

New Point of View

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I once had an opportunity to go to a small art gallery in Lihue. It is small, but many nice pictures were displayed. Those pictures were painted on Kauai by several artists.

If you draw a picture of Kauai, what kind of subject matter do you choose? On Kauai, there are different nice landscapes, such as Wailua River, Waimea Canyon, Napali Coast, etc. Actually, the pictures of those places were displayed in the gallery. Interestingly, subject matter is totally different depending on artists. One artist drew only landscapes on Kauai. Another artist only flowers. The other artist only wild chickens. There were pictures of big, small, and colorful chickens. I was surprised at the variety and thought that those pictures are also peculiar to this island. The pictures made me notice that each of them has different point of view. All the artists painted on the same island, but they looked at different things.

Sakyamuni Buddha said: "Just as a picture is drawn by an artist, surroundings are created by the activities of mind." In this passages, the activities of mind are compared with painting. Artists usually draw a picture after focusing subject matter. Likewise, we recognize reality after our mind focus something.

In our lives, we encounter different kinds of event. If everything works out as we wish, we would feel comfortable. However, we sometimes encounter unfavorable situations that we don't want to have. In that case, we might think, "Why do I have misfortunes?" or "I'm an unlucky person." It happens because our minds tend to separate good or bad, advantage or disadvantage, depending on our limited viewpoint. In addition, it would cause a suffering. Buddhism teaches us that we tend to see things in this way, because of our self-centered viewpoint or "Gashu". It would be very difficult to be free from our self-centered viewpoint, even if we understand this matter intellectually. Since we encounter various sufferings in our lives, Amida Buddha is always working with his wisdom and compassion to save all of us without fail. Shinran Shonin said: When we say "Namo Amida Butsu", which surpasses all virtues, our heavy obstructions of evil --past, present and future-- are all unfailingly transformed, becoming light.

(Hymns of the Pure Land Masters: Collected Works of Shinran, p. 352)

If we have only self-centered viewpoint, it would be difficult to accept unfavorable events. However, if we become aware that each thing is an event under Amida Buddha's compassion, we would be free from our self-centered mind and firmly live through our lives. Through listening to the guidance of Amida Buddha, entrusting our heart to Amida Buddha and reciting the Nembutsu, our self-centered point of view would be transformed into a new point of view.

Looking at the pictures of Kauai, I remembered that we would be able to see different views even in the same situation. Let us live our daily lives, listening to the teaching and reciting the Nembutsu.

Namo Amida Butsu.