

TADAIMA - OKAERINASAI

Most Issei and older Nisei grew up having to say "Tadaima – I'm home" when returning home. And whoever was at home would reply "Okaerinasai – welcome home". Growing up Sansei, I did not say "tadaima" and did not hear "okaeri". So when I went to Kyoto to study and lived in a dormitory, I was told to say "tadaima", which I resisted by saying "Why should I say I'm home when you can see me home?" The reply was "You're in Japan, just say it." and being in Kyoto, the reply was "okaeriyasu". After a few weeks I said it as a matter of course and never thought about it again – until recently.

In Jodoshinshu, being born in the Pure Land is referred to as returning to one's original home. And since reality is always in the present, ever-changing moment, he who can be in the present-moment is in his original home. "Tadaima" is made up of two characters; the character for "tada" meaning "just," and the character for "ima" meaning "now". So "tadaima" which is used to mean "I am home" literally means "just now". "okaerinasai" or "Okaeriyasu" means "welcome home" or "well returning." Think of it.

We missed out in this custom which reminds us on a daily basis of the definition of reality. To be in the ever-changing now is to be deeply and profoundly at home. Buddhist practice then is how to understand the difficulty in or what obstructs our ability to be in the "just now."

For Jodoshinshu, we are not trying to be in control, we are not trying to grasp awakening. We are not trying to be happy by making things go our way. We are trying to see that we are indeed always trying to be in control of things, always seeking to be like others, wanting this and wanting that. When we get what we want, we are happy. When we don't get what we want we are unhappy and blame it on others, like spoiled brats.

Jodoshinshu wants us to see that this is so, and to relax, to let go long enough so that what is really going on can make itself known to us. When we experience this truth, we experience Kangi, the "joy" of returning home. Kangi is a special Buddhist term which means that sense of well-being that comes from encountering the truth of one's self, the truth about one's dark,

self-centered side. When we see our dark side for what it is, we do not cling to it as much as when we were unaware of it. And it is then, that the truth and beauty of life bursts in upon us. Truth and Beauty or Wisdom and Compassion, to use the Buddhist terminology, is what reality is composed of – and this reality is called Amida Buddha. Amida Buddha is not a thing or conscious being, but the name given to the "workings of true reality – shinjitsu no hataraki".

The objective is not to try to catch the truth, but to give in and let the truth catch you. Trying to do it yourself is using your ego-self, on the terms of the ego-self – the very thing that blocks out the truth. Buddhism is not a believing in something to acquire something, it is becoming aware of what you already are, or perhaps more accurately, becoming aware of what you already are-ing. Tadaima, Okaeriyasu.

Gassho,

Rev. Maa