



WE HAVE GOT TO BE THE MOST IGNORANT PEOPLE ON EARTH

In August, I took a quick trip of 10 days to New Delhi and Darjeeling in India. In those 10 days, I got more international news on the TV and English language newspapers slipped under my hotel room door than the past 6 months in Los Angeles. There were 3 international news programs in Hindi, one in German, one in Japanese, one in Chinese, one in Spanish, and one in Italian- all with English subtitles, not to mention BBC and CNN, the latter two being the least informative and most show-biz of the lot. I suddenly realized there was a South America, an Africa, a Europe, and all of Asia and Australia. I even heard about things in North America I never heard of in Los Angeles. For the time being anyway, the media in India is a hundred times more journalistic, informational, and contentious than anything in America. With all the hoopla over accessibility of information, the reliability of which is still a huge question. knowing that it is there somehow makes us ignore it. And when we look something up, it is only what we want to clarify something we already think we know. It is not new information or information that in the past was judged important to know for an educated person.

What then does this say about Jodoshinshu teaching? If it is only

to see how it fits into our set ideas of what religion or spirituality are, why bother with it? What if it doesn't fit our definition and preconceptions? Do we just dismiss it at hand or do we try to see it on its own terms.? We are profoundly self-centered, self-concerned, and self-valuing - almost to the exclusion of anything else. We know virtually nothing about our neighbor to the south, and worse - see no need to know anything, except perhaps how to keep them from entering our country. It is like the recent statement "9/11 is all I need to know about Islam". Such ignorance - no, such stupidity is staggering and frightening in a country so militarily powerful. How about "Pearl Harbor is all I need to know about Buddhism" - there was such a time you know.

If Buddhism and Jodoshinshu is about awakening to the reality of the eternal now and its interconnectedness and ever-changing nature - How can we seriously take such statements as "I can be anything I put my mind to", or "It's my way or the highway", or "What about me, me, me?" Thinking positively is not necessarily the same as thinking realistically, anymore than thinking in negative terms or thinking about negative things leads to negative thoughts and attitudes. If it looks askance at the

idea of an eternal and unchanging soul or creator god, then we must understand such terms as Bodhi, the eternal, birth in the Pure Land, the past, present, and future, the self and other, etc. in a significantly different way from our present way of thinking, seeing, and experiencing. What is that different way, and how is it to be understood and felt? Ignorance is slightly different from stupid - it is a ignore-ance, ignoring what we are capable of understanding - and many times it is a willful ignoring. Stupidity is a condition we cannot help, ignorance is.

Search for the news!

Gassho, Rev. Mas