



Fellow Travelers

The monthly newsletter of the Longmont Buddhist Temple

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Message from Sensei John Minister's Assistant

Obon/Hatsu Bon

On August fifth we observe, the annual Obon Service, and the Hatsu Obon, the first Obon for people who have passed away since our last Obon Service. We call this Hatsu Bon or First Obon.

For the Hatsu Bon families, this Obon is perhaps even painful for it brings back memories and sorrow that is still fresh. But it is the spirit of Obon that reminds us that life goes on, and for us, the ones left behind, we live with deeper appreciation for the benefits we have received from our loved ones. For all of us, seeing the names of the Hatsu Bon individuals is a reminder of the fragile nature of human life.

Obon is a Buddhist holiday that comes from the Ullambana Sutra. In this Sutra, it tells the story of Mogallana who was a superior student of the Buddha.

There are many versions of this story, but I would like to share my interpretation and understanding.

It was said that Mogallana had super-human vision and could see anywhere in the universe. And one day, Mogallana wanted to find his late mother. He searched the Heavens, he searched the Pure Lands, and then he searched the other levels of existence. And he found his mother suffering in the realm of GAKI, the land of Hungry Ghosts, where the beings were always hungry and thirsty.

These beings have small mouths, long thin necks and bloated stomachs. Whenever they took a morsel of food, it turned to fire and burned all the way down their throats, and whenever they took a sip of water, it turned to fire and burned all the way down their throats. Thus, they were always hungry and thirsty. Thus, they were beings in the realm of Hungry Ghosts.

Mogallana was horrified, but his mother was a widow and did everything for her only son. It is said,

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that during a famine, Mogallana's mother hoarded food and would turn away starving and suffering people who came to her door looking for help. She hoarded food so she could feed her only son.

And for this, she was suffering in the realm of Hungry Ghosts. Mogallana was distraught knowing his mother was suffering because she wanted to protect him. So, Mogallana went to the Buddha and asked what he could do to release his mother from the realm of Hungry Ghosts.

After careful consideration, the Buddha said, we are about to end our rainy season stay in this village and soon we will begin our pilgrimage to spread the Dharma, the Teaching, to other areas. So, to celebrate the end of the rainy season, let us have a festival for all the disciples and the villagers. You are to plan a successful festival, **AND ... to do so without thinking about your mother.**

Soon, Mogallana was arranging musicians, finding singers, asking villagers to prepare food....but all thru this time, Mogallana kept thinking; I will arrange a wonderful festival and my mother will be released from the realm of Hungry Ghosts.

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Then, on the evening of the festival, there was great food, and there was music and singing and soon the local folk dances were being danced. Everyone was enjoying the festival, except Mogallana. He kept to the shadows along the edges and became aware that everything that he did was for his selfish reason. The reason was to release his mother from the realm of Hungry Ghosts.

His fellow monks came by to thank him for such a wonderful festival, the villagers came by to thank him for sharing the joy of the Dharma. Mogallana knew he had failed. Out of despair, he gave up. And simply got up to jump to release his failure. In that instant, he forgot about his mother, and his jump was a jump for JOY. In that instant, his mother was released from the Realm of Hungry Ghosts. Actually, she was never there, it was Mogallana's own mind who put her there.

This story has lots of symbolism, of course. Mogallana's superhuman vision of seeing his mother in the Realm of Hungry Ghosts was totally in his own mind. But, the idea of doing something with no motive is the real significance of the story. It is impossible, in our human world, to not have selfish motives. But it is possible, for an instant, to reach out to a spiritual world, just as Mogallana's jump for JOY. The jump for JOY is why we had the Bon Odori dances last night.

Obon Odori is a reminder of Mogallana's jump of Great Joy....to just dance and not worry about anything else. When we can just dance without thinking about how good I am or if I used the correct foot.....to just dance with a Pure Heart.

Obon is that reminder to do everything with a Pure Heart. It is not easy, because we usually do things to make ourselves happy and we do things for all kinds of selfish reasons...The Buddha showed Mogallana how to do things with a Pure Heart.

We dance as an expression of gratitude and joy.

Celebration of 50 Years in Our Temple Building And Honoring All Those Whose Efforts Made Our Sangha Possible

We are honoring all those who have made it possible for the Longmont Buddhist Temple to be in our converted school house fifty years after we moved from Showa Hall on Isabelle Road to Pike and Main in Longmont at this month's Obon Service at Kanemoto Park. Throughout our lives we owe debts of gratitude to all those who have made it possible to travel the path we are on. There are so many to honor – the founders who started the Longmont Kyudokai in January, 1925; those who made it possible to move into our current Temple in 1968; the ministers who shared the Dharma; all the members, friends and visitors who have given money, effort, time and love to keep the sangha going.

Come to our Obon service on the 5th of August. Bring your dancing shoes. Bring a dish to share. Invite your family and friends. Come and dance with Joy!

In Gassho,
John Sensei

Temple Updates **by Jackie Tono, Temple Board President**

I hope everyone is able to keep cool and hydrated in all this very hot July weather!! Let's hope that August is a bit cooler.

Our Sangha is like that story of the little engine that could!! I'd like to thank everyone who had some part in making our rummage & bake sale a huge success!! We had some very large, expensive donations from temple members and from neighbors who saw our advertisements and signs and then everyone pitched to help sort, price, set up and work more than their 4 hour shift!! This ranks up with some of our most successful fundraisers; so much so that we are pretty close to making our budget! All this to say that we won't have to do the carnival in September that we were planning!! Thank you all for all your generous dana and always willing to pitch in whenever we come up with some crazy fundraiser, it is always appreciated.

By the time you read this we will be enjoying our annual picnic and Obon service. Dancing with our

dancing divas!! I hope everyone is enjoying the great food and socializing with all our wonderful members. Obon is when we honor and remember our ancestors and show our appreciation for all they have done for us.

With August here everyone will get back into their regular routines. Children returning to school & most vacations over & going back to our regular Service schedule. Surprisingly we don't have anything special scheduled for a couple of months.

Thank you all again for your continued support to help keep our Temple going.

In Gassho,
Jackie

Wheel of Dharma July 2018

"What's Your Treasure?" A Question from the Land of Hidden Nembutsu

By Rev. Sala Sekiya, Gardena Buddhist Church

At the recent Federation of Dharma School Teachers' Leagues Conference, I appreciated Rev. Henry Adam's Dharma talk in which he described vividly how Shakyamuni Buddha shared his "treasure" with his son, Rāhula. Rāhula was excited to receive his father's treasure, although he didn't know what the treasure was. Was it a bag of precious jewels? The Buddha told him it was the most precious thing that he had. The treasure was the Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha. Rāhula joined Buddha's disciples who paid homage and bowed down to the treasure.

When I reflected upon the treasure, it reminded me of the Jodo Shinshu treasure we were made keenly aware of, by the trip last year to southern Kyushu with a group from Seattle Betsuin. There we learned the history of "Kakure Nembutsu," the hidden Nembutsu. In southern Kyushu, the Jodo Shinshu teaching was banned for over 300 years.

It is not easy to single out the reasons for the religious persecution, but our teaching that "all beings are equally precious in the eyes of Amida Buddha" was opposed by the ruling forces. The unification among the Nembutsu followers was also seen as dangerous; Nembutsu followers fought against the powerful feudal lord Oda Nobunaga for

10 years in Osaka.

The Jodo Shinshu teaching was outlawed in Kumamoto and then in Kagoshima by the feudal governor, named Shimazu, in 1597. Persecution was severe; more than 140,000 followers were arrested and 2,000 Buddhist images were confiscated. The torturous punishment of Nembutsu followers led to their deaths and suicides.

Despite the hardships, Nembutsu followers maintained fellowships called ko and held Dharma gatherings in hidden locations like mountain caves and aboard ships. There are many locations and relics still in existence today and we visited a few. People skillfully hid scrolls with the Name, Buddha statues, and images of Shinran Shonin they received from Hongwanji and paid homage with them. These were the treasures the followers protected despite threats to their lives.

A statement by Densuke, a devout follower who was captured, explains the feeling of the others. When sympathetic officers offered Densuke his life in exchange for abandoning Jodo Shinshu, he said, "Thank you, but I can't think of continuing my short life here without the Nembutsu. I do not recite the Nembutsu by my own calculation. The Nembutsu is given by Amida Buddha. Even if I tried to stop reciting the Nembutsu, the shinjin (entrusting heart) within me can never be erased." Densuke had a final Shoshinge service and said to his fellows, "My going to the Pure Land is without doubt. I hope you, too, share the gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence." This true story taught us that the Nembutsu is a rare and precious treasure for Jodo Shinshu followers and that, once given—for Densuke too—it could not be taken away by anybody. It keeps protecting us to live life to the utmost with strength and joy under any circumstance.

Religious freedom was finally given in 1876 and Hongwanji immediately sent ministers to the region to support the followers. Now the Kagoshima Betsuin temple shines brightly in the cityscape, visible and large, carrying on the wishes of those Nembutsu followers to transmit the treasure openly to future generations. The question from the Kakure Nembutsu followers echoes in my ears, and hopefully in your ears too—What is your treasure? Are you keeping the rare and precious treasure and paying homage to it?

Hoonko

by Mike Shibata, Temple Member

The Obon Service and Obon Odori or colorful folk dances, which accompanies it, are observed between July 15th and August 15th in the Buddhist Temples and communities. Together they form a mixture of solemn respect and reflection and gaiety.

The word "Bon" comes from the Sanskrit "Ullambana" which was translated into Chinese as "ura-bon". "Ura" is the transliteration of "Ulla" and "Bon" that of "bana". "Ulla" means to hang upside down and signifies suffering caused by inverted views. "Bana" is the Sanskrit word for bowl and has come to signify salvation, because it is used primarily as a container for rice. Some view the word "Ullambana" as being a corruption for "avalambana", a noun derived from the verb "avalambante" (hung) in Sanskrit. The "o" placed before the word "bon" is used as an honorific prefix following the Japanese tradition.

The origin of the Obon Festival is generally ascribed to the *Ullambana Sutra*. Maudgalyayana, one of the Buddha's ten foremost disciples, possessed the superhuman feat of being able to perceive things beyond this earthly existence. With the desire to see how his deceased mother was doing, he looked and found her reborn in the realm of hungry demons or Pretas and suffering the fate of not being able to eat anything, because the food would turn into fire whenever she brought it to her mouth. Seeing his mother's plight, Maudgalyayana sought the Buddha's advice and was told that it was impossible to save his mother through his own power. He was advised to offer food to the monks after they had finished their rainy season retreat (pravarana) on the 15th day of the seventh month as an act of Dana. In this manner, not only will his mother be saved, but seven generations of parents will also be saved. Maudgalyayana carried out the injunction of the Buddha and his mother was able to rise from the realm of hungry demons. Everybody who saw this became so happy and joyful that they began to dance. This story forms the origin of the Obon Festival.

There is suspicion that the *Ullambana Sutra* was compiled in China instead of India, but it is the only literature which relates the Obon Festival as being of Indian origin.

The Obon Festival, which is carried out in Japan, was first performed by Emperor Wu Ti of the Liao Dynasty in 538 in China. The first example of it

Among the Japanese Buddhists, Obon has become a fixed way of life and is certainly one of the most colorful events observed during the year. During the Obon period, people would return to their homes to visit, clean up, and offer fresh flowers and burn incense at the cemeteries where their ancestors are buried and light candles to welcome the spirit of their departed ancestors into their homes. At the culmination of the Obon period, paper boat lanterns would be constructed and loaded with food and lit with a candle at night with the boat floating down the river or to the sea to return the souls to their resting places.

Many of us believe that the significance of the Obon service lies in the fact that the spirits of the departed will be saved through the chanting of sutras. However, this is not the case as it is beyond our power to save those who have fallen into hell. It is through the Compassion of Amida Buddha that we are saved and born in the Pure Land.

The true significance of the Obon Service and Festival lies in the rededication of ourselves to the Buddhist way of life by reflecting upon the love, affection, compassion, and virtues that our parents and others, who have passed on before us, have given to us while they were still alive. Let us pause and reflect on the hardships and sacrifices which they made for our sake so that we can clearly understand the interdependency of all life and things. Through this realization, may we all come to lead a life of thanksgiving and become Buddhists with firm Faith.

Monthly Salutations

By Rev. Diana Thompson, Denver Buddhist Temple

Hello everyone, welcome to the middle and end of summer! First of all, I would like to extend my extreme gratitude to all those who came out to help with this year's Cherry Blossom Festival. As always, 'thank you' is too small a phrase to express our appreciation but I will say it anyway. Thank you, thank you, thank you, the temple always relies on and is extremely grateful for the kind dana (selfless giving) of our sangha (community).

And speaking of our sangha...When we recite the Three Treasures, we are taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma AND the Sangha. The reasons for taking refuge in the Buddha and Dharma (teachings) are fairly clear as they are the foundations of our

appears in 606 in the reign of Empress Suiko.

Continued from page 4

religious tradition. However, we mention the Sangha as part of what we take refuge in because without our community, the teachings of the Buddha would have no place to flourish. Buddhism is sometimes viewed as a solitary practice as one of the main focuses is to investigate the self. However, from its beginning, it has actually been a community practice. People gathered together to hear the words of the Buddha and then communities were created so that the people could learn and practice together, guiding and supporting each other through the process of enlightenment. These were known as 'good Dharma friends'.

Over the years, temples and universities were built for the purpose of housing the teachings and the communities; places which were built through the hard work and kind donations of the communities that they served. The Sangha was initially considered to be just the communities of monks and nuns, but the definition was expanded to include the lay people who were, for one reason or another, unable to leave their lives behind to find perfect enlightenment but who still wished to hear the Dharma. In Jodo Shinshu, we also talk about 'good Dharma friends' and fellow travelers' which still refers to those who assist us on our paths, but also to those who walk the paths alongside us.

Those whom we attend services with, spend time in Dharma study with, but also those whom we volunteer with and form friendships with. These are our Sangha members, our fellow travelers. The temple services have been on summer schedule and our busy month of June is behind us, so we maybe don't see as many people as we do during the school year. However, we can still remember that no matter where we are, we still have our fellow travelers with us. Jodo Shinshu is meant to be for 'regular' people with busy human lives and therefore, whether we are at temple services or not, we are connected to our good Dharma friends through the Nembutsu, which can be recited any time, anywhere, and through this recitation, we are connected to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and it expresses our deep gratitude for all three. Namo Amida Butsu

FUNDRAISING UPDATES

by Gail Kanemoto Hogsett, Temple Board Treasurer

Our **Duck Ticket Campaign** was very successful – quack! quack! Thanks to your fabulous jobs of selling/buying tickets, our temple raised \$1365! Not only was it great for LBT, but numerous temple members won gift certificates from local businesses – that's a win-win!

Hurray for the very small army of volunteers who made our **Rummage Sale** an awesome success! The team spent countless hours sorting, pricing and arranging in preparation. We had delicious bake sale treats in addition to hundreds of items so generously donated. Then the final phase was to find homes for every, last left-over item. Our temple is so grateful for the nice crowd of shoppers, as well as the many inquisitive visitors interested to attend a service. Thank you, thank you to everyone who made our \$3000 profit possible!

August Calendar

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| August 5 | Obon, Hatsu Bon, 50 Years Celebration | |
| | Kanemoto Park, Walking Meditation | 10:00 am |
| | Service and Dharma Talk with Rev. Okamoto | 10:30 am |
| | Obon Dancing | 11:30 am |
| | Potluck lunch after dancing | |
| August 12 | Mindfulness Class with Sensei John Hughes | 10:00 am - 11:00 am |
| August 19 | Regular Service | |
| | Newcomers Welcome | 9:30 am - 10:00 am |
| | Meditation Service | 10:00 am - 10:30 am |
| | Service and Dharma Talk | 10:30 am |
| | Toban (Coffee/Tea Hour) in Community Room | 11:30 am - 12:30 pm |
| August 26 | Mindfulness Class with Sensei John Hughes | 10:00 am - 11:00 am |
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| | Upcoming Events | |
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