

## Learning the Buddha's Great Compassion

by Rev. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki (Sensei)

**"How fortunate!" - Joy to encounter the Dharma -**

*How fortunate it is that I, Shaku no Shinran, but an old, simple-hearted ignorance, should come across the sacred texts from India and Central Asia and their commentaries by the teachers of China and Japan! It is so difficult to have access to them, and I now have them. It is rare to listen to this message, and I now have heard it!* (Preface of "Kyogyoshinsho" by Shinran Shonin, translated by D.T. Suzuki)

True joy and happiness is something that we strive for in our lives. We, Buddhists find it in the teaching of the Buddha. As we live the Dharma-centered life, we experience the happiness and joy which embrace all aspects of life, including unpleasant and painful experiences. No matter how hard life is, there is still a sense of appreciation and happiness to the life encountering the Buddha-Dharma, or the Nembutsu teaching in our tradition.

The quotation above "How fortunate it is that I." is the expression by Shinran Shonin who appreciates the masters and teachers from India, China and Japan for their teachings which brought a true contentment and joy to him. We see his humble and sincere gratitude to the Buddha-Dharma in the statement. Encountering the Nembutsu-Dharma is to meet all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, masters, teachers and fellow practitioners of the Dharma, beyond time and space.

The wisteria is the symbol of Jodoshinshu Buddhism which Shinran Shonin (1173-1262) founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Japan. The wisteria is a unique flower, because it flowers down as it grows. The more we learn and the more we practice, our heads become lower and we become more sincere and humble. Instead of how much I know, we realize how much we don't know of life. Honen Shonin, Master Shinran's teacher, says, "In the paths of the Pure Land, we attain the birth (enlightenment) by becoming ignorant and foolish."

The Buddha teaches us to become awakened to our real conditions which is deluded by anguish such as greed, anger and self-centered ignorance. (Rely on yourself! Or Know yourself!) He also teaches us that there is a way to overcome delusion and enter the world of Enlightenment. (Rely on the Dharma! Be aware of the Dharma!) So, becoming ignorant and foolish means to be deeply aware of our own karma, which makes us aware of the way of the Nembutsu, based on the profound Wisdom and boundless Compassion of Amida Buddha. The clear mirror of the teaching can show you what we truly are. We are grateful for the mirror-like teachings of the Buddha which has been transformed to the present here today.

*Here I am breathing in the park.*

*Open-sky is inviting me to go beyond the*

*World of delusion that I create with my selfish mind.*

*Fire of anguish burns under my feet,*

*Ouch, ouch, ouch !*

*Relax and calm down.!*

*There is a path somewhere*

*Unnoticed before searching, maybe.*

*Namo-amidabu reaches to my mindful heart.*

*As if the sounds of voice echo in the mountains.*

*Time is now and space is here to*

*Enter the forest of the Dharma with joy ! (by Shaku Kenjitsu)*