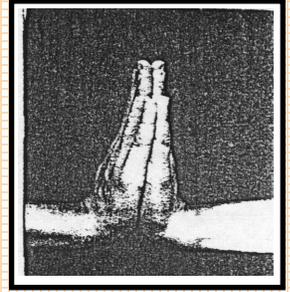


GASSHO

March
2016

Issue No: 03-16

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



SAMSARA AND NIRVANA ARE INSEPARABLE!

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

Generally, people believe that "heaven" and "hell" are two totally disconnected places and realities. For people believe that "good people" go to an "eternal heaven" while "bad people" are cast into an "everlasting fiery hell."

In Buddhism the concept of "heaven" and "hell" is as Sakyamuni says in the Dhammapada:

"The wise man makes his own heaven while the foolish man creates his own hell here and in the hereafter."

For according to his karmic past:

"A man pays in himself for the evil he has done and in himself is purified. ... No one purifies another."

This, and most significantly, is why:

"Better than sovereignty over the earth, better than going to heaven, better than lordship over all worlds is the reward of the first step in holiness."

Through these words Sakyamuni Buddha is telling us that the "six realms of transmigration" (*samsara*) and the "world of enlightenment" (*Nirvana*) are much like the two sides of a single coin called "reality" that are inseparable.

In Shinran's "Hymns of True Faith" (*Shoshinge*) the following lines help in understanding this inseparable connection between the world of karma riddled beings and the

MONTH'S THOUGHT



"... there has never been and never will be a permanent solution. ... We are painfully aware of our separateness, but utterly blind to our connectedness." Philip Slater. *Earthwalk*. (1947) p. 113.



world of enlightened Buddhas as follows:

When the one thought-moment of joy arises, *Nirvana* is attained without severing blind passions; when ignorant and wise, even grave offenders and slanderers of the dharma, all alike turn and enter *shinjin*, they are like waters that, on entering the ocean, become one in taste with it. SBT-Series. *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way*. p. 161.

The stanza compares Amida Buddha to a boundless ocean taking in all kinds of river waters without rejections as they without being obliterated instantly become the very waters and currents of the ocean.

Shinran Shonin also depicted this inseparability between Amida Buddha and all sentient beings through the analogy of "ice," in melting, instantly becomes flowing "water." More humanistically he compared this inseparability between sentient beings and Amida through the image of a mother embracing and suckling her just born infant. This imagery well explains the principle of "two and yet one" as well as "one and yet two,"

REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR MARCH 2016

1st SUN Mar 6th

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

2ND SUN Mar 13th

SPRING O'HIGAN SERVICE

9 A.M. English Service
Rev. Shigeaki Fujitani

3RD SUN Mar 20th

No Service

4TH SUN Mar 27th

MONTHLY
FAMILY WORSHIP
9 A.M. Eng. Service
Dharma Talk
for Children and Adults
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

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

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

SHINSHU KYOKAI MISSION GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE FOLLOWING DONATIONS

With Deepest Sympathy

Mr. Sadao Yamamoto 94 yrs. Jan. 16, 2016

2016 Memorial Service Schedule

2015	1 Year	2014	3 Year	2010	7 Year
2004	13 Year	2000	17 Year	1992	25 Year
1984	33 Year	1967	50 Year	1915	100 Year

continues on p. 5

meaning Inseparable and Seamless!

This "inseparable relationship" can also humorously be seen in the story about an old mountain man. He had outlived all his friends often wondering whether they were in "heaven" or in "hell." One day, as he was walking through the mountains, he suddenly came to a fork on the mountain trail. One trail led down the steep mountain side with the sign "Road to Hell." The other led straight up the mountain side with the sign "Road to Heaven."

There he stood wondering which trail to take. Recalling that his friends, like himself, had committed transgressions and desecrations, he concluded that they must all be in hell. So he decided to walk down the trail down to hell to see if they were there. When he arrived he saw all his former friends seated at tables full of delightful foods and drinks. But what he subsequently saw disgusted and appalled him.

Each person's forearm had grown two to three times as long. Consequently, they were unable to take food or drink to their mouths to quench their thirst and hunger. They were thin and emaciated like "hungry ghosts." Furthermore, they were behaving like "brute animals" because they were fighting over the goodies in trying to garner them only for themselves. They were shoving, pushing and trampling over others. In fact much violence and bloodshed had broken out. The old man became so disgusted that he immediately returned back up to the fork on the mountain trail.

There once again he stood and began wondering what "heaven" was like. So he decided to go and see. Upon arrival he was not

WORDS OF SHINRAN

"since there is no one – whether among the wise of the Mahayana or the Hinayana, or the ignorant, good or evil – who can attain supreme nirvana through his own self-cultivated wisdom, we are encouraged to enter the ocean of the wisdom-Vow of the Buddha of unhindered light, for his form is the light of wisdom. This form comprehends the wisdom of all the Buddhas. It should be understood that light is none other than wisdom." SBT Series. *Notes on "Essentials of Faith Alone."* p. 31.

only pleasantly surprised, but was utterly astonished by what he saw. It was exactly the same situation as it was in hell. All his friends were there with the same long forearms. The only key difference now was that his friends, instead of shoving, pushing, and trampling over each other to grab things only for themselves, were now generously helping each other to eat and drink. Each now was enjoying food and drink because each now was feeding each other to eat and drink.

Hopefully this story of the mountain man helps in explaining and understanding what "many and yet One," and "One and yet many" means. For this is the significance of what is the Truth of Selflessness and Reality of Togetherness are all about (meaning that the trail down to hell and the trail up to heaven are both found on this very earth of ours).

Master Shan'tao makes this inseparable connection between samsara and Nirvana even clearer through his "Parable of the White Path being obscured by the Rivers of Fiery Incineration (hatred) and Frigid Waters (greed)." This parable clearly sets apart this world (this shore) from the Pure Land (the other shore). And yet, at the same time, it clearly shows that the "two banks" are inseparable by virtue of the "White Path" or Amida's "Sacred Name." Both are manifestation of the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its All-embracing Togetherness.

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Shinran Shonin, in his *Kyogyoshinshu* (see Ryukoku Translation Series. *Kyogyoshinshu*. pp. 92-100) quotes this very lengthy parable in its entirety. For brevity's sake only the main portions are quoted below as follows:

"... a man who desires to travel a hundred thousand 'li' to the West. Suddenly in the midst of his route he sees two rivers, a river of fire ... a river of water ... between the fire and water ... a white path barely four or five inches wide. ... waves of water surge and splash against the path on one side ... flames of fire scorch it on the other. ..."

"The man is out in the middle of a wasteland.... A horde of vicious ruffians and wild beasts ... rushing to kill him. ... Doubtless today I shall surely die"

"Just as he thinks this, he hears someone from the east bank call out ... "Friend, just follow this path resolutely and there will be no danger of death. To stay here is to die." And on the west bank, there is someone calling out, "Come straight ahead, single-mindedly and with fixed purpose. I will protect you. Never fear of falling into the fire or water!"

At the urging of the one voice and the calling of the other, the man ... resolves without any lingering doubts or hesitations begins crossing the Path! ... the horde of vicious ruffians calls out to him: "Friend, come back! That Path is perilous. You will never get across." ... Though he hears them calling, the man does not look back but single-mindedly proceeds on the Path. In no time he crosses over to the west bank. He is greeted by his good friend and there is no end of joy.

Then Master Shan'tao explains:

"... the east bank ... this world, a house in flames ... the west bank ... the precious land of highest bliss. The ruffians, wild beasts, and seeming friends ... the Six Sense Organs, Six Consciousnesses, Six Dusts, Five Components, and Four Elements [that constitute the illusory 'self']."

"The 'lonely wasteland' is ... not meeting

with those who are truly good and wise. The "two rivers of fire and water ... human greed and affection, are like water, ... anger and hatred, are like fire. The 'white path' ... the pure aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Land which arises in the midst of the passions of greed and anger. Greed and anger are powerful, and thus are likened to fire and water; the good mind is infinitesimal, and thus is likened to a white path [a few inches in width]."

"The waves inundating the path ... constant arising of affectionate thoughts in the mind which stain and pollute the good mind. ... the flames which scorch the path are comparable to thoughts of anger and hatred which burn up the treasures of dharma and virtue."

"... voices from the East bank encouraging and exhorting him to pursue the path straight to the West ... Shakyamuni Buddha, ... whose teachings may still be pursued ... 'The calling out of the ruffians' after he has taken a few steps ... those of different teachings and practices and of evil views who wantonly spread their ideas to lead people astray and create disturbances, thus falling themselves into sin and losing their way."

"... obeying trustfully the will of the two Buddhas while paying no heed to the rivers of fire and water, ... traveler ... when life is o'er attains the other Land, where he meets the Buddha and knows unending bliss."

The Western Bank (Pure Land) is clearly set apart from the side of karma riddled man on the Eastern Bank. It is not visible and seems to be unattainable. Though he stands right before the White Path, the traveler is unable to see it. This is because the mists of greed, doubts and fears keep fogging his vision and because the voices of his pursuers distract him from listening steadfastly to the "voiceless voices" of Sakyamuni urging him on "this shore" and Amida's calling from the "Other Shore."

This is why, in order to clarify the togetherness and inseparability between sentient beings and Amidas Shinran Shonin in his *Shoshinge* (Hymns of Truth Faith) expanded

on Shan'tao's Parable of the White Path as follows:

The light of compassion grasps
to illumine and protect us always;
The darkness of our ignorance
is already broken through;
And yet the clouds and mists
of greed, anger and vanities
Cover as always the skies above
of true and real *shinjin*.

But though the light of the sun
is veiled by clouds and mists,
Beneath the clouds and mists
there is brightness not dark.
When one realizes *shinjin*
seeing and revering
and attaining great joy,
One immediately leaps crosswise,
to close the five evil courses.

SBT-Series. *The True Teaching, Practice
and Realization of the Way.* p 162.

In these verses Shinran shows how the eastern bank (the "six realms of transmigration") and the western bank (Amida's Pure Land) are both illuminated by the Cosmic Dharma-sun whose rays keep breaking through to disperse the dark clouds, mists and fog that obscure the White Path that connects the worlds of sentient beings and Buddhas that are "two" and yet are inseparable and seamless.

These verses of *Shoshin Ge* are of a greater cosmic significance. For they reveal the greater sphere of the Dharma-world in which all things and life are interdependent, interconnected, inseparable and seamless! This

continued on p. 6

Donations

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SHINRAN'S WASAN

Becoming a Buddha
by power of *O-nembutsu*,
is the Shin Buddhist teaching.
Trying to become Buddha through
good deeds and other means,
are temporary teachings.
Persons unaware of what is
"fiction" and "false" or
"true" and "real,"
Will never know the Pure Land's
"naturalness" as it is!"

Jodo Wasan. No. 71.
rkt translation.

Due to limited space due to Postal restrictions, if your donation is not listed in this GASSHO, it will be listed in a following edition. For any inadvertent misspelling of names, please accept our apologies.

BUDDHIST PASSAGE or STORY

"This world is a dream indeed. Let us return to the home of Light." (p. 16)

"Because you do not understand the depth of Shakyamuni Tathagata's Enlightenment, you cannot entrust yourself to Amida Tathagata's Primal Vow-Power of Great Compassion." (p. 53)

Zuiken's Shinshu Dhammapada (1).

Dharma Sphere is likened to a boundless unimpeded "spaciousness" that is the infinite spaciousness that is the universe itself in which the "six realms of transmigration" and the "world of enlightenment" are fully contained in it, much like the two mountain trails under the same sun, one leading down to hell and the other up to heaven.



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING *and* *New Year's Party*

"Bingo, Door Prizes, Lucky Number"

March 6 • 10:30 a.m.

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: What is *shinjin*?

ANSWER: To translate *shinjin* simply as faith can become misconstrued with the faith of Christianity. According to Shin scholars, faith is:

"... a radical transformation in which evil (the good and evil of the foolish being) becomes good (the good of the Buddha), occurring at the depths

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Hopefully, the story of the mountain men and parable of the White Path have helped you to understand what Buddhists mean by the phrases: "One and yet many" as well as "many and yet One," as well as the Jodoshinshu expressions: "man and Buddha are of one essence" and "*samsara* is at once *Nirvana*."

Namoh-amida-butsu!

of one's being. This transformation takes place the moment *shinjin* is realized and continues to take place, for the mind of blind passion cannot be easily transformed into great compassion..." *Essentials of Faith Alone*. p. 8.

According to 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." *Op. cit.* p. 32.