

The Dharma Breeze

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Maida Center of Buddhism

2609 Regent Street, Berkeley, CA 94704

Tel/Fax: (510) 843-8515 E-mail: MaidaCenter@sbcglobal.net Online: www.maidacenter.org

The Importance of Having Two Beginnings on the Buddhist Path

Nobuo Haneda

A. Introduction

In this essay I want to distinguish two beginnings (or births) on the Buddhist path, and show that not just one but both must be experienced. All Buddhists experience an initial entrance into the Buddhist path. Although many Buddhists think that their initial entrance is good enough, I do not think so. If we desire to attain true liberation from the ego-self, the goal in Buddhism, we must experience two beginnings on the Buddhist path. When we examine the lives of Buddhists such as Honen and Shinran, we learn that they experienced two such beginnings.

I will first explain Shinran's experience of two beginnings (or births) on the Buddhist path by discussing a schema of practice that is found in a Buddhist treatise. Then, on the basis of my discussion of Shinran's two beginnings, I will discuss the issue of self-power (*jiriki*) and the Power Beyond the Self (*Tariki*). This is one of the most popular issues among Shin Buddhists. Since I believe that many Shin Buddhists misunderstand the meanings of the two powers, I will attempt to show how they should be correctly understood.

B. Shinran's Two Beginnings (or Births) in Terms of the Five Stages Described in the *Perfection of Mind-Only*

In order to explain the two beginnings (or births) that we can see in the life of Shinran, let me first discuss the five stages that are found in a treatise entitled the *Perfection of Mind-Only* (*Vijnaptimatratasiddhi-sastra*), a text that explains Vasubandhu's ideas. We can see this schema as an outline of Shinran's life. The five stages are as follows:

“Provisions”: the first beginning (or birth)

“Effort-making”: the first practice

“Break-through” (i.e., *shinjin* [genuine awakening]): the second beginning (or birth)

“Cultivation”: the second practice (true practice)

“Ultimate [realization of Buddhahood]”

I will call the first stage of the “provisions” “the first beginning.” The word “provisions” means “spiritual food or materials.” It means things such as teachings, ideas, and concepts. In this stage a practitioner acquires knowledge about Buddhist teachings and doctrines. As far as Shinran was concerned, this stage meant the time he embarked on the Buddhist path on Mt. Hiei. At the age of nine he started to study all kinds of teachings.

The second stage, “effort-making,” is the stage in which a practitioner puts the doctrinal knowledge that he has learned in the first stage into practice. In this stage Shinran engaged in various practices, such as worship, chanting, self-discipline, and meditation, believing that those practices would enable him to attain Buddhahood. This was the stage of self-improvement, or self-betterment. But he was unable to become a Buddha through these practices. He was feeling more and more frustrated and depressed as he intensified his efforts. Having lived twenty years on Mt. Hiei, Shinran's spiritual quest hit a dead end.

The third stage, “break-through,” means the stage in which a practitioner breaks through a dead end and enters into a new spiritual realm. I call this stage “the second beginning.” Shinran entered this stage when he met his teacher Honen. Shinran encountered the spirit of Amida Buddha (the dynamic spirit of a perfect student) that Honen embodied. The teacher's spirit challenged and deconstructed Shinran's original spiritual basis. The teacher taught Shinran that the *nembutsu* alone was good enough to be liberated. The *nembutsu* was a calling voice, “Come to Limitless Light and Limitless Life! (*Namu Amida Butsu*).” Just by hearing and understanding

the deep meanings contained in the *nembutsu*, Shinran was immediately liberated. He was born in a wonderful spiritual realm that was filled with the Buddha's light (i.e., wisdom) and life (i.e., compassion). We can call this experience *shinjin* (genuine awakening) experience or "birth in the Pure Land."

The fourth stage, "cultivation," means the stage in which a practitioner embarks on the Buddhist path with his newly gained spiritual foundation. His practice in this stage differs from his practice in the second stage because the former is based on self-power and the latter on the Power Beyond the Self. In the former the practitioner forces himself to practice, but in the latter he cannot help practicing because of joy and gratitude. Although the first practice does not guarantee the practitioner an eventual attainment of Buddhahood, the second practice does. After Shinran reached this stage, he was able to live the life of a perfect listener. He was able to fulfill his life because he lived it both dynamically and creatively. He advanced on the path with deep joy and gratitude.

The fifth stage, "ultimate," means the stage in which a practitioner attains Buddhahood, the fulfillment of life.

C. Shinran's Two Beginnings and a Bird's Two Births

Now I want to further explain Shinran's two beginnings (or two births) by comparing them to the two births of a bird. In the life of a bird, there are two different births. The first birth is birth as an egg. The second birth is birth as a newly hatched bird. The first birth is birth *within* an egg-shell. The second birth is birth *from* an egg-shell. We can compare Shinran's first beginning to a bird's birth as an egg and his second beginning to a bird's birth as a newly hatched bird.

In the first stage, "provisions," Shinran was born as a Buddhist. He started to study various teachings. He absorbed and digested spiritual provisions. Then in the second stage, "effort-making," he made an effort in his practice. This way, he gradually grew as a Buddhist. In the life of a bird the first two stages are the period in which a chick starts to take shape. Its eyes, ears, and legs gradually appear and develop.

The first two stages are very important stages in which Shinran and a bird become grown-ups. But in those two stages they are still living in a small world. Although they are growing, this development is constricted and limited by the confined world of their shells. No matter how much effort they may make, they can only grow so far within the shell. Although Shinran was diligently practicing Buddhism, he was doing so *within* a shell, in his small world. In the case of the bird, the shell is called an "egg-shell." But in the case of Shinran, we can call his shell his "ego-shell." Shinran was growing in his ego-shell and was creating "his type of Buddhism."

When all of us initially study Buddhism, we are no different from Shinran. We go through the same self-centered process. We love teachings that are agreeable and comfortable and that comport with our ideas of what is good and ethical. We seek and appreciate the teachings that fit our needs. We create "my kind of Buddhism" that is designed to enhance our ego. We cannot appreciate the teachings that challenge our ego and make cracks in it. Although the first two stages are important and indispensable stages, all the things we are doing there, such as discipline, chanting, and meditation, are done within our ego-shells. It is crucially important that we move from the second stage to the third stage—that we experience the second beginning (or birth).

Now let me go to the third stage, "break-through," that Shinran experienced. Just as a chick is born out of a shell when its mother awakens it, Shinran was awakened and was born out of his ego-shell. His ego-shell was finally broken. Shinran experienced a total transformation of his spiritual being. Here his true self, the self that was one with the Dharma, was born.

Then, what facilitated Shinran's second beginning? What broke the shell? Shinran would answer that two types of *Tariki* (Power Beyond the Self) did. He would say that the first type of *Tariki* was the power of his teachers and the second type was the power of his own aspiration that gushed out of him.

The first type of *Tariki* was the nurturing power of his teachers. Just as the warm nurturing power of a mother bird contributes to the breaking of the shell, the nurturing power of his teachers contributed to the breaking of Shinran's ego-shell. What do we mean specifically by the teachers' power? It means the power of their teachings. Without their teachings, Shinran could not have realized his second beginning, his *shinjin*. The teachers' nurturing power, the first type of *Tariki*, had to be there first.

The second type of *Tariki* that realized the breaking of Shinran's ego-shell came from within Shinran's mind. The nurturing power of his teachers gradually awakened his aspiration for birth. His teachers' power alone could not realize the breaking of the shell. The power of Shinran's own aspiration to be born had to be awakened. It was another indispensable condition for his second birth. It is a very important feature of Shinran's teaching that he talks about *shinjin* or innermost aspiration as *Tariki*.

Shinran teaches us that we all have an aspiration for birth, the aspiration for the birth of the true self, which is deeply hidden in our minds. This aspiration is so deeply hidden in us that we are not even aware that we have it. We are so deeply immersed in the chores of our daily life that we are not even aware that it is always within us. But Shinran teaches us that if we keep on listening to our teachers' teachings, we will be able to experience the birth of this aspiration.

D. Self-power and the Power Beyond the Self

Here I want to talk about the issue of self-power and the Power Beyond the Self. I consider self-power the spiritual basis of the first two stages and the Power Beyond the Self the spiritual basis of the remaining three stages. The "shell" that I have discussed symbolizes self-power (or dualistic human wisdom) and the "mother bird" symbolizes the Power Beyond the Self (or the Buddha's wisdom).

I want to discuss the following three issues concerning self-power and the Power Beyond the Self:

1. Recognition of self-power and recognition of the Power Beyond the Self take place simultaneously

The recognition of self-power and recognition of the Power Beyond the Self take place simultaneously. When a chick is inside an egg-shell, it does not know that it is in the shell. It does not know that there is a shell. How could it? It does not know that there is a mother bird either. When the chick experiences the breaking of the shell and encounters its mother, it learns of both of them simultaneously.

In the case of Shinran, too, it is only when Shinran encountered Honen, the Power Beyond the Self, that he recognized the existence of self-power. How could he know the existence of self-power when he was performing various practices on the basis of self-power on Mt. Hiei? He had absolute faith in it. It is only when his ego-shell (self-power) was broken that he recognized the existence of the Power Beyond the Self that had brought about the breaking of the shell. Recognition of self-power and of the Power Beyond the Self took place simultaneously.

2. In the simultaneous recognition of self-power (the ego-shell) and of the Power Beyond the Self, one experiences both deep sadness and deep joy

When we recognize a broad world, the Power Beyond the Self, for the first time, we simultaneously recognize the smallness of the ego-shell, of self-power. This experience is accompanied by a feeling of deep sadness and deep joy. It is sad to have one's beloved ego-shell challenged and broken, but it is delightful to meet a Buddha, the Power Beyond the Self. It is sad to know that the world in which we have been living is so small, but it is delightful to know that there is a tremendously great world behind it. It is sad to know that since we have lived in a small shell for a long time, the "shell-mentality" has deeply permeated our beings and we cannot shake it off. But it is a great joy to receive the Buddha's wisdom that liberates us from all kinds of suffering.

Thus in the actual experience of the two powers, we experience both deep sadness and deep joy. This actual experience takes place in the third stage, "break-through." But it is possible that we talk about the two powers when we are still in the first two stages. It is possible that we talk about them using our human, dualistic wisdom. But both self-power and the Power Beyond the Self that we conceive using dualistic wisdom are deluded ideas. All the Buddhist ideas that we conceive within our ego-shells are deluded ideas that the true Power Beyond the Self will destroy when it breaks these ego-shells. When we discuss self-power or the Power Beyond the Self within the ego-shell, we do not feel any sadness or joy. The two powers are mere dualistic concepts that we are using to indulge in intellectual amusement. In talking about the two powers that way, people do not feel any joy or sadness. It is a mere idle discussion that has nothing to do with any true experience of the two powers. It is only when self-power is broken that we can know of its existence. Seeing its pettiness is a sad and shocking experience. Recognizing that pettiness is called "confession," to use a general religious term. Any authentic awakening in Buddhism is accompanied by "confession."

3. Self-power is actually the Power Beyond the Self

Then, what is self-power? It is an over-estimation of our own power. It is believing that the Power Beyond the Self is our own power.

When the shell is broken and the chick meets the mother bird, it learns that its mother has been there all the time, nurturing it. The chick realizes that what it considered its own power was actually the nurturing power of the mother bird. It was the mother bird sitting on the egg that actually enabled the chick to grow within the shell. The chick realizes its mistake in thinking that it was growing inside the shell because it was making an effort to grow. It realizes that it owes its growth entirely to the nurturing power of the mother bird.

Similarly when Shinran was on Mt. Hiei and performed his practice, he believed that he was growing spiritually all by himself. He thought he could take all the credit for his growth, for his practice. He had no insight into the power that had been supporting him. But when he met his teacher Honen, the Power Beyond the Self, and learned that many wonderful conditions, such as teachers, teachings, and Dharma friends, had been supporting him and enabling him to grow, he realized that the idea that he had his own independent power, self-power, was a total delusion. What he considered his own power was actually a greater power that existed behind his beloved ego-shell. He realized that even his own aspiration for Buddhahood was something that all his teachers were attempting to awaken in him. He came to the conclusion that there was nothing that he could claim as his own—that what he had considered his self-power was an illusion. It was actually the Power Beyond the Self.

E. Conclusion

In this essay I discussed two beginnings (or two births) on the Buddhist path. I said that we must experience both. Many people think that Buddhism is a wonderful religion. They study and practice it. But unfortunately, many Buddhists only remain in the first two stages. They experience only one beginning on the Buddhist path. They cannot leave ego-based Buddhism, “my kind of Buddhism.” It is crucially important that we move from the second stage to the third stage—that we experience a total change in our religious basis. We must be born twice like a bird. We must be born *from* the shell. We should not end our lives as unhatched eggs. We should not be complacent in the tiny shells of our religious egos.

We must have our ego-shells broken by two types of *Tariki*—by the power of our teachers’ teachings and by the power of the aspiration that comes from the depths of our beings. We must be born into the wonderful world of the Hongan, the Innermost Aspiration.

We must be born as persons of *shinjin*—as persons who can *truly* listen to the Dharma and appreciate the words of our teachers. If we can experience this second birth, we will be able to live our lives with deep joy and gratitude. That is what Shinran Shonin teaches us.

Five Points Concerning the Person of *Shinjin* That Is Realized by *Tariki*

Shuichi Maida

1. Not to speak ill of others
2. Not to accuse others
3. To be grateful
4. Not to teach others
5. To revere the working of the *Tariki*

If we can practice any one of these five points, we can easily receive *shinjin* (genuine awakening) that is realized by *Tariki* (the Power Beyond the Self). My explanation of these five points is as follow

1. Not to speak ill of others

When a person speaks ill of others, he is placing himself in a higher position. He regards himself as better than the person of whom he is speaking ill. When we criticize others, we judge ourselves to be better and more righteous than “those guys.” But as long as we have the self-affirmation that we are good and righteous, we cannot possibly receive *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*. Coming to see no good at all in ourselves is called *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*. Thus it is important to carefully examine whether you are speaking ill of others or not. If you are, you must realize that you have already become better and more righteous than the person of whom you are speaking ill.

Speaking ill of others is absolutely not a feature of a person of *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*. Whether you speak ill of others or not is a touchstone that determines if you have *shinjin*. When you become unable to speak ill of others, *shinjin* has already started to take root in you. It is a wonderful turning point when you become able to recognize the self that is speaking ill of others. Nothing is more deplorable than proudly speaking ill of others. We must recognize the deplorable nature of such an action.

If we speak ill of others, it does not reveal others’ evil alone: it also reveals our own evil. If we did not have in ourselves the same evil that we see in others, how could we speak ill of it? It is because we discover our own evil image in others that we can speak ill of others. We are actually speaking ill of ourselves. So the person who speaks ill of others is actually

confessing that he is such-and-such a person. When someone is complaining about others, look at his face and think that he is complaining about himself. You do not have to say anything to him. Just listen quietly to him and think that he is confessing he is such-and-such a person.

If someone complains, “That guy is a miser,” you can think that the complainer is a miser. If someone says, “That guy is cunning,” you may think that he is a cunning person. If you can listen quietly to his confession, that is precisely *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*.

2. Not to accuse others

The above discussion holds true concerning accusing others. The only difference between speaking ill of others and accusing others is that the former is an indirect action, but the latter is a direct action.

When someone accuses others, you may think the accuser shares the same negative quality that he is accusing others of having. Although the accuser may confidently accuse others as if he is above making a mistake, he and others are the same. When a person accuses someone of some evil and kicks him into a pit, that person will also simultaneously fall into the very same pit. The angry face of the person who accuses others is the face of a suffering person. On his own he is taking upon himself the trouble of falling into suffering. What hard work he is doing! Thus when you see a person accusing others, just look at his angry face and consider him a person who is suffering.

In the tenth article of the *Seventeen-Article Constitution*, Prince Shotoku says, “Even if others get angry, reflect upon yourself and fear that you are in the wrong.” Here Shotoku does not say that we should rebut the person who accuses us. He says that we should just quietly listen to him. We do not have to do anything. Just quietly watch the suffering of the scolding person. What can we say to refute him? The accuser wishes to be in a higher position. But as long as he thinks himself to be in a higher position, he cannot have *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*.

If we are able to see the self as the most useless rubbish, the total opposite of the self that is capable of accusing others, we have *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*. Where, apart from knowing the meaninglessness of our being, can we have *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*? If you feel like accusing others, you should realize that you are assuming a higher position and that you are far away from *shinjin*. The moment when you are about to accuse others is the crucial moment that determines whether you will receive *shinjin* or not.

3. To be grateful

If we can sincerely think about our indebtedness to others, we are already a person of *shinjin*. The person who accuses others or speaks ill of them has never even dreamed about his indebtedness to them. The person whose self-infatuation has not been destroyed cannot think about his indebtedness to others.

The person who has no feeling of indebtedness to others thinks only about the favors he has done for others. He feels that others are indebted to him. He never even dreams that he is the one who is indebted to them—that others have been doing so much for him. This is the miserable way the person without *shinjin* is living. If you can think only about your indebtedness to others, without accusing others and without expecting others to remember their indebtedness to you, you are obviously a person of *shinjin*.

4. Not to teach others

If a person forgets about the idea that he is teaching others, it is another obvious sign that he has *shinjin*. Rev. Manshi Kiyozawa taught Rev. Haya Akegarasu: “Never preach! If a desire to preach arises in you, you better put a stone in your mouth.” Rev. Akegarasu followed this instruction throughout his life. It is truly pathetic and lacking in introspection when people put themselves forward as a teacher. There is no greater conceit and self-infatuation than the idea that one has taught something to others. The person who can reflect upon himself a bit does not intend to teach others. As long as a person has a position as a teacher, he is totally unconnected with *shinjin*. In that sense, schoolteachers are far removed from *shinjin*. Schoolteacher is a very unfortunate occupation. The desire to teach is a direct manifestation of conceit. The total loss of conceit is simultaneously the realization of *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*. This is not complicated at all. Throw away your teacher mentality. If you are able to throw it away, you have *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*.

By following this, the way to *shinjin* is quite easy. If you can practice any one of the above four points, that is good enough. Please practice any one of them. You will immediately receive *shinjin* and experience liberation.

Shinjin that is realized by *Tariki* means inadvertently awakening to what you really are. You have only to awaken inadvertently to the wretched reality of the self. That’s all. You who have so far been looking at others inadvertently come to turn your attention to yourself and awaken to what you really are. This sudden turning round is called *shinjin* that is realized by

Tariki. Apart from this, there is no *shinjin* anywhere. If a person who has so far been looking at others and the world, and has been criticizing and accusing others inadvertently starts to reflect upon the self that is criticizing and complaining and awoken to what it truly is, that's good enough. If he discovers the wretched self, that's good enough.

5. To revere the working of *Tariki*

The following statement of Rev. Haya Akegarasu's contains a profound meaning that I cannot fully appreciate:

Whatever a person who has the right understanding does is all right. But whatever a person who does not have the right understanding does is not all right.

(Haya Akegarasu, *Declaration of An Independent Person*)

Here "a person who has the right understanding" is a person who has received *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*, the Power Beyond the Self. Everything he says or does is the working of the Tathagata, of universal truth. Through *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*, *Tariki* becomes the person and works through him. This is the secret of conversion from reliance on self-power to reliance on *Tariki*. We cannot begin to fathom its depth.

Further, "a person who does not have the right understanding" is a person who is infatuated with his self-power. He thinks that he has to do everything himself. He has difficulties in his life because he believes that he must figure out the right way and carry it out all by himself. Rev. Akegarasu says that everything such a person does with much struggle and suffering is "not all right"—that it is a mistake. All his actions are vain and meaningless. What is the cause of his miserable mistakes? It is his *calculative thinking*. Deciding what to do on the basis of one's calculative thinking is called self-power. The cause of all his mistakes is calculative thinking.

Then, what is the cause of right actions? It is *actional intuition* [a term coined by Dr. Kitaro Nishida]. Everything other than actional intuition is erroneous. In that sense, the Tathagata is a person of intuition—a person who relies only on intuition. Here intuition does not refer to a perspective or viewpoint. It specifically refers to *actional intuition*. The definition of actional intuition [by Dr. Nishida] is: "One acts by seeing and one sees by acting. Seeing is acting and acting is seeing."

Jesus was truly a man of actional intuition. He said, "Just say yes, yes, or no, no. The other things you say come from the devil." Here his expression "come from the devil" means "come from human calculative thinking." Jesus identified self-power as "the devil." Actions done through "saying yes, yes, or no, no" are actions that are done with actional intuition—actions done following the universal flow of life.

Thus, we can rephrase the above statement of Rev. Akegarasu this way:

Whatever a person who lives actional intuition does is all right. But whatever a person who relies on calculative thinking does is not all right.

Another statement of Jesus' talks about the life of actional intuition:

Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own troubles be sufficient for the day.

Here "be anxious about" refers to self-power. Seen this way, Jesus was precisely a Tathagata. Although Rev. Ryojin Soga [a modern Shin Buddhist scholar] criticizes Christianity, I have no doubt that Jesus was a Tathagata when I read Jesus' other words in the Bible. Being caught up in a sectarian prejudice as a Shin follower, Rev. Soga unfortunately cannot appreciate the truth that Jesus taught. How sad, miserable, pathetic, and narrow-minded it is that he, being hampered by his sectarian mentality, cannot hear such brilliant words of Jesus, a Tathagata! The above words of Jesus and the following words are found in the famous Sermon on the Mount:

Do not be worried about the food and drink you need to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. After all, isn't life worth more than food?...Look at the birds flying around: they do not plant seeds, gather a harvest...not even Solomon, as rich as he was, had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers...So do not start worrying: "Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes?"... Instead, give first place to his kingdom and to what he requires, and he will provide you with all these other things.

Here "Give first place to his kingdom and to what he requires" means "Intuit truth." Jesus is telling us to live the universal flow of life itself through intuition. This is actional intuition. Apart from following the working of the universal flow of life, there is nothing to be called *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*. Jesus was precisely a man of *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*. The person who cannot hear the *nembutsu*, *Namu-Amida-Butsu* [a calling voice, saying, "Come to Limitless Light and Limitless Life!"], of Jesus in this teaching is an unfortunate person. Such a person is rather a foolish person. The only thing necessary for us to do is to intuit the

universal flow of life. Could we find any other statement that describes the universal flow of life more concretely than this sermon by Jesus?

The most important thing that is necessary for us is only *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*. If we do not have this, everything we do is no good. It is heading in the wrong direction. And the terrible thing about this is that suffering always exists in the wrong direction. That is, suffering is the punishment of a person who is attached to self-power. We must be liberated from this punishment and move toward a spiritual realm where we can live our lives in an easy, relaxed, and delightful way.

The person who relies on self-power is not liberated. Such a person lives a miserable and suffering-filled life. No one else is torturing him; he is torturing himself. Unfortunately, he is firmly convinced that there is no alternative to this suffering-filled way of living. He has only to abandon his calculative thinking! If he simply stands on actional intuition, everything will be all right. But this transition is not easy at all. That is why Shinran said, “[Among all difficult things] *shin* (genuine awakening) is the most difficult.”

Although Rev. Akegarasu’s statement above is simple, it fully describes the secret of the spiritual turn round that enables us to acquire *shin*. *Shin* cannot exist anywhere else. Rev. Akegarasu’s words explain the process by which we can acquire *shin*. We must abandon the folly of torturing ourselves and enter into a relaxed, delightful, and cheerful spiritual world.

The person who is suffering in this world is precisely a person of such folly. His suffering reveals nothing but the fact that he is a man of self-power. Self-power tortures and agonizes him. This is the pathetic reality of the person who relies on self-power. We cannot help desiring for him to experience a spiritual turn round and acquire *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki*. The Innermost Aspiration (*Hongan*) of Amida is this desire directed to this person, which comes from the ultimate truth, the Tathagata.

The person of self-power cannot appreciate the deep love and compassion that others are giving him. He cannot have a sense of indebtedness. Love and compassion are *Tariki* itself. Without our actions that are based on self-power, everything is being fulfilled through love and compassion. All other people are carrying it out for us. There is no need for us to strive to accomplish a thing. Just keep receiving with a grateful heart the beneficence that others are giving us. We are not so much imperfect as completely incompetent. Because we are totally incompetent, *Tariki* is fulfilling all things for us. Without doing anything, we have only to selflessly revere the fact that the universal flow of life is accomplishing all things. The only thing we can do is to praise the working of the universal flow of life.

Having heard what I have just said, people may ask me, “Don’t we do anything at all?” The answer is “No.” We take actions following the dictate of the working of the universal flow of life. This is called “no action.” “Although one does not do anything, everything is being done” is the meaning of “no action.” Although one does not intend to do anything, everything is being done. The more imperfect, powerless, and incompetent we become, the more manifest the free and dynamic working of the universal flow of life becomes. We have only to revere the magnanimous working of the universal flow of life. When we, without adding any of our self-efforts, entrust ourselves to the working of the universal flow and follow it, every desire we have is fulfilled. This inconceivable fact is called love and compassion, to which we feel indebted. When we selflessly revere the working of the universal flow of life, we sense deep love and compassion, to which we feel deeply indebted. Having the sense of indebtedness and attaining *shinjin* that is realized by *Tariki* are one and the same.

(Written 8/11, 1966. *Complete Works of Shuichi Maida*, VI, 720-724)

Notes:

We will hold the Maida Center summer retreat July 24 (Fri.) – 26 (Sun.), 2015, at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley. The theme of the retreat is “The Innermost Aspiration as the Basis of Shinran’s Teaching: Introduction to the *Kyogyoshinsho*.” The two speakers will be Dr. Nobuo Haneda and Rev. Patti H. Nakai. For the information and the registration form, see the last page of this newsletter.

We want to express our deepest gratitude to the following individuals:

Mr. and Mrs. Roy Nakahara for creating DVDs and CDs of Dr. Haneda’s lectures.

Mr. Donald Bender, Mr. Steve Kaufman, and Mr. Paul Vielle for valuable suggestions concerning the two articles in this newsletter.

DVD sets of the Maida Center summer retreats are now available. Each set is \$50 including handling/postage. Other DVD sets and CD sets of Dr. Haneda’s lectures are available.

Every Saturday (2:00 – 5:00 pm) we hold a study class at the Maida Center. We are now studying Shinran’s *Shoshin-ge*. Everyone is welcome to attend. (T.H.)

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