

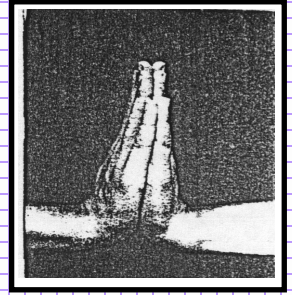
GASSHO

October

2015

Issue No: 10-15

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



ARE WE ANGELS OR OGRES?

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

Unknowingly, on Halloween nights when innocent children are dressed in such costumes as winged angels with halos or demonic ogres with horns and fangs, their impressionable hearts and minds are being encoded with conflicting images of "good" and "evil." Their minds are being indelibly encoded with awe for "deities" while their hearts with fear of "demons." In adult life, these conflicting images affect their judgments as to who are "good and just" and who are "evil and unjust."

Now, the tradition of children going about dressed up in such costumes and masks for "tricks or treats" has its origins in pagan customs. For it is said that groups of children from poor families in pre-Christian Europe went from house to house of the rich on the night of All Saints Day to pray for the ancestral souls and spirits believed to have returned at such times of the year. In doing so, the children received treats or coins in return.

Halloween observances have no biblical basis. As Christianity evolved it appropriated in order to convert pagans. It adapted and incorporated many pagan holidays and customs such as All Soul's Day and All Saints Day. Many Christians, therefore, see praying to the souls of the dead to be unChristian. This is because according to biblical scripture one's going to heaven or hell has already been sealed upon one's death. So any attempt to change the fate of those already dead with prayers, food and gifts is seen to be an incredibly dangerous thing to do.

MONTH'S THOUGHT



"In the sky, there is no distinction of east and west; people create distinctions out of their own minds and then believe them to be true." *Buddha's Words.*



Several decades ago after WWII, Tamai sensei said, "we are living in a very frightening age" (*Ichinyo*, p. 1). Since we are now living in times that are even more frightful, once again allow me to reiterate his words:

"I believe the biggest defect in American democracy is that there is no feeling of gratitude towards others, and this is what Buddha-dharma has to teach the people of the United States." *Ibid.*

"I firmly believe that if the thought of Ichinyo (oneness), indebtedness to others, and the great goal of nirvana enter the thought of democracy, that the United States will truly become a nation that can lead the peoples of the world." *Ibid.*

Then he said:

"I firmly believe the great mission that we Buddhists in the United States have is to bring about this realization in the peoples of the United States." *Loc. cit.* p. 4.

REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR OCTOBER 2015

1st SUN Oct 4th

No service

Chicken & Sushi Sale
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

2nd SUN Oct 11th

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

3rd SUN Oct 18th

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

4th SUN Oct 25th

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

**SHINSHU KYOKAI MISSION
GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES
THE FOLLOWING DONATIONS**

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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In Buddhism this goal is realized through "one's own 'awakening of true and real faith' which in turn "awakens genuine faith in others!" It was Shinran Shonin who realized that one's "awakening of true and real faith" of its own accord naturally leads others to their "awakening of faith."

Such an awakening of faith in the Japanese psyche is characterized by subtle feelings of being an undeserving beneficiary of the many blessings of life through such expressions as *mottai-nai*. Such feelings of being an "undeserving recipient" are not self-abnegations in which the things of the flesh are deemed to be "carnal, sinful and evil."

Mottai-nai is a feeling of being profoundly undeserving of the joys and blessings of life. Such a feeling is also expressed as *o-kage-sama de!* *Mottai-nai* and *O-kage-sama-de* are the opposite feelings of taking the things of life for granted as though we have the right and are entitled to them. Such a presumptiveness is called *atarimae*, or the assumption that one has the right to the things of life.

The term *atarimae* in the dictionary is defined as "doing what is natural, normal, proper and reasonable." Such a definition implies that one has the "perfect right to think, feel, say and do as he pleases." Such a presumption upon becoming habitual then becomes an "addiction" to what are pleasurable and rewarding." When the post-particle *da* is added to *atarimae*, the presumption to think, say and do as one pleases becomes even more "justified!" That is, of course, as long as one does not hurt or harm others.

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, 2015

WORDS OF SHINRAN

... 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 Bhiksu Dharmakara and established the forty-eight great Vows that surpass conceptual understanding. SBT-Series.
Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone.' p. 43.

However, the verities of Selflessness and Togetherness emanating from the Dharma inform a person that he cannot set himself above any element, plant, tree, creature or fellow human being. Believing in Selflessness and living in Togetherness empower and enable a person to become a person in whom "no self working ... is true working." It is to become a being on "the great path of unobstructed freedom" in which *Namoh-amida-butsu* is uttered "without calculation," meaning without thoughts of personal gain or recognition. Obviously, such utterances of *Namoh-amida-butsu* "without calculation" are not prayers for personal blessings or miracles.

Many Americans do not realize that much of the comforts and conveniences they have and continue to enjoy are being derived from what our ruthless faceless multinational corporations have taken from economically and politically disadvantaged third world countries at the expense of their impoverished indigenous peoples whose labors and natural resources are being exploited, in many cases to utter extinction.

Many are unaware of the many U.S. military forts and facilities garrisoned all over the world in positions of power and control to maintain access to the world's natural resources and indigenous peoples as sources of cheap labor. Our military has made its presence felt in the lands, oceans, the skies and now in aerospace.

Let us now look at the expression *okagesama de* which is the very opposite of *atarimae da!* The expression is comprised of the words *o-kage* and *-sama-de* as a post-particle. The dictionary defines *o-kage* as "due to" and "owning to" the benevolence of other things and other people's work and efforts. More profoundly, *o-kage* points to forces that elude our sensory perceptions, logic and powers of reason.

When the honorific *o-* and the ending *-sama-de* are appended to *-kage-*, the expression *o-kage-sama-de* takes on even more of a deeper sense of one's indebtedness to the wonder of things and mysterious forces that make one's life and living a possibility and reality. Such intuitions concerning life transform our normal sense perceptions of things and life by infusing them with timeless sacredness and spirituality.

When one undergoes such an "awakening of true and real faith," one's ingratitude becomes transformed into gratitude. So also are one's irreverence into reverence and impertinence into penitence. As of natural consequence, one's total being becomes permeated with the positive energies of "Great Joy." The negative energies of karma are transformed into positive ones. This transformation is possible because sentient beings since timeless time have been always embraced in the Dharma's Benevolent Selflessness and Boundless Togetherness in which no thing or life form has ever been condemned, excluded or rejected.

In Jodoshinshu (Shin Buddhism), the significance of *on*, or one's acknowledgment of indebtedness to things and others is even of a much deeper and profounder significance. In terms of time, it entails a sense of indebtedness for the contribution of countless others over the timeless passing generations, especially our ancestors. Such a realization in turn awakens a profound sense of responsibility for the lives of those who are yet to be born and yet to live in what is the ever unfolding future.

Amida is the very Clear Light of Selflessness. Amida, at the same time, is also the Pure

Life of All-embracing Togetherness. Nothing is not illuminated by this Light for everything is permeated by its Life-giving Light. Amida as Light and Life is constantly active and timelessly working in seen and unseen ways bringing all sentient beings to their enlightenment and ultimate Buddhahood. Therefore, it is an error to see Amida Buddha as some kind of "graven image" condemned in Christianity as being the worship of an "idol." Even more of an error is it to visualize Amida as some kind of deity who accepts only "good people" while rejecting "bad people."

In Buddhism there are four categories of *on* called *Shi-on*, or the Four Indebtedness. The first is the indebtedness owed to one's parents (one's mother and father) for having conceived and brought us into this world as an intact human being with the five powers of conscience. The second is one's indebtedness to countless fellow human beings and forms of life without which one could not survive or exist. The third is one's indebtedness to one's government without which there would be utter chaos, conflict and violence. The fourth is one's indebtedness to the Three Treasures, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Samgha without which there would be no awareness of things eternally sacred and timelessly spiritual.

Let us now examine the meanings of *inochi* and *seimei*.

The Japanese-English dictionary defines *inochi* to be a person's life's breath and blood pulsating throughout a person's entire physical being. So *inochi*, more or less, has to do with a person's personal struggle to live and survive. In Buddhism the term also entails the life of plants, trees and even the soil of the earth itself. The focus, however, is on centering a person, his mind, body and spirit (*nama-rupa* = psycho-physical being).

One's anatomy is one's whole being, self and person that is responsive and reactive to sensory stimuli, moral sensitivities, and spiritual intuitions. One's person naturally reacts to sensations of pain and pleasure, while one's psyche responds to what is rewarding and

aversive. One's persona reacts and responds to expectations of others as well as how he sees himself. As of consequence, human beings are strongly affected by their personal likes and dislikes as well as by how others see them.

There is, however, a third dimension in human consciousness called one's conscience wherein the meaningfulness and meaninglessness of one's thoughts, words and actions are reflected upon and transformed by the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness. One's conscience concerns one's innermost moral being and ethical person. It is the place where one breaks out of the cycles of primitive sensations of pain and pleasure to then soar in what are the boundless spaciousness of spiritual consciousness, or what Shinran Shonin calls "unobstructed freedom."

One's conscience, therefore, is where one hears and comes to take refuge in the "voiceless voice" of Amida. This voice appears as the Sacred Name of Amida full of Selfless virtues and power that reconciles by transcending all opposites of "right and wrong," "just and

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Donations

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SHINRAN'S WASAN

Divine Light being without form
is beyond all descriptions.

Buddha appearing as Light
is Ineffable Light.

His Vows are rays of Light!

Everywhere the Buddhas
forever laud and praise him!

Jodo Wasan No. 14.

Due to limited space due to Postal restrictions, if your donation is not listed in this GASSHO, it will be listed in a following edition. For any inadvertent misspelling of names, please accept our apologies.

SACRED BUDDHIST PASSAGES

People naturally fear misfortune and long for good fortune; but if the distinction is carefully studied, misfortune often turns out to be good fortune and good fortune to be misfortune. The wise man learns to meet the changing circumstances of life with an equitable spirit, being neither elated by success nor depressed by failure. Thus one realizes the truth of non-duality. BDK. *The Teaching of Buddha* (1978). p. 62.

unjust" by embracing both "good persons" and especially "evil persons" into a Togetherness much like an ocean that keeps accepting all clear and turbid river waters without rejections.

The kanji characters for *inochi* are comprised of *sei* (life) and *mei* (life's breath). So the compound *inochi* can be also read *sei-mei*. In doing so, *seimei* comes to mean one's own very life (*inochi*) that is embraced and illuminated by the larger dimensions of true and real life (*seimei*).

In past issues of GASSHO, this relationship between "mind, body and spirit" has been depicted as a "circle with a circumference" (an individual enclosed by ego shackled by passions and vanities) that is yet embraced by a larger "Circle with a broken Circumference" (Amida Buddha's Immeasurable Wisdom and Unconditional Compassion). The two yet are inseparably contained in a "Circle without a Circumference" (the Dharma's Inconceivable Truth of Selflessness and Ineffable Reality of Together-

...
**Chicken
& Sushi**

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ness that are Timeless and without bounds). This "Circle without a Circumference" symbolizes all three as concentric spheres, man, Buddha and Dharma. The three are inseparable, and in a seamless Oneness.

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: What is *e-sho funi*?

ANSWER: *Esho funi* means each life (*sho*) and things of the environment (*e*) are inseparable from each other. *Funi* means "not two." This means that we often perceive objects and people as discrete, independent entities. However, according to Buddhism, there is a dimension in which all things and life forms are seamless and inseparable. For instance, if all greenery disappears, so too will all life. This is why all things and forms of life are sacred and of spiritual significance.