

## ***Dharma cards***

These are from a series of Dharma cards by Rev. Koju Fujieda. Such cards are sent monthly to parishioners and friends, with insights from the teaching.

*Getting out of your lonely shell,  
Encountering various worldly conditions,  
You can meet people and Buddhas.*

-- Eiichi Enomoto



"Don't take the person in front of you for an ordinary being. He or she may be what Amida Buddha has disguised Himself as because He simply loves you; so you must courteously appreciate his or her virtue."

This is the remark that the Nembutsu person Takahashi (Uhei Takahashi) in Hokkaido heard from his father as his last will (taken from Rev. Gyo-u Hayashi's speech).

Mr. Takahashi then urged his follower, Masanao Maeda, asking, "Do you 'worship' your wife everyday? She thinks of you and takes care of you all the time. She could be compared to the Kwannon Bodhisattva. If you can't worship her, your Nembutsu faith cannot be genuine."

Eventually Mr. Maeda was convinced to bow his head down to his wife. Happy is the person who, emerging from his/her shell or den of self-complacency and egoism, meets various people following many worldly conditions and 'sensing' the Buddhas behind them, recites the Nembutsu, silent or aloud.

*I am not really trusted by anybody,  
while I am absolutely entrusted  
by the TathAgata.  
Believing in this fact is what is called  
Shinjin or faith that is the most difficult  
to accept.*

-- Rev. Ryojin Soga

"These are the hands that grasped my mom's  
breasts as an infant;  
These are the hands that massaged her back;  
These are the hands that plucked out her gray hair;  
These are the hands that killed two women one day;  
These are the hands that translated the Tannisho  
into Braille in the jail; and  
These are the hands that are pressed together  
in prayer every morning and evening."

So he writes around the print of his hand on the shikishi paper -- a certain  
condemned criminal. He gave the shikishi to his prison priest Rev. Tkayuki  
Ashikaga as his memento.

As a middle school student, he happened to know the secret of his birth as a  
love child. This triggered a series of his misdeeds such as gangsterism, drug  
abuse, burglary, and murder, which ended up in death sentence. However, he  
was fortunate enough to open his eyes to the Tannisho with the guidance of  
Rev. Ashikaga in the prison and came to practice the Nembutsu. Yes, he  
realized that he was entrusted by the TathAgata.



*Bereaved of my parents  
then of my wife,  
and finally of my son;  
How beautiful the glowing clouds are  
in the western sky!*

-- Shuko Tsuchihashi

It is said that there are three "saka" (slopes) in life: "Nobori-zaka" (upward slope), "kudari-zaka" (downward slope), and "masaka" (Incredible!). And that "masaka" did happen.

Rev. Shuko Tsuchihashi, former professor of Ryukoku University, retired from the professorship a few years before the retirement age so as to devote himself to his temple tasks in Yamashina, Kyoto.

However, three years after that, his wife passed away, and one and a half years afterwards, his temple and its living quarters were burned down by an accidental fire. Fortunately, in two years, the buildings of the temple were rebuilt, but a year later, another "masaka" hit him.

His son, who was teaching at a college in the Kanto area as an associate professor apart from his family in Kyoto, took his own life for an unknown reason. Moreover, the following year found Rev. Tsuchihashi seeing his wife and two children leave the temple.

Certainly, it was a series of "masaka" occurrences. Yet, he was such a Nembutsu person that he even adored the glow of the western sky as the light from the Pure Land, remarking, "The power that makes me live on appears from the Original Vow of the TathAgata."



by Miyoko Tsutsumi

*The palm pressed  
onto His Treasure Seat still warm  
Cool breeze*

-- Tenko (Ven. Zenge)

December 8 is the day of Shakyamuni's Enlightenment

"Namaste," "Namaste" greeted us into the plane of Air India around this time 33 years ago. I was leaving Japan as an attendant to the previous Chief Abbot Ven. Zenge of the main temple Goshoji on his Nembutsu Journey to the Buddhist remains in India.



*by Miyoko Tsutsumi*

"Namaste" is a daily greeting in that country, but I was pleased to learn then that "namas" means "I respect" and "te" means "you." What a gracious greeting it is! When "I respect you," there will be no conflict around at all.

This "namas" constitutes "Namu" of "Namuamidabutsu, so "Namu- amidabutsu" implies "I respect Amida Buddha." (Shan'tao translated "namas" as "Kimyo" or "I entrust myself to you," though.)

At Buddha Gaya Ven. Zenge placed his palm onto the big rock where Shakyamuni sat in meditation to reach enlightenment, and then remarked he felt as if the warmth of His Body was still there.

It happened that my record of his trip "Accompanying the Nembutsu Journey" was reprinted last week from Nagatabunshodo, reviving my strongest impressions in life.

*It surely is me  
who recites and hears Namuamidabutsu,  
But in fact it's the calling from Amida  
Buddha  
to carry me to enlightenment.*

-- Shinsui Haraguchi

This is the waka poem cherished by Rev. Shinsui Haraguchi (d. 1893), which was actually adapted from the original Chinese verse composed by Rev. Daigon (d. 1856) in Yamaguchi Prefecture.



*By Miyoko Tsutsumi*

Since Rev. Daigon was accustomed to recite the Nembutsu in a rather loud voice, he was suspected of Shomyo Shoin or the heresy of taking Nembutsu recitation as the cause of Pureland birth while making light of Shinjin, and his case was reported to the Main Temple in Kyoto. Rev. Haraguchi, who happened to be in charge of the suit, requested Rev Daigon to come up to Kyoto, but he responded by a letter due to his old age.

Attached to the letter was this splendid Chinese verse: Inspired by the immeasurable gratitude to the Buddha's compassion, Nembutsu recitation irresistibly continues from fresh morn till quiet night; Although I recite and I hear it, it is nothing but the calling from the Great Compassion to me.

This verse is based on Shinran Shonin's authentic explication of the Six-Character Name or the Nembutsu, "It is the command of the Primal Vow calling to and summoning us" (The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization II).

How come the Nembutsu we utter is the calling of the Buddha Himself? How gracious! How close!

*Man is so made  
that he cannot live  
without passing  
in front of the other.*

-- Shusaku Endo

The other day when I took the shortcut to save time, my car was stopped a number of other cars behind the railroad crossing. Unable to return, I waited until a local train passed, and then stepped off the brake, but the crossing gate would not open.



*By Miyoko Tsutsumi*

About a minute later another train came from the opposite direction. "Such a thing will happen in this world!" So saying, I tried to step on the accelerator this time, but the red sign on the gate post kept warning the approach of another train from the original direction for a certain time.

How much longer did I have to wait? Finally a super express sped past and the gate was opened. It was just when I crossed the rail that I awakened to the hidden phase of this situation: I have boarded so many trains in my life, but have I ever thought of the people waiting at the crossing?

Haven't I thought, "The super express ought to dash along as a matter of course, and haven't I paid for the extra express seat"? Likewise, while I marched passionately along my way of life, how many people had to wait for me to pass and how many gave way to me? I have no idea at all.

I could not help feeling ashamed of myself.

*The Buddha said, "I  
appeared in the world  
In order to save Gunmo  
or nameless-grass-like  
multitudes of beings  
by endowing them with the  
true benefit."*



*By Miyoko Tsutsumi*

-- Larger Sutra

Around this time of year when young green grasses come out, I am reminded of the term "Gunmo" or multitudes of beings like nameless grasses.

"Gunmo are the grasses that grow thick," so I wrote in the first volume of the Gunmo (Dharma pamphlet) which was founded 43 years ago. To us, like field grasses that cannot bloom with big and brilliant flowers, the sun in the grand sky shines and mother earth produces heat to make us grow.

Both earnestly wish us to be awakened to the true significance of our lives that were bestowed through wondrous channels of evolution. To realize the intrinsic value of one's life is to have deep insight into the wonders of life.

It is invaluable because our once-and-for-all life in this world is to be led to enlightenment and is charged with the Amida Buddha's strong vow to save us. Namuamidabutsu is nothing but His exertion to awaken us to that realization, hence it is the "true benefit." "Oh, the green of the grass, it is the token of the immense value of life."

(The last stanza of my poem, taken from Gunmo no Mezame or The Realizations of Gunmo, Hozokan)