

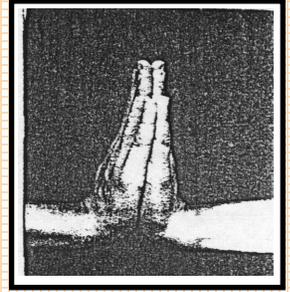
GASSHO

October

2016

Issue No: 10-16

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



TODAY'S HALLOWEEN, YESTERDAY'S HOLY DAY

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

A person who has undergone an "awakening of true and real faith" (*shinjin*) is a person full of gratitude and indebtedness who, at the same time, is a person brimming over with a penitence full of "Great Joy." Such a person because he is illumined by Amida's Light of Selflessness and embraced within its Life of Togetherness, is free of fears as to whether he is going to be condemned and abandoned because of his implacable transgressions and desecrations. As of consequence, such a person, just as he is, is being "enabled" to reach higher and higher awareness of sacredness and spirituality until he finally attains Buddhahood. Such a person, without fail, is destined to enter the portals of "Nirvana Without Blemishes and Impediments" to enter Amida Buddha's Pure Land upon his final breath of life.

Before the times of Jesus and Muhammad and even well much before Sakyamuni Buddha's times, primitive peoples were subscribing to all kinds of "imagined" things and "imaginary" beings and apparitions. In our times of scientific, technological and medical knowledge, acceptance of such belief in such non-existing things are no longer acceptable as confirmation of a person's commitment to a given set of religious beliefs and convictions. However, there are persons today who still believe in such baseless superstitions and non-existent apparitional beings. For they are yet those who indulge in supernatural magic and the occult. Then, there

MONTH'S THOUGHT



Halloween starts earlier and earlier, just like Christmas. —Robert Englund



are individuals who continue to delve in secretive spiritual practices dating back to the dawn of human history.

In primitive pagan times it was thought that the days between the cold of winter (death) and the warmth of spring (rebirth) were times when "the boundary between the dead and the living became blurred." People believed it was then when the ghosts, spirits or souls of their deceased loved one's returned to earth to visit them. The Celts called this time of year *Samhain* (pronounced "sow-in"). It seems that people in different parts of the world were lighting up all kinds of fires to illuminate the way for the spirits of loved one's back to their home. Various kinds of offerings, such as grain and vegetables, animals and even human beings were then sacrificed as offerings to gain their favors or to avoid their wrath.

In 609 A.D. the Catholic Church appropriated and changed the *Samhain* observance into their "All Martyrs Day" that then came to be celebrated as "All Saints Day." This "All Saints Day" came to be called "*All Hallow-mas*" or "All-hallows Eve," today's Halloween or "tricks or treats night." So the meaning of Halloween today is far from the meaning of "All-hallows Eve" in which the Catholic Church

REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR OCTOBER 2016

1st SUN Oct 2nd

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

2nd SUN Oct 9th

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

3rd SUN Oct 16th

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

4th SUN Oct 23rd

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

5th SUN OCT 30th

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

EXERCISE CLASSES Wed 5 – 8 p.m.
Natural Healing Research Foundation

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

With Deepest Sympathy

Mrs. Leatrice I. Tanna 90 yrs. Aug 27, 2016
Mr. Hideo Matsumoto 97 yrs. Aug 31, 2016

**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

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honored the spirits of their martyrs and Saints.

According to Sakyamuni Buddha, because we human beings are troubled and befuddled by such baseless beliefs and superstitious practices, we find ourselves in arguments and conflicts that often end in violence and bloodshed, all because of differences in religious beliefs and political ideologies. In other words, we become at odds with each other because of our conflicting thoughts (feelings, likes and dislikes) boiling in the innermost darkness of our subconscious and unconscious that trigger words and acts that conflict with that of others. Such conflicts can be seen between today's Zionist Israelites and Jihadist Muslims, whose ancestry, surprisingly, goes all the way back to a common father, the Patriarch Abraham.

Meanwhile, the puzzling question as to whether one's notions of one's self or personhood (*atman*) are illusions or whether one's "soul" (spirit) is fiction, such questions continue to perplex the best of minds to this very day. Man still finds it difficult to solve the questions as to whether an autonomous "soul" or "spirit" survives one's physical death, or whether one has lived prior existences that have led to one's present birth in this life. The best of scientific, philosophical and religious minds still cannot come to a definite consensus.

Since our ongoing thoughts, words and actions keep changing, we are incapable of seeing how our present lives are inseparable from the ever receding past as well as continuously connecting to an ever unfolding future. For each thought, desire, intention, word and act in the present ongoing moment is

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WORDS OF SHINRAN

"Human beings are such that, maddened by passions of greed, we desire to possess; maddened by the passions of anger, we hate that which should not be hated, seeking to go against the law of cause and effect; led astray by the passion of ignorance, we do what should not even be thought. ..." *Letters of Shinran*, No. 19. p 57.

being triggered by the stimuli of one's immediate surroundings that arouse our inner passions and desires, which then affect what we have and keep saying and doing.

Reality, therefore, is "not two, three or many" disconnected moments, but actually a seamless reality in which the past and future exist in each ongoing present moment that itself is always emerging out of the past as it keeps affecting the future. This is the underlying significance and reality of the Buddha's dictum: "all things are transient and constantly changing" (*sarva dhamma anicca*). This is the reason why "things and self cannot stay or remain the same" (*anatman* = no permanent, unchanging substance or self). For all things are governed by the uniform and orderly processes of causality, conditionality, interdependency and karma.

So, let us once again look at the Story of Kisa Gotami to show how Sakyamuni Buddha with great sensitivity and skill helped her overcome the grief of having lost her first and only child she gave birth to. For her story helps us to see how we ourselves are "dying and yet living" as well as "living and yet dying" in each passing moment of our unrepeatable lives due to the fact of impermanence.

For time keeps relentlessly "ticking" away and we can do nothing about it. In becoming one with this actuality of transiency that is the reality of life, we come to see that there is no enduring permanent substance or self. We become then "aware" of how each

passing moment of our lives is unrepeatable and, therefore, to be cherished as sacred and spiritual, albeit in sensual and sensate terms as well as in humanistic and spiritual terms. This means that the lives of all living and non-living things should not be treated merely as things or objects and not to be taken for granted and desecrated.

Kisa Gotami lived in Savatthi. She was known as Kisa because of her slim body. She married a rich young man and after several years a son was finally born to them. The son died just a few days after birth and Kisa Gotami became so stricken with grief that she was thought to have completely lost her mind. She could not accept the fact that her infant son was dead. In her mind he was only sick and was just sleeping. Wrapping her dead son in a blanket as only a mother could, she went around the village asking for medicine to restore her sick son back to health and consciousness. People thought she had gone completely mad because she kept insisting her son was not dead but was merely sick and asleep.

But a wise man seeing her pathetic condition advised her: "Sister, the Buddha is the person you should approach. He has the medicine you want. Go to him."

When she asked the Buddha for help he did not bluntly and outright say "your son is dead!" Instead he told her to get some mustard seeds from a home where there had been no sickness, aging or death. Overjoyed at the prospect of having her son restored to good health, Kisa Gotami then, with her dead son in her arms, went from house to house, begging for some mustard seeds. Everyone was willing to help, but the problem was no family could claim that death had never occurred in their household or that everyone in their home was living in good health and perfect happiness.

As the days passed in her hopeless quest, it began dawning on Kisa Gotami that her son had died and that his death was not the only one, for every family had lost loved ones to death. She began realizing that there

was no family that had not suffered the loss of a loved one, and that there were more people who had died than there were living at any one time.

As soon as she realized this actuality, her attitude "instantly" changed. She no longer was attached to the lifeless body of her son. Only then did she begin realizing how understanding and compassionate the Buddha had been in sending her in the fruitless quest of such mustard seeds. For it was in the process of going about asking for such seeds that she came to finally realize the most important lesson in life that "everything born must eventually die." She was finally able to accept the reality of her son's death and arranged for a proper funeral and burial for him.

For it was only then that the Buddha straight forwardly advised Kisa Gotami:

"Gotami, you should not think that you are the only one who has lost a son. As you have now realized, death comes to all beings. Before their desires are satiated death takes them away."

In having so perceived the fleeting nature and impermanency of life, Kisa Gotami decided to renounce the worldly ways of human beings. She requested the Enlightened One to admit her to the Order of *bhikkhunis*. Accordingly, the Buddha sent her to the sisterhood of nuns where she was ordained as *bhikkhuni Kisa Gotami*. She then later became one of the greatest Buddhist nuns, a *Maha-thera*.

According to Jodoshinshu teachings, a person who has undergone an "awakening of true and real faith" becomes a person whose entry into the Amida Buddha's Pure Land becomes settled and a certainty in the instant he trusts Amida Buddha. This is when one's birth in the Pure Land when one dies happens. This moment can be understood to be like when the waters of a river, in the moment of entering the boundless ocean "instantly becoming the very waters and free flowing currents of the greater ocean." This is also much like when the darkness of a room

instantly disappears when the lights are switched on. The light instantly transforms the darkness into illumination itself. It has not destroyed the darkness.

One night, Kisa Gotami lit some oil lamps. As she watched their flames flickering she noticed that some were burning brilliantly while others were sputtering as they finally burned themselves out. It was then she suddenly had an "aha moment" and realized:

"Even as it is with these flames waxing and waning, so too are living beings. Some are bright and flaming, while others were flickering and sputtering out."

Then, suddenly, she gained the further deeper insight that it was only those who have entered *Nirvana* Without Residues and Impediments that were no longer seen, much like when the waters of a river disappear the very instant they flow into the ocean to become its very free flowing waters and currents. People who have entered the Ocean of *Nirvana* Without Residues are also very much like "ice" that has melted and turned completely into "water." The ice in melting is no longer seen but it has not been destroyed or obliterated. It has naturally become the very boundless waters of the ocean.

The Buddha through his powers of clairvoyance and omnipresence saw Kisa Gotami meditating on the flames of the oil-wick lamps from the Jetavana Monastery. Whereupon, he in a flash sent forth a ray of light at the speed of light to inform her:

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Donations

continued from p. 2

SHINRAN'S WASAN

Lamentable it is that both
monks and laymen,
Choose "good luck days"
and "auspicious times,"
To worship "celestial"
and "earthly" deities,"
Absorbed in divinations
and magical rituals

Shozomatsu Wasan

No. 101. p. 101

rkt translation

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

As rivers, when full must flow
and reach and fill the distant main,
So indeed what is given here will
reach and bless the spirits there.
As water poured on mountain tops
soon descend and fill the plain
So indeed what is given here will reach
and bless the spirits there.

Nidhikanda Sutta in Khuddakapatha

**“Better than living a hundred years
is one day in the life of a man that
sees the highest Truth.”** *Dhammapada*

2. Praises of Buddha. p. 163.

This story of Kisa Gotami is an example of how Sakyamuni Buddha, as a “good friend and spiritual teacher” (*kalyanana mitra*), used a variety of “expedient” and “skillful” means (*upaya*) to guide all sentient beings, especially human beings riddled by transgressions and desecrations, to bring them all to their “awakening of true and real faith.”

Though one may not be aware of how profound his transgressions and desecrations are, nevertheless, one is being guided and led to one’s “awakening of faith” in this life that is connected to a series of past lives constantly connecting to future of lives of others yet to come. A person of true and real faith will enter the Pure Land to attain Buddhahood in Amida’s Pure Land upon his or her final breath of life to be born in the Pure Land. Such is the promise of Amida Buddha that is his Primal Vow and significance of saying his Sacred Name by

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Part Time**

Shinshu Kyokai Mission

1631 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96826

skm@ShinshuKyokai.org
www.ShinshuKyokai.org

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trusting and taking refuge in his virtues of Wisdom and powers of Compassion.

Namoh-amida-butsu!

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: Who are Dharma seekers?

ANSWER: Sakyamuni Buddha said those who seek the Dharma,

“They do not get carried away by superstition; they believe in deeds, aspiring to results from their own deeds through their own effort in a rational way; they are not excited by wildly rumored superstition, talismans, omens or lucky charms; they do not aspire to results from praying for miracles.” *Anguttara Nikaya* III 206.