



GASSHO

March
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"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



ONLY THE NEMBUTSU IS TRUE, REAL AND SINCERE

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

In this issue of *GASSHO*, I would like to follow up on Rev. Yoshitaka Tamai's understanding of Shinran Shonin's words that:

"... all things are empty and vain, therefore, untrue. Only the nembutsu is true, real, and sincere." T. Unno. *Tannisho. Epilogue*. P. 36.

Rev. Tamai restated these words as:

"In this world where everything is changing and where those who earnestly seek the truth become disillusioned and cry in sorrow as a result, we must become aware that only Amida Buddha is true and eternal." *Ichinyo*. p. 31.

In previous issues of *GASSHO* I have reiterated the fact that "to be living" at the same time, is "to be dying." Therefore, we are all "dying" and "living" in each passing moment of our unrepeatable lives. Living and dying are not two separate processes as most of us ordinarily assume that they are.

Living and dying in actuality are seamless and inseparable processes governed by the uniform and orderly principles of causality, conditionality, interdependency, and, most importantly, by the consequences of personal and collective karma. Such is the ceaseless process of birth, growth, decay and death. Once conception occurs, birth, growth, aging until death

MONTH'S THOUGHT



"A people without hope soon perish. A life without hope becomes degenerate. Regardless of the adversities that may confront us, we must never lose hope. Even if the entire world forsakes us, the Buddha will continue including us in his embrace. The Buddha is always with us, regardless of our suffering." Yoshitaka Tamai. *Ichinyo*. pp. 34, 35.



inevitably follow. Like an avalanche triggered by an earthquake, the consequences of conception must run their course until they come to final rest at death. This fact of living and dying at the same time underlies a person's life from the moment of his conception in his mother's womb to his final breath of life at death.

One's physical person and social psychological personality undeniably are constantly changing because "all things are impermanent" (*sarva dhamma annica*). The effects and affects of karmic consequences are irreversible once they have been set in motion. For example, the invention of the atomic bomb and the consequences of having detonated such atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki continue to this day to cast the ominous possibility of human kind's total extinction.

For this reason, I have been saying that there is a basic difference between religions bent on "converting others over to their religion" in

REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR MARCH 2015

1st SUN Mar 1st

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

2nd SUN Mar 8th

Spring O'Higan Service

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Guest Speaker:
Rev. Sandra Hiramatsu

3rd SUN Mar 15th

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

4th SUN Mar 22nd

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

5th SUN Mar 29th

MONTHLY FAMILY WORSHIP

Dharma Talk
9 a.m. Eng. Service
Rev. Tatsuguchi

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

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

KARATE CLASSES Tues & Fri 6 – 8 p.m.
Int'l Karate League – Walter Nishioka

KARATE CLASSES Thurs 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Hawaii Shotokan Karate – Alan Sekiguchi

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

THANK YOU

for YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS !!

2015 Memorial Service Schedule

2014	1 Year	2013	3 Year	2009	7 Year
2003	13 Year	1999	17 Year	1991	25 Year
1983	33 Year	1966	50 Year	1914	100 Year

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comparison to religions based on an "inner self transformation." The former is characterized by individuals who openly "convert" others by disparaging the religious teachings and practices of others. Concerning this passion and zeal that impels such persons to "convert" others, Rev. Tamai said: "It is wrong to destroy the principles by which others live just for the sake of our own principles (p. 9)."

The good Reverend then explained:

"Faith is not a problem for the 'other person.' It is a problem that must be solved through our own experience. We will never become enlightened if we participate in religion with the thought of criticizing others. For this reason, the first thing we must do is not rely upon our own learning or any bits of information that we may have accumulated. We must seek *shinjin* without desiring to make society better, bring peace and harmony to our family, or to make our wife, husband, or children 'better.'" *Ichinyo*. p. 30.

What Tamai sensei has pointed out here is the most crucial, underlying difference between what it is "to convert others" from what it is to "undergo an inner transformation" of one's total being, person and personality. For an "awakening of true and real faith" (*shinjin*) involves a "total transformation" of a person's inner self that naturally becomes a beacon of light to others. Such an inner light does not diminish its own brilliance in brightening another's life. This is because it is a light that naturally radiates from within one's deepest being touched by Immeasurable Light and Immeasurable Life of Amida in each person's heart.

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WORDS OF SHINRAN

To be transformed means that evil karma without being nullified or eradicated, is made into the highest good, just as all waters upon entering the great ocean, immediately become ocean water...." SBT -Series. *Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone.'* p. 32.

Such an inner transformation is much like a green persimmon that has naturally become a ripe persimmon without being turned into something else or destroyed in the process. Such a "transformation" occurs when one trusts in the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness upon having taken complete refuge in its Reality of Togetherness that especially embraces those riddled by implacable transgressions and desecrations.

In other words, this is like the very bitterness in the persimmon "transformed" completely into its very sweetness without destroying the persimmon or "converting" it into something else. Such a transformation by the Truth and Reality, like the facts of gravity, cannot be monopolized by any one person, race, creed, culture or any one specific religion or historical era, because the Truth and Reality of Dharma apply to all living and nonliving things for all times.

I often have pointed out that such a "transformation" of illusions in one's mind and delusions in one's heart is not like cutting out the "knots," "tangles" or "snarls" out of one's "rope of life" that is inseparable from a beginningless past and seamless with an endlessly unfolding future. To cut any of the knots or tangles out merely reduces one's "rope of life" into disconnected segments. This means one's "rope of life" becomes disconnected pieces from the beginningless past and endless future. Each piece still has a "knot" on it. Such a person lives, therefore, only for the pleasures and joys of his present life that ensnare and tangle him in pain and suffering (*dukkha*). There is no sense of indebtedness to the past or accountability for the future.

In Buddhist enlightenment, the “knots,” “tangles” and “snarls,” instead of being cut out, are unknotted, untangled and unsnarled. Transformation, in other words, is not about cutting out the “knots” from one’s “rope of life.” For in doing so, the “knots,” as mentioned, are still on each cut-out segment of one’s “rope of life” that has become disconnected. Such fragments of one’s life, as of consequence, become neurotic, psychotic, even sociopathic, and at worst psychopathic. A psychopath is a being without feelings of thoughtfulness and thankfulness, for he has cut off his conscience from his conscious person. Such a fragmented person feels no remorse and penitence.

Such a thoughtless, insensitive person lacks awareness as to how the things he says and does negatively impact another person’s thoughts, feelings and existence. Such a person has no sense of sensitivity for what he says or accountability for what he does. Nor does he have any feelings of indebtedness to others. Such a person also has no sense of restraining his unwholesome thoughts, feelings and desires. Karma, nevertheless, is about this “three-way inseparable connection” between one’s thoughts, words and actions. It’s about the consequences of karma that eventually catch up with us all.

The life of O-nembutsu is a life of pure gratitude brimming over with great joy. In such a life, one’s ingratitude, irreverence and impertinence are constantly being “transformed” into gratitude, reverence, and, most significantly, a life of self-reflective penitence. In Shin Buddhism, true penitence is seen as brimming over with great joy and pure serenity. Penitence is not about doubts, fears or guilt. Penitence differs from a life of penance characterized by fears, doubts, guilt and uncertainties. Such fears and doubts are like “the knots, tangles and snarls” on one’s “rope of life” that have been cut out that are still there on each cut-off segment of their life. For the “knots” and “tangles” on each cut-out section of one’s “rope of life” still need to be unknotted, untangled and unsnarled.

By contrast, those who have undergone a “transformation” experience a mysterious “unknotting” of “knots” on one’s rope of life to

suddenly find their “rope of life” inseparable from a past that is beginningless and seamless with the future that is endless. In such a “transformation” there is no “cutting out” of knots or tangles. The reason being that Selflessness and Togetherness form a “full circle” that has no beginning or ending point. Upon being so “unknotted,” “untangled” and “unsnarled,” one’s “rope of life” then, of natural consequence, naturally finds itself connected to those in the past and to those yet to be born in the future in a circle of life that is seamless. As a result this seamless circle becomes visible in one’s spiritual eye. This is like when the “bitterness” in green persimmons is completely transformed into the “sweetness” of ripe persimmons by virtue and power of sunlight. The very “bitterness” has been transformed into their “sweetness.” The green persimmon in becoming a ripe persimmon is still a persimmon.

A person so transformed becomes a person now aware that all life forms, past, present and future, are seamless and inseparable one from all others. Such then are the deeper unfathomable significances of interdependency, interconnectedness and inter-relatedness. This is why Amida’s Mind of Wisdom shining on all and her Heart of Compassion embracing all life and things without rejection are unfathomable. This is why Amida is called Inconceivable Light and Ineffable Life. This is because the Dharma’s Light of Selflessness and its Life of Togetherness are immeasurable and Unfathomable.

This is exactly why, Rev. Tamai said:

“*Tariki* (Buddha centered power) is a gift, and a mind that is filled with arrogance or pride about attaining *shinjin* will never receive this gift. Arrogance and pride are referred to as *jaken* (wrong view) and refers to the fact that those who feel ‘I am right!’ and are proud of this, will never attain faith.” p. 30.

Unfortunately, especially in our times of instant gratifications, there are increasingly those who disparage and desecrate what are the Dharma’s Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Together-

ness that are constantly manifest as Infinite Light and Boundless Life. This is because many today have a wrong idea about freedom as meaning the right to pursue one's liberty and happiness.

Such disparagers of the Dharma's Selflessness and Togetherness also regard Amida Buddha's Immeasurable Light and Life to be merely fiction and fantasy. Such persons become skeptics and agnostics whose reasoning and evaluations of life are solely based on logical reasoning and claims of personal rights and entitlements. Then there are others who feel betrayed by life's falsehoods, deceptions and injustices solely based on material and monetary standards. Many, therefore, become pessimists and nihilists full of negativism and vitriol. Then, most unfortunately, there are those who keep resorting to devious, deceptive and even violent means to eradicate what they perceive to be unjust and evil.

All the more significant, therefore, become the words of Shinran Shonin, who said:

"... in this foolish being filled with blind passions, living in this impermanent world of burning house, all things are empty and vain therefore, untrue." Tannisho. Epilogue.

These are words of a person who has undergone an "inner transformation."

Rev. Tamai simply restated these words of Shinran as follows:

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Donations

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SHINRAN'S WASAN

People not professing knowledge
of absolute "good" and "evil,"
have a heart that is true.

Acting as though one knows
what is "good" or "evil"
this is a great pretension!

Shozomatsu Wasan No. 115
rkt trans.

BUDDHIST STORIES OR PASSAGES

"There is one advantage to realizing that you're never going to get it right: you do begin to stop expecting everyone else to get it right too, which makes for less frustration when other people turn out to be just as human as you are." — Jeff Wilson.
Buddhism of the Heart: Reflections on Shin Buddhism and Inner Togetherness.

"... everything is constantly changing and where those who earnestly seek the truth become disillusioned and cry in sorrow as a result, we must become aware that only Amida Buddha is true and eternal." p. 31.

These words of Tamai sensei help make clear that: "Only the nembutsu is true, real and sincere (*ibid.*)."

The following excerpts from Shinran's *Wasans* published by the Ryukoku Translation Series may be helpful in understanding what Shinran meant by "only the nembutsu is true, real, and sincere." The excerpts are as follows:

"Unequaled is the Pure, Clear Light, when we meet (and trust) this Light, **all our karmic bonds are removed.** Take refuge in the Ultimate Resort [Amida Buddha]." *Jodo Wasan* No. 7. Bold for emphasis.

"Although my eyes, blinded by passions, do not see the brilliant light which embraces me, the Great Compassion never tires, always casting light upon me." *Koso Wasan* No. 95.

"Hindrances of evil become the substance of virtue. As with the example of ice and water; the greater the ice, the greater the water; the

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greater the hindrance, the greater the virtue." *Koso Wasan* No. 39. Bold for emphasis.

"Those who have already attained Faith should always try to repay His Benevolence." *Koso Wasan* No. 50.

To be continued

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: What is *hakarai*?

ANSWER: *Hakarai* means a "self-working" to impose one's thoughts, intentions, desires as well as one's moral convictions and religious views on others. It also means trying to gain advantage. Such a "self working" is also driven by a scheming heart. Such a person is not only intrusive but also intimidating because of his blatant and/or subtle methods of trying to get what he wants.