

## Ore Ore Sagi - September 2004

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Last year in Japan, many innocent people fell victim to a fraudulent scheme called "ore ore sagi". In Japan, males refer to themselves as boku or ore, so ore ore sagi is fraud committed by males pretending to be sons or grandsons in need of money. Victims, mostly mothers or grandmothers, receive a frantic phone call from someone who says, "Ore ore!! Ore dayo!! (Mom, it's me!)" Because the caller is talking and crying at the same time, it is difficult for the distraught mother to truly recognize the voice of her son or grandson. Instead, the frantic mother responds, "Is that you, Ai?" (using her son or grandson's name). The caller responds, "Yes, it's me, Ai" and assumes the identity of Ai. Then the caller says, "A debt collector is after me for money I don't have. If I do not pay now, something terrible will happen to me. Can you put money in an account for me?" And he gives a bank account number. You would think a mother or grandmother could tell that the voice is not genuine; however, throughout this conversation, the caller is crying loudly, causing the mother or grandmother to feel sorry and hurriedly go to the bank to deposit the money. If the caller is a grandson, he begs grandma not to tell his parents.

You might think you would never fall for such fraud. In 2003, 4 billion 518 million yen or approximately \$37,650,000 was lost by 4,319 people out of the 6,504 households that reported incidents. 70% were female victims; 80% were 60 years and older. Only 178 perpetrators were caught and 58 arrested. One would assume that people this age are experienced and wise; however, they were easily deceived because of the kindness in their hearts.

If you think it wouldn't occur in Hilo, remember how many of us saved wari bashi wrappers, thinking we might be getting a wheelchair for Project Dana? I don't remember if we had to save 1000 or 10,000, but many people collected the wrappers, including me. Then one day, after eating bentos, I saw people who had previously diligently collected the waribashi wrappers, throwing them away. When I asked them why they were throwing the wrappers away, they said it was all a hoax. I thought, "What a cruel thing to do!" Those collecting the wrappers were all kindhearted people wanting to make a difference. Embarrassed myself, I also got very angry.

This incident exposed what is truly in the hearts of human beings. The rumor may have started as a joke, but word got around in Hilo, so many began collecting even if, at first, it sounded too good to be true. Human judgment often has difficulty to doubt when everyone else seems to believe something to be true. However sure you may be, you can never tell when your own kindness might be a trap. Human beings have difficulty seeing through such deceit, yet we must do so without sacrificing human compassion.

Under these conditions, how do we live our lives? What is important or precious in our lives? The answer is to seek the truth, to make truth the center of your life.

In the Koso Wasan, Shinran Shonin wrote:

The light of wisdom exceeds  
all measure,  
And every infinite living being  
Receives this illumination that  
is like the dawn  
So take refuge in Amida, the  
true and real light.

Amida Buddha's wisdom has two aspects, Jitchi and Gonchi. Jitchi is the wisdom that does not discriminate between good and evil, men and women, and accepts all equally. Gonchi is the wisdom of expediency that keeps equality as a basis and guides the evil being toward good. Amida's wisdom is not impeded by this evil.

We human beings cannot see the truth through our own power. We continue to be deceived and hold on to falsehoods in our daily lives, surrounded by blind passion. Only the light of Amida's wisdom illuminates us.

Because of our limitations as human beings, Amida Buddha vows to save us all, never to abandon us. The realization that we are accepted, as we are, turns our ears to the Dharma in order to embody the Teachings. In so doing, our experience of being deceived is transformed. Keeping Jodo Shinshu, the teaching of true and real mind, in a special part in our hearts, let us live in this world with strength and serenity relying on the teachings we can truly depend on.

Effective October 1, I will be assigned to Aiea Hongwanji . I would like to thank you for your kind gestures, friendly smiles, and gentle guidance. I will never forget you all. Mahalo nui loa.

Namo Amida Butsu.

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