

Transcending Worldly Wishes

We often chant the *Juseige* in our services. I love the first line of the *Juseige*. It goes, GA GON CHO SE GAN. Let me explain this one line from the *Juseige*.

To begin with, we have to know the context of the *Juseige*. The *Juseige* is a short song, or poem, that appears in the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life*, one of the three main sutras of Shin Buddhism. The sutras are the sermons of Shakyamuni Buddha. In this particular sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha tells a profound story to express his innermost heart of enlightenment. The hero of the story, the “Luke Skywalker,” if you will, of the Larger Sutra, is a Bodhisattva by the name of *Dharmakara*. Shakyamuni Buddha expresses his own heart through the fictional character of *Dharmakara*.

In the line, GA GON CHO SE GAN – *Dharmakara* expresses his deepest wish to first become a Buddha, an enlightened one, and second, as a Buddha, to liberate, or “save” all beings from a life of suffering, from the world of samsara.

This wish is something that transcends worldly wishes. In our unenlightened life, we have many “worldly” wishes. We might wish for a new car, or a bigger home, or maybe to win the lottery. Others might wish for their dream job, to meet the love of their life, or maybe to make a hole in one. There is nothing wrong with those wishes. We all have them at various phases of our life.

But *Dharmakara* does not ask for such worldly wishes. *Dharmakara* specifically expresses a wish that “transcends,” that is “beyond” such worldly wishes. What does this mean?

Right now, with the Coronavirus, doctors, nurses, and medical staff are on the “front lines” of the battle in the war against this virus. Daily, they risk their own lives, exposing themselves to potentially getting it themselves, but yet they work to save the lives of others.

Let’s say that there are two nurses going to work at the hospital, Nurse A and Nurse B. Nurse A became a nurse because the pay was good and there was a demand for nurses. Nurse A goes to the hospital and thinks, “They give me too many patients to take care of. These doctors are too demanding. I should be getting paid more for all that I am doing. Gee, isn’t it quitting time yet? Oh no, four more hours on my shift.”

Nurse B, on the contrary, became a nurse because of a deep wish to heal the sick. Nurse B dives into work, helping this patient and that patient, helping this doctor and that doctor, working tirelessly throughout the day. Finally, at the end of the day, Nurse B looks at their watch and thinks, “Is it time to go home already? But there is still so many patients to care for. I will work a little more and then go home.”

Thankfully, we have many nurses and doctors like Nurse B, for whom their work is not just a job, but they are fulfilling their deep wish of life, to heal the sick, to care for the sick, to save lives.

Having a deep wish for your life can apply to any occupation. Right now, so many occupations are so important in keeping all of us safe and alive. Farmers aren’t raising crops just for the money, but they are feeding the world. Truck drivers are

making it possible for us to receive the food in the stores. Store workers risk their lives to keep food and supplies on the shelves for all of us.

May we find our own deepest wish of life, something that transcends worldly wishes. When we discover that, then our life is always meaningful, always gratifying, and always fulfilling.

Namuamidabutsu,

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