Talk  
for Children & Adults  
Rev. Tatsuguchi

## WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

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

**KARATE CLASSES** Tues & Fri 6 – 8 p.m.  
Int'l Karate League – Walter Nishioka

**KARATE CLASSES** Thurs 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.  
Hawaii Shotokan Karate – Alan Sekiguchi

**FUJINKAI LADIES' FELLOWSHIP GROUP**  
Tues 9 a.m. – noon



Rev. Tatsuguchi will be off-island  
from May 11 - 21

## 2015 Memorial Service Schedule

|      |         |      |         |      |          |
|------|---------|------|---------|------|----------|
| 2014 | 1 Year  | 2013 | 3 Year  | 2009 | 7 Year   |
| 2003 | 13 Year | 1999 | 17 Year | 1991 | 25 Year  |
| 1983 | 33 Year | 1966 | 50 Year | 1914 | 100 Year |

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feature in the Semitic religions.

In Pure Land Buddhist scriptures, Amida Buddha, by contrast, is depicted as a mother constantly hovering over, protecting and nurturing her infant with unconditional love, more so than as an authoritarian father asserting that his will be done and whose directives are to be obeyed. If defied, the disobedient is to be punished and even executed.

The compound "*Oya-sama*" in Shin Buddhism conveys a "vision" of Amida Buddha as one's "Eternal Parent" whose guidance is unailing and whose nurturance is unwavering, especially when a child is wayward and becomes delinquent. This is why Amida Buddha is often drawn and sculptured with two attendants, *Seishi Bosatsu* (Bodhisattva of Wisdom) on his right and *Kannon Bosatsu* (Bodhisattva of Compassion) on his left.

Amida Buddha is ever ready to grasp and embrace a being who trusts in his Light of Selfless Wisdom (*Seishi*) and has taken refuge in his Life of Compassion (*Kannon*). This triadic depiction symbolizes the activity of the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and Reality of Togetherness that unfailingly working to bring about each sentient being's "awakening of true and real faith" (*shinjitsu shinjin*).

Amida's right hand is raised with thumb and forefinger forming a circle to symbolize the Dharma's Clear Light of Selflessness shining on everything, not just on human beings. Amida's left hand is lowered with thumb and finger forming a circle to symbolize the Dharma's Pure Life unailingly enfolding all sentient beings. The power of Wisdom and Virtues of Com-

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## WORDS OF SHINRAN

"All beings have been fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters in the timeless process of birth-and-deaths. ..."

Words of Shinran Shonin. *Tannisho* XIII p. 13  
(T. Unno trans.).

passion both sustain all things and beings without preferences or favoritisms. This Infinite Light of Selflessness and Immeasurable Life of Togetherness especially penetrate into the most unfathomable of hells full of beings in total, abject darkness. In doing so, the beings trapped therein are "grasped just as they are" by Amida and lifted back into the multi-dimensions of True Light and Real Life to "enlighten" and finally transform them into Buddhas. This is the significance of Amida's first and second Vows. His Eighteenth Vow is the Vow to save all sentient beings without rejections and condemnations. Each of Amida's 48 Vows have been all so consummated.

The sense of inseparability between non-living and living things and Amida Buddha can be appreciated in a poem for children entitled "Little Birds, a Bell and Me." This poem composed by Misuzu Kaneko charmingly tells children that even seemingly lifeless things like bells and even flowers have sacred and spiritual significances as follows:

No matter how I flap my arms  
I cannot fly,  
But little birds that can  
Can't run as fast as I

No matter how I shake my body  
I can't produce a beautiful sound,  
But bells that can  
Don't know many songs as I.

The bell, the little birds  
And me —  
We are all different  
And are all good just as we are.

Daishun Ueyama. *Misuzu's World  
of O-nembutsui*. p. 29.

This poem helps even us adults to understand the significance of the phrase "we are all good just as we are" (*kono mi kono mama*). The phrase means that even such things as a temple bell and a Buddhist gong upon being "sounded" begin resonating and emanating spiritual vibrations that pacify and calm one's person and being with serenity and peace just as the karma riddled beings we are without trying to "convert" us or others into saints or angels.

Now, when a Buddhist hanging temple bell or an altar gong is "sounded," the initial vibrations vibrate inward to the very still center where all is complete perfect calm and silence. There are no vibrations in the center of our being. There is a Buddha in the very core of our being. This Buddha symbolizes perfect peace and serenity (Selflessness). Then, from this very still center, mellowed resonances ripple forth in ever widening circles of All-embracing Togetherness to infuse and permeate all that it touches with loving kindness, joy, compassion, generosity and equanimity.

These ever widening "soundings" of good will emanating from the very still center of one's being send out vibrations that connect one's core being to the Boundless Mind of Dharma that is inseparable from the Dharma's Heart of Compassion that embraces all living beings and non-living things throughout the "ten endless directions and regions of the universe."

These resonances are of cosmic proportions. They are not the deafening clangs of bells clanging or the shrill of howling sirens that are unnerving and unsettling to the ears. The Dharma's "radiance" of Selflessness and "resonances" of Togetherness, beckoning as the mellow "voiceless voice" of Amida "sounding" from our deepest beings that mysteriously become our very voicings of *Namoh-amida-butsu* full of gratitude, humility and especially a penitence full of joy.

In the very center of one's deepest being, there is a "wild black boar" (greed),

a "venomous asp" (anger) and a "crowing rooster" (vanities). These creatures are constantly harassing and trying to overturn the Buddha in the very still center of our core being. The "voiceless voice" of this Buddha brings one a steadfast calm and serenity despite the inner chaos and confusion caused by these three creatures in one's person and relationship to others. For a person who has trusted and taken refuge in this Buddha, his innermost core being and person become connected to Amida, whereby he is not bothered anymore by nonexistent gods or imaginary demons.

The "voiceless voice" of Amida Buddha eternally emanating the Dharma's Inconceivable Truth of Selflessness timelessly resonates the Dharma's Ineffable Reality of Togetherness. Such rays of Infinite Truth and resonances of Timeless Reality bring joy, gladness and happiness to those who had trusted in its Light of Selflessness. In that very instant they are embraced in its Life of Togetherness. The Great Joy it brings to one and all is a happiness more than one's heart can contain. The reason is because this source of Infinite Light and Immeasurable Life shines even on those who are blind and mute to embrace them in its golden radiance full of warmth.

Shinran Shonin explained this significance of Great Joy metaphysically as follows:

"... Buddha-nature is none other than Tathagata. 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 Alone."* p. 42.

"All attain Buddhahood" means all living and non-living things throughout the "countless worlds," the boundless universe. Everything is to be revered as sacred and spiritual. This means macroscopically and microscopically, each grain of sand and living thing is permeated by the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness, and therefore, should be regarded as sacred and revered.

This is exactly why we should not transgress or desecrate things like the air, water and the earth itself. Are we not now experiencing the karmic consequences such as in rising temperatures, rising waters and climate changes that are globally devastating? The very water we drink, the air we are breathing and the land we stand on, are they not being compromised by faceless multi-national corporations' relentless quest for material and monetary gain?

Misuzu Kaneko's words "We are all different" and "good just as we are" obviously embrace Shinran Shonin's concept of "*jinen honi*." It means that "to be transformed" is "to be living in harmony and in accord with the nature of things as they actually are."

This means to be:

"without the practitioner's calculating in any way whatsoever, all his past, present and future evil karma is transformed into the highest good. To be transformed means that evil karma, without being nullified or eradicated, is made into the highest good, just as all waters, upon entering the great ocean, immediately become ocean water. ..." *Ibid.*

These words of Shinran Shonin simply mean that man should be living in full accord with the natural rhythms and cycles of life instead of "interfering" with them. Especially to be noted are the phrases: "To be transformed" and "evil karma, *without being ... eradicated ...* is made into the highest good."

Shinran's metaphor of "ice melting and turning naturally into water by power of sunlight" helps us to understand how a person's transgressions and desecrations, without being "obliterated," are "transformed" into the "highest good" by Power of the Dharma's Selflessness and its Virtues of Togetherness. This transformative process is much like the "bitterness in green persimmons" being "transformed" into the very "sweetness of ripe persimmons." The "bitterness" itself is not being destroyed as it keeps turning into

## SHINRAN'S WASAN

Of the five mysteries beyond  
human logic and understanding,  
None compares with the mystery  
of the Buddha-dharma,  
Which is the Inconceivability  
Amida's all-embracing Vows!

*Koso Wasan* No. 33  
rkt trans.

"sweetness" by power of sunlight. Nor are the green persimmons being discarded and displaced by ripe persimmons.

As of consequence, Shinran Shonin warned that:

"it is impossible to be born in the true, fulfilled Pure Land by simply observing precepts, or by self-willed conviction, or by self-cultivated good." *Loc. cit.* pp. 38, 39.

This is because:

"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; thus our compassion is inconsistent and limited. Only the saying of *nembutsu* manifests the complete and never ending compassion which is true, real, and sincere." Taitetsu Unno. *Tannisho* IV p. 9.

This is why, regardless of whether one is a monk or layman, male or female, young or old, rich or poor, short or tall, skinny or fat, we are all human beings constantly assailed by all kinds of idiosyncratic desires, passions and subtle self vanities that escape even the best of one's self introspections. For it is most difficult to see one's faults and failings buried especially in one's deepest unconscious being. It is much easier to see and criticize the obvious visible shortcomings and failings seen in others.

Whether we are aware of it or not, we human beings are riddled by the grossest of

transgressions as well as the most subtle of desecrations of what are sacred and spiritual. For these reasons, the noblest of our aspirations and best of achievements even of a "good person" are tainted and blemished by the most subtle forms of greed, animosities and vanities. This can be seen in the rationalizations of victors in wars justifying their wartime atrocities committed by them, while condemning those of the vanquished seen as war crimes!

This is why according to Buddhism, human beings undeniably are:

"evil people who have committed the ten transgressions or the five grave offenses, people of evil karma who have reviled the teaching or who lack seeds for Buddhahood, those of scant roots of good, those of massive karmic evil, those of shallow inclinations to good, those of profound attachment to evil. ..." *Ibid.*

This was and is why Amida's Wisdom Light forever illuminates and its Life of Compassion keeps embracing all beings. Amida has, is and continues to embrace all beings without condemnations or rejections.

This is why:

"Good people, bad people, noble and low, are not differentiated in the Vow of the Buddha of unhindered light, in which the guiding of each person is primary and fundamental." *Ibid.*

This is also why Sakyamuni Buddha pointed out that: "the ignorant have themselves for their greatest enemy, for they do evil deeds which must bear bitter fruit" (*Dhammapada* 4. Praises of Buddha. pp. 155, 156).

Now, a person who has undergone an "awakening of true and real faith" differs from a person claiming to be "a reborn Christian." For in Shin Buddhism a person who has undergone "an awakening of a genuine faith" by Power of the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness, has been enabled to become "fully aware of his person riddled by irreversible consequences of

his karmic transgressions and desecrations." Because of being such karma riddled person, Amida has been and is yet grasping and embracing him, never to abandon him until such time he and all others attain enlightenment and Buddhahood.

So, in Shin Buddhism, the meaning of transmigration and reincarnation comes to take on the significance that one's present life is inseparable from the lives of those in the past, the present as well as to those yet to be born in the future. What this means is that one's life is a spiritual journey seamless and inseparable from all other forms of lives over a seamless past, present and future.

Therefore, the basic intention of Amida's Primal Vows has, is and continues "to effect the enlightenment of all beings, especially the evil ones."

A person who believes that only "good persons" are to be saved while "evil persons" need to be punished, rejected and even executed, such persons are taken aback by the words of Shinran: "Even a good person attains birth in the Pure Land, how much more so the evil person." For such a thought defies common sense logic and thinking. This is why much of human thought, feelings, words and action are contradictory. For this reason human relationships often end in conflicts, violence and bloodshed. The saddest being of a person who is at odds with his own self and inner being!

This is why Shinran Shonin, speaking of himself, said:

"in this foolish being filled with blind passion, living in this impermanent world of burning house, all things are empty and vain; therefore, untrue. Only the *nembutsu* is true, real, and sincere." T. Unno. *Loc. cit.* p. 36.

Such a realization emerges only in a person who has trusted in Amida's Benevolence and taken refuge in his Beneficence that has never or will ever set apart "good people" to embrace them while rejecting those who are "evil" to

abandon and ultimately condemn them to their karmic fates.

According to Rev. Tamai a human being is subject:

“to the transient nature of the physical body. Everything with form eventually

*continued on p. 8*

**THANK YOU**

*for YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS !!*

## BUDDHIST PASSAGE OR QUOTE

Ignorance (*avijja*), or not knowing things as they truly are, is the chief cause of Karma. Dependent on ignorance arise activities (*avijja paccaya samkhara*). —Buddha in the *Paticca Samuppada* (Dependent Origination).

passes away. Someday our bodies will no longer exist. I 'have' it, but I have it only temporarily. And while I have it, it becomes ill. It becomes injured. It is subject to the consequences of war, the consequences of fire and earthquakes. It is subject to suffering before dying. It is subject to its child dying before it, and having a wife or husband die before it does. It is subject to suffering that cannot be described. It is a fleeting thing. ..." *Ichinyo*. p. 12.

This is why human beings are "foolish beings" who easily fall into the traps of skepticism, doubt, and anxiety. Herein also the significance and meaning of the phrase: "ceaseless births and deaths" in which all forms of life are "interlinked," therefore inseparable and seamless, one from all others.

A human being who doubts, defies and desecrates the Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness:

"develops an irresponsible attitude of not caring about what will happen later. It accepts the principle of enjoying things for the moment while it lasts. Bit of the least thing goes wrong, it falls into an attitude of despair, and attitude of despondency. ..." *Loc. cit.* p. 13.

According to Tamai sensei, modern man, though "full of knowledge and endowed with great natural abilities," for this very reason

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"makes a mistake about life" (*ibid.*). This is why "We do not need a religion that judges others. We need a religion that shines light into our heart" (Yoshitaka Tamai. *Ichinyo*. p. 92).

*To be continued in the next Gassho*

## QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: "Only the nembutsu is true, real and sincere" — what do these words mean?

ANSWER: According Shinran Shonin:

"To become free of self-power means to become free of and not depend upon the false and untrue, which constitutes the nature of the thoughts, words, and actions of human beings, as well as the society that surrounds us. In this world that which is true and real is nonexistent; only the Buddha is true, real and sincere."

SBT-Series. *Notes on "Essentials of Faith Alone."* p. 23.