



29. The Concept of Prayer in Buddhism

The group looked at the concept of prayer in Buddhism, and Gary explained that the standpoint of Shin on this matter is that while praying for world peace and suchlike is valid, praying for personal benefit is not.

Follow-on Wikipedia snip: In the earliest Buddhist tradition, the Theravada, and in the later Mahayana tradition of Zen (or Chán), prayer plays only an ancillary role. It is largely a ritual expression of wishes for success in the practice and in helping all beings.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer>

30. Buddhist Concepts of Infinite Light

The group discussed the concept of the idea of light representing wisdom and compassion in Pure Land teachings. The discussion explored the concept of "infinite light" and "infinite life" associated with Amida Buddha, including the challenge of understanding vast time periods like kalpas, which were described using analogies like how long it would take to empty a huge barn of mustard seeds, one at a time; and how long it would take a butterfly's wings would take to eroding a mountain. The conversation also touched on the Pure Land sutras and the role of Lord Lokeshvaraja, though limited information was available about this figure who was described as the 54th Buddha.

31. Understanding Shinjin

This study session focused on the concept of Shinjin (true faith) and Nembutsu. Gary explained that Shinjin is not about logical belief but an intuitive awareness of Amida's presence, which can be experienced without conscious effort. The group also explored how faith in Amida and his vows leads to participation in his Dharma body, where individuals become part of Amida's eternal activity.

32. Time and Space

This meeting focused on a discussion about Buddhism practices, particularly the Nembutsu, and the group's 30-year history of meeting weekly. The conversation included reflections on time and space in Buddhist philosophy, with Gary explaining how the past, present, and future may be conceived as happening simultaneously. The group also discussed their tradition of meeting on Lantern Festival, which marks the anniversary of their first meeting in 1996, and Gary mentioned an update to the SBFUK website a new "About Us" page that emphasizes respecting ancestors.