



# GASSHO

June  
2014

Issue No: 06-14

*"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"*



## MATTERS OF COLOR

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

Because of what and how we human beings see, hear, smell, taste, touch and are touched by the living and non-living things of our immediate surroundings, we are constantly influenced by their shapes, forms, size, appearance, substance and especially by the skin color of our fellow human beings. Our reflexes, reactions, responses and opinions, as of consequence, are constantly affected and conditioned by what we keep seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and what our skin surfaces are touched by, both on the outside and in the insides of us, such as in experiencing headaches and heartaches.

These external and internal stimuli in becoming sensations in turn then trigger feelings and thoughts which in turn subjectivizes the very things we say and do to each other that then have irreversible karmic effects and consequences that have personal as well as collective consequences. At the same time, our deep seated personal likes and dislikes are "communicated" through our ocular cues, facial reactions, hand gestures and body posturings that constantly "telegraph" and "communicate" our approval or disapproval of what or who we are interacting with. Each person's ocular, facial, hand and body posturing constantly communicates a unique "language" of their own in the arena of human interactions and relationships, more so than what are our socially correct words and actions.

In these respects, whether we are aware of it or not, our constantly changing moods, opinions and judgments of what is pleasurable or painful, proper or improper, right or wrong and especially what we subjectively judge to be "good" or "evil," these determinations are all very much influenced

## MONTH'S THOUGHT



In our human world, there are many above us when we look up, and many below us when we look down. Although half paralyzed, I have my right arm and I have my right leg. I have a tumor in my brain but I can see colors, hear sounds and sense differences in taste. I am fast getting to where even these will fade away, but I still have the Buddha, I have the Pure Land and I have the Great Compassion. How fortunate I am! ... It is the world of "All right if I live, and all right if I die." — A woman of Jodoshinshu faith.



by the color, shape, size and appearance of things, especially in terms of how we feel about a person's skin pigmentation and overall anatomical attributes. Such superficial discernments of another person's physicality, sexuality, complexion and visible person constantly affect how we react and respond to each other.

A spectrum of human beings is depicted in the "six realms of transmigration" wherein sentient beings are constantly meandering between the extremes of the most pleasurable experiences (heavenly existence) all the way down into the most painful and unbearable of states of torment as though we were beings burning in hellish existence. It is as Shinran Shonin noted: "under the influence of our karmic past, we human beings will do anything" regardless of their good or bad consequences. This fact of our wandering mind, person and conscience between "heaven" and "hell"

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# REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SERVICES for JUNE 2014

### 1ST SUN JUN 01st:

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

### 2ND SUN JUN 08th:

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

### 3RD SUN JUN 15th:

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

### 4TH SUN JUN 22nd:

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

### 5TH SUN JUN 29th:

#### **ANNUAL O'BON SERVICE**

9 A.M. Eng. Service  
Speaker:  
Rev. Hidehito Sakamoto

## 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

*With Deepest Sympathy*

Mrs. Yoshino Tanaka  
95 yrs. April 18, 2014

**THANK YOU**

*for YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS !!*

### 2014 Memorial Service Schedule

2013	1 Year	2012	3 Year	2008	7 Year
2002	13 Year	1998	17 Year	1990	25 Year
1982	33Year	1965	50 Year	1915	100 Year

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# REV. SAKAMOTO'S CORNER

## JINEN, NATURE, THE TEACHER OF SENTIENT BEINGS

The Buddha said to Ananda and Bodhisattva Maitreya, "When you observed the land, did you not see that everything there, from the ground up to the Heaven of Pure Abode, is most wondrous, adorned with purity, and that it comes into being spontaneously?"

Ananda answered, "Yes we did." Then said the Buddha, "Did you not also hear the great voice of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life resounding throughout the whole world and guiding all sentient beings?" Ananda replied, "Yes we did."

The Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life 42.

Once again, greetings everyone. Some five months already have quickly gone by since I came to Hawaii. Gradually, little by little, I have been adjusting to Hawaii.

When I arrived, I noticed that the things of Mother Nature can be seen everywhere here in Hawaii. Especially when I look at the beautiful trees and colorful flowers swaying with the winds, my heart is moved and becomes filled with serenity.

Now, I would like to talk about a student who was also moved by Mother Nature and of his subsequent reaction. He was a student of Juko Sugiura, a great teacher from the old Zeze clan (Shiga-prefecture of Japan). He gave lectures to the late Emperor Showa (Emperor Hirohito, father of present Emperor Akihito).

In those days, it was customary for students to go to the home of their teachers for learning. Sugiura's home was in a rural area remote from Tokyo called Musashino. The drawing room of Sugiura's home had a commanding view over an open field of Japanese pampas grass swaying with the winds. In the fall, they appeared to be like rolling silvery waves.

This student upon seeing this impressive view then said, "Teacher, wouldn't it be even more of a spectacular view if we set fire to the grass? To which Sugiura replied, "Indeed, it would be spectacular, but I wouldn't do it!"

Later, this student also became a famous scholar. The words of Sugiura were recalled and remembered. He then realized that Sugiura's response "but I wouldn't do it" was prompted at that time by Amida's compassionate love for all things. And that Jinen, or Mother Nature, is always speaking to us and teaching us.

We as beings of sentience, because of our underlying ignorance, are always in danger of committing grave transgressions and desecrations of the Dharma. But, regardless of the consequences, we keep committing transgressions and desecrations. So, teacher Sugiura's words, "but I wouldn't do it!" means that we all are in the sure unfailing hands of Amida Buddha who keeps stopping us from committing transgressions and desecrations.

This is why we should do our best to "listen to Amida's voiceless voice" by accepting Amida Buddha as our spiritual parent. For Amida is Jinen, meaning Amida is in Mother Nature everywhere, like a parent's love always sustaining us. I believe it is very important to become aware of this actuality by saying and repeating Amida's Name in gratitude and indebtedness to one's parents and ancestors.

Namo Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu,  
Namu Amida Butsu.

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Rev. Sakamoto can be reached at 220-3702  
or by email at [hidehito128@gmail.com](mailto:hidehito128@gmail.com)

is confirmed daily in news media reports, such as in cases where one person takes the life of another compared to cases where one gives up one's life in trying to save the life of another, even that of a total stranger.

Let us then in this our centennial year, when the O'Bon season has begun in June, dwell on how the world of colors, shapes, forms, size and a person's physicality play a significant role as to how we react and respond to each other in terms of our overall physical appearance, especially our skin pigmentation.

For instance, how do you react and respond when you see a person of very dark skin complexion? Do you experience discomfort, unease, if not fear and mistrust? In another entirely different sense, what is your reaction and response when you see the traffic light blinking a yellow-orange? Do you press on the brakes to come to a stop, or do you step on the gas to speed right on through before it turns red in order to be on your merry way? Your reactions and responses in both instances reveal what your thoughts and feelings of the ongoing moments are. Therefore, your reactions and responses reveal your person, personality and your inner character.

Then, there is another dimension that affects the reactions and triggers responses in us as human beings. And that concerns not only how a person reacts to a person's skin color. It has to do more subtly with a person's deep rooted beliefs and convictions ingrained ever since childhood that have tended him toward ethnocentrism and religious dogmatism.

Since man's known history, people of lighter complexion have been seen to be godlike and superior to persons of darker skin complexion. Ever since the Iberian expansion beginning with the Portuguese and Spanish, people of color, the blacks, the browns and the yellows, were especially seen as primitive and backward, therefore, as pagans and heathens. For instance, what do the following terms "darkie," "yellow peril," "porch monkey" and "Polynesian paralysis" imply? Likewise, what are the racial imputations of labeling someone as being an "eggplant," a "red apple" or a "banana"?

Now, let us turn to the colors of the Buddhist flag. They are blue, yellow, red, white, orange, and, at times, include deep purple such as indigo or

maroon. Deep blue-indigo in Buddhism stands for royalty and nobility. It also stands for trust and truthfulness. Yellow stands for a "mellowness" that avoids divisiveness, conflicts and especially violence. This state of non-divisiveness is called "emptiness" which does not mean obliteration but "envisions" a state of bringing all conflicting opposites into a "selfless relationship of togetherness." This state is depicted as a mellow radiance that is of a "golden yellow brilliance." It is a brilliance radiating calm, serenity and peace, such as experienced in the mellow yellow-oranges of a crimson setting sun as contrasted to the blazing, bluish sizzling rays and searing heat of the noonday sun.

Red in the sense of such mellow yellow-orange tones of crimson golden splendor means living in serenity by practicing the virtues of Bodhi-wisdom's warming light which brings untold serenity and good fortune by virtue of its all-embracing, unconditional compassion for all things and beings. Therefore, white, in this case, stands for the Dharma's crystal clear Light of Selflessness that is a colorless beam of light that is non-scorching and non-incinerating, full of affirmation, fulfillment and a serenity full of joy and happiness.

When this clear mellow Light passes through a glass prism that is a person's "vertical axial consciousness," it manifests itself in all colors of a rainbow with all the in-between shadings and hues. Thus, the World of Dharma and the varying worlds of sentient beings become "seamless" and "inseparable" as are the colors of a rainbow. In a similar manner, the clear World of Selfless Dharma is also manifest as Amida Buddha's Clear Light of Wisdom radiating a warm golden splendor full of Boundless Compassion that embraces all beings never to forsake or ever abandon them. This Light is also the golden radiance emanating from the Pure Land. Therefore, it also stands for the inseparability between Amida and sentient beings. This is like moonlight being inseparable from sunlight, though the two are distinctly two.

In another similar sense, we also are like lotus plants whose roots are rooted deep in the very stench and mire of a swamp in total darkness. Like a lotus plant drawn upward by power of sunlight that then finally breaks through the water's surface, a person also is drawn out of his cocoon of ignorance to finally break out into the full light of day to then soar unobstructed in the spacious skies. In breaking through the water's surface, the

lotus plant, likewise, produces buds that then finally blossom into radiant lotus flowers of pure joy radiating with gratitude. In doing so, like all the other lotuses, each lotus then equally benefits from the same sun.

In like manner, all sentient beings are equally benefiting from the same Dharma's Light of Selflessness and Life of Togetherness. The Dharma Sun transforms the ignorance of human beings into endless blossoms of enlightenment. The Dharma's Selflessness and Togetherness are manifest as Amida Buddha's Infinite Wisdom and Boundless Compassion constantly illuminating and enfolding all sentient beings without partiality.

Therefore, sentient beings are likened to lotus plants with roots deeply mired in the muck of a swamp. Like the lotus plant growing in a swamp, we are all destined to bud and flower into persons of faith. In being so transformed, we are like lotus blossoms. In this becoming we are not being incinerated or obliterated. We are not becoming a "no-thing-ness." Instead, "just as we are," we are constantly being "awakened by the powers of Selfless Wisdom and its virtues of All-embracing Compassion that are eternal verities that have, are and will be with us always.

This "transformative process" by power and virtue of Amida's Wisdom and Compassion also can be likened to an iceberg melting and naturally becoming the very waters of the Dharma Ocean by the warmth of the Dharma Sun. In melting and turning into the very waters of the Dharma Ocean, the iceberg itself also is not being destroyed or becoming a "no-thing-ness." This is why, said Shinran: "even plants, trees and the soil all attain Buddhahood" (*Essentials of Faith Alone*. p. 42). This means nothing in the universe is rejected or excluded. All are in the World of Dharma.

Therefore, in his *Ichinen Tanen Mon'i*, Shinran also declared:

"Amida Buddha's purpose in causing our birth in the Pure Land of Ease is to transform us into Flowers of Enlightenment with the same Great Enlightenment as his own."

In Pure Land Buddhist scriptures, it is said that whenever a person "awakens true and real faith," a lotus simultaneously blooms in Amida's Land of Purity. This is the reason why *myokonin* are called

## WORDS OF SHINRAN

"Where there are arguments, various kinds of blind passions are awakened; the wise should avoid them." T. Unno. *Tannisho*. XII. p. 21.

"wonderful white lotus blossoms." They are persons who have entrusted themselves completely to Amida Buddha and have taken refuge in her All-embracing Compassion that does not "discriminate between ... good and evil." What this means is that Amida definitely is not a deity who accepts only "good people" and rejects "evil people" to obliterate them (see Deuteronomy 7:1-6). For persons of "evil," said Shinran, are "a special concern of Amida" (Taitetsu Unno Ch. III. p. 8).

In the Pure Land scripture called *The Buddha's Discourse on Amida Buddha (Bus'setsu Amida Kyo)* the following passage concerning lotus blossoms is found as follows:

"... Sariputra, in the Land of Utmost Bliss there are seven jeweled ponds filled with the water of eight excellent qualities. ... In the ponds are lotuses as large as chariot-wheels — the blue ones radiating a blue light, the yellow a yellow light, the red a red light, and white a white light. They are marvelous and beautiful, fragrant and pure. ..." Hisao Inagaki. *Three Pure Land Sutras*. *Ibid*. p. 354.

Now, in the art world, the colors red, blue and green are primary colors that are combined to obtain differing colors. In color spectrography, when a ray of crystal clear light is passed through a glass prism, it breaks out into the colors of the rainbow as follows: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, and especially deep purple.

As already mentioned, in Buddhism a white lotus stands for the state of crystal clarity that is of a spiritual purity that enables a person to pacify her or his burning desires and boiling passions by power of the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Actuality of Togetherness in which all things and forms of life have been, are and continue to be interconnected and seamless over the timeless process of ceaseless births and deaths. Therefore even in conditions that are constantly changing

(*anitya*) all things and forms of life are “inseparable,” therefore, to be regarded as eternally sacred and timelessly spiritual. This then is the underlying significance of the words: “Life never dies although we live in the midst of change and death!”

A red lotus stands for the heart at the very center of our being that is constantly pulsating to keep the vital organs above and below it functioning and alive. According to Buddhist tantric practices, the “heart” is the “transformative center” (*anahata*). It is the fourth of the seven vital centers (*chakras*), three above and three below it. Therefore, the heart is also depicted as a circle with eight white petals, or eight ways to ennoble a person’s sensual and spiritual being.

The heart at the very center of our person represents our conscience that cannot be compromised or lied to lest we not only mentally and morally perish, but also die a spiritual death. Should this happen, our minds then become insensitive to the intuitions and feelings of the pulsating heart that is the nexus of our conscience that is connected inseparably to things sacred and spiritual. Our minds if cut off from our hearts then become full of misconceptions, misunderstandings, superstitions, prejudices as well as doubts, fears, suspicions and mistrust. Our hearts cut off from our minds then also become beset with avarice, personal resentments and self vanities. Therefore, as Shinran says, for these reasons human beings are full of untruths and falsehoods. As of consequence, our thinking is easily misled and our sentiments easily befuddled. Therefore, human beings, without being aware and awake, often become hypocritical and bigoted because of their moral insensitivities, thoughtlessness and mindlessness. This is why many are not aware of their transgressions and desecrations deep in their hearts.

A blue (or purple) lotus symbolizes one’s innermost, core conscience or spirituality in the depths of one’s deepest “conscience-ness.” That is where the matters of one’s innermost heart take precedence over the matters of the mind. For it is in the depths of one’s heart that the Dharma’s Truth of Selflessness and its Actuality of Togetherness awaken the “aware-ness” that living and non-living things should not be transgressed or desecrated.

This transformation of darkness into light, as mentioned, can be likened to when the lights of a pitch black room are suddenly switched on to

“instantly” illuminate everything in the room just as they are without pulverizing or incinerating them. An upside down chair then is seen as an upside down chair and can be up-righted. In doing so, the chair itself is not being incinerated or rejected just because it happens to be upside down. It is as a Zen Master once quipped, “Now I can see a crooked pine tree as crooked and not as an upright, straight pine tree!” Likewise, you do not cut a tree down just because it is “crooked.”

Therefore, the Light of Wisdom illuminates to reveal a thing “as it actually is!” This is because the Dharma’s Truth of Selflessness is a Light without prejudice, discriminations and favoritism. This is also because the World of Dharma is without condemnations or rejections. The World of Dharma equally embraces “good persons” (straight types) and especially “evil persons” (crooked types). Therefore, a pink lotus stands for the blending of white (purity) with red (impurity) which becomes a rosy pink. In other words, the Clear Light of Amida’s Wisdom suffuses to mellow and calm down a person’s burning desires and “red-hot” passions before they explode and spill over, without conflicts of who is straight and upright and who is bent and crooked. Therefore, a pink lotus symbolizes the Boundless World of the Dharma’s Selflessness and Togetherness embracing all things and sentient beings in a sacred and spiritual relationship that is seamless and inseparable, that is also calming and pacifying, instead of boiling and raging.

This is the reason why the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path were revealed by Sakyamuni Buddha. They are not the monopoly of any one person, race, culture, or religion. This is why it is timelessly possible for any person to take refuge in the Three Treasures, or the Ultimate Buddha, the Absolute Dharma and the Universal Samgha. For these reasons, the Three Treasures are universal verities that cannot be monopolized by any ethnocentric or theocratic religion. It was because of such an “awakening of faith” that Shinran declared: “Only the nembutsu is true, real and sincere.” The term “only” here means that the Dharma’s Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness cannot be “only” for a given person, race, culture or religion.

This significance of “only” as meant by Shinran Shonin is made clear as follows:

“I, Shinran, have never even once uttered

nembutsu for the sake of my father and mother. The reason is that all beings have been fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, in the timeless process of birth-and-death. When I attain Buddhahood in the next birth, each and every one will be saved."

Taitetsu Unno. *Tannisho*. Ch. V. p. 10.

In these words, we can see that the "only" meant in "only the O-nembutsu is true and real" means that upon attaining Buddhahood a person, of natural consequence, then keeps returning as a Buddha "to save all others" without regarding differences of a person's skin color, race, culture or religion. Clearly, this "only" does not mean just for a "chosen race" to the exclusion of others who are perceived as "sinful" or "evil," and therefore, to be ultimately rejected, if not obliterated.

Living things, scientists say, first appeared on this earth billions of years ago and not just out of the clear blue in 4004 B.C. (*ex nihilo* creation) as the creationists would have it. The phrase "the timeless process of birth-and-death" also implies timeless time of cosmic proportions whose beginnings and endings are unknowable. According to evolutionists, living things naturally emerged out of pre-existing elements to develop and evolve over a very long, long period of immeasurable galactic time. And in doing so, all things and life forms were and continue to be based on pre-existent matter (*creation ex material*). In doing so, they have and yet are evolving in a multitude of seen and unseen ways. What the future will be like, no one really knows. How is it possible to speak knowingly of things that are unknowable?

Now, the underlying significance of the Profound Vows of Amida Buddha is based on the fact that "unless all beings are safe and happy, no one can be truly safe and happy." Therefore, the

*GASSHO continues on p. 8*

**Donations**

*continued from p. 2*

## SHINRAN'S WASAN

*Upon receiving faith  
one instantly leaps out of  
the Five Evil Realms,  
rejoicing in Great Joy!*

*All ordinary people,  
both "good" and "evil,"*

*Upon "hearing" of Tathagata's  
all-embracing Vows,*

*Become persons  
of "Superior Understanding"*

*Much like lotus blossoms  
radiating with excellence!*

Shoshinge v. 35-40  
rkt trans.

ultimate purpose of Buddha-dharma is to make all living and non-living things happy and safe wherever they are, whether they be in the past, present or future.

In this regard the views of Buddhism are quite different from theocentric religions whose beliefs and doctrines are based on a personified Supreme Deity who accepts only those who are "good" and ultimately, in the end, rejects those who are "evil." Is not Amida Buddha's Vow as a Bodhisattva: "I will not accept final enlightenment until all beings are equally enlightened," the very opposite in sentiment? For the Vow states that unless all things and beings are enlightened, safe and happy, until such time, no one can be truly safe and happy?

Such an all-embracing sentiment is of cosmic proportions. Is not this sentiment echoed also by Shinran Shonin in his words as follows:

"Nirvana has innumerable names. ... peaceful happiness ... eternal bliss ... oneness and Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is none other than Tathagata. This Tathagata pervades the countless worlds; it fills the hearts and minds of the ocean of beings. Thus, plants, trees, and land all attain Buddhahood." SBT-Series. *Notes on Essentials of Faith Alone*. p. 42.

So Shinran also implies that all sentient beings and non-living things, since beginning-less, endless time, are destined to Buddhahood. Therefore, over the passing generations, we also have been fathers and mothers as well as brothers and sisters to one another. In other words, as individuals we are connected to those who have already passed on before us. It is also an actuality that we in the present are connecting to those yet to be born in the ever unfolding future. Therefore, we, who are now living, are responsible for assuring the safety and happiness of those yet to be born in the distant future.

Such then is the significance of Amida's Primal Vow that has, is and keeps transforming the very darkness of our ignorance into the very light of "illuminated understanding" that keeps embracing us with compassion instead of rejecting us because of his skin color, ethnicity and beliefs. *Namoh-amida-butsu*.

**Shinshu Kyokai Mission**  
1631 South Beretania St.  
Honolulu, HI 96826  
skm@ShinshuKyokai.org  
www.ShinshuKyokai.org

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## **BUDDHIST STORY OR PASSAGE**

"We are taught that foolish people of inferior capacity like ourselves, unlettered and ignorant, will be saved by entrusting ourselves to Amida. As we accept this and entrust ourselves, it is the supreme dharma for us, regardless of how base it may seem to people of superior capacity. No matter how superb other teachings may be, if they are beyond our realization and mastery, we cannot uphold them. ... it is the basic intention of the Buddhas that we shall all together get beyond birth-and-death. ..." T. Unno. *Tannisho*. XII. p. 21.

## **QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER**

QUESTION: What does *bombu* mean?

ANSWER: In reply I quote the words of Shinran in his *Ichinen Tanen Mon'i* (The Significance on that Singular Thought), as follows: "A bombu is an ignorant being constantly filled with base desires, greed, anger, hatred and jealousy constantly arise within him, and do not cease until the last moment of life."