

## A Surprise Encounter

Part Seven of a Nine Part Series by Reverend Shindo Nishiyama

Buddha and Shindo are sitting in Jikoen temple together.

Shindo: Buddha, thank you very much for speaking to my question: What happens when we die? Your answer was clear. I appreciate it very much!

Buddha: Great! I hope that my words are able to bring peace and ease your anxiety.

Shindo: Yes, I understood that I should accept and understand that all things in this world are impermanent. Because we don't realize or accept that aging, sickness, and death are inescapable parts of our lives, our anxiety and doubt continue. Accepting, understanding, and awareness of this truth are key to becoming "An Awakened One."

Buddha: Good!

Shindo: So, the Dharma teaches us to understand and accept that we are born, we live, and we end in the gentle grasp of Universal and Unconditional Love. You call this love, "The Infinite Life and Light of Amida Buddha." Amida Buddha embraces us with his Love, Compassion, and Wisdom through his name, "Namo Amida Butsu."

Buddha: Yes, Shindo. Namo Amida Butsu is Amida Buddha's Infinite Wisdom and Compassion gently surrounding and protecting all living beings without any distinction between good and bad, men and women, high and low, big and small, rich and poor, or color of skin. This Unconditional Compassion does not discriminate; it touches all life. Because we lack right understanding and acceptance of the reality of our lives just as it is, our suffering continues and we are not awakened.

Shindo: I see. Namo Amida Butsu is Amida Buddha's caring spirit in my life, right? It is especially for me, because I am always doubting and I cannot see the reality of Amida Buddha's Wisdom and Compassion.

Buddha: Shindo, Buddhism is not about believing or trusting. Buddhism is listening, understanding, and receiving.

Shindo: Oh, you are saying that Buddhism is not believing or trusting in your teachings? Why?

Buddha: Believing or trusting in a thing is unstable. Your believing mind is impermanent and always changing according to conditions in your life. It is like our love. We like to believe our love is pure. But it is not. It is not stable due to our selfish ego and judgmental mind. Our mind and thus our love is always changing and doubting because we are self-centered and ignorant. Thus, Buddhism is not belief or trust; Buddhism is listening, accepting, and awakening. Buddhism is understanding and receiving the Buddha Dharma which is working in your daily life. "Amida Buddha's Working" means your whole life, just as you are, is lived within the loving shelter of pure and unconditional compassion and you are never abandoned. You don't need to pray to the Buddha, instead, you only need to receive the Dharma to become an Awakened One. Amida Buddha gave his name for us to recite, "Namo Amida Butsu," to be awakened to his embrace.

Shindo: Now I understand that Buddhism does not ask us to believe. It asks us to receive by listening to the Buddha Dharma and becoming an Awakened One! Yes, my trusting mind or believing mind are always changing due to my ego and ignorance. I don't have a perfect mind for believing and trusting. Your guidance has helped me to understand Buddhism!

Buddha: Good! Your awareness is most important to live fully until the last day of your life. You are not alone because Amida Buddha's Vow is real and true and surrounds you! Namo Amida Butsu is for you, a gift of Amida Buddha's Infinite Life and Light. Please understand that you

are born, you live, and you die in Namu Amida Butsu, Amida's caring embrace.

Shindo: I see. The Nembutsu (Namu Amida Butsu) is Amida Buddha caring and embracing me, right?

Buddha: Yes, right. By the way, Shindo, I will be leaving soon from Hawaii for sharing the Dharma to the future generations. Thank you so much for your hospitality and kindness during my stay. I have had a very good time with Hawaiian breezes and sun shine! And I really enjoyed Zippy's "Loco Moco!"

Shindo: Oh, no problem! I am so sad you will leave soon but I understand that there is beginning and ending and meeting and departing always. Buddha, I would like to share with you the old Japanese proverb, "ICHIGO ICHIE." It means: A very precious meeting once in our lifetime. Meeting with you in Hawaii was a very precious gift for me! I understand that your work never ends, and you need to continue to share the Buddha Dharma with future generations!

Buddha: Thank you so much for your understanding. I shall never forget you and your family. Especially your dog, Happy! She is so friendly and funny! She came to my room many times and we became friends!

Shindo: Oh, great! Yes, Happy always enjoys meeting people, especially you, Buddha!

Buddha: Shindo, please keep listening to the Dharma for a more meaningful and peaceful life! The Dharma is always living with you!

Shindo: Yes, I will but I want you to stay so I can receive more guidance. I will make a special Vegetable Curry with rice for you so can you stay a few more days. Buddha, you cannot miss my special curry!

Buddha: Oh, special curry? Sounds delicious! Well, *Shikataganai*. I love curry; I will stay a little longer!

Shindo: Oh, my Buddha! I am so happy! Thank you so much!!!

End of Part Seven