



# GASSHO

May  
2011

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"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



## GUTOKU SHINRAN

rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

*Gotan-E* is a service to celebrate Shinran Shonin's birth. He was born on May 21<sup>st</sup> in the year 1173 and lived during the Kamakura Period (1185-1333). These were times in Japanese history when many of the common folk who could not read or write were exploited by the nobles and aristocrats who could read and write Chinese kanji characters and were living in luxury. They were also times of warring feudal lords, pestilence, famines and natural disasters.

Yuiembo quotes Shinran Shonin speaking of the common folk and the privileged classes who, in the eyes of Amida, were equal as follows:

Again the Sage said, "There is no difference [whatsoever] among those who make their living by catching fish, using a line or a net, in rivers or the ocean or those who eke out an existence by hunting game or fowl in the fields or mountains or those who live from day to day by engaging in trade or tilling the soil. ..." Ryukyo Fujimoto. *Shin Buddhism's Essence: The Tannisho*. Ch. XIII. p. 32.

Yuiembo then quotes the words of Shinran speaking of the underlying nature found in all human beings, regardless of whether they were educated or uneducated. It is as follows:

... Ah! Man will do anything if so moved [by the force of] his implacable karma. *ibid.*

This nature of "implacable karma" was seen by Shinran to be in himself, more so than in others. For Shinran realized that "outwardly he pretended to be wise as he inwardly harbored all kinds of untruths."

This is why Shinran confessed:

On the whole, I know nothing of good and evil, for were I to know good so thoroughly that the Tathagata also regards that as being good, then I would know what good is. And were I to know evil so thoroughly that the Tathagata also regards that as being evil, then I would know what evil is.

## MONTH'S THOUGHT



"Your vision will become clearer when you look into your heart. Who looks outside, "dreams," who looks inside, "awakens." Carl Gustav Jung. (*Jung Quotes*).



However, the truth is that we are all foolish beings, filled with evil and dwelling in a transient world, which is as fleeting as a burning house.... R. Fujimoto. *loc. cite., Epilogue*. p. 46.

This is how Shinran, upon being embraced and illuminated by Amida, became the "foolish being" who "realized" that his "birth in the Pure Land," for this very reason, had been settled and established by virtue of his Compassion. Thus, Shinran realized beyond all doubt that he was undeniably heading for "... the pit [of Hell]." This was the reason why he had been grasped by Amida never to be rejected or abandoned. It was because he was incapable of purifying himself through any religious practice. (*op. cite., Ch. II*. p. 13).

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# REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SERVICES for MAY 2011

### 1st SUN May 1st:

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

### 2nd SUN May 8th:

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

### 3rd SUN May 15th:

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

### 4th SUN May 22nd:

**Commemorating  
Shinran's Birthday**  
9 A.M. Eng. Service  
Guest speaker:  
Ms. Sandra Hiramatsu

### 5th SUN May 29th:

MONTHLY  
FAMILY WORSHIP  
9 a.m. Eng. Serv.  
Dharma Talk  
For Children & Adults  
Rev. Tatsuguchi

## WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

**KARAOKE CLASS** Mon 7 - 9 P.M.  
Mr. Nelson Yoshioka

**KARATE** Tues/Fri 6 - 9 P.M.  
Shihan - Walter Nishioka

**FUJINKAI SEWING CLUB** Wed 9 - 11 A.M.  
J. Kobuke/A. Murata

**HAWAII EISA CHIMUGUKURU DAIKO**  
Mr. Van Shimabukuro  
Wed/Thur 6.30-8.30

**THANK YOU FOR  
YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!!**

*With Deepest Sympathy*

Toshiko Yagi 94 yr March 17, 2011  
Kay Mikami 94yr March 29, 2011

After some twenty years of trying to be celibate, pure and blameless on Mt. Hiei, Shinran came to realize that he was unable to do so. As of consequence, Shinran gave up the life of a Tendai monk. He then met Honen Shonin and became one of his disciples. Shinran then married and began raising a family. By doing so, he “essentially ended the traditional life of monks and nuns” in Japan. For in having done so, he opened the “doors” of the Dharma to the laity.

Therefore, we must keep well in mind that his admonition, “just say the nembutsu and be saved,” is not based on one’s moral ability to uphold “monastic” precepts or “religious” practices based on conditions of celibacy, vegetarianism, non-violence and the doing of good deeds. Nor is it based on mystical or magical rites and rituals believed to purge one’s self of impurities to qualify for salvation.

In reality, Shinran’s “awakening of faith” was due to the workings of the inconceivable Original Vow. This “awakening” happens when a person comes to see how the consequences of his karmic evils are irreversible (See *loc. cit.*, p. 31). This is the paradoxical significance as to why Shinran said, “Even a good man attains Rebirth in the Pure Land, then how much more so an evil-doer!”

During the Nara Period (710-794), life was basically agrarian and centered around village and family life. People in Japan then were worshipping the very forces and wonders of nature and the “souls” of their deceased ancestors as “spirits” or *kami*. Therefore, there were all kinds of good and bad spirits, gods and goddesses and all kinds of astrologers, diviners, spiritual mediums, prognosticators, healers and so forth. The Nara Period was followed by the Heian Period (794-1185).

The Heian Period were times when Chinese Buddhist teachings, philosophies, culture, art, music, and folk beliefs etc. were at their highest. The Japanese imperial court, nobles and aristocrats were assimilating and adopting Chinese culture, especially Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. They were learning how to read and write Chinese “logograms” or what were pictographs and ideographs that were set in combinations of sentences involving single ideographs and compound kanji.

## WORDS OF SHINRAN

... when one has boarded **the ship of the Vow of great compassion** and sailed out on the vast ocean of light, the winds of perfect virtue blow softly and the waves of evil are **transformed**. The darkness of ignorance is **immediately broken through**, and quickly reaching the land of immeasurable light, **one realizes great nirvana and acts in accord with the virtue of Samantabhadra**. .... SBT-Series. *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way*. Vol. I. pp. 140-141.  
(*Samantabhadra: the primordial Buddha of Wisdom (male principle) embracing the primordial Buddha of Compassion (female principle)*). The term “transformed” means turned into, like “ice” into “water.”)

In the Kamakura Period, the culture and religions that were restricted to the upper classes began to be “opened up” to the peasantry. They were simple, unadorned folk without sophisticated pretensions. Like the “common folk” in India they were being treated like “outcasts” and “untouchables.” This was because they were seen to be “defiled” (“tainted and impure”) because they engaged in such as killing, butchering and tanning the hide of animals. Such vocations were believed to defile the person’s spirit or “soul.” Furthermore, because they were not able to read and write they were considered to be crude, crass and and brash in their unrefined manners.

During the Kamakura Period, several new schools of Buddhism emerged to meet the spiritual needs of the common folk who could not read or write the difficult Chinese characters or decipher the cryptic *man’yō-gana* or the Japanese phonetic alphabet derived from them. Among the new sects that emerged, the two that became the most dominant were the Pure Land and the Zen schools. And among the Pure Land schools, the teachings of Honen Shonin and his disciple Shinran Shonin taught the common people to “simply say the nembutsu and be saved.” This teaching became the most popular among the non-literate masses. Zen interested primarily the samurai classes.

Honen and Shinran both taught that the only way for a “karma riddled person” to attain enlightenment in times of Decadent Dharma was to simply “trust” and “take refuge” in the Truth of the Other Power’s Selflessness (*tariki*) being manifest as the Vows of Amida Buddha to save them all. This was because in times of moral and spiritual decadence there were no “enlightened beings” like Sakyamuni Buddha who were teaching the way of Right Dharma. As of consequence, there are none capable who could fulfill the life based on fulfilling the truths of the Noble Eightfold Path.

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For this reason Honen taught that “taking refuge in Amida’s Vows was the only Way to salvation.” His teachings became the basis for the Jodoshu Sect that encourages repetitive recitations of O-nembutsu. Shinran, however, had to clarify the distinction between “many recitations” based on “self-power” from that “single recitation” that awakens a person that is due to the sole workings of the “Other Power’s True and Real Mind.” This distinction became the basis for the Jodoshinshu teaching that “... only the nembutsu awakened by Amida alone is true and real.” However, both Honen and Shinran agreed that it was the “instant” in which “true and real faith was awakened” by Amida in a person that was the moment that settles a person’s salvation. It could not be established through one’s invocations or recitations of nembutsu based on one’s presumption of moral virtue and spiritual capability.

Since Jodoshinshu faith is based on Shinran Shonin’s personal “awakening of faith,” it becomes necessary for us as Shin Buddhists to understand as to why Shinran said that there was nothing else a karma riddled person can do but:

“Just say the nembutsu and be saved by Amida, ...” T. Unno. *Tannisho*. Ch. II. p. 6.

This is because the nembutsu is Amida’s complete compassionate activity (karma) that has been consummated in the form of his Sacred Name easy to say to especially save all “sentient beings” who are hopelessly riddled by their irreversible karmic evils. Such a compassionate activity cannot be the work of human beings whose thoughts are riddled by blind passions and self vanities, especially by their spiritual egoism.

Realizing that he undeniably was truly a person riddled by hopeless karmic evils and “implacable transgressions,” Shinran said therefore:

... When I ponder on the compassionate vow of Amida, established through five kalpas of profound thought, it was for myself, Shinran, alone. Because I am a being burdened so heavily with karma, I feel even more deeply grateful to the Primal Vow which is decisively made to save me. *loc. cite.*, Epilogue. p 35.

These words were based on his unwavering faith and understanding that:

The Primal Vow was established out of deep compassion for us who cannot become freed from the bondage of birth-and death through any religious practice, due to the abundance of blind passions. Since its basic intention is to effect the enlightenment of such and evil one, the evil person who entrusts himself to Other Power is truly the one who attains birth in the Pure Land.

Thus, even the good person attains birth, how much more so the evil person. *op. cite.*, Ch. III p. 8.

Therefore, it becomes evident that Shinran had no such self presumptions concerning his moral rectitude or his religious capabilities. Nor was Shinran’s trust in Amida some kind of “blind faith” in a Supreme Deity who accepts and rewards only “good persons” while punishing “evil persons” to condemn, reject and abandon them on a day of final judgment to some kind of eternal purgatory.

Furthermore, according to Shinran Shonin, it is clear that when one has trusted and taken refuge in Amida’s True and Real Mind of Wisdom and Sincere Heart of Compassion, it is in that very instant that such a person’s birth in the Pure Land is settled and established. This is because Amida:

... does not discriminate between the young and old, good and evil; ...

Therefore,

... true entrusting alone is essential. The reason is that the Vow is directed to the being burdened with the weight of karmic evil and burning with the flames of blind passions. *op. cite.*, Ch. I. p. 5.

Thus, in entrusting one’s self to Amida, “no other form of good is necessary, for there is no good that surpasses the nembutsu. ...” *ibid.*

Therefore, upon being “awakened” Shinran Shonin realized and became the foolish being:

... filled with blind passion, living in this impermanent world of burning house, [where] all things are empty and vain; therefore, untrue. Only the nembutsu is true, real, and sincere. *op. cite.*, Epilogue. p. 36. [ ]’s mine.

This is exactly why Shinran began calling himself *Gutoko no Ran*, “Shinran the burr-headed simpleton.”

He realized that we are all:

... 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. *ibid.*

The “only” here means that by saying the nembutsu its Truth and Reality (*shin-jitsu*) keeps enfolding all sentient beings equally both “good” and “evil,” and nothing else is needed. The “evil person” in this vision is not excluded

from the benefits and virtues of the Dharma's life giving and sustaining Light that does not discriminate to separate the "good" by obliterating what is "evil." These virtues of Dharma can be likened to the sun shining on all kinds of fruits regardless of whether they are edible or inedible, "poisonous" or "non-poisonous."

Now, a person who is "ignorant" and "unaware" will keep eating non-edible fruits thinking that they are edible. Such a person who does not know the difference will also unknowingly eat poisonous fruits without realizing that they are poisonous. Similarly, a person who sees no harm in saying or doing hurtful things will say and do harmful things because he is unaware of their hurtful and harmful consequences. On the other hand, there are also persons who knowingly say and do things that are abusive and abrasive, knowing full well of the adverse effects and affects that follow!

According to Shinran Shonin, a person not living the life of O-nembutsu is a person who is living like an addict who keeps inserting:

... his own calculations into the consideration of good and evil, believing that the former helps and the latter hinders birth in the pure Land, (and that such a person) fails to entrust himself to the inconceivable power of the Vow. Rather, he strives in his own efforts to achieve birth; he claims the nembutsu which he utters as his own practice. Such a person also fails to entrust himself to the inconceivable power of the Name. *loc. cite.*, Ch XI. P. 19. ( ) mine.

Let us, as we begin now to examine the reasons as to why Shinran Shonin referred to himself as *Gutoku no 'Ran* (burr headed Shinran) keep then these words of his well in mind.

In his greatest work the *Kyo Gyo Shin Sho*, Shinran Shonin referred to himself as follows:

How joyous I am, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Sakyamuni! Rare is it to come upon the sacred scriptures from the westward land of India and the commentaries of the masters of China and Japan, .... I am especially aware of the profundity of the Tathagata's benevolence. ... SSBT-Series. *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way*. Vol. I. pp. 58-59.

Here, we see that in Shinran's day people in the African-European-Asian continental complex were well aware of the ancient land trade routes that had connected pre-Buddhist India, China, and Korea through which Buddhism came over the Sea of Japan to their land of Yamato (Peace and Calm). The sea lanes of the Indian Ocean were also well known as well as those into Europe and Africa.

## SHINRAN'S WASAN

Not knowing "right" from "wrong,"  
nor "false" from "true,"  
Lacking in even in  
a bit of sympathy or mercy,  
I keep seeking after fortune  
and fame as a teacher!

*Shozomatsu Wasan* No. 116.  
rkt trans.

This fact is verified by the words of Shinran:

Here I, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Sakyamuni, reverently embrace the true teaching of the Buddhas and Tathagatas and look to the essential meaning of the treatises and commentaries of the masters. Fully guided by the beneficent light of the three sutras, I seek in particular to clarify the luminous passage on the "mind that is single." .... *Loc.cite.*, Vol II. p. 202.

The "masters" referred to here are the Seven Pure Land Sages, two in India, Nagarjuna (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.) and Vasubhandu (c. 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), three in China, Tan'luan (476-542 A.D.), Tao'cho (562-645 A.D.) and Shan'tao (613-681 A.D.) of China, and Genshin (942-1017) and Honen (1133-1212 A.D.) of Japan. These lineage of Pure Land Sages is lauded in Shinran's *Shoshin Nembutsu Ge*.

Shinran, for this very reason, describes the Dharma's Selflessness and its Togetherness constantly manifesting themselves as Amida's inconceivable Light and immeasurable Life. This is indicated by the first two lines of his *Shoshin Nembutsu Ge* as follows:

I rely upon the Tathagata of Immeasurable Life;  
I take refuge in the Inconceivable Light.

Ryukokyu Translation Series.  
*Shoshin Ge*. (1961) p. 17.

Shinran explains that a person who has truly trusted and taken complete refuge in the Dharma's Life of "Togetherness" has also trusted and been illumined by its Light of "Selflessness." Such a person then becomes like a meandering river steadily returning to the boundless ocean of "unobstructed freedom." Such river waters returning to the waters of the ocean can also be compared to an iceberg steadily melting in an ocean as it becomes the very flowing waters and currents of the ocean.

These images for "self-transformation" by power and virtues of Amida Buddha's Infinite Wisdom and Unconditional Compassion are expressed in the following *Jodo Wasans* of Shinran Shonin as follows:

By Power of Unhindered Light  
and its profound benefits,  
a faith (that enlightens),  
is “awakened” in man!  
In having been so endowed,  
one’s passions and vanities  
Unfailingly become transformed  
into one’s final enlightenment,  
As unfailing as ice melting  
turning into water!

No 39. rkt trans.

The very evils and transgressions  
become the very elements  
of rectitude and virtue,  
like ice melting into water.  
More the ice, therefore, more the water!  
Similarly, more the hindrance,  
more the virtues will there be!

No. 40. rkt trans.

When the various rivers muddied  
with passions and vanities  
flow into the oceanic waters,  
That is the “Ocean of Unhindered Light”  
radiating in “the ten directions,”  
They become one in taste  
with the Waters of Wisdom!

No. 42. rkt trans.

What has to be kept well in mind here is that Shinran uses the ocean as a metaphor in two distinct ways. In the *Wasans* above, we see Shinran using it in terms of the Oceans being like an Ocean of Boundless Light and Life in which the polluted waters of our passions and vanities become purified by the very currents and waters of the ocean.

In another sense Shinran in the *Wasans* also uses the ocean in the sense of it being a turbulent ocean of ceaseless cascading waves of births and deaths in which sentient beings are sinking and drowning. Nevertheless, in these analogies the muddy river waters and clean ocean waters are of one and the same essence of water. This is the paradoxical significance and meaning of “One and yet Two, Two and yet One.” This principle of non-duality is the fact of the inseparability between the worlds of *samsara* and *Nirvana* that is beyond human comprehension. This paradox is also found in the *Shozomatsu Wasans* translated below.

The *Wasans* are:

Amida’s Vows of Wisdom  
is a “Boundlessness Ocean”  
In which human beings,  
both “good” and “evil”  
Are “instantly transformed”

by the “Heart of Compassion!”  
No. 40. rkt trans.

If we do not come across  
the truth of (Amida’s)  
endowing of merit and virtue  
by his “comings” and “goings”  
How then are we to end our  
endless meanderings and  
our sinking and drowning  
in this ocean full of sufferings?

No. 46 rkt trans.

Amida manifesting himself as  
Seishi and Kannon  
Steers the Great Ship called  
“Great Vows of Compassion.”  
Contently traversing the ocean  
of “ceaseless births and deaths,”  
Amida keeps grasping to save  
sentient beings drowning therein  
by pulling them all on board!

No. 53 rkt trans.

These *Wasans* above help us to appreciate more deeply the inseparable relationship between “Buddha-nature” and “human nature” as being of one essence and of the same reality.” We all are like dewdrops, raindrops, snowflakes or hailstones that lose their distinct forms and dimensions upon falling in the ocean. In falling into the Dharma Ocean we are not obliterated or destroyed. We become the very waters and currents of the Dharma Ocean (*Butsu bon it’tai*).

Buddhism began with the birth of Sakyamuni Buddha in India about 500 B.C., then swept across the Far Eastern Asia for the next two-and-a-half to three thousand years or so. It was in the fifth century A.D. that Buddhism finally crossed the Sea of Japan, first from Korea into the Land of Yamato. It was sometime in 585 that Emperor Yomei recognized and accepted Buddhism and Confucianism as religions for the Japanese people. Prince Shotoku Taishi (574-622) was the second son of Emperor Yomei. It was under the patronage of Prince Shotoku that Buddhism quickly spread and became Japan’s national religion.

Influenced by the tenets of Buddhism Prince Shotoku composed the following:

I most certainly am not always wise and saintly.  
*Ware kanarazu-shimo sei ni arazu.*

He most certainly is not always a fool or an idiot.  
*Kare kanrazu-shimo gu ni ara-zu.*

Both he and I are mere human beings!  
*Tomo ni kore bombu nomi!*

These words clearly underlie the meanings of the

*Shozomatsu Wasans* of Shinran as translated above. These words of Shotoku Taishi could have come only from a heart that had been touched by the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness that undeniably reveal one's own weaknesses. For whenever one sees the imperfections in others, one also sees them as one's own.

Now then let us turn to Kitaro Nishida (1870-1950), founder of the Kyoto School of Philosophy. Japan was in the midst of the Meiji Era (1868-1912). It was rapidly becoming an industrialized nation modeling itself after European imperialism and American expansionism by colonizing and annexing the lands of lesser nations. (To get an overview see also Jared Diamond's *Guns, Disease and Steel*.) This was a time when our *Issei* parents came to Hawaii as immigrants and plantation workers.

One of his students, Keiji Nishitani (1900-1990) in his *Nishida Kitaro sensei no hitogara (The Nature of Professor Nishida Kitaro's Person and Character)*, presented Nishida's understanding of Shinran's "profound insight" into the depths of his own deceptions and falsehoods to be commonly found in all human beings.

Nishitani explains Nishida's understanding of the term *Gutoku* as follows:

A large pyramid-sized triangle and a tiny one share the basic quality of a triangle, where the sum of their two inner angles equal one right angle; that's unchanged, and whether they are large or small is irrelevant. This is the point Nishida sensei makes in "Gutoku no Shinran," one of his relatively early essays.

It was by this name Shinran referred to himself, Gutoku no Shinran, or Foolish Baldheaded Shinran. Toku is linked to the fact that monks shaved their heads. And so what's this all about? ... a triangle is a triangle, whether large or small. As long as it is triangular in shape, big or small, it is the same; a triangle. Likewise, whether a person is a hero or ordinary man in the street, the basic configuration is the same.

That is what this Gutoku business is all about: whether a person is famous or not, the basic configuration of Gutoku is what they come down to ... if there's not some one thing you bet your life on, that you throw yourself into, you can't say you've done anything with your life. ... Some people are born to be large triangles, others small. ... but large or small, the basic configuration remains the same.

So did Nishitani explain Nishida's understanding of the term Gutoku.

This graphic of triangles helps us to grasp the significance as to why Shinran Shonin said "...I know nothing of good and evil ..." and why "... we are all foolish beings, filled with evil and dwelling in a transient world, which is as fleeting as a burning house. ...," and why, "... all things (of this transient world) without exception are false and devoid of any real substance. ..." and, finally why, "Nothing is true or real; only the Nembutsu is true and real." (R. Fujimoto. *Shin Buddhism's Essence: The Tannisho*. p. 46).

These words of Shinran were based on Shan'tao's "Golden Saying" as follows:

Know yourself to be in reality a foolish being of karmic evil caught in birth-and-death, from distant past kalpas ever sinking and ever wandering in transmigration with never a condition that would lead to emancipation. Dennis Hirota. *Tannisho: A Primer*. p. 42.

In other words, a person who has truly undergone a "transformation by power and virtue of true and real faith," becomes a person who has undeniably come to see how even the best of his intentions and acts of charity are tainted by thoughts of selfishness, self importance, personal gain and self advantage. And paradoxically, this realization comes about because all sentient beings have been, are and yet continue to always be in the unfailing embrace of Amida's powers of Wisdom and her virtues of Compassion that never ever forsakes any being, including us human beings.

Therefore, in Jodoshinshu, "transformation" by faith in Amida Buddha means that a person who has been made truly awake is a person who is aware that he is constantly being assailed by the wild boar, venomous asp and crowing rooster. Such a person made so aware of his "all too human self," paradoxically, is the very person who has been grasped never to be abandoned by Amida until his enlightenment and Buddhahood has been attained.

Indeed, this is how Shinran Shonin came to confess: "I know nothing of what is good and evil" which is not to be understood in the ordinary, conventional sense of what is "right" or "wrong," or what theistically is declared to be "good" or "evil." For making such distinctions between "good" and "evil" then becomes in one's faith and convictions a Deity's mandate and authorization to get rid of "evil" and to uphold "justice" and protect the "good." This is as foolish as to be plucking "green persimmons" off a persimmon tree before they have become ripe because they are "astringent" and "bitter," and therefore inedible. Even worse, this is like "eradicating" people because they have contracted HIV or leprosy or a terminal or incurable illness.

In Jodoshinshu faith, "evil persons" are seen to be like green persimmons, especially persons with

incurable sickness or contagious diseases. They are not to be rejected by plucking them off the tree just because they are bitter and inedible or incurable or terminal. Rather, they are allowed to “naturally” turn into “ripe persimmons” full of sweetness and mellowness, persons full of humility, penitence and gratitude. This does not mean that the persimmons are being turned into apples or oranges, or into some one kind of exotic fruit thought to be superior to all other fruits growing on other fruit trees rooted in the same earth with their green fruits ripening under the same sun. Such then is the meaning of Selflessness and Togetherness, which in my opinion differs from a faith based on “eliminating” and getting rid of green persimmons while keeping only the “ripe ones”! Or, like cutting down all other fruit trees because they are not apple trees!

## BUDDHIST PASSAGES & STORIES

**The Vow of compassion** is like vast space, for all its excellent virtues are broad and boundless.

It is like **an immense cart**, for it carries all people – whether ignorant or wise – wherever they may be.

It is like **a wonderful lotus blossom**, for it is not stained by anything in the world. ...

It is like a true teacher, for **it unknots all the ropes of birth-and-death**. ...

It is like a lotus, for it is **not tainted by any karmic evil**.

**It is like the great earth**, for all the Tathagatas of the past, present, and future throughout the ten quarters arise from it.

**It is like the light of the sun**, for it breaks through the darkness and ignorance of all foolish beings and gives rise to shinjin in them. ...

It is **like a strict father**, for it gives guidance to all, both the ignorant and the wise.

It is **like a compassionate mother**, for it gives birth to and nurtures the true and real cause of birth in the fulfilled land for all, both the ignorant and the wise.

It is **like a nursing mother**, for it raises and protects all people who aspire for birth both the good and the evil.

It is like **the great earth**, for it sustains the birth of all beings.

It is **like the great waters**, for it washes away the scum of all blind passions.

It is **like the great fire**, for it burns the firewood of all views.

It is like **the great wind**, for it goes everywhere in the world and is without hindrance. SBT-Series. *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way*. Vol. I. pp. 156-158. (Significance of passages set in bold)

## QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

**QUESTION:** You talk about “untying” instead of “cutting” off the “knots” on one’s rope of life. So what’s the point you’re trying to make?

**ANSWER:** Shinran Shonin’s undergoing an “awakening of faith” can be illustrated by seeing it as untying the “knots” on one’s one and only “rope of life” instead of “cutting” them out of one’s life. This is like “plucking” the eyes out because they see lustful things, or, “cutting” out the tongue because it is an instrument of falsehood, or “lopping” off the hands because they are the means of stealing things.

If “enlightenment” (or salvation) were dependent on getting rid of body parts that defile or betray the integrity and purity of one’s person, then one would have to cut out one’s brain and heart for they are the places where unsavory thoughts arise and harmful intentions originate.

Through this metaphor we see that “enlightenment” and “faith” in Buddhism is actually a process of “untying” the “knots” on the “rope of one’s one and only life.” The “knots” were not there in the first place. Cutting them off would destroy the “rope,” or one’s one and only life. Untying them frees one’s rope of life of such “knots!”

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Okinawan Bon Dance Practice

by

Young Okinawans of Hawaii

May 28, 2011

Saturday 6:30 to 8:30 pm

SKM Social Hall

Everyone welcomed