



# GASSHO

August  
2012

Issue No:08-12

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



## THE JAPANESE-AMERICAN'S DILEMMA

rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

As a sequel to last month's *GASSHO* I will continue to muse on the *Sansei* who are now parents of *Yonsei* children, many of whom are bi-racial as well as multi-cultural. Our Eight Island Aloha 50th State was once a Territorial Trust of the United States. Hawaii now is becoming even more of a "megalopolis" of multi-racial and mixed cultural persons.

The *Sansei*, as of consequence, are now nostalgically holding on to mere vestiges of their *Issei* grandparents' plantation days. The *Yonsei*, as great-grandchildren of *Issei*, have become "consummate American consumers" of "stuff," and even "more and more stuff," where the "new stuff" quickly becomes "old stuff to be discarded" because the "new stuff" keeps coming to quickly displace the "old stuff." In the meanwhile, "more money" is needed to buy the "new stuff" that keeps constantly rolling in. "Money," as of consequence, has become more important than "people" and their "feelings."

Today, the *Sansei*, *Yonsei* and *Gosei* do not have to cope with the problems of being too "Japanesey" or acting overly "haolified." These extremes were a point of conflict for *Nisei*, especially for *Kibei* who were sent to Japan to be ingrained with traditional Japanese core values. Psychologically, many *Nisei* were Japanese when at home with their *Issei* parents, and very "local" and "American" when among their classmates and playmates. Inwardly, *Nisei* were conflicted in trying not to be too "Japanesey" when among their Causasian peers and not being "haolified" when at home in the presence of their *Issei* parents who did not read, write or speak English.

However, today, for the *Sansei* and *Yonsei* the problem is not whether "Am I too Japanesey?", or "too haolified," or whether one is a "local born," but how far do I play the game of being socially acceptable and politically correct in order to economically survive in a way of life that has always

## MONTH'S THOUGHT



... We know ... that we have actually been born from space, since it was out of primordial space that the galaxy took form, of which our life giving sun is a member. And this earth, of whose material we are made, is a flying satellite of that sun. We are, in fact, productions of this earth. We are, as it were, its organs. Our eyes are the eyes of this earth; our knowledge is the earth's knowledge. And the earth, as we know, is a production of space.

Joseph Campbell. *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*.  
p. 2.



been where the "larger fish" eat the "smaller fish." Today, human contact and friendships have become casual and transitory because human relationships have become transactional and contractual, especially as based on legalities that only lawyers can understand and manipulate. People have become replaced by more efficient robot-like machines, especially robotic technicians and specialists.

**SHINSHU KYOKAI MISSION**  
1631 S. Beretania St.  
Honolulu, HI 96826  
email: [skm@flex.com](mailto:skm@flex.com)  
website: [www.shinshukyokai.org](http://www.shinshukyokai.org)

NonProfit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
Permit No. 231

*Return Service Requested*

# REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SERVICES FOR AUGUST 2012

### 1st SUN Aug 5th:

No Service

### 2nd SUN Aug 12th:

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

### 3rd SUN Aug 19th:

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

### 4th SUN Aug 26th:

No Service

## WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

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

**KARATE CLASSES** Tues & Fri 6 - 8 p.m.  
Shihan - Walter Nishioka

**FUJINKAI LADIES' FELLOWSHIP GROUP**  
Wed 9 a.m. - noon

**THANK YOU**  
*for YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS !!*

Rev. Roland Tatsuguchi  
will be off Island  
from  
July 28 to August 8 and  
August 29 to Sept. 12, 2012

## 2012 Memorial Service Schedule

2011	1 Year	2010	3 Year	2006	7 Year
2000	13 Year	1996	17 Year	1988	25 Year
1980	33 Year	1963	50 Year	1913	100 Year

*continued on page 10*

Sociologists agree, the American home, as of consequence, has become basically a room and board house in which family members hardly see each other during the work or school day. A "home" has become a "house" where family members mainly come together to eat, sleep, go to bed and enjoy sex without fear of unwanted pregnancies. Then, after a hasty breakfast, once again, they rush off each on their merry way each to her or his day's routine and scheduled activities.

The home also has become full of labor saving electronic and robotic appliances that have come to make living more convenient, comfortable and pleasurable. Due to "instant communication" and "instant travel," the ends of the world can be easily reached in a matter of hours. As a result, the world has become full of faceless transients pursuing their own agendas based on relationships that can be quickly made and equally ended abruptly. People, as of consequence, indifferently pass by each other often unaware of each others' true thoughts and innermost feelings.

Today, the *Sansei* and *Yonsei* in Hawaii, as a consequence, have also become such indifferent "consummate American consumers" and have adopted and assimilated themselves to the values of "middle class" Americans. Like their ethnic peers, they also perceive and react to a person's skin pigmentation that act as a shroud that "masks" a person's actual thoughts, feelings, likes, dislikes, beliefs and prejudices. For human beings, whatever their race, ethnicity, nationality or religion, all tend to rely on things they can see, touch and take hold with their hands, instead of just hearing and listening to mere "words," "promises" or "ideologies" that are often "empty," "misleading" and "devoid" of substance.

This split between things imagined and actual life perennially becomes quite evident on Bon Dance nights. The dancers who attend pre-dance O'Bon memorial services in the temple sanctuary before the dancing begins are minimal. The rest of the dancers sitting outside on the temple grounds and waiting for the dancing to begin are many. They are impervious and indifferent to what is going on in the temple. This situation, whenever I reflect

## WORDS OF SHINRAN

... in the Tathagata's teachings this world is called the defiled world of the corrupt dharma. All beings lack a true and sincere heart, mock teachers and elders, disrespect their parents, distrust their companions and favor only evil; hence, it is taught that everyone, both in secular and religious worlds, is possessed of "Heart and tongue at odds," and "Words and thoughts both insincere." The former means that what is in the heart and what is said are at variance, and the latter means that what is spoken and what is thought are not real! ... SBT-Series. *Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'*. p. 49.

on it, reminds me of the great "chasm" between the world of "things and stuff" that you can buy in the mega shopping malls and things sacred and insights spiritual being offered in the temples, shrines and churches that money cannot buy.

Recent studies have shown that in the last five centuries, especially since 9/11, nearly 50 percent of American youth are now disenchanted with traditional religions, especially those claiming that theirs is the only "highway leading to a heaven above," while that of others are leading them into a bottomless fiery inferno below" (*cf.* Matt. 13:41-50).

I have often referred to Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) who studied the mythologies of aboriginal peoples. He concluded:

The old gods are dead or dying and people everywhere are searching asking: What is the new mythology to be, the mythology of this unified earth as of one harmonious being? *Inner Reaches of Outer Space*. p. xix.

Campbell, though a Catholic himself, was referring to:

... the only three monotheistic monads of the planet (each dedicated to the notion of its own historically conditioned idea of "God" as having been from all eternity, in very fact, that to which, not words, nor the eye, nor the mind can reach) in this delicate moment of imminent global unification, "Year of our Lord" (A.D.) 1985, **are threatening the whole process of global unification with the adventure of their scripturally prophesied Armageddon.** *Loc. cit.*, p. xxv. Bold for emphasis.

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: July 26, 2012

By the "three monotheistic monads" Campbell obviously meant Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Ever since 9/11, many American youth, all the more, are earnestly searching for a spiritual perspective that brings things and peoples together, instead of one that sets people apart in opposition and in conflict with each other. The youth of today in a shrinking world are not looking for a God whose jealousy and wrath are set upon those who defy his will or commands, or a deity whose anger which aroused is to be feared because of its punishments.

Campbell in his studies of primitive mythologies in aboriginal societies has pointed out that:

... a mythology is not an ideology. It is not something projected from the brain, but something experienced from the heart, from recognitions of identities behind or within the appearances of nature, perceiving with love a "thou" where there would have been otherwise only an "it." ... *Op. cit.*, p. xix.

Campbell, as of consequence, said that "living a mythology is like living in a dream where what happens cannot be predicted." This is much similar to when scientists form hypothetical premises that are to be objectively tested and confirmed based on linear cause-to-effect confirmations. These ways of induction and reduction, to me is like seeing the light of day through a telescope or microscope, which are like seeing things through a tunnel ("tunnel vision"), whether it be macroscopic or microscopic.

Today's multi-racial hyphenated Japanese-Americans are broadly classified as being Asians by the U.S. Census Bureau. The categories are based on supposed objective, racial and ethnic variables. So genetically, you are *Issei* if you are a child of parents born in Japan; a *Nisei* if one of the parents was born in Japan; a *Sansei* if one parent is *Nisei*; a *Yonsei* if one parent is *Sansei*; and *Gosei* if one parent is *Yonsei*. These supposedly objective generational distinctions are specific to Americans of Japanese ancestry. They do not apply to American progeny of other Asian or Caucasian immigrants.

This is because these generation specific categories do not address the vast array and mix of racial, cultural and religious factors that have become so homogenized that it has become difficult to say who is a Japanese-American when one of the parents is a multi-hyphenated Chinese, Korean, African, Polynesian, or Caucasian Japanese-

American parent. Today's Japanese-American's psyche, therefore, for these reasons has also become disconnected from things classically and traditionally Japanese. For today's Japanese Americans are now not only multi-racial but also multi-cultural, and socially and multiple personalities. Such multi-hyphenated *Sansei* and *Yonsei* Japanese-Americans do not see themselves as being Japanese at all. They see themselves as true-blue blooded Americans with certain inalienable rights and constitutional entitlements. Therefore, Shinto traditions of revering the Emperor and praying to Japanese folk gods and goddesses, or observing Buddhist rituals and holding memorials to honor one's ancestral parents, such traditions no longer have meaning for today's *Sansei* and *Yonsei* who are interested mainly in things that money can buy. They are no different from their ethnic peers who also have become the "consummate American consumer" of "endless stuff" that keeps coming out.

I think George Carlin (1937-2008), in his parody on the Abrahamic religions, best expresses the thoughts, feelings, yearnings and attitudes of today's skeptical American youth who are realizing more and more the folly of being a "consummate American consumer," a self-engrossed individual oblivious to the fact that her or his lifestyle full of comforts and conveniences is being derived at the devastation of mother nature and at the expense of countless innocent creatures and people, often justified by biblical verse and words of Jesus that are anthropocentric, that is, man-centered, ethnocentric and anthropocentric.

Therefore Carlin's satire and parody on Semitic religions was as follows:

When it comes to bullshit, big-time, major league bullshit, you have to stand in awe of the all-time champion of false promises and exaggerated claims, religion. No contest. No contest. Religion. Religion easily has the greatest bullshit story ever told. Think about it. Religion has actually convinced people that there's an invisible man living in the sky who watches everything you do, every minute of every day. And the invisible man has a special list of ten things he does not want you to do. And if you do any of these ten things, he has a special place, full of fire and smoke and burning and torture and anguish, where he will send you to live and suffer and burn and choke and scream and cry forever and ever 'til the end of time.

George Carlin. Objective Thought.com - 12-23-05. cf. Matt. 26: 41,46.

In this parody, it is obvious that Carlin, like Campbell, was referring to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Today's thoughtful American youth as mentioned, are seeking for a new spiritual identity, a religion that brings all people together in unity and harmony instead of in opposition and conflict with each other.

I believe this is why Joseph Campbell pointed out that modern man, instead of being doubtful and skeptical of primitive religions, needs to look into the underlying meaning of their mythologies for clues that can reconnect his "conscience" and "life" to actualities that are eternally sacred and truths that are timelessly spiritual. For example, the significance of primitive drawings and figurines depicting a mother's love in terms of a "mother's womb" bringing forth new life, and her "breasts" overflowing mother's milk as being nurturing and sustaining the life that she has brought forth, such symbolism has profound meanings.

In his own inimical way Carling confirms the validity of primitive people literally worshipping the things of the earth below and the celestial bodies in the heavens above as gods and goddesses when he said:

Sun worship is fairly simple. There's no mystery, no miracles, no pageantry, no one asks for money, there are no songs to learn, and we don't have a special building where we all gather once a week to compare clothing. And the best thing about the sun, it never tells me I'm unworthy. Doesn't tell me I'm a bad person who needs to be saved. Hasn't said an unkind word. Treats me fine. So, I worship the sun. But I don't pray to the sun. Know why? I wouldn't presume on our friendship. It's not polite. I've often thought people treat God rather rudely don't you? Asking trillions and trillions of prayers every day. Asking and pleading and begging for favors. Do this, gimme that, I need a new car, I want a better job. And most of this praying takes place on Sunday, His day off. It's not nice. And it's no way to treat a friend. *Op. cit.*

The commandment in the Bible "not to bow to idols" "or to worship graven images," they refer also to such things and images as the sun, moon, stars, as well as mountains, rivers and specific forest creatures. Primitives not only "experienced" and "understood" the changing seasons of this earth, but they also worshipped the celestial bodies in the skies above with gratitude and reverence. They "appeased" and "honored" them with offerings to

## SHINRAN'S WASAN

Should a sentient being  
wish to see Buddha  
like a child yearning  
for its mother,

Then, undoubtedly, soon,  
in this present life,  
Tathagata will appear  
right before his eyes  
for him to see!

*Jodo Wasan No. 115*

rkt trans.

insure their virility, fertility, longevity, as well as for protection from demonic and natural forces, if defied, they thought, meant sure death.

Therefore, it is a grievous error on the part of fundamentalist Christians to see Buddhist statues as being like the "graven images" of Baal, Mammon, Astarte and others that were condemned by Moses as being the handiwork of the "devil" himself. Christian evangelicals and charismatics, therefore, do not see drawings, paintings and sculptures of Buddha as being symbolic representations of the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of All-embracing Togetherness, or as the Light of Wisdom and Life of Compassion that they are symbolizations that the Dharma is without discriminations, favoritisms, exclusions, rejections or condemnations.

Carlin, on another occasion, showed a surprising knowledge of Buddhism, more so than that the average *Nisei*, *Sansei* and *Yonsei* who are nominal Buddhists, as follows:

The Buddha espoused that following what he referred to as *The Four Noble Truths* and *The Eightfold Path*, would lead to the elimination of "suffering" and thereafter to Nirvana. There's no mention of him stating that he was "God" – nor did he, as Christ did, claim to have connections to God. So who is it that Buddhists pray to?

There's Theravada, Mahayana, Tibetan, and other forms of Buddhism being practiced around the world. The rituals are different, as are some of the beliefs, but they all "pray," so do they pray to different Buddhas, or is it the same Buddha that just "looks" different?

George Carlin. *A Few Thoughts on God*. June 26, 2008.

Carlin, however, in confusing prayer with meditation, shows how Caucasians curious about Buddhism, nevertheless, have read, studied and researched it to obtain a good grasp of Hinayana, Mayanana, Tibetan and Zen Buddhism. By contrast, many *Nisei*, *Sansei* and *Yonsei* who are Buddhists in name do not have such a grasp of Buddhism.

Even more so, today, many *Sansei* and *Yonsei* Shin Buddhists, unlike their Christian Caucasian peers interested in Buddhism, often have not read, studied, nor have an understanding and grasp of Jodoshinshu teachings as did their *Issei* parents who were not as literate, sophisticated or doctrinaire as were their Jewish, Catholic and Protestant parents who instilled definite Christian beliefs and fundamentalist ways of their sect of denomination in their children. Many *Nisei*, as of consequence, are nominal Buddhists because their *Issei* parents' were permissive and accepting of other religions. All the more, therefore, for this reason, the *Sansei* and *Yonsei* are unable to challenge and correct the misconceptions and misunderstandings held by evangelical Christians who, at times, can be quite persistent and very overbearing in their efforts to convert them. In fact, many Japanese Americans raised by *Issei* Buddhist parents, by contrast, have been culturally conditioned to be reticent and withdrawn especially from being opinionated, overbearing as well from being confrontational and argumentative. This is basically because of the teaching of *ahimsa*, or "non-violence" in the Dharmic religions.

The teachings of Shinran, therefore, are also based on a quiet gratitude and self reflection. Therefore, to this day Shin Buddhism remains relatively unknown. And, surprisingly, Jodoshinshu, at times, is often mistaken and misperceived to be a corrupt form of Christianity because many Shin Buddhists "pray to Amida as a Savior" much like Christians pray in the name of Christ for their personal salvation in a life to come in the Kingdom of God. Once again, not knowing the difference between "transformation" and "conversion," or between being "enlightened" and being a "born again Christian," the meaning of "faith" in Amida often becomes misconstrued with "faith" in Christ.

Today, the ethnic neighborhoods where *Issei* once lived are now gone. On weekends the shopping malls that have replaced them are filled with shoppers while the number of worshippers in churches, especially in temples, keep dwindling. So, *Sansei* parents with their children (*Yonsei*) and their grandchildren (*Gosei*) who go window shopping on the weekends vastly outnumber the worshippers in churches and temples on Sundays.

And as Carlin satirized, the worshippers are actually "... in a special building where we all gather once a week to compare clothing" instead of "listening" to what the ministers are saying from their pulpits.

Therefore, the Buddhism of the *Issei* has declined, with their passing. Caucasians interested in Buddhist discipline, practice and meditation seeking to improve themselves have and are increasing. Caucasians began to increase first in Zen, Tibetan Buddhism, especially in Buddhist monastic life based on celibacy, vegetarianism and the renouncing of worldly life. On the popular level, people began seeking for the practical benefits of Buddhism. As Carlin put it, "by Asking and pleading and begging for favors. Do this, gimme that, I need a new car, I want a better job...." Like any typical human being, Buddhist laity are also interested in the promise of immediate benefits that any religion might offer.

Therefore, American and European youth dissatisfied with their Judeo-Christian upbringing and beliefs began seeking for a "new spiritual vista." Many are being drawn to Hinayana, Mahayana, Tibetan and especially Zen Buddhism, mainly because of their focus on self discipline and personal improvement, such as in becoming a "centered, whole person." However, by comparison, the Shin Buddhism of *Issei* immigrants centered on ancestral and memorial services as an ethnic specific religion has declined even as their *Nisei* progeny were becoming bi- and multi-racial Americans. Many have been "converted" to Christianity.

For these and other related reasons, the number of *Sansei* and *Yonsei* in our Shin temples have dwindled as *Nisei* now in their "twilight years" continue to pass away. Meanwhile, you often hear of Caucasians who have become Buddhist monks and nuns, Zen Masters, scholars and specialists in the various Buddhist sects. But you hardly hear of Blacks or Latinos becoming Buddhists. Much less do you hear of native Hawaiians or native American Indians who have become Shin Buddhists.

In the meanwhile, we, regardless of race, ethnicity or religious affiliation, are all living in very frightening times. So ominous that many people go about their daily business in denial in not wishing to face the facts. Many believe that "ignorance is bliss," and are resigned that "whatever will be will be." This seems to be the attitude of many serving on Japanese Buddhist temple Boards in Hawaii today.

The reason for such attitudes is because the few in power and control of our nation's economics,

politics and financial institutions are also in control of the direction of science, technology and medicine takes. This is because they fund to support the research and projects that mainly ensure their profits and advantages. The so-called "military industrial congressional complex" (MICC) has taken center stage to displace not only mainline religions, but continues to undermine the basic family unit comprised of a husband and wife struggling to parent and provide for their children and grandchildren. The traditional family has become disrupted by the introduction of such things as condoms, birth control pills, abortion procedures, surrogate mothers carrying the fertilized egg of another woman in her womb for money, same sex marriages and so on endlessly.

These intrusions, in turn, have resulted in incidences of infidelity, divorces, teenage sex, unwanted pregnancies, domestic strife and violence and so forth. In addition, *Sansei* parents, like other middle class parents, are struggling to raise their children, the *Yonseï*, and their grandchildren the *Goseï*, in a society full of economic, social and political pressures. These pressures have resulted in divorce and subsequent single parent families, co-habitation, children born out of wedlock, and so forth.

Furthermore, the family of man is now faced with several serious absurdities because of an individual's mindless transgressions and blatant desecrations of things eternally sacred and timelessly spiritual. All the while, the few in power and control of the politics and money continue to orchestrate a global situation in which several absurdities have arisen.

Today, the whole family of man is faced with the following "mind boggling absurdities." The absurdity that should an all out total nuclear war occur, all of mankind will be extinguished; the absurdity that stockpiling and developing even more superior weapons of mass destruction is actually preventing an all-out nuclear war; the absurdity of faceless corporations claiming that they are meeting the real needs of human beings, while in reality, they are mainly pursuing their own profits at the expense of unsuspecting native indigenous peoples and their virgin ecosystems; the absurdity that is the growing "gap" between the "haves" and "not haves" is strangling the hen (the workers) that is laying the golden eggs (prosperity); the absurdity that the ongoing toxic emissions and chemical wastes being produced by industries are not poisoning the waters that we are drinking, not polluting the air that we are breathing, and also not contaminating the land that we are standing and living on.

And finally, the absurdity that as multi-national corporations keep denuding the remaining pristine forests, harvesting virgin lands and flushing their industrial wastes and debris into the rivers flowing into the oceans, that there will be no long term consequences that follow, such as that of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and the Fukushima nuclear disaster even now affecting the Pacific Ocean above the Equator.

Such are the absurdities that are the rationale of faceless corporations. Such absurdities continue and yet will be felt for many, many more years. What, therefore, can be more absurd than the absurdity based on the premise that "stuff and more stuff" and that "more bigger stuff" is progress? For "the new stuff" quickly becomes the "old stuff" that keeps becoming the "mounds of discarded non-biodegradable stuff." The problem of where to dump all this "endless mounds of discarded stuff" that nobody wants dumped in their neighborhood continues to be a growing problem.

Ecologists have noted that in just the last two or three hundred years, modern man has done more damage to the earth than has primitive man over the last three to four thousand years. In the meanwhile, in the name of science and progress the earth continues to be relentlessly harvested as its indigenous native peoples continue to be displaced, dehumanized and devastated and often to extinction. This is especially true concerning the breakdown of the traditional family comprised of a father, mother and their children.

Recent studies in medical, neurological and brain sciences have shown the importance of intra-uterine existence in many ways that are quite complex, especially in the proper development of the frontal lobes of a baby's brain over the ten lunar months when a pregnant mother and her developing child are physically connected through the umbilical cord. They are also according to Buddhism connected to unseen spiritual forces developing a conscience in the baby (Buddha's Mind and Nature). Brain scientists have also verified the importance of "mother's milk" right after birth in the proper and continuing development of a baby's frontal lobes where its future awarenesses of things moral, ethical, sacred and spiritual are to emerge (its conscienceness).

Let us, therefore, turn to the words of the Buddha for guidance and illumination. Let us thoughtfully reflect and contemplate on the words of Buddha concerning our profound indebtedness to our "elders," "parents" and "ancestors" as being sacred and sources of knowledge, wisdom and spirituality that have been accumulated over the

countless generations. For many youth and young adults of the now generation think that anything past is archaic and irrelevant because of today's seeming progressive scientific, medical and technological achievements and their practical benefits. However, the fact that feral children found in the wild not able to speak, read or write and adjust to society attests to the fact that a newborn cannot survive on its own and needs to rely on the wisdom and ways of its parents and elders whose ancestors stretch all the way back into an incalculable distant past. Such an ancestral past must be revered as a source of knowledge and wisdom in the form of a "voiceless" voice that connects us to things sacred and insights spiritual that are "timeless" and therefore, "eternal."

To deny and reject the "voiceless voices" of one's ancestral past is not only a grave error but entails another absurdity. It is the absurdity resulting in the denial of a viable future for those who are yet to be born and yet to live. Such a denial can be compared to a person claiming that she or he was born without a father and mother, and, therefore, also the absurdity that our fathers and mothers were born without their fathers and mothers. Then, this would also mean to deny that those who are to be born in the future also will be born without their fathers or mothers, which is another absurdity. How absurd can you get? This is just as absurd as to think that two males or two females in getting married can conceive children of their own without the opposite sex, which again, is another absurdity.

Someone has wisely and prudently noted: "if we destroy everything that has been accomplished in the past, you then reduce the world into nothing but the rubble of steel and concrete." These words immediately reminded me of 9/11 when the world of man was suddenly changed for forever when the Twin Towers came tumbling down to nothing but the rubble of twisted steel, and shattered glass and pulverized concrete. And this does not include the lives of the three thousand innocent human beings who perished. As of consequence, the family of man now lives constantly under the ominous clouds of indiscriminate terrorism.

Meanwhile, the mega-global corporations, in spite of the warnings of the earth's scientists and ethical humanists continue to manufacture and merchandise "more and more" "stuff" that keeps depleting and polluting the resources of the earth. People and world governments are also distrustful and in fear of each other because of their clandestine quest and the surreptitious activities for dominance and supremacy over other nations as they constantly

keep improving their weapons of mass destruction. So what must we do to live together in peace and harmony?

I believe the "family of man" must heed the words of Buddha who spoke of our *Four Indebtednesses* and about our *Our Profound Indebtedness to Our Parents and Ancestors*. The *Four Indebtedness* are: first, one's indebtedness to the Boundless Universe; second, one's indebtedness to one's parents; third, one's indebtedness to all sentient beings; and finally, one's indebtedness to the Three Treasures. For without the Cosmos, the solar system as we know life would not be a possibility. This then would mean that the "earth" also would not be a reality. Without our parents, furthermore, we never would have been born as a human being with a conscience that humanizes us all.

The undeniable fact is that we also are all dependent on other human beings who we will never get to know, as well as witness the countless innocent creatures being necessarily slaughtered daily for the sake of our very survival and existence. For example, if there were no one to govern and enact the laws of a nation or the police to enforce them, then, because human beings are self-centered as such, they can suddenly get out of control and behave like brute animals (raw instincts), hungry ghosts (insatiable) and demons (cruelty and violence). Given the circumstance, as Shinran said, human beings can suddenly become frightening, violent, wanton and cruel (See Tannisho XIII. p. 24).

Therefore, the fact is that if there was not the Dharma Truth of Selflessness and its Actuality of Togetherness, then, there would be no Buddhas and Bodhisattvas constantly appearing as Tathagatas traveling back and forth to appear in the various worlds of sentient beings to illuminate and guide them out of the darkness of their own greed, hatreds and vanities. There would be no Light that reveals the reality that all things and forms of life are independent and interdependent, and, therefore, sacred and spiritual. If this was not so, then the life of human beings would be devoid of all possibilities for a life of gratitude, reverence, humility, especially a life of reflection, penitence and commiseration as illuminated by Wisdom and Compassion.

This is why the *Sutra on Our Profound Indebtedness to our Parents and Ancestors* especially tells of how in actuality we are all indebted especially more so to our one and only mothers than to our fathers. Why? Because, as mentioned, we were totally and utterly dependent on our mother's very body while we were developing in

her womb receiving all the while direct nourishment through her "blood" (umbilical cord) for over a period of some "ten lunar months," developing into a human being with a conscience.

None of us, however, have any inkling of the ten lunar months we each spent in our one and only mother's body. Nor can any of us as adults distinctly recall and remember the days of our infancy right after our births when we were totally dependent on our "mother's milk" and incapable of toileting or bathing ourselves without her tender love and caring hands. In this Sutra, Buddha estimated that "... each child drinks up to some one thousand two hundred gallons of **mother's milk**" and that a mother, for over some "... three years she **nourishes the baby with milk** which is transformed from her blood into her mother milk."

That the Buddha recognized further the importance of the basic family unit as being crucial and foundational to society, this is seen in his following words,

A family is a place where minds come in contact with one another. If these minds love one another, the home will be as beautiful as a flower garden. But if these minds are out of harmony with one another, it is like a storm that plays havoc with the garden. *Op. cit.*, p. 432.

And, speaking of a son doing all he can to repay his parents for having brought him into this world as a human being with a conscience, once again the Buddha's said:

It would be impossible for a son to repay his parents for their gracious kindness, even if he could carry his father on his right shoulder and his mother on his left for one hundred long years. *Op. cit.* p. 430.

We need to keep these words of Sakyamuni Buddha in mind. We need to know that in repaying the kindness and love of our parents, grandparents and great grandparents for us, we, in reality, can never fully requite what they all did and endured for us in full or in kind. Once again, such acts of filial piety are not peculiar to or are the monopoly of any one person, race, creed, culture or religion. They are natural and universal to all mankind.

Here are also some other words of Buddha to ponder.

To best serve their parents they must learn to practice kindness toward all animate life. To live happily with their wives and children

they must keep away from lust and thoughts of selfish comfort. BDK. *The Teachings of the Buddha* (Eng./Japnese) p. 408.

The fact is that there is only one world, not two worlds, one meaningless and the other full of meaning, or one good and the other bad. People only think there are two worlds, due to their discriminating faculty. p. 414.

If a lay follower becomes ego-centered, he will become jealous, envious, hateful and harmful, because his mind has become defiled with greed, anger and foolishness. But if he returns to Buddha, he will accomplish even a greater service for Buddha ... p. 418.

Then Buddha spoke to the children and parents as follows:

A child should honor his parents and do for them all that he is supposed to do. He should serve them and help them at their labor, cherish the family lineage, protect the family property, and hold memorial services after they have passed away. p. 424

The parents should do five things for their children: - avoid doing evil, set an example of good deeds, give them and education, arrange for their marriage, and let them inherit the family wealth at a proper time. .... Ibid.

Then Buddha spoke to husbands and wives as follows:

A husband should treat his wife with respect, courtesy and fidelity. ... provide for her needs, such as accessories. At the same time, a wife should take pains with the housekeeping, ... maintain her virtue as a good wife should. She should not waste her husband's income, and should manage his house properly and faithfully ... pp. 424, 426.

Please then ponder once again the deep significance of the Buddha's words:

If there were a person who carries his father on his left shoulder and his mother on his right shoulder until his bones were ground to powder by their weight as they bore through to the marrow, and if that person were to circumambulate Mount Sumeru for a hundred thousand kalpas until the blood

that flowed out covered his ankles, that person would still not have repaid the deep kindness of his parents." The Filial Piety Sutra.

Allow me now then to end with Shinran's Wasan:

Sakya and Amida are  
Compassion's parents;  
Using all means  
they skillfully lead us  
And in us the supreme Faith  
Do they awaken.

Koso Wasan No. 74  
Ryukoku Trans. Series VI.  
The *Koso Wasan*. p. 99.

Therefore, what Shinran is saying is that we should all express deep gratitude and indebtedness to Amida because her Compassion does not forsake or reject anyone. This is expressed in Shinran's *Wasan* as follows:

For Tathagata's Great Compassion  
So beneficent and benevolent,  
Though our bodies be crushed,  
We should express indebtedness!  
As for the Great Master Teachers'  
Beneficence and benevolence,  
Though our bones be pulverized,  
We should express gratitude!

*Shozomatsu Wasan* No. 59.  
rkt trans.

Let us then to the last breath of our lives express our deep gratitude and profound indebtedness to Amida Buddha as the Ultimate Manifestation of the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness that is the Light of Wisdom that "awakens" the Reality of Togetherness that is the Life of Unconditional Compassion that embraces all beings without rejections or condemnations, a Truth and Reality that has never or will ever forsake, abandon or reject any sentient being. *Namoh-amida-butsu!*

## **BUDDHIST VERSES OR STORY**

It would be impossible for a son to repay his parents for their gracious kindness, even if he could carry his father on his right shoulder and his mother on his left for one hundred long years.

And even if he could bathe the bodies of his parents in sweet-smelling ointments for a hundred years, serve as an ideal son, gain a throne for them, and give them all the luxuries of the world, still he would not be able to repay them sufficiently for the great indebtedness of gratitude he owes them.

But if he leads his parents to Buddha and explains the Buddha's teachings to them, and persuades them to give up a wrong course and follow a right one, leading them to give up all greed and enjoy the practice of offering, then he will be more than repaying them.

Buddha's blessing abides in the home where parents are held in respect and esteem. BDK. *The Teaching of the Buddha*. (Eng/Japanese edition) pp. 430-432.

## **QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER**

**QUESTION:** What are the "five impediments" and "three servitudes" of women mentioned by Rennyo Shonin in his Epistles?

**ANSWER:** The five impediments prevent women from becoming a Brahman, Indra, Mara, Cakravartiraja or Buddha. The three servitudes mean that women have to submit to the dictates of her parents and elders at home, when married are to be subservient to her husband, and when widowed to be dependent on her children, especially in her old age.

In ancient Hindu as well in Confucian society, women were thought to be inferior to men.

But trusting and taking refuge in Amida Buddha's Selflessness Wisdom enables us to rise above the historical distinctions that traditionally set a man above a woman. In being embraced by Buddha's Light and Life of Togetherness, we come to see also that, regardless of one's sex or age, we are all imperfect human beings that have to be forgiving and loving if we are to live in peace and harmony.