

The Fresno Buddhist Church

Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple

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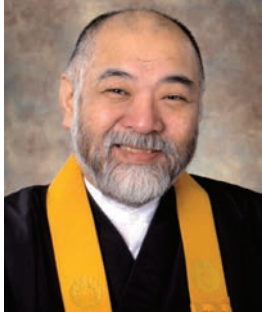
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"YOU MAY SAY I'M A DREAMER, BUT I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE. I HOPE SOMEDAY YOU'LL JOIN US,
AND THE WORLD WILL LIVE AS ONE." - JOHN LENNON

REV. KAKEI NAKAGAWA, Rinban



Let's Live on the Other Shore

Birth-and-death is this shore, Nirvana is the Other Shore, and Bonno, the Blind Passions, is the swift current in-between that sweeps away every worldly effort. The Bodhisattvas boarded a boat named 'Pâramitâ' with inconceivable Wisdom from this shore of birth-and-death to the other shore of true-and-real Enlightenment.

In September, Fall Ohigan is held at the turn of the season. In particular, the autumn equinoctial week is an event that announces the arrival of a comfortable season free from the harsh heat.

Taking this opportunity, our ancestors continued to worship their ancestors. But while learning a whole new insightful Buddha-dharma, the universal truth-reality, they left behind the right way of life-being to correct the rhythm of human-life that suited them.

The national holiday law of Buddhist countries states that the Spring Ohigan is "to praise Nature and care for living things," and the Fall Ohigan is "to respect the ancestors and to honor those who have passed away."

We must celebrate the autumn of fertility, praise the blessings of mother nature, thank all supports from between heaven and earth, and offer our gratitude in memory of the great virtues of our predecessors.

The lives of those who do not thank their parents, as well as to those who forget their ancestors' indebtedness, will be corrupt someday.

Day by day, in the ups and downs of this world of egoistic birth-and-death, if we scold ourselves and stare at one self, and when joined in the true working of wisdom of the Buddha by validating Nenbutsu, this shore of delusion will be changed to the other shore of true and real Enlightenment.

Let's devote ourselves to living in the world of enlightenment, seriously under the torch of wisdom, that shows the route that crosses the Ocean of birth-and-death.

In this year 2021, we, the CCBMA (Central California Buddhist Ministers' Association), will conduct the Fall Ohigan Service from the site of Tule Lake Concentration Camp in California.

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The Eight Essentials of our Jodo Shinshu - No. 5 Shinjin is the causal main factor for enlightenment which is to reach the state of tranquility. (Shin Jin Sho In)

Hello, all Central California Sangha friends! How are you spending your hot summer? Last month, Central California temple and Churches held three Bon-odori (Obon dance). They were recorded and you can watch them on our Twitter site. If you missed hearing the tune of Tanko Bushi this summer, please watch them. You may find your friends dancing in the circle of Obon dance! As our CC combined special event, we will conduct the Fall Ohigan Service at the Tule Lake Concentration Camp site on September 2nd. It will be streamed on September 26 at 10am on our YouTube Channel. You can go to YouTube.com and search "Central California Nishi Hongwanji", then you will see the list of our recorded videos.

Over the last several months, Covid-19 Delta Variant has been spreading in the Central Valley. Unfortunately, we have lost some of our dearest sangha friends, caused by the virus since the pandemic occurred. Please continue your routine sanitization to protect both you and your family. Recently local hospitals started allowing us (reverends) to visit Covid patients in their ICUs by the family's request. I may visit more often for such cases, but please do not be frightened for when I do. If I am in the ICU, I will request reverends to visit me before my passing. So why not?

In this article, I would like to share one of eight essential teachings of Jodo Shinshu. It is *Shin Jin Sho In*. This is fifth of eight teachings. It is a Japanese idiom. SHO means you met a requirement or are eligible for this idiom. IN means Causation. Probably you have heard the word SHIN JIN before. You may say "I know SHIN JIN, it is the faith or belief!" Then I need to respond "it is a typical mistranslation."

I will explain why it is a mistranslation. Shin Jin does not come from our action nor something I (or someone) can provide. In other words, our Jodo Shinshu is not a teaching of "believing or faithful to" Amida Tathagata (Buddha).

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Many people and families of American of Japanese ancestry were detained under discriminatory crackdowns during World War II and suddenly had to spend the un-imaginable period of life inside the barbed wire fences at each camp.

There is a Japanese word, “Shikata-ga-nai.” Nowadays, not only the 3-sei (third) but also the 4-sei (fourth) and 5-sei (fifth) generations know it as a Japanese word that seems to symbolize the experience of the Concentration Camp. Those words are used as words of resignation, meaning that the Japanese Americans detained in Concentration Camps during World War II were despaired in a difficult reality.

The use of this word is based on a great deal of misunderstanding, but especially such words which are lost in translation are clearly detrimental to the new generation in shaping their identity as Americans of Japanese ancestry because it is a word that expresses the negativeness of Japanese Americans. (I wrote the detailed story in my October 2020 Geppo article for each of the Central California Sanghas.)

From the conclusion, the 1-sei (first) and 2-sei (second) Japanese immigrants in America at that time did not speak the Japanese words, “Shikata-ga-nai.” The word, “Shikata-ga-nai,” is a standard word centered around the Tokyo area, the center of the eastern part of Japan. Also that word is a word found mainly in modern Japanese teaching materials.

But around 100 years ago, most of the large numbers of immigrants to the west coast were from the western part of the Japanese archipelago, such as Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Shimane, and Kitakyushu, and the western dialect they speak was far different from the Tokyo standard. Moreover, they have kept a strong Buddhist cultural background, since they encountered Buddhism 1,500 years ago. They never said “Shikata-ga-nai.”

When in trouble, *Issei* (first generation) and *Nisei* (second generation) immigrants said,

“*Shô-ga-nai-ken-nô* “

“*Shikata-ga-nai* “ is a word of complete resignation, looking up at the sky with both hands up. That pose means “I can’t help it” or “There is nothing to do but accept it.”

Instead, *Issei* and *Nisei* immigrants actually said, “*Shô-ga-nai-ken-nô*.” This word comes out when, looking down and focusing on the problem with their arms crossed, recognized the desperate situation, and then thought about possible ways to solve it. That contrasting pose means:

“It’s a first-time experience; no data cannot help ... Well let me see.....”

The unreasonableness of the federal government forced Americans of Japanese ancestry to live in Concentration Camps that violated the Constitution. Most of the *Isseis* and *Niseis* spoke the same words under such circumstances

“*Shô-ga-nai-keh-nô*” ... Well let me see, “GO FOR BROKE!”

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Rev. Kaz, continued from page 1

It is one of the main reasons why we do not ask people “Do you believe in Amida Tathagata?” Amida Tathagata is not a deity or idol figure. I will explain this later. Also Shin Jin is not transferrable, so I cannot provide it. It may make Shin Jin sound like a magical miracle, but it is not. When we trace the origination of the Japanese word Shin Jin, we encounter an ancient Indian language, Sanskrit. SHIN can be derived from *prasâda* in Sanskrit. It means serenity, tranquility, equanimity, or ataraxis. JIN comes from *citta* in Sanskrit. It means mind. Shinran Shonin explains Shin Jin (*citta*) and Bodhi-*citta* are identical and these *cittas* are TARIKI in his *Wasan hymn of the seven masters*. Tariki generally means something we receive. Tariki is an essence of the teaching of Amida Tathagata. The previous Monshu, Zenmon Koshi Ohtani states Shin Jin is generally called Tariki No Shin Jin (We receive Shin Jin from Tariki of Amida Tathagata.)

In Jodo Shinshu, there is a famous expression which is “receiving Shin Jin”, Shin Jin wo Itadaku in Japanese. To be frank, when we encounter the teaching of Amida Tathagata, we receive the mind of Shin (which is serenity, tranquility and so on) as our reaction. However, it does not mean you are required to read Buddhist texts or books in order to receive Shin Jin. Under the influence of the Western Education system, people like to understand everything as an academic subject. You won’t receive or understand what Shin Jin is as your personal matter by studying Buddhism. In fact, most of Jodo Shinshu Sangha members in the past were not capable of reading or writing, but they received Shin Jin. Shin Jin is not a subject of study. As I said, Shin Jin is our reaction. The source of the action to make our reaction comes from our past experience. Past experience means our personal experience since we were born.

I’ll share one example. Do you like Spam Musubi, Rice Ball or a bowl of rice? When I ask you how much water we need to have one Spam Musubi, what is your response? You may say 1 gallon for washing and soaking of the rice.

The answer is about 60 gallons! I am not kidding you. From the seeding to harvesting, the seed for one Spam Musubi absorbs about 60 gallons. Water consumed behind the scene which we call “virtual water.” When I was child, I grew up in the middle of rice fields. My last name is “Nakata”. Naka means middle or center, and ta means a rice field. My name describes where I was born and raised. During the rice farming season, my family’s rice field was always filled with a lot of water. It looked like a mud pond. So I was not surprised to hear that rice needs an excessive amount of water. When I was child, my grandfather used to explain by showing a bowl of rice, “Kaz, each grain of rice needs a cup of water to grow. Not only water but also many other things help growing rice. Don’t waste any rice in your bowl.” In order to have rice grains enough for one bowl, there are immeasurable elements and factors help and support growing rice. Since my childhood, I have been told the stories of Tariki (something we receive from others), although my grandfather was NOT Jodo Shinshu Buddhist. The way of his living as a farmer was really like a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist.

When I eat Spam Musubi, every bite I feel a sense of gratitude to all others. That sense raises my mind to the state of serenity and tranquility. Spam Musubi can provide me Shin Jin!

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I won't discuss here whether it is good or bad for Buddhists to go to war here. But...for the sake of the family, particularly for the mother and sisters left behind, the Nikkei troops, 442nd Regimental Combat Team continued to perform their duty even if the casualty rate exceeded 300%! They were never to be the descendants of stereotyped Samurai—they were the descendants of the Jodo Shinshu (land-owned) Farmers Force a.k.a. "Ikko-Ikki," who established the 100 years of republic system in the 16th century on some regions of Japan, and who inevitably appeared in 20th century U.S.A.

Jodo Shinshu Buddhists never despair and never give up. We are the successors to the core of Mahâyâna Buddhism which Sâkyamuni Buddha most enthusiastically propagated. It is our way of life that we have been learned since 1,500 years ago.

Since the pandemic began, we are still continuously experiencing a truly unpredictable reality of what will happen in real time.

"Do not believe in anything because it is spoken and rumored by many...."

"Do not believe in anything, merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. When you find anything that agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it."

"As the wise would test gold on a piece of touchstone, so are you to accept my words after examining them and not merely out of regard for me." - Sâkyamuni Buddha

Try to avoid fiction as much as possible and try to light the torch of wisdom. "*Shô-ga-nai-keh-nô*"...never say "Shikata-ga-nai," please.

Rev. Kaz, continued from page 2

That is how ancient people understood and received Shin Jin without reading Buddhist books. A life of a human being can be described as a life of receiving something. Since you are born, how many diaper changes had you received? How many car rides (drop off and pick up at schools) you have received? How many paychecks you have received? How many words of "Thank You" you have received? Answers of these questions can become awareness to Tariki.

In ancient India, these "receiving" Tariki process in our human life they called Amitâbha (immeasurable sources and factors), and Amitâyus (immeasurable sources and factors will continuously occur and vanish). When Amitâbha and Amitâyus are combined, it is named Amida Tathagata (Buddha). Recalling the teaching of Amida Tathagata in your everyday life is experiencing Tariki and receiving Shin Jin. I hope many of our sangha friends will receive Shin Jin from their everyday experience.

Gassho.

Please enjoy below, an article by Kylie Kubo. Kylie is learning "Applied Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Studies for Teens".

Namo Amida Butsu and Namô Amitabha

Kylie Kubo

Good morning everyone! Today I will be talking about Namô Amida Butsu and Namô Amitabha. A lot more people probably recognize Namô Amida Butsu than Namô Amitabha.

南無阿彌陀佛 (namô amida butsu) is used in Chinese and Japanese. It is used when we offer incense, after we chant, and when we open and close Dharma School classes.

Namô Amida Butsu roughly translates to, "I entrust myself to the Buddha." This is similar to "namaste", which translates to, "Trust or respect to you." ("Namas" means respect or trust and "te" means to you). Some people may think that it is the Buddhist equivalent to praying, but that is not the case. A more accurate description of Namô Amida Butsu would be a sign of gratitude.

However, in Sanskrit, Namô Amitabha is used. Although it is used the same way as Namô Amida Butsu, it has a different meaning. This is because "Butsu" means Buddha, while "Amita" means immeasurable or uncountable and "abha" means light or arrow. Namô Amitabha roughly means, "I respect the many factors that go into or make up life," or, "I respect the ecosystem." When you eat something like a burger, for example, there are many different things that go into that burger. The bun of the burger is made from bread, which is made from flour, which is made from wheat, which is grown by farmers. The lettuce and tomatoes and the burger were grown by farmers using water and sunlight. The meat patty was made from beef, which comes from cows who were raised by farmers and ate grass and drank water. All of these factors can be called "arrows". The amount of arrows pointing at you are uncountable. Therefore, Amitabha means that arrows are constantly being added.