

*"Little understanding – great pride
Great understanding – little pride"
- Tibetan Proverb*

This alone would qualify the Tibetans as Buddhists. The ego-self; puffed-up, preening, and proud, is the source of almost all of the world's woes. In fighting terror we become terrorists; in our openness we permit evil; in our strictness we stifle liberality; in helping, we get in the way; in leaving things alone, we neglect them; in thinking, we don't listen; in listening, we don't think; damned if you do damned if you don't. Here we are not talking about objective, rational ways of seeing ourselves and the world. This is about spending a few seconds in a good deed, and then spending the rest of the day reveling in it – or telling someone about it – in all humility of course. It is about making an anonymous donation and making sure someone knows about it. It is about needing to have the last say in any conversation, whether or not you know anything about its contents. Control of body and speech is relatively easy compared to control of thought, and yet even the control of body and speech seem impossibly difficult. If for Jodoshinshu, the seeing of our ego-self is at the same time the seeing of other and more real aspects of living and dying, it behooves us to consider less dualistic approaches to reality.

We Americans, like the Russians I am told, are a deeply dualistic people. "You are either part of the solution or part of the problem." "You are either with us or with the terrorists". "You are either a saint or a sinner." For or against, yes or no, clear or foggy, you either understand or you don't understand at all. All of the above statements are incredibly naive and ultimately self and other destructive. Areas of grey, of paradox, of mystery, of the unknown are largely cast in a negative light and associated with hypocrisy, non-committal stances, fuzzy thinking, etc., etc. The end result is a profoundly confrontational mind-set, of winning or conquering, of being #1 in all things, of having the most, the best, and the most expensive as a definition of success. Class hierarchy is based on individual power, power that only wealth can bring. The term *self-made man* only applies to the accumulation of wealth and things, not creativity, intelligence, authentic diplomacy, etc.

"Pride cometh before a fall" is an old American proverb, old and largely forgotten it seems. So old that the profound truth of the above Tibetan proverb needs to be pondered upon. The paradoxes of Buddhism are the truths of Buddhism; the logic, philosophy, meditations, art, music and dance are the approaches to it. Entering the Way is to finally walk the Way, after years of watching, observing, and trying to be in control of your understanding of the Way. And walking the Way *is* the Way, not walking *to* something. Walking the Way is Amida Buddha and the Pure Land, or as Sasaki Joshu Roshi put it on his 100 birthday: "One hundred years of this world, I have played with God." A Buddhist view of course, but a view common to all Buddhists. Being born, living, and dying is Samsara. Not seeing it in that way is Nirvana. Living in this way is SamsaraNirvana,
NamoAmidabutsu.

Gassho,

Rev. Mas