



Metta

Winter 2018

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THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF LOVE Its History and Significance

by Bishop Eric Matsumoto, Rev. Tatsuo Muneto and Dexter Mar

Written in a plain and simple style, the Golden Chain of Love has attracted numerous children to the ethical teaching of Buddhism. It explicitly encouraged the children in Hawaii and the mainland USA to nurture kindness and love for all beings, animate and inanimate. Touched by the Buddha's loving-kindness, the Dharma school students have become aware of their inner strength to protect the lives of other people and animals.

Such is the power of the Golden Chain of Love. This short saying will continue to inspire children and adults to pursue the goodness of human life, through the teachings of the "interdependence" of all things and "responsibility" for helping one another.

In order for the Shin Buddhist clergy and lay leaders to guide the congregation to speak the words of the Golden Chain of Love, clearly and with personal appreciation for its content, it is necessary to understand its background, the author's intent in writing it, and the change in wording that was made by the Honpa Hongwanji Sunday School Commission in 1970.

Today, we live in an era of abuse, acts of violence and discrimination, and confusion on a national and international scale. Standards for moral behavior are being sought. Jodo Shinshu may be able to suggest principles of moral endeavor that are based on a natural and spontaneous human effort based upon the unconditional love and compassion of Amida Buddha.



Dorothy Hunt

Dorothy Hunt's Contributions and Institutional Problem

It is generally agreed that Dorothy Hunt

wrote the Golden Chain of Love to promote the Eight-fold Path, the basic Buddhist teaching taught to children. Her husband, Rev. Ernest Shinkaku Hunt had a strong conviction that following the Eight-fold Path would lead to the peace of Nirvana.



Rev. Ernest Hunt

Other religious traditions had commandments as a guide to a moral human life. Dorothy Hunt came up with the clear idea of writing a short saying as such a guide. She turned to the Eight-fold Path and wrote the Golden Chain of Love as its summation.

Ever since its inception in the 1927, the Golden Chain of Love guided Buddhist children to know that they are inter-related as precious links of Lord Buddha, and to seek and therefore purify their karma in thoughts, words and actions.

This simple but profound reading became one of the recitations to be used in the Hongwanji's Sunday School services from the 1930's to 1970. Adult members of the English Sunday Service began reading the Golden Chain of Love in the mid-1970s. There have been several modifications in wording, but they were minor. The basic intent was to make one's thoughts, words and deeds pure and beautiful for the sake of achieving the perfect peace of nirvana remained the same. The original version of Golden Chain of Love that Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii used till 1970 reads:

I am link in Lord Buddha's golden chain of love that stretches around the world.

I must keep my link bright and strong.

I will try to be kind and gentle to every living thing, and protect all who are weaker than myself.

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Message from the Editor

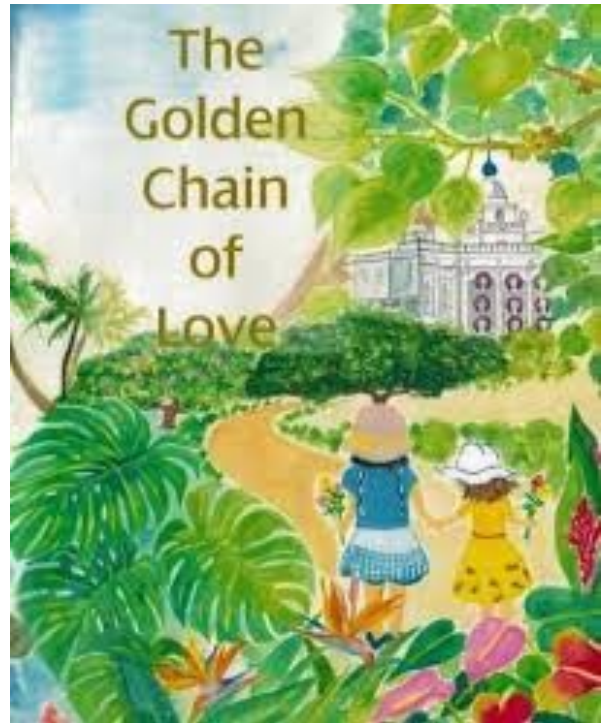
In response to a request from retired minister and former director of the Buddhist Study Center, Rev. Tatsuo Muneto that came to us in late November, we changed some of our plans for this last quarter to include an informative article on The Golden Chain of Love. It is timely because of the recent release of the book of the same name. There is information about it to the right of this message.

It was decided to continue the series of articles by Rev. Michio Tokunaga, Dean of the House of Hongwanji Academicians (Kangaku), and the first part on a thought provoking essay by W. S. Yokoyama, an old friend and former member of the Nishi Hongwanji translation committee. He was also on the staff of the Eastern Buddhist. Presently he is retired, but still pursuing research in various areas of Buddhism and its more recent history.

We hope to be “back on track” January of next year. In any case, you will be receiving this issue and the first quarter 2019 in early 2019.

Best regards for the holidays!

NEW BOOK “THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF LOVE”



Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii published a new picture book, *The Golden Chain of Love*, in September 2018. Bishop Eric Matsumoto wrote: “May *The Golden Chain of Love* continue to serve as a guide for many Buddhists throughout the world, perhaps even non-Buddhists who understand the principles found in it. For (Jodo) Shin Buddhists, may we in grateful response to All-Inclusive Wisdom and All-Embracing Compassion (Amida Buddha) hold dear *The Golden Chain of Love* and continue to be guided by it.” The book is available at the HHMH Bookstore at 1727 Pali Highway, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 for \$8.00 plus shipping and handling. Please check the HHMH Website for information at www.hongwanjihawaii.com



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.

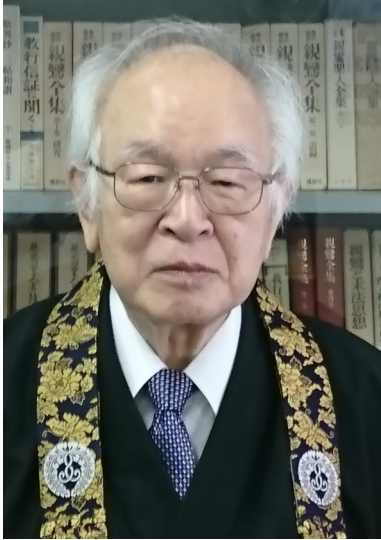
The white lotus flower symbolizes a stage that is associated with the state of bodhi; that of becoming awakened to the wonders of it all. When one reaches this state it is said that one has mental purity and has reached a state of spiritual perfection.

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Excerpt from Hongwanji Shimpo June 1, 2017

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

The Tathagata known as Namo Amida Butsu

Having entered the samadhi of great tranquility,
The Buddha's countenance was wondrous in its radiance;
Observing the depth of Ananda's discernment,
He praised him for his insightful question.

(Collected Works of Shinran, Vol. I, p. 339)

Sakyamuni Buddha's beamingly radiant countenance

The above wasan is found in the Hymns of the Pure Land in the section 'On the Larger Sutra.' It extols Sakyamuni's exquisite appearance when he expounded on Amida Buddha and the Pure Land.

The reason for this is that Sakyamuni was teaching about Amida's salvific working which is for the benefit of all sentient beings. This indicates to us that it was for this very purpose, to explain the working of Amida's Primal Vow, Sakyamuni appeared in the world and his great pleasure clearly shown and radiated from his countenance.

Shinran included this in Shoshinge as follows. "Sakyamuni Tathagata appeared in this world / Solely to teach the oceanlike Primal Vow of Amida." This statement is part of the foundation that underpins the Jodo Shinshu teaching.

These lines have the same point as the first two

lines of another well-known gatha, Sambutsuge ("Verses in Praise of the Buddha") of the Larger Sutra, which states,

ko gen gi gi / i jin mu goku

光顔巍々 威神無極

("Your radiant countenance is majestic,
/ And your dignity is boundless.")

In this gatha, Dharmakara Bodhisattva, who later became Amida Buddha, praises the Dharma and the brilliantly majestic appearance of his master teacher, Buddha Lokeshvararaja, when he expresses his desire to become a Buddha and declares his Primal Vow.

When I was a professor at Kyoto Women's University teaching a course on Buddhism, every month the entire student body and faculty would gather for a service during which they sang "Sandan no uta," a transliterated version of Sambutsuge in modern Japanese. Although it is a transliteration, it begins with the same exalted praise, "The brilliant light that radiates from you is noble and immeasurable."

The Name of Amida Tathagata

In regard to the "samadhi of great tranquility," Shinran wrote notes in his personal copy of the wasan, which is a National Treasure.

The reason for the Buddha's inner stillness and quietude, which is now more excellent than usual, is that he has appeared in the world solely to teach the Name of Amida; thus, his particularly excellent and auspicious features.

Shinran felt that Sakyamuni's coming into this world was for one specific purpose: solely for expounding the working of the Name, Namo Amida Butsu. Why did Shinran feel this way and what does it mean?

First of all, it does not mean that my emancipation is established because I believe in Amida Buddha or because I recite the Namo Amida Butsu. Rather, it is Amida's great compassion in the form of Namo Amida Butsu that has already reached me long before I become aware of Amida's salvific working.

Translation by Gene Sekiya

(Continued from page 1)

I will try to think pure and beautiful thoughts, to say pure and beautiful words, and to do pure and beautiful deeds, knowing that on what I do now depends not only my happiness and unhappiness but also those of others.

May every link in Lord Buddha's golden chain of love become bright and strong, and may we all attain perfect peace.

Why "Amida Buddha" instead of "Lord Buddha"?

The major change in the wording of the Golden Chain of Love took place in 1970. Honpa Hongwanji's Sunday School Commission decided to change the key word in the reading from "Lord Buddha" to "Amida Buddha." Although the reason for the change was not recorded, perhaps the members of the Commission felt that it is natural that this change takes place, because Amida Buddha is the object of reverence (worship) and because Jodo Shin Buddhists entrust themselves to Amida Buddha. However, it is not that simple. The reasons why this change was necessary should have been discussed with and explained to the members, children and adults of the Honpa Hongwanji temples.

A discussion would have clarified the difference in meaning with the change from "Lord Buddha" to "Amida Buddha." The Eight-fold Path teaches that one strives to get rid of blind desire (klesha/bonno), the cause of suffering in this life. With the words "Lord Buddha" in the first paragraph of the Golden Chain of Love, one is required to have Right Understanding and to purify one's thoughts (Right Thought), words (Right Speech), and deeds (Right Deed) in order to attain peace (Right Meditation).

In Jodo Shin Buddhism, one is not required to purify one's karma through one's effort in order to attain nirvana and instead entrusts in the great wisdom and compassion of Amida Buddha which is unconditionally promising enlightenment. The Nembutsu follower is not able to purify their karma by their own power, but they aspire to do so in deep awareness and gratitude to Amida Buddha's unconditional compassion which they find embracing them. Amida Buddha's compassionate heart connects the Nembutsu follower with all others through the law of inter-dependence. Though Shinran Shonin, while on Mt. Hiei, followed the difficult path - he found this traditional Buddhist path of purification ineffective. Guided by Honen Shonin, Shinran found that his inner being had been illuminated by the Infinite Light and Immeasurable Life of Amida Buddha. He declared that he "left the self-power practices, discarding the sundry practices, and entered the great ocean of Amida's compassion." (Kyo-gyo-shin-sho)

Thus, in Jodo Shin Buddhism, Amida Buddha's compassion inspires one to work for the happiness of others. The Entrusting Heart from Amida Buddha is the source of such endeavor. It was perhaps for this reason that the Sunday School Commission replaced the term "Lord Buddha" in the original version of the Golden Chain of Love with the term "Amida Buddha."

The latest version of the Golden Chain of Love in the

Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii reads:

I am a link in Amida Buddha's Golden Chain of Love that stretches around the world.

I must keep my link bright and strong.

I will try to be kind and gentle to every living thing and protect all who are weaker than myself.

I will try to think pure and beautiful thoughts, to say pure and beautiful words, and to do pure and beautiful deeds, knowing on what I do now depends not only my happiness or unhappiness but also that of others.

May every link in Amida Buddha's Golden Chain of Love be bright and strong, and may we all attain perfect peace.

Shinran Shonin was aware of his true nature as a foolish and limited being. He was able, through the virtue of Amida Buddha's unconditional compassion, to relate to Amida Buddha's love, care and compassion for others, and he encouraged his disciples to do so too as we find in his letters to them:

"As a sign of long years of saying the Nembutsu and wishing to be born in the Pure Land, people come to reflect on their minds that used to be vile and selfish and hold kindly hearts towards their friends and fellow Nembutsu practitioners." (Mattosho)

Live Peace

When a Nembutsu follower strives to have pure and beautiful thoughts, words and deeds, one is urged by the active workings of True Compassion to pursue morality in human life. While being responsible for doing what is good in life for others, the Nembutsu follower is not conscious of their actions; instead in saying Namu Amida Butsu, they are mindful of being embraced by True compassion. This person has become one who will surely attain the peace of Nirvana.

In the midst of such problems as bullying in addition to the stresses that we experience in life, our reciting the Golden Chain of Love encourages us to be united with one another as "fellow travelers and fellow practitioners" on the way to birth in the Pure Land and promotes goodness in human life in gratitude for Amida Buddha's compassion.

In the 21st century Nembutsu Sangha and the growing community of faiths, may we, once again, return to the Eight-fold Path and use its principles in Shin Buddhist mindfulness! May we recite the Golden Chain of Love at home and temple with a clear voice that will resound not only within the walls of the temple but also throughout the entire universe.

The Inscription on the Myogo Scroll Reflections on my new theory of the Tannisho



W. S. Yokoyama

Looking through old texts is a preoccupation of mine. Over the past few years I have narrowed down my focus and toward the end of 2017 I had gone through enough old Tannisho-related materials to make me feel confident I was on to something new. In June 2018 at a Tannisho workshop at Ryukoku University in Kyoto I was invited to give a twenty min academic presentation on my findings. My new theory of the Tannisho basically looks into the interactive process of composition of the text. But with only twenty min to present I had to limit my statements to the problem at hand.

As is typical of academic presentations it is difficult to tell if my talk had any impact on the field. To tell the truth I doubt it. Like a magic show the presenter takes six months to get a decent white elephant of a talk into shape and it vanishes into thin air the moment it is presented on stage. I did not expect to have a chance to reprise my talk when our old friend now editor of *Metta* kindly invited me to submit an article.

First of all I would like to get away from the academic English style of presentations. I prefer to inject some humor into my talks. It keeps the audience entertained. Something for the mind to munch on like popcorn while watching movies. People go home happy after the talk. At the same time I would like to give the serious reader enough information to use as a basis for further research. This is to me the real criterion of how successful this article is.

In an early draft of this talk while in a whimsical mood I sat down and wrote . . . "One day when they do a remake of the movie *Back to the Future* they will reset the clock on the Delorean to June 25, 2018 the day I gave my academic talk. It is the day I went back and changed history."

When we look back, the path of history disappears into the mists of the past. What do we know of the life and teachings of Shinran, anyway? The story of his life is based largely on the legend (the word "legend" here meaning "captions") to the illustrated biography compiled by Shinran's great grandson Kakunyo. There is also another biography by Kakunyo's son Zonkaku and other biographies by other Shinshu denominations. I have not read them all. But what we do not have much information on is what Shinran did in the final years of his life.

Shinran did not spend his senior years leisurely playing golf three times a week like my uncle Hiroshi on Big Island. He was extremely busy. The outlying Shinshu communities in the Kanto area were in a state of crisis. They needed his leadership. The problem was he was located at a distance from them, at least ten days journey on foot, in Kyoto. As the crisis deepened the disciples made the long journey to Kyoto to see him. But as we examine Shinran's activities in his early eighties, we realize he had hit upon an effective plan of how to extend his influence to remote areas and even give his disciples guidance once he was gone.

This dramatic episode of his life is a major turning point in the survival of the early Shinshu communities. But it is downplayed in Kakunyo's *Life of Shinran*. It is not that Kakunyo did not know of it. The Tannisho written by Yuien for his edification alludes to it. That is, Kakushinni, Shinran's youngest daughter, commissioned the work from Yuien as a way of conveying something of Shinran's teaching to her grandson Kakunyo.

Yuien is known to have met Kakunyo on one occasion. But it does not seem Yuien was altogether impressed with him. For along with the Tannisho there is another work by Shinran he should have handed over to him but did not. This is the *Songo shinzo meimon*, a secret document only shared among the disciples who were deemed worthy.

Shinran compiled *Songo shinzo meimon* one summer at age 83. It is a list of kanbun inscriptions used on myogo scrolls and portraits. To this Shinran added his comments in wabun (Japanese) to guide the reader through the text. Through this handwritten text his disciples would be able to sense his presence and commune with him even after he was gone.

The inscription that immediately interested me was the *Shoshinge* selection at the very end. This is not the entire text, which ends the Practice chapter of *Kyogyoshinsho*. It is only the following section:

"The famous Name of the long held wish for us is the true act securing our Birth. . It has as its cause the wish for us to have us sincerely awaken joyously. . Our realization of the supreme Nirvana equal to perfect Enlightenment . Fulfills the wish for us assuring us we shall all reach Nirvana.

"As to the reason tathagata appear in this world, . 'Tis solely to expound the ocean of the long held wish for us of Amida such that . The living ocean of the masses in this five-fold defiled wicked age . Come to respond in faith to the tathagata's true word.

"Through experiencing a single moment of a heart of joyous love . We attain Nirvana even without cutting ourselves off from our misery. . The ordinary and the holy, the offenders and the slanderers all turn to enter it . Like many a stream enters the ocean of one taste.

"Taken up into the heart light that shines constantly to protect us, . The inky darkness of our ignorance is shred at last. . Though we may go on lost in the clouds and mists of our own greed, lust, and arrogance . That constantly block out the

(Continued on page 6)

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heavens of our sincerely believing mind,

“This is like the analogy of sunlight covered by clouds and mists. . Except it is no longer dark beneath the clouds and mists but bright. . Out of the great joy of realizing we have been respectfully entrusted with faith, We immediately leap across and go beyond the five wicked courses.”

This inscription appears at the bottom of Shinran’s portrait. I think the underlined portion above is significant: “a single moment of a heart of joyous love.” As it appears in the very middle of the vertical text, it looks like the central axis on which the portrait turns. While it is possible to make too much out of this feature, in the following I would like to accrue it greater significance than may seem warranted, although some of you will not be convinced.

In Japanese reading this phrase is *ichinen kiai shin*, “a single moment of joyous love.” Shinran uses it sparingly. Outside its occurrence in the inscription to his portrait, it only occurs in the *Shoshinge* of the *Kyogyoshinsho* and the *Shoshinge* section of *Songo shinzo meimon*. I would contend this sparing use is intentional, as part of his secret transmission, or *kuden*.

I do not know how love is treated in other Buddhist denominations but in the Shinshu tradition it seems the four letter word “l-o-v-e” is regarded as a dirty word and that “faith” is much to be preferred. We are supposed to sup on the monastic fare on “faith alone,” and not feast on the bounty of love. At the same time we find expressions of love of a higher dimension in Nishida Kitaro (his early essay “Knowing and loving” in *Seishinkai* August 10, 1907), Kujo Takeko, and Asahara Saichi.

Saichi’s poems are basically love poems, where *kiho ittai*, the Oneness of seeker and dharma, is an expression of the state of love. Anyone who has fallen in love knows what this means. You want to be just like the person you love, walking the way they walking and talking the way they talk, as you swirl around together in a world of dream. Still Shin scholars are unwilling to explain Saichi’s poems as such. D. T. Suzuki also avoids any discussion of the state of love in his reading of Saichi and looks down on love as if it were beneath his state of enlightenment. All the same if we look at Nishida’s views it is clear that knowing and loving allude to a higher form of being. Today it is clear there is a lack of love and kindness in society, hence the growing appeal of religious communities as a haven to restore our faith in life.

So here at the very end of his life Shinran drops a hint of love like a mani stone into murky waters. “A single moment of joyous love.” He hardly breathes a word of it in his writings and never quotes the entire passage in its originally form. As a result we are not told explicitly where to find it. But if we look, as scholars have done, we find it in the *Nyorai e*.

The *Muryoju Nyorai e* is a later version of the Larger Sutra. It was translated some thirty years after Shandao died. This means that it does not figure into the Pure Land model Shandao formulated. Nor does it figure into the model Honen formulated. But surprisingly here it is in Shinran!

This means Shinran’s worldview extends beyond the Honen-Shandao one at this point. It might be just a tiny bit beyond. But let its trajectory extend infinitely outward and in the end this tiny differential is what makes Shinran’s teaching totally unique from all the rest.

In the *Collected Works of Shinran (CWS)* the text is referred to as the Sutra of the Tathagata of Immeasurable Life. The standard Larger Sutra is the Sutra of Immeasurable Life. If we look at the treatment of the two sutras in CWS we might notice there is a great difference in the quality of translation. The standard Larger Sutra is in fair condition but the other one is not. This reflects the fact that not a lot of work has been done on the latter which is seen as a distant cousin to the real Larger Sutra. All the Shinshu scholarship over the centuries has focused on the standard Larger Sutra leaving the other one in the shadows. All this needs to be recalibrated to the Sutra of the Tathagata of Immeasurable Life.

This tiny recalibration ultimately results in major changes in how we see things. The tiny blindspot in our understanding has the power to upset the apple cart of all the work done on Shinshu texts over the centuries. As a result even our honored ancestors Kakunyo and Zonkaku, hence Rennyō, missed the point, not to mention modern thinkers to this day.

In the new Shin studies we must now embark upon, we must go beyond the limits of the standard Larger Sutra to incorporate the new gold standard of the Sutra of the Tathagata of Immeasurable Life, the *Nyorai e*, as a work of central importance to understanding the furthest extension of Shinran’s teaching.

I can see why my uncle Hiroshi is much happier playing golf three times a week on the Big Island. I really should join him. At the same time I would like to leave something to the next generation besides a set of used golf clubs. As the legacy of our generation I would like to give an idea of the direction in which the Shin community could well develop to contribute positively to a society that seems increasingly bent on destroying itself. The “single moment of joyous love” does not seem like much of a contribution. But even a drop of love in the vast ocean of confusion imparts meaning to our lives. To use a golf analogy it is like hitting a hole-in-one. You are not going to do it every day of your life. But that one time is enough.

To my mind the Shin community is a haven for people who have been traumatized by what they have experienced in life. It makes them vulnerable and prone to addiction. In the immediate postwar era people who came back from the war were smoking and drinking up a storm trying to forget the war. My father came out of internment camp smoking and drinking. They were basically addicted to ethanol and nicotine due to the trauma they went through. Going through Hell could do it to you. I was like that, growing up in poverty in the mother fog sucking fens of Boyle Heights. It is mighty hard to put someone on the right tracks unless we deal with the trauma behind it. It will end up killing them. These are the people who need the support of the religious community.

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The Golden Chain of Love

I am a link in Amida Buddha's Golden Chain of Love that stretches around the world. I must keep my link bright and strong.

I will try to be kind and gentle to every living thing and protect all who are weaker than myself.

I will try to think pure and beautiful thoughts, and to say pure and beautiful words, and to do pure and beautiful deeds, knowing that on what I do now depends not only my happiness or unhappiness, but also that of others.

May every link in Amida Buddha's Golden Chain of Love become bright and strong and may we all attain Perfect Peace.

(Continued from page 6)

My usual recommendation for someone who needs love is to get a dog. Most of the time if you are in need, God isn't going to help you. God just wants to send you to back to hell. A dog can help put you on the right track.

Speaking of which, to return to our story, there was a time Shinran was in hot water in Honen's community. It is sometimes said he was in hot water over his claim he had the same faith as Honen. But the other story is that Shinran met someone he fell in love with while living in the community.

Zonkaku's biography of Shinran has an episode where young Shinran meets a woman at the well. The site of the well is Sekizan Zen'in in Kyoto. It is halfway between Mount Hiei, where Shinran lived, and Honen's community, where the woman lived.

The woman is an intriguing figure since she is well educated and speaks eloquently. This makes us realize that women in those days were able to freely move through society as long as they were educated. This seems to be the case with Eshinni. If the woman at the well was not Eshinni herself, then it was someone very much like her.

The result of the meeting is the woman points out to Shinran the contradiction of monastic Buddhism: "Is it

not strange of monastic Buddhism to ban women from entering the Mountain? After all," she observes, "are not the birds and the bees up there both male and female?" And so she gives Shinran a lesson in the bird and the bees, and the problem of inequality in patriarchal societies.

Here we come to the problem of two kinds of religious society. The patriarchal society based on inequality of the sexes where man rules over the world by power and wealth, and women are subordinate. And a nonhierarchical society based on equality of the sexes where love and respect is primary.

With Shinran standing before him asking for advice Honen had to answer. When pressed for a decision he advised Shinran to do whatever he needed to do to live a life of nenbutsu. "If you have to get married to live a life of nenbutsu then do so."

In the end Honen died by the rites accorded a Tendai monk. That is, Honen ultimately clung to the patriarchal model. To Shinran this seemed like a betrayal of trust and it must have troubled him for years. But at that impasse where Honen was forced to make a decision, he stepped beyond his role as Tendai monk and gave his nod of approval to love over faith.

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Upcoming Events

Buddhist Discussion Group	Jan 14
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Shakuhachi with Rev. Thomas Okano	Jan 17
Zen Meditation	Jan 22
BSC Shakuhachi Club	Jan 22
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