



The Answer

新当派
浄土宗



Q @ A for Shinshu Buddhists

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FOR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR CONTRIBUTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT: fukumotodsgn@earthlink.net or sensei@vhbt.org

With volume 2, I am going to begin with the basics. I will be using a little used text from the 1960s and 1970s, hopefully one day to be reprinted again for our use. The text book is "NEMBUTSU THE WAY OF SPIRITUAL FULFILMENT." It was published by the BCA Sunday School Department. The last printing marked on the book that I have is 1972.

What is the crest of the Hongwanji?

It is derived from the flower of the wisteria plant. The wisteria blooms with it's head hanging down from a trestle. Thus, the wisteria crest symbolizes humble reverence before Amida Buddha. An example can be seen locally in Sierra Madre, California in March (and that wisteria plant is named by the Guinness



Book of World Records as



the largest blossoming

plant in the world, just for your information).

What is Amida's Gift to Us?

As Shinshu Buddhists, we should understand that we are the recipients of a most wonderful gift from Amida Buddha. The promise and assurance of salvation.

Although we many not have been aware of this gift. Amida's compassion to save all of us has existed from beginningless time.

Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha teaches us that there is in this universe, a fundamental Truth which remains unchanged through all eternity.

This may be a little confusing since we learned earlier in the teachings of Buddhism that all things change. We were taught that clinging to things that change causes suffering.

But, we must remember that the teaching concerning the Truth that all things change refers to things in this world. In our everyday experience we learn not to cling to or desire things that are impermanent. Through Buddhism, we understand that such thoughts or actions bring about suffering.

However, when we say that Amida never changes, that Amida exists forever, we are speaking of something beyond the everyday things of

this world.

Even though everything else changes, Amida never changes. We put our trust in him because of his timeless concern for the salvation of all.

Our Salvation, then, does not depend on any mere promise of a man, but on Amida—the Buddha of Infinite Life and Light—who will forever embrace us in his eternal light and never cast us away.

Nowhere in this universe is there a gift more enduring, unfailing or precious.

(Taken from NEMBUTSU THE WAY OF SPIRITUAL FULFILMENT Pg. 14-15)

What is "Faith?"

"Faith," as taught by Shinran Shonin, is "Faith given by Amida."

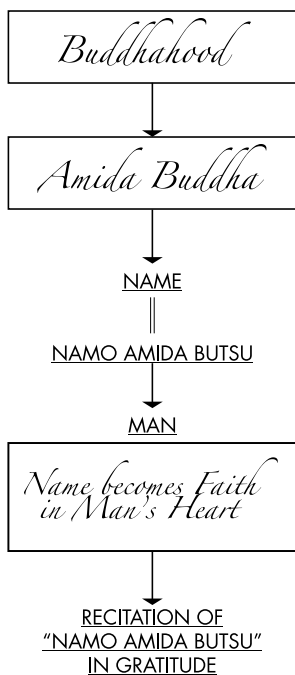
Buddhahood (Truth) is a principle and hard for us to grasp. It is not personal enough. Therefore, this Buddhahood appears before our consciousness as Amida Buddha—Buddha of Infinite Life and Light.

Amida Buddha is hard for us to know and understand. Therefore, for us, Amida Buddha becomes even more personal by appearing in his Name—Namo Amida Butsu. This name embodies all the perfect

qualities of Amida and it is the simplest way for Amida Buddha to communicate with us. It is easy for us to keep in mind and recite the Nembutsu.

We begin to understand the meaning inherent in Namō Amida Butsu. A realization takes place. This realization is Faith. When Faith is realized, one recites Namō Amida Butsu in thanksgiving and gratitude.

See illustration below



Reference - Program of Studies for Buddhist Sunday Schools, Tsuji, p. 133.

What is "Parināma?"

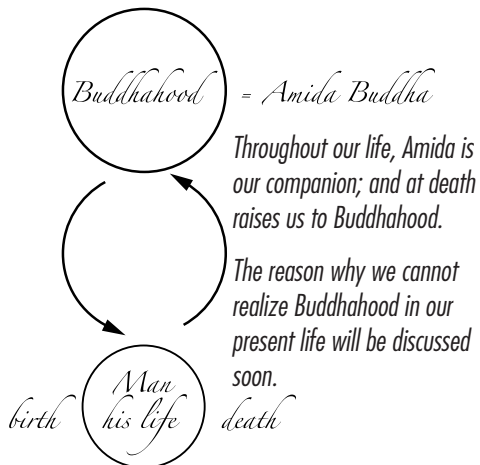
"Parinama," or merit transfer is Amida's gift to mankind.

In the following illustration, the arrow points downward first—from Amida to mankind. Out of pity and compassion for mankind, who is unable to gain Buddhahood by themselves, Amida¹ accumulates enough virtuous merits² and transfers to mankind the necessary conditions for this attainment of Buddhahood³.

Thus the followers of the Pure Land path, mankind is a receiver of all practice and goodness, completed for them by Amida Buddha. Through this marvelous gift from Amida mankind is assured of his salvation.

In the Pure Land Path, the Way of Faith is Discovered:

WAY OF FAITH



Footnotes

1. As Bodhisattva Dharmakara—the name ascribed to Amida Buddha while he was perfecting his Vows. For further reference, read *Buddhism and Jodo Shinshu*, p. 118.
2. Dharmakara's fulfillment of 48 vows.
3. This is called transference of merit, and the wish or desire of the Buddha for man to attain enlightenment is called the Buddha's Original Vow (Hongan).

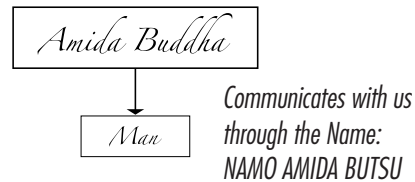
How does Amida make known His Gift?

That our salvation has already been accomplished by Amida Buddha is a reality, but how is this truth to be revealed to us in terms of human language?

Because of our limitations, we are unable to communicate with Amida.

On the other hand, it is possible for Amida to communicate with us through the Name, "NAMO AMIDA BUTSU." Herein lies the great power of the Name, for within the Name is found the wisdom and

compassion to bridge the gap between Amida and us.



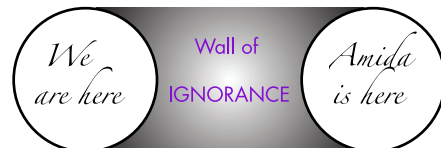
Through the Name, Amida is constantly striving to awaken the religious nature in all of us.

Why are we not aware of Amida's Gift?

Amida, from his side, is constantly working, striving to awaken us to realize true happiness in life through the assurance of Salvation. However, many of us go through life unaware of his call. We live aimlessly from day to day without realizing there is another more deeply satisfying side to life.

It is because we are ignorant of this calling. So then, what is IGNORANCE? Ignorance is the absence of Amida's Wisdom. Ignorance is the motivating factor of the unenlightened life, marked by selfish greed, anger and foolishness (3 poisons). Ignorance makes us see the world separated, and isolated from Amida's world.

However, we must not forget what Shinran had said, "The hardest thing in the world is to receive faith." Shinran made this remark through his deep understanding of the nature of humankind. He knew that most of us will try to attain faith by our own design, instead of wholeheartedly depending on Amida's vow.



A wall of ignorance separates Amida and us.