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- (a) Kawai Kanjuro
- (b) Genza + Ox

Story - Kawai Kanjuro
puppeteer

= life of Amida Buddha
Story - Genza + Ox.
"Other power"

Jesus is coming soon

Buddha is already here

(a) Kawai Kanjuro

constantly receiving the memorial blessings of the eternal Buddha (praise)

I was still studying
While in Japan, during our spare time on weekends and semester breaks, ^{my wife used to} ~~my wife~~ and I visited temples and shrines in Kyoto

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and Nara/which deepened our understanding of religion and culture in Japan. We also visited art galleries and craft centers and flea markets/to look for bargains. On one of these excursions/we were introduced to the House of Kawai Kanjiro, the potter. Some of you may have heard of him,/for Kawai Kanjiro is the famous ceramist/ noted for his innovative and natural style of creations. He died in 1966 at the age of 76 years,/but while he was alive/his personality, just as much as his ceramic creations,/attracted many people. He was described as being "humble and compassionate"/and yet at the same time bold in his creations/and ^{was} "abounding with the freshness of a child."

and was an excellent wood carver and a poet as well. Religion-wise, he was not affiliated with any organization/ but he was familiar with Zen teachings.

What made me realize that Kawai Kanjiro was an "authentic person"/was that as talented as he was,/he acknowledged that he along was not responsible for his creations. In a little booklet written about him by Yoshiko Uchida who studied with him/it said that the important thing for him was ^{to} know that there is a force bigger than himself/that he and this force are one/and that through this force he is able to work and create things of beauty in this world^{ly}.

To me this is generally speaking/a description of the workings of Amida Buddha within us. To paraphrase the scriptures/it may be said that through the Vow of the Transcendent ^{other} Power/we are in Oneness with Amida Buddha/who is working with us, for us and through us. Kawai Kanjiro called this force/"this unknown self"/and

said that this self "is revealed through the work of the hands and the body/and is that unconscious element in every person that prods him on to new achievements". In other Buddhist sects this force may be called the Larger Self, but in Pure Land Schools, it is called the "Other Power", Tariki, and it refers to the Power in the Universe who reaches down to us/compassionately and unconditionally.

Shinran Shonin called the Other Power "Fukashi no ko," the light that is inconceivable or unexplainable.

This is the hyorai daihi no ondoku

Kawai Kanjiro added, "It is ultimately faith that lies at the bottom of all my work. We do not work alone. We are never working alone." And in one of his poems he asked, "who is moving this hand of mine?" Although he was talking about his life as an artist, I believe the ideas are the same as in Jodo Shinshu.

He had a great sense of oneness with the other power.

Those who believe in and rely on the Other Power/the greater Power/their performance is maximized/their life is maximized. But more basically/one is able to accept oneself as he or she is, because of the Other Power/regardless of the outcome of his performance.

Genza 80X

~~Kawai Kanjiro came to the realization that a greater force was working through his creations of ceramics and woodcarving.~~

~~In the case of Genza, the myokonin of Tottori Prefecture, his realization of the workings of a greater force came through his hauling~~

realized his realization of work of

firewood from the mountain to his home. Myokonin, by the way, means/a wondrously excellent devotee/as symbolized by a white lotus blossom. Genza was a farmer who was told by his father at his death bed/"when I die, put your faith and trust in Oyasama/the Other Power who is inconceivable, unexplainable. Thereafter, although Genza attended temple services regularly, he could not

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quite understand what his father means by "trust in oyasama." One day as usual he went up into the mountains with his ox to gather firewood. As he was loading the usual six bundles of firewood upon the back of the ox he suddenly came to the realization that like the ox that carries the heavy burden of the firewood Amida Buddha is constantly carrying the heavy burden of our karmic passions. He came to understand that "Amida Buddha is always with us extending his love and compassion to us. Because as human beings we are constantly burdened with problems and worries ^{not to mention our burdens} Amida ^{Buddha} is a constant companion ^{who} takes away the burdens from our shoulders, i.e., ^{takes away our negative karma.}

It should be noted that ^{for Genza, his religious} ~~practice religious austerities in the formal sense,~~ practice was ^{his} ~~then~~ day to day life through which ^{he} ~~they~~ gained awareness of spiritual truths. ^{He} became aware of ^{his} oneness with the Other Power. That is in accordance with Jodo Shinshu teachings which prescribe not the way of sages or holy men but the way of the common people who have a family to look after and have a living to earn.

The reality of the Other Power as being within our heart the idea that we are not alone is explained by Shinran as a merging of a river with the ocean. In his Shozomatsu Wasan (Hymns of the Last Age) Shinran states:

Like rivers entering the vast ocean,
The foolish minds of good and evil,
Return to Amida's Vow of Wisdom,
As they become one with the heart
of Great Compassion.

7. When we have faith, that is when we joyfully accept Shinjin, which is Amida's true heart, the small self/which is part of this physical, transient world/^{within our hearts,} becomes one with the eternal/transcendent Other Power. We are like rivers, whether clean and pure/or dirty and ^{dark}/we all flow into the ocean/and take on the one taste of the sea.

~~situation in Oahu for example, the pure spring water that flows out of the waterless farm in Aiea/as well as the polluted and "fragrant" Kapalama Canal/in which fish caught there are probably unsafe for eating/are both transformed into one taste when they flow into the ocean. The spring water and polluted water/have undergone physical change as they mix in with the sea water/but chemically,~~

In the same way/Amida's heart is so large, His embrace so wide that ^{He} can take in anyone regardless of his social status,/spiritual development or the condition of his moral strength. Amida's power is so great/that it can dilute any poison within our system/and make it good again.

And the good is realized without nullifying evil. In other words, while we are still in possession of this physical body/we continue to generate negative vibrations//but once we accept Shinjin/the true and sincere heart of Amida within our heart/we come to realize that our negativities/are constantly being converted to highest good by Amida. And, what is interesting here is that while the two--myself and Amida/are in a state of oneness/we are also separate and distinct from each other. That is, we still retain our uniqueness.

This Oneness with the transcendent/which is established while we are living/continues on to eternity after death. Other Buddhist sects teach that at the moment of death/Amida Buddha and his retinue /will come to greet and accompany the deceased

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to the Pure Land. However, as mentioned earlier, ^{Shinran} Shinran taught us that Amida ^{Buddha} is already here with us/surrounding us with his compassion. Have you seen the humorous cartoon in the newspaper? There's a church with a sign saying, "^{Jesus} is coming soon." And, walking on the sidewalk/is a little man carrying a sign, "Buddha here already." This is especially true for our Shin Sect, as Shinran was able to ^{understand} ~~fathom~~ ^{of} the depth the Compassion of Amida Buddha and realized that while we are still alive/we are already in the embrace of Amida in a state of Oneness. This condition is called "Sesshu Fusha", embraced and never ^{to be} abandoned/and is synonymous with the word "faith." In Jodo Shinshu, faith does not refer to belief, but is the gift of the true and sincere heart of Amida Buddha/which is given to human kind unconditionally. *Faith for us means to entrust, to become one with Amida Buddha. The Buddha is here already.*

In the first chapter of the Tannisho, the 700 year old religious classic/it is written, "When the thought of saying the Nembutsu/emerges decisively from within/having entrusted ourselves/to the inconceivable power of Amida's Vow which saves us/enabling us to be born in the Pure Land/in that very moment/we receive the ultimate benefit/of being grasped never to be abandoned." While we are living/when we entrust ourselves to the Other Power/we will find that Amida Buddha has already embraced us/and we are already recipients/of Amida's blessings and love. We are already one with Amida. The Buddha is here already. ^{Not coming soon.} Like Kawai Kanjiro/let us "makasu", or entrust ourselves to the Greater Power/and make the entrusting alive within our lives. And like Genza, the myokonin,/let us find the reality of the love and compassion of Amida/in our daily life's experience. Kawai Kanjiro marveled in the knowledge of a

force greater than himself/and said, "we do not work alone". Genza, on the other hand/came to the remarkable realization/that like the ox carrying firewood/Amida is always lightening the burdens we carry.

For Shinran/"Sesshu Fusha" or being grasped never to be abandoned by Amida Buddha/means that one is settled in the stage of non retrogression/i.e., there is no turning back. In this stage/one is assured of never reverting to the stage of aimless wandering/ but is destined for birth in the Pure Land. Shinran explained that this idea is ^{the same as the} settling of the diamond-like Shinjin. He said it was a stage equal to/the supreme enlightenment. In other words, Shinran gave top priority in importance/to understanding "Sesshu Fusha", being grasped never to be abandoned. However, he said that establishing oneness with Amida Buddha/cannot be achieved by one's self effort/ but can only be ^{a gift from} the Other Power.

So at this Hoonko special service, let us remember
we too, must make the reality of our Oneness with Amida Buddha come alive in our lives. If we have burdens too heavy to carry/pass them over to ^{Buddha} Amida. And *regardless of what we do* let us remember that the Other Power is flowing through our bodies/to strengthen us, enliven us, and to make us more loving and compassionate people. In closing, I would like to again quote Shinran Shonin:

"Like rivers entering the vast ocean
The foolish minds of good and evil
Return to Amida's Vow of wisdom
As they become one with the heart of Great Compassion."
NAMU AMIDA BUTSU.