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LOVE AND RELIGION

In the Teachings of the Buddha, the supreme noble emotion is defined as Metta or Maha-Karuna, or Dai-Hi, translated into the language of Christian origin as compassion. Although the people of the West call God “Love”, they also use the same term to describe the human passions, however impure or exhausting they might be.

Human love can't be at the same time synonymous with the Love of God, or God's Love for the people. Also the human ability to feel compassion even for all the possible living beings doesn't necessarily lead to any conclusion or action. In Buddhism such a spontaneous response of help is the main characteristic and a driving force of Maha-Karuna.

A human being is not perfect; therefore human language doesn't carry proper names for all the possible aspects of the eternally manifesting Life. Life is Energy. Emotions could be compared to fuels, as they considerably influence the rhythm of our life. Emotions could also be compared to fire. Fire is an element, which keeps us warm and provides us with light or enables us to cook food. Yet it can also burn us and entirely destroy all our possessions.

Everything depends on the terms of our relationship with fire. In fact, our attitude towards the emotions, that we experience, affects their purpose and the consequences they may bring about. Anger, hatred and fear are generally perceived as negative feelings as they can burn out and deprive our minds of joy and contentment. Such negative feelings can also push us to take on some negative and dangerous actions due to which we could suffer not only mentally, but physically as well.

At the same time, a feeling of controlled anger can be very constructive, encouraging us to take on actions that could improve our situation and may eliminate our pain and suffering. Also if instead of hating our life and other beings we begin to dislike our “bonno” (unfortunate karma), or in other words, if we become fed up with our own faults, we may consequently desire a change: our transformation into a better, fully satisfying state called the Buddha. This insight into the human nature (our nature) is a vital step on our path of spiritual development, as it comes from complete lack of self-adoration. As a result of this insight, we may develop a fear of the uncountable and agonizing conditions we had managed to collect during the immeasurable past (Shinran's: “Only hell is my destiny!”).

In such case, we may give up ourselves and let Amida transform our mind into courageous and confident one (on “the road to final emancipation from the everlasting cycle of birth and death”). We may then finally notice the true and positive effect that our fear had on our life.

The similar case may happen to our love.

The feelings that we call “love” might transmute us into demons that may try to possess our beloved person and eventually destroy him/her. We may also from love learn to respect the other person and to consider his/her needs like ours, or even to put that person’s happiness before ours. Most people’s love oscillates between the two extremes mentioned above.

A practicing Buddhist knows that his/her unstable feelings should undergo a transformation into virtuous aspects of the mind. Different Buddhist traditions present the Path, on which such a transformation takes place.

Jodo Shinshu stands at the position of Shinran Shonin, strongly stating that no individual can achieve the state of Buddha solely by himself/herself. No ego is crazy enough to commit suicide. The transformation into Buddha is only possible via Buddha’s influence on the ready to take on such a transformation person.

Namo Amida Butsu, which itself is the Energy of Buddha, takes on the task of “tuning” our minds to Buddha’s frequency (performs a merit transfer), the task of making us change. If we want to control this process, we develop the Jiriki attitude and hinder the effect of the Name on our mind (by our own narrow-mindedness). That way we limit our metamorphosis into the state of Buddha. All practices described as Jiriki, or in other words those performed via our own means, have this disadvantage. The one, who wants to control and understand the entire process before it even begins to take place in his mind, believes that this way he/she shall develop safely. Yet the same individual doesn’t take into consideration that he/she is extremely limited. Such a man is attached both emotionally and intellectually to his/her ideas, his/her imagination, and he/she is afraid to part from them.

The mind of a human being compared to the mind of Buddha is like a drop of water meeting an immense ocean on the beach. The ocean can absorb the drop, making it an inseparable, integral part of the ocean. On the other hand, the drop “looking” at the ocean from the beach can’t grasp or embrace the entire ocean.

However, this doesn’t eliminate the value of the Jiriki practices, which are a necessary introduction. They are the driving-force behind the drop’s decision to come to this beach and see this ocean. They are the ones to convince the drop to evaluate its limited nature and trustfully give itself up to the ocean. The mind, like the drop of water, which has asked the ocean waves to take it with, still has the consciousness of a “droplet” but, at the same time, is joyfully merging with the “ocean.” Such a mind is the mind of the genuine shinjin and of irreversible satori; a mind that is transformed into Amida – the Joyful State of Sambhogakaya.

When such a mind is in love, it is able to understand the other person. In every single fault of his/her character, it sees a future virtue, while each virtue is treasured like a priceless gem. Such a mind doesn’t try to judge, fight or dominate. Instead, it would like to realize its darling’s dreams and give him/her enough space to spread the so-called wings. Such a mind humbly serves with care instead of trying to rise above the partner. Its happiness just doesn’t exist without its partner’s happiness and well being.

This kind of real love requires a lot of spiritual maturity. Most of us are afraid of entirely opening up to another person. Most of us are also afraid of getting hurt, dis-



appointed, dominated or used. Yet a mind that truly experiences shinjin isn't afraid. It is dominated by Amida and mustn't fear any other domination. It is confident, since it feels inside the greatness and the calmness of the "ocean". Such a mind is able to be totally open up to love that is unconditional, liberating and joyful. Such love doesn't violate the partner, doesn't constrain, humiliate and doesn't need to prove anything. It is caring, peaceful, kind, helpful, understanding and thankful. It is joy in itself, no matter the cir-

cumstances under which it is experienced.

Question: Many of us would like to experience such love, but it is difficult to get a shinjin mind and quite often it is quite difficult to find the right partner. What are we supposed to do with our sexual tensions and with loneliness when we don't have the right partner?

Answer: In Buddhism, there is no single answer to such a question. It is a very individual matter. A lot depends on our conditions, personality and on how we manage with our feelings. In a religious state of mind every sexual act is a symbol of Enlightenment. It is the symbol of the union of wisdom and compassion, action and space— it is a sacral experience. It is something that should uplift us spiritually.

Tariki Nembutsu is an act of tantric union of the human mind with Amida. The overwhelming openness of Amida given to a human consequently enables him to fearlessly open up to his partner. The supreme tantra develops quite spontaneously then.

Nobody says that genuine love is easy. Love is not any kind of a service or responsibility like house keeping or bread-winning. Such are the cultural functions of society which right now are beginning to change. They dictate a special social order that we may accept or not. I personally believe that Buddhist practitioners don't have to succumb or adapt to such archaic social systems. Not everyone must get married or have children. Amida enables us to be happy no matter the circumstances. This is genuine freedom and true happiness. This is how I see it.