

**5. Home Altar for Shin Buddhism**

Gary and Brandon discussed setting up a home altar for Shin Buddhism practices. Gary explained the importance of involving participants more in the rituals, including lighting incense and candles. They talked about the use of a butsudān, a traditional Japanese Buddhist altar, and its appropriateness for home practice. Gary shared a historical anecdote about how children's curiosity led to the resurgence of Shin Buddhism in America after World War II, further suggesting that a butsudān in the home can have a similar effect.

06. Understanding Shin Buddhism's Nembutsu

Gary discussed the Nembutsu, a fundamental practice in Shin Buddhism, emphasizing its simplicity and importance. He explained different forms of Nembutsu, including the Ichinen Nembutsu, and highlighted the need to avoid trivializing it by using it casually or as a response to agree with something. Gary also described a specific ritual involving strident tones and prostration, which he and others had practiced. He noted that Shin Buddhism, unlike other forms, does not seek merit through practice but instead focuses on returning any merit to Amida Buddha.

07. Buddhist Concepts of Reality and Enlightenment

The group discussed concepts related to Buddhism, focusing on the nature of reality, enlightenment, and the role of faith and symbolism. Gordon emphasized the importance of being open to experiences that awaken one to the truth, while Gary highlighted the challenge of understanding ultimate reality. They explored how different Buddhist schools, including the Pure Land and Tendai traditions, sought to make the absolute more accessible to practitioners through rich symbolism and teachings. The conversation touched on the idea of returning merit and the use of evocative imagery to inspire spiritual aspiration.

08. Beauty, Respect, and Creative Expression

The group discussed the symbolism of jewels, music, colours, and fragrances, emphasizing that beauty can be found in mundane things. Gary and Gordon explored the concept of respect for all sentient beings and the idea that harming others ultimately harms oneself.

They also discussed the Pure Land Patriarch T'an-luan, his musical abilities, and the imagery associated with him. The conversation touched on creativity, its connection to communication, and the use of resources in creative processes.