



Metta

Spring 2019

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Whispers . . . Sasayaki Takeko Kujo

Translated by W. S. Yokoyama



The prose and poetry of Lady Takeko Kujo, the daughter of the twenty-first Monshu of the Nishi Hongwanji, was recently published by the American Buddhist Study Center. Excerpts from the book was shared in the winter 2010 issue of Metta. The picture to the left is a photo portrait of her and her husband, Baron Yoshimune Kujo.

Sasayaki (Whispers) is the title of the set of poems that appear at end of her book *Muyuge* (Flower without Sorrows) In the words of the translator W. S. Yokoyama: "... appearing near the end of Takeko's Uta nikki, "poem diary," section of *Muyuge*. It is the last fifty pages of a 200 page book. Most of it is like a travel diary connected to places she visited. Shanghai, Suzhou, Hangzhou abroad, Sapporo, Onuma, and Towada-ko in Hokkaido, Tosa, Kyoto. Only "Sasayaki," whispers, is connected to no such place. They are like whispers arising softly within her heart. "

Whether our lives be blessed or miserable,
all of us receive the sunshine of this bright new day
that fills the heavens from end to end . . .

wiyaya ka ni megumaruru mono mina ukemu atarashiki hi wa amatarashi tari

Whatever cares or worries may fill our heart, "Look to the sky," I say:

Ah, is the sparkling sun not shining most beautifully today! . . .

mune ni nani no wadakamari nau sora o mireba hi wa kagayakeri utsukushiki kana

"Oh, gee, how I miss him!" is what my aching heart sounds like,

as I kick the pebbles around distractedly:

makes me wonder if he is ever coming home . . .

tsumasaki ni kerishi koishi no oto itamikokoro utarete kaheirikoshi wa ya

Brushed by my kimono sleeve as I got to my feet,

the scissors fell to the ground

making a clear tinkling sound like a tiny bell . . .

tachiagaru suso ni futoshimo suberi ochishi hasami no suzu no yoki oto no sae

Today, was just about to leave the page blank again,

nothing coming to mind,

when I scrawl out something short in my diary,

just to write something, anything . . .

kefumo mata shiroki kami nari muwinari to mijikaku kakite to dzuru waga nitsuki

(Continued on page 2)

Whispers . . . Sasayaki

(continued from the front page)

When I breathe on it, it leaves a faint cloud,
and when I wipe it away:
oh how cold the mirror is! . . .
waga iki o kakete mitaredo honogumori nughite yaredo tsumetaki kagami

As you watch the whirlpool going around and around,
'tis as if you could duck your head to pass through its vortex,
to appear again on the other side in another world far, far away . . .
udzu o meguri sono hima kuguri yuku gotoku ura tō shimo yo yo no naka no koto

The new Moon, assuming her basic form, is not there at all:
Not there at all and yet in that form
she happily proceeds down the path set out for her . . .
nihidzuki wa kiso no katachi ni kefu arazu aranedo ureshi michiyuku sugata

With nothing to occupy myself
and tire me out physically doing this and that,
my heart is just about to roll itself up out of sheer boredom . . .
itonaku mo mi o hatarakase tsukarete mo nado ka kokoro wa tsuredzure ni umu

No matter how sad we are, in our heart laden with sadness
there is a delicate mechanism that is designed
to somehow bring us back to life again . . .
kanashiku mo kokoro no omori kakete mimu hakari no tsumu wa nani mote katsukuru

(Continued on page 4)



The current logo from all the documents I have found was designed in 1992 under the direction of Rev. Yoshiaki Fujitani, when he was director of the Buddhist Study Center. The background of the black circle with the white stripes images a scene of the calm ocean and symbolize serene and tranquil state of

mind created by the Buddhist teachings which is represented by the white lotus flower in the center of the logo.

This also symbolizes the BSC, located in Hawaii on the crossroads of the Western cultures and the Oriental cultures, which shares the better understanding of different cultures and contributes towards the peace of human beings and the world.

The white lotus flower symbolizes a stage that is associated with the state of bodhi; that of becoming awakened to the wonders of it all. When one reaches this state it is said that one has mental purity and has reached a state of spiritual perfection.

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Buddhist Study Center
1436 University Avenue
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Phone: (808) 973-6555
Fax: (808) 973-6551
E-mail: bscassist@honpahi.org
Director: bscdire@honpahi.org
<http://www.bsawahaii.org>

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Excerpt from Hongwanji Shimpo September 1, 2017



**Rev. Michio (Ichido) Tokunaga
Dean, House of Hongwanji Academicians**

Just for me, for my benefit

When a person realizes the mind of nondiscrimination,
That attainment is the “state of regarding each being as one’s only child.”
This is none other than Buddha-nature;
We will awaken to it on reaching the land of peace.
(Collected Works of Shinran, Vol. I, p. 350)

A mother’s love for her child

In the July 1 issue of this column, I told of a mother who, although she was on her deathbed, gave priority to her daughter over her own condition. Specifically, the daughter had been going to the hospital every day to care for her ailing mother. The mother noticed that the blanket had slipped off of her daughter who had fallen asleep on the cot next to her bed. She dismounted the bed to fix the blanket for her. This is the manifestation of the never-ending love and concern a mother has for her child.

There is another story that is somewhat similar to this that I want to tell you. It was a composition I read at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum that was written by a woman who told of her experiences when the bomb was dropped on the city. Michiko Ogino was 10 years old at the time when her city was devastated seventy-two years ago.

Michiko’s two year old sister was trapped under the rubble of their collapsed home. They begged some navy sailors that were passing by to help rescue her, but even the five of these men could not lift the beam of the house. However, Michiko wrote that her mother, although she had sustained injuries from the blast, crawled into the rubble, thrust her shoulder under the beam, and with all her might somehow was able to lift it enough for daughter to be pulled out. After the girl was rescued, her mother began trembling in great pain. Michiko’s composition ends with “...in great agony and suffering, my mother passed away that evening.” This story, too, clearly reveals to us the extent a mother will sacrifice even her own life for the sake of her child.

A mother is likened to the great compassion of the Tathagata

The profoundness of a mother’s love and concern for her child is astounding, and it would be virtually impossible to mention all of the situations there are of them. With the above example, we are able to gain a solid sense of why Shinran likened this to the Tathagata’s great compassion in the following wasan, which is found in the Hymns of the Pure Land.

(Continued on page 5)

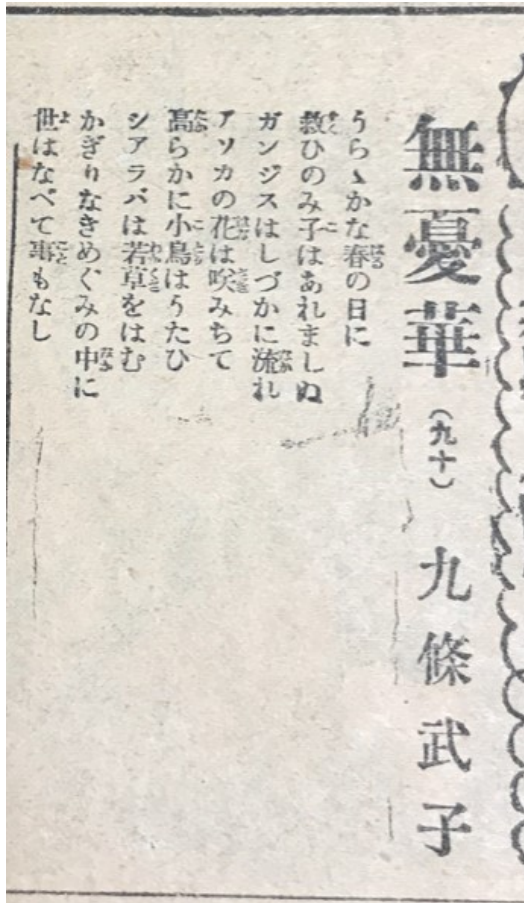
Whispers . . . Sasayaki

(Continued from page 2)

Resigning myself to never seeing him again,
 at the door to my house, finding I have forgotten my key,
 I start to cry as if I had gone nearly half mad with grief . . .
 ahamu to shi tobira no mae ni wasuretaru kagi o nageku ni niru kuruhoshisa

Forgetting whether we are rich or poor,
 all of us sleep in peace and quiet
 in the wee hours of the night . . .
 madzushisa mo tomi mo wasurete hito wa mina nemureri mayo no shidzukeasa yasukesa

Postscript. Thanks to Hoshina Seki of ABSC, New York, the Kujo Takeko book not only got into print, it came out much better than originally planned, thanks to everyone's concerted efforts. It has a lovely poem in there on Hanamatsuri that was in the original Yomiuri newspaper column but not included in the Muyuge book.



'Twas on a grand spring day
 When our savior the Prince made his appearance.
 The Ganges flowed serenely
 As Asoka flowers burst into bloom everywhere.
 Little birds up on high were singing
 As Sharabha munched the tender grass below.
 Amidst this boundless happiness
 The whole world was at peace.
 April 8, 1926

I discovered it when double checking our sources and saved it from obscurity. (Unless they decided not to use it!) But at the very end I had another dozen poems to add. Hoshina said there was no room for them. And so I was left with some poems until we could find a home for them. If you like them and have a copy of the book, I suggest you cut this out and paste it on to the endpage. — *W. S. Yokoyama*

We are happy to announce that as it turns out, it was possible to place the hanmatsuri poem facing the title page of the book
 — Editor.

(Continued from page 3)

When sentient beings think on Amida
Just as a child thinks of its mother,
They indeed see the Tathagata—who is never distant—
Both in the present and in the future.
(CWS, Vol. I, p. 357)

This wasan points out the resemblance of a mother and the Tathagata's great compassion, lauding both.

In other words, in leaving everything in the care of Amida, the working of true entrusting gives reassurance as if one is the only child of the Tathagata.

As for the "state of regarding each being as one's only child," Shinran wrote notes in his personal copy of the wasan, which is a National Treasure.

Attainment of the thought that each of the beings of the three realms is one's only child.

This means that the working of Amida's compassion extends to all people in the ten directions equally, and that everyone comes to the realization that it is "just for me, for my benefit."

Simply put, the above wasan extols the virtue of the entrusting heart that is bestowed to me from Amida.

Translation by Gene Sekiya

BSC Shakuhachi Club

Last year the BSC Shakuhachi Club was established as a sponsored club of the Buddhist Study Center and with Rev. Thomas Okano as its head instructor. This year the membership now stands at nineteen regular members and two student members. The club offers are Michael Usui, president, Neal Shiosaki, vice president and Rev. Kevin Kuniyuki, secretary/treasurer. We would also like to thank Daren Miyashiro, University of Hawaii, Lecturer for Koto Ensemble, for his involvement and help in making interested University of Hawaii student aware of the shakuhachi instruction that is available through the club and with activities related to the UH Music Department.

In February, Genzan Miyoshi, a master of the Tozan School, made his annual visit to Hawaii to conduct beginner level and intermediate level workshops. The members attended beginner and intermediate workshops conducted by Miyoshi Sensei. He also provided one-on-one instruction to those who wanted more detailed personal instruction.

A major project begun by the BSC Shakuhachi Club is to produce a Hawaii produced Shakuhachi workbook that will include material based of the original workbook written by the Tozan School founder Tozan Nakao along with notation for popular Japanese folk and children's songs and songs popular in Hawaii. Also based on anecdotal information, and the fact that copies of that original workbook by Tozan Nakao have been found in Hawaii, there must have been as active group of Hawaii people studying the Tozan School. So it is even more meaningful that the Club has started this project.



From left to right: Daren Miyashiro Sensei, Thomas Okano Sensei, Genzan Miyoshi Sensei. At February Fellowship Dinner, one of the activities held during Miyoshi Sensei's visit to Hawaii.

The Spider's Thread
Akutagawa's "Kumo no ito"

A New Translation by W. S. Yokoyama

In July 1918, Akutagawa published a short story called "The Spider's Thread" in the very first issue of a new children's magazine called Akaitori. The story is of a sinner in Hell who has a chance to escape by a Spider's Thread, that is, a ray of light into Hell, let down by the Buddha strolling in the Pure Land. Twenty years earlier, in 1898, Suzuki Teitaro, the well known Buddhist writer who went by the pen name D. T. Suzuki, translated a similar story into Japanese. It was in Paul Carus's Karma 1896 (Appendix 2) to which Carus later provided some comments in 1905. Carus's Buddhist morality story was itself adapted from the parable of the onion in Doestoevsky's Brothers Karamazov. I have assembled these materials thinking they might make interesting reading. Akutagawa's short story has been translated into English many times. I have not looked at them all. But I could not readily find one that stuck close enough to the Japanese text as I would prefer. In the end I did my own version, as well as a translation of the Suzuki version, presented below. The imagery of the Buddha dropping a ray of light into Hell must have been literally imprinted on Suzuki's mind. Even fifty years after he translated the story into Japanese, he mentions the imagery in a series of talks at Fresno Buddhist Church in 1950, only a few months after leaving the Islands. Either he had a really good memory or a really guilty mind. Or both. But in a talk to a Bussei group in Honolulu he mentions his mother's death and how he would not accept she had died. Somehow he wanted to save her. After all he was enlightened, wasn't he? But he did not know how. Her death tormented him.

The Spider's Thread
Akutagawa Ryunosuké

(1) Once upon a time O Shakasama was strolling along the edge of the lotus pond in the Land of Bliss. He was strolling along by himself with nothing particular in mind to do. All the lotus blooming in the pond were like round jewels of pure white. And from their golden stamen in the middle there flowed forth an unending stream of the most indescribably beautiful fragrance you could ever imagine. It was exactly morning in the Land of Bliss just then.

At length O Shakasama's stroll came to a halt at a point on the pond's edge. As he stopped to peer between the lotus leaves covering the surface of the pond he saw the scene taking place directly below. For just below the lotus blossoms of the Land of Bliss is exactly where the floor of Hell is. If we look past the sparkling crystal waters, scenes of the River of No Return and Pricklepoint Mountain await the eye. And it is exactly as if peering through spectacles, for you can see everything most clearly.

When he did so, his eye came to rest on one particular sinner there, writhing on the floor of Hell along with the other sinners. His name was Candata, an infamous thief who killed people and burned down their houses. He made a career out of doing wicked things. Even so there was just one good thing he did. And what that was all happened one day while walking deep in the woods. As he was passing through he saw a tiny spider crawling away on the roadside. The next moment he had already raised his foot about to stomp it to death. "Hey, hey, hold on there, Candata," he said to himself. "It might just be a tiny spider but clearly it bears life within itself. To rob it of life for no reason! Even for someone like me that's a no-no." As he suddenly reflected on himself in this way, he stayed his foot and did not kill the spider. In the end he helped it by letting it live.

As O Shakasama gazed upon his situation in Hell, he recalled how Candata had once spared the life of the spider. And as the reward for that one good deed he thought he ought to try rescue him from Hell, if at all possible. As luck would have, he only needed to glance to the side to see a single Land of Bliss spider sitting on a jade green lotus leaf. It was spinning out a beautiful silver thread. O Shakasama deftly took the Spider's Thread into his hand and carefully lowered it between the jewel-like white lotus, letting it go straight down, down, down to the floor of Hell far, far away.

(2) And here on this side we have the Lake of Blood on the floor of Hell. There we see our hero bobbing up sinking down, up and down up and down, like all the other sinners there. Whichever direction you look it is pitch black. On occasion there is a vague outline of something over there in the dim light. When we look closely it turns out to be the glitter from all the sharp pins and needles of frightening Pricklepoint Mountain! There was no way to describe the terror that raced through his heart when he saw this.

The atmosphere about the place was completely reduced to the silence of the grave. The only sound you might hear was some sinner barely moaning on occasion. What we have here are humans who, having fallen into Hell, have endured the countless sufferings of countless hells. They are now so worn out they haven't even the strength to cry out. And so even when we look in on our infamous thief Candata, as expected, there he was suffocating in all the blood from the Lake of Blood. He was wriggling and kicking about desperately trying to live like a dying frog.

But then the strangest thing happened to him one day. For no special reason he raised his head to gaze at the sky over the Lake of Blood. And what did he see come dancing down inconspicuously through the darkness closer and closer to dangle just above his head was a single thread of light in the form of a silver Spider's Thread being lowered from the ever so distant heavens above! When Candata saw this awesome sight he spontaneously clapped his hands in joy! He thought to himself, "If only I can grab ahold of this thread, I wonder how far I can get. Hmm, I bet I can escape from Hell by this means. Yes, I'm sure of it! No, not only

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(Continued from page 6)

that. I bet if I do it right I can make my way all the way to the gates of Heaven and enter the Land of Bliss. Yes! No more clambering over the pins and needles of Pricklepoint Mountain, no more drowning in the Lake of Blood for me! No, sir!"

So thinking, without a moment's delay, he latched on firmly to the Spider's Thread with both hands and vigorously hauled himself up and up hand over hand. It was a cinch for a veteran thief like him who had been doing things like this all his life.

But the distance between Hell and the Land of Bliss was nothing less than many tens of thousands of leagues apart. However impatient he was to get out, it took just one look around to realize it would be no easy matter getting out of Hell. After hauling himself up for awhile, at length Candata's arms began to grow weary. He just could not manage to lift himself even on more time hand over hand like this. He had no choice but to stop and take a rest. Hanging there midway on the thread, he looked down at the considerable distance he had climbed.

When he did so he felt it was well worth it climbing this far with all his might. The Lake of Blood where he had just been had now slipped unnoticed into the darkness of the floor of Hell. And also that dimly glowing Pricklepoint Mountain was now beneath his feet. If I keep climbing at this pace I just might surprise myself and escape from Hell. As he wrapped the Spider's Thread around both hands he let out a voice he had not used since he first got here many years ago as he laughed, "Man, what luck, what luck!"

But then, glancing back down what did he see on the Spider's Thread below but countless numbers of sinners climbing up after him, like a procession of ants singlemindedly climbing upward, upward, ever upward! He was both shocked and frightened at what he saw and for awhile he just hanging there with mouth wide open eyes blinking like a fool.

"This Spider's Thread is so slender it hardly seems strong enough to bear my weight. How is it able to bear the weight of all the countless people I see below me? If by chance it should break, why, all my precious efforts to climb this far would only see me, the most important person in this drama,

tumble back into Hell head over heels! It would be terrible if that were to happen."

But even as he spoke these words to himself, sinners by the hundreds, by the thousands, came crawling up in swarms from out of the floor of darkness of the Lake of Blood. Lining themselves up on the slender shining Spider's Thread they came climbing up diligently. "Unless I do something right now, this thread will snap in two, and I will surely fall back." At this point Candata let out a big voice, shouting, "Hey, you damn sinners! This here Spider's Thread is all mine. Who invited you to climb up? Off, off, off, all of you, off!"

It was just when he said these words that it happened. Up to that point nothing was wrong with the Spider's Thread, it was holding. But at the very place where Candata was hanging on to it, it suddenly broke with a snap. And so he could not help it. The next moment he was cutting through the air, spinning like a top, falling headlong as he looked helplessly into the dead center of the floor of darkness.

After that only the Land of Bliss Spider's Thread remained, with its slender light twinkling, hanging there broken off short in the middle of the sky with neither moon nor stars.

(3) O Shakasama stood by the edge of the lotus pond in the Land of Bliss. He saw the entire drama take place from start to finish. And so it seems our hero has sunk like a stone to the bottom of the Lake of Blood. A sad look passed over his face as he again started to stroll along with no particular purpose in mind. By trying to escape from Hell by himself, Candata revealed he had a heart lacking in compassion. And so he received a punishment commensurate to that heart and fell back into the Hell from which he came. But you could tell from the look in the eyes of O Shakasama that he felt sorry for the poor wretch.

But the lotus in the lotus pond of the Land of Bliss are totally indifferent to such matters. The calyx of the jewel-like white flowers around the feet of O Shakasama rock back and forth gently. And from the golden stamen in the very middle there is an unending stream of the most indescribably beautiful fragrance flowing forth constantly. Even in the Land of Bliss it is almost midday.

Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii
Buddhist Study Center
1436 University Avenue
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Director Rev. Kevin Kuniyuki

Editor Rev. Kevin Kuniyuki

Contributors Rev. Michio (Ichido) Tokunaga
 W. S. Yokoyama

Translators: Rev. Gene Sekiya
 W. S. Yokoyama

Upcoming Events

Zen Meditation	May 21
BSC Shakuhachi Club	May 21
Shakuhachi with Rev. Okano	May 22
Yoga Class with Lisa Yanagi	May 22
Shakuhachi with Rev. Okano	May 23
Zen Meditation	May 28
BSC Shakuhachi Club	May 28
Shakuhachi with Rev. Okano	May 29
Yoga Class with Lisa Yanagi	May 29
Shakuhachi with Rev. Okano	May 30
Zen Meditation	Jun 4
BSC Shakuhachi Club	Jun 4
Shakuhachi with Rev. Okano	Jun 5
Yoga Class with Lisa Yanagi	Jun 5
Shakuhachi with Rev. Okano	Jun 6

