**Much Ado About Nothing**

We really get caught up in things, don’t we.

We get caught up in our possessions, in our hobbies and interests, stories on the news, arguments. For instance, I love soccer. And I love to follow the matches. I have a favorite team that I follow, closely. But how close is close enough or too close? How much time and interest to put into such pastimes is reasonable? In the process of living and following our desires and our passions, don’t we often, as Shakespeare said, make “much to do about nothing.”?

For example, sometimes I find myself watching a soccer game and I hear the commentator getting very excited about something like the “crisis” of the position of a certain team in the standings. The team that is top of the standings this year, might be in the bottom half of the standings in the new season. Within a few months their form is forgotten as they struggle with mediocre performances. And we see it month after month, year after year, and yet we get excited in the moment, thinking that this is something historic or life changing.

The reality is that it is not really of any importance at all in the big scheme of things. All that seems so permanent now, will one day vanish. The stadiums where the great memories were made, the records that were broken, the great goals that were scored, they will all vanish like they never existed. What a horror this is when I think deeply about it. How can something so seemingly permanent vanish as though it never existed at all? All that effort, all that support, all that fanaticism, what was it all for? The fact is that we get very involved in things in the moment, but even a few months later we cannot remember what we were so passionate about.

I remember when Barak Obama was announced as winner of the presidential elections. People were joyous,neighbors who barely said hello were hugging each other. There was a feeling that a great change would take place, that a great change *was* taking place. But he proven to be a disappointment to many. How many times in our lives have we gotten so excited about something, only for our hopes to be dashed? Things that we look forward to end up being an anti-climax, and we wonder what it was all about. But yet when that same event comes around again, we will get just as excited and caught up in the momentum of the moment not remembering or caring to remember the unfulfilled feelings of the time before.

At the end of life, Sakyamuni Buddha says that we will be left with nothing but fear and regret.The things that we place our faith in are not able to save us. And we are going to a place we know nothing about. But we don’t see this in the midst of life, in the midst of our chasing ephemeral joys. We see as far as what is in front of us, for the most part. A word comes to mind. It is “Myopic”: Def: “A lack of foresight or discernment; a narrow view of something.”

*“In this world as fleeting and unstable as a burning house, inhabited by ordinary people beset by worldly passions, all is idleness and foolishness, utterly devoid of truth. Only the nembutsu is true.”*

Shinran’s words succinctly sum up the situation of human beings.

Beset by worldly passions, which we are made up of 100%, teaches Buddhism, we are caught up in the here and now. Doesn’t it make sense that we are attracted to nothing but that which stimulates our passions. In fact the word “blind passions” says a lot. Our passions are “blind” indicating that they don’t give us direction or guidance. We are pulled this way and that by our passions, one situation after another, beit road rage, an extra marital affair, acceptance of a bribe, or even suicide.

I imagine that from the point of view of Buddha, who sees us fretting over things of no importance, we make our lives to be “much ado about nothing.” In conclusion, our lives are given value by what we pursue.

“Only the nembutsu is true”: If it were not for the teaching of Buddhism our lives would for sure be much ado about nothing and meaningless. But by way of the truth unfolded by Shinran and the Buddhist masters we can learn and experience the one and absolute truth in this world.