

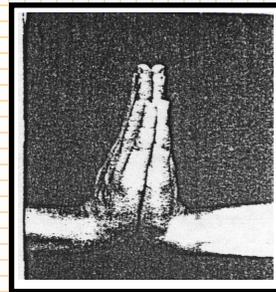
# GASSHO

February

2016

Issue No: 02-16

*"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"*



## WHY SAKYAMUNI WAS BORN, ACCORDING TO SHINRAN

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

Shin Buddhists need to understand why Shinran Shonin uttered the words: "To reveal the true teaching: It is the Larger Sutra on Immeasurable Life" (SBT-Series. *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way*. Vol. I p. 63).

The Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life explains why and how Amida Buddha set forth his Forty-eight Vows of Compassion and established the Pure Land especially for the enlightenment of beings hopelessly riddled by transgressions and desecrations.

Shinran Shonin considered the Larger Sutra to be the "Words of Truth" (*shin-gon*) because the words of Sakyamuni were "illuminated" by the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and "inspired" by its Actuality of Togetherness in which all things and forms of life are seamless and inseparable, therefore, of profound sacred and spiritual significance.

The Truth of Selflessness is the Light of Wisdom timelessly illuminating the fact that all things and life forms are seamless and in an inseparable Oneness (*Ichinyō*). Desecrations occur when we try to force the things of life to suit our personal purposes and self gratifications. The Actuality of Togetherness is the Life of Compassion in which all things living and non-living from the beginning are inseparable, meaning, each thing and form of life depends on a myriad of other things and forms of life for its very survival and existence.

## MONTH'S THOUGHT



"When wisdom arises, it dispels the darkness of ignorance, generates the illumination of knowledge, sheds the light of cognition, and makes the holy truths stand out clearly. Thereafter the yogin, with his correct wisdom, can see impermanence, ill, and not self. ... It is like a lamp which a man would take into a dark house. It would dispel the darkness, would illuminate, shed light, and make the forms in the house stand out clearly." *The Milinda Panha*. Buddhist Sage Nagasena's words to King Menander.



In Jodoshinshu teachings these verities of interdependency and inseparability are stated in terms such as "your happiness is my happiness," and "your unhappiness is my unhappiness." Philosophically it is stated as "the benefiting of self that simultaneously is the benefiting of all others" (*jiri rita en'man*).

This is why in his Hymns of True Faith (*Shoshinge*) Shinran Shonin begins with the two lines:

"I rely upon the Tathagata of  
Immeasurable Life."

"I take refuge in the Inconceivable  
Light."

Ryukoku Translation Series.  
*Shoshinge*. p. 17.

# REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY 2016

### 1st SUN Feb 7th

9 A.M. English Service

#### **NIRVANA DAY**

for Children and Adults  
Rev. Tatsuguchi

### 2ND SUN Feb 14th

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

### 3RD SUN Feb 21st

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

### 4TH SUN Feb 28th

MONTHLY  
FAMILY WORSHIP  
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

**NHRF EXERCISE** Wed 5:30 – 8 p.m.

**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

### 2016 Memorial Service Schedule

2015	1 Year	2014	3 Year	2010	7 Year
2004	13 Year	2000	17 Year	1992	25 Year
1984	33 Year	1967	50 Year	1915	100 Year

*continues on p. 5*

Immeasurable Life means that the Great Compassion of Amida Buddha is to be found by immersing one's total person and being in its Life of Selflessness and Togetherness in which all things are inseparable. That is when the Inconceivable Light of Amida Buddha "enables a person to become awake and aware of the unfathomable spiritual significance in each thing, even in a pebble or flower. Immeasurable Life also means that Amida Buddha's Compassion always embraces all things and forms of life without rejections, discriminations and favoritisms.

In lines 21 through 24 Shinran states that Sakyamuni Buddha emerged from the Timeless Dimensions of the Dharma that is without a beginning or an ending. In other words, Sakyamuni appeared from the Dharma World to be born of human parents in order to reveal the Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness.

The following verses attest to this:

"The reason for the Tathagata's  
appearance in the world  
Is solely to preach the ocean-like  
Original Vow of Amida.

The ocean of multitudinous beings in the  
evil age with five defilements  
Should believe in the Tathagata's true  
words. *Op. cit., p. 32.*

This is why Sakyamuni's auspicious birth from the World of Dharma was depicted as a spiritual birth out of his mother's heart and not from out of her womb as ordinary human beings are born. Nevertheless, Sakyamuni in reality was born of real parents, King Suddhodana and

## WORDS OF SHINRAN

"You are telling people who are appallingly self-indulgent and lacking in shame that a person should do evil just as he desires. This is absolutely wrong. ... One must seek to cast off the evil of this world and to cease doing wretched deeds; this is what it means to reject the world and to live the nembutsu. ... We should be careful to keep our distance from people who are given to evil." SBT-Series. *Letters of Shinran*. No. 16. pp. 51, 52.

Queen Maya Devi, and this fact is of significance.

In the first half of the "The Larger Sutra" (full title: "The Buddha's Exposition on the Greater Immeasurable Life" – *Bus'setsu Dai-muryō-jū Kyō*) Sakyamuni tells Ananda that all Buddhas have been appearing and reappearing to grasp and return with karma riddled sentient beings to the Timeless World of Dharma. This is why each Buddha's birth is described as follows:

"Having abandoned that palace of [Tusita] heaven (meaning the Timeless Dharma World), each descended into a mother's womb. Each being born from the right side, manifested himself by walking seven steps. The light (he radiates) was brilliant and thoroughly illuminated the ten directions. The countless Buddha lands trembled in six ways. Each Bodhisattva declared aloud: 'I will become the most honored one in this world.'" Kenjo S. Urakami. *Amida Buddha and His Pure Land: Three Sutras and One Treatise*. p. 8. ( ) mine.

Whereupon:

"Each witnessing old age, sickness and death, became awakened to the impermanence of the world. ... Each appeared in the world of the five

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corruptions, and followed and mingled with all beings ... each had become defiled, each bathed in a golden river. ... Each emitted a great radiant light." Urakami, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

And finally:

"They saved everyone who was in severe difficulty. ... Without being asked, they became friends with all beings shouldering [the sufferings of] all beings as a heavy burden [of the Bodhisattva's own]." Urakami, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 13.

This depiction of countless Buddhas endlessly incarnating themselves as Bodhisattvas fulfilling their Vows to save sentient beings is to say that the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness were especially manifest as Amida Buddha's Immeasurable Life and Infinite Light. This is the reason why Shinran declared this Sutra to be the True Ultimate Teaching of Sakyamuni Buddha.

So, when Ananda noticed that "all the sense organs of the World Honored One that morning were joyful and pleased," he, in intuitive anticipation of what Sakyamuni Buddha was about to expound, arose and went to stand before the Buddha, then bowed in *gassho* and declared:

"Today the World Honored One dwells in the rare and special Dharma. Today the World Valiant One dwells in the place where all Buddha's dwell. Today the Eyes for the World dwell in the action of a guiding master. Today the World Knowing One dwells in the most excellent way. Today the heavenly Honored One practices the virtues of a Tathagata." Urakami, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Then Ananda asks Sakyamuni a most fundamental question as follows:

"The Buddhas of past, future and present think upon each other, so how could the Buddha of the present not also be thinking upon all the Buddhas!

Is this why your majestically divine radiance is like this?" *Ibid.*

Sakyamuni then asks Ananda whether some celestial being or terrestrial divinity told him to raise such a wonderful question, to which Ananda replies in the negative.

So, Sakyamuni Buddha praises Ananda for having raised such a significant question. The Buddha's words were:

"Very good, Ananda. Your question pleases me very much. By developing deep wisdom, truly wonderful eloquence, and concern for the people, you have asked about the meaning of enlightened wisdom.

"With inexhaustible great compassion, Tathagatas sympathize with beings of the three realms.

The reasons that they appear in the world are to illuminate the teachings of the Way in order to save beings and give them the benefits of true reality. ...

"Ananda, you should know that the wisdom of the perfect enlightenment of the Tathagatas is difficult to measure, and guides many. Their wise views have no obstructions and cannot be restrained. ...

"All their sense organs are joyful and pleased, and will never be impaired. Their appearance will never change, and their bright faces will remain the same. Why? The mindfulness and wisdom of Tathagatas is ultimate and unlimited, so that while relating to all things, yet at the same time they are free. Ananda, listen clearly, I am going to teach you." Urakami, *op. cit.* pp. 14, 15.

So, as Ananda was eager to "listen" to what Sakyamuni Buddha had to say about Amida's "voiceless voice" deep within our deepest selves and being telling us "to trust in the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness" by "taking complete refuge in its Reality of Togetherness wherein bliss, serenity and happiness are found."

This is why Immeasurable Life also is the very radiance of Infinite Light in which all things and their opposites are forever equally illuminated without prejudices or favoritisms. Such then is the underlying significance of having undergone an “awakening of true and real faith” in which one has been grasped and embraced by Amida never ever to be rejected or abandoned until one’s ultimate Buddhahood is attained.

Shinran Shonin refers to three kinds of listening. “Listening to the Dharma” (*mon’pō*), “listening in faith” (*mon’shin*), and “listening to the Light” (*mon’kō*). All three forms of listening mean entrusting one’s karma riddled self to Amida Buddha’s Light of Wisdom as it illuminates and enfolds one’s person in its Life of Compassion never ever to be condemned, rejected or abandoned. Such is the joy and peace of mind of a karma riddled person who has been grasped “just as he is” to be established in the “rightly settled state” until one, upon being reborn in the Pure Land, attains “the Highest Perfect Unsurpassable Enlightenment!”

This is why Shinran Shonin declared:

“As for myself, Shinran, I simply receive the words of my dear teacher, Honen, ‘Just say the nembutsu and be saved by Amida,’ and entrust myself to the Primal Vow. Besides this, there is nothing else.”  
T. Unno. Tannisho II. p. 6.

Shinran, in having undergone such an “awakening of faith,” realized:

*continues on p. 6*

## Donations

*continued from p. 2*

## SHINRAN’S WASAN

From the Eastern  
innumerable Buddha come  
from their Buddha Lands  
to laud Amida Buddha’s  
power and virtues!

Bodhisattvas, countless  
the sands of Ganges River,  
also arrive to praise Him.

From the other nine  
Buddhas and Bodhisattvas  
come also to revere Him.

This is why the Sakyan Sage  
in a *gatha* did praise  
Amida’s virtues and powers.

*Jodo Wasans* No. 32, 33.  
rkt translation.

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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

"There is no meditation without wisdom, and there is no wisdom without meditation. When a man has both meditation and wisdom, he is indeed close to nirvana." The Buddha (563 – 483 BC).

"To support mother and father, to cherish wife and children, and to be engaged in peaceful occupation — this is the greatest blessing." The Buddha.

"I am absolutely incapable of any religious practice, hell is my only home."

*Ibid.*

And this was how Shinran came to see how he was undeniably

"filled with blind passion, living in this impermanent world of burning house, (in which) all things are empty and vain; therefore, untrue. Only the nembutsu is true, real, and sincere." Unno, *op. cit.* Epilogue p. 36. ( ) mine.

Such then is the first "transformation" (awakening of faith) that occurs in the here and now. The second "final transformation" occurs when one is "reborn" in the Pure Land upon one's death. Such will not happen unless one first has undergone one's initial "awakening" in this very existence. Namoh-amida-butsu.

**March 6, 2016**  
**General Membership**  
**Meeting**  
**&**  
**Shinnen Enkai**  
**10:30 a.m.**

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## QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: What are the "five deadly transgressions"?

ANSWER: They are: patricide, matricide, to kill a person seeking the Way, causing strife and dissension in a religious brotherhood/sisterhood, and causing injuries to a Buddha. According to Jodoshinshu teachings we all have and continue to commit these transgressions in the most subtle and unconscious of ways because we are ordinary mortal beings (*bombu*) unaware that we are doing so. This is the significance of Shinran's words: "Under the influence of our karmic past we human beings will do anything" (Tannisho XIII).