



Fellow Travelers

The monthly newsletter of the Longmont Buddhist Temple

Longmont Buddhist Temple Northwest corner – Pike Road and Main Street
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Message from Sensei John Minister's Assistant

The Call of the Nembutsu

Happy March! As the northern hemisphere moves into the cycle of rebirth, I am deeply heartbroken at the violence that encompasses our culture, our nation, our world. How can we be the change the stops the divisiveness that blocks us from being able to live in a place of Wisdom/Compassion? I wish I knew. I do know that it is incumbent on each and every one of us to do what we can to build a world of loving kindness. We can only defeat hatred, fear, anger and ignorance through love guided by wisdom. May each of us do what we can to be that change. *namo amida butsu.*

This month I am sharing an extended quotation written by Rev. Dr. Taitetsu Unno from a wonderful book titled [Living in Amida's Universal Vow: Essays in Shin Buddhism](#). For those of you who were baffled by my discussion of the Nembutsu at the second service in February, hopefully this will clarify matters. Rev. Unno's essay shares that, "Buddhism is a path of supreme optimism, for one of its basic tenets is that no human life or experience is to be wasted, abandoned or forgotten, but all should be transformed into a source of vibrant life, deep wisdom, and compassionate living."

"...Humility arises for having been shown our karma-bound self, yet grateful for the boundless compassion that inspires us to act with a new and vigorous appreciation for life. All this is contained in the saying of the *nembutsu: Namu-Amida-Butsu*. It consists of two parts integrated as one: the being of self-enclosure and deep egocentricity, symbolized by *namu*, illuminated and transformed by boundless compassion, *amida-butsu*.

The *nembutsu* is the flowing call of the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life, coming from the fathomless

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center of life itself, as well as our response to that call without any hesitation or calculation. Thus it is not a petitionary act, a mindless, mechanical repetition, or a mantra with magical powers.

This calling of *nembutsu* awakens us to a liberation power that sanctifies all life, because it comes from beyond the small-minded self that is always engaged in calculating life only in terms of gain or loss, winning or losing. Sooner or later we will respond to this call, if we are ever to know a sense of security and well-being. If I were to translate *nembutsu* into English, it would be the '*Name-that-calls*,' for it calls us to awaken to our fullest potential to become true, real and sincere human beings.

What is essential, then, is not the number of times voiced, nor even the purity of heart involved, but simply the deep hearing of the *Name-that-calls* to which we want to respond. The goal of deep hearing is to bring about a fundamental change in one's life, such that one realizes liberation and freedom in the midst of worldly entanglements, daily responsibilities, and constant agitations. This path is for everyone, especially lay people, in our contemporary world, because the *nembutsu* path has no requirements except the recognition of an indisputable fact: the

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problems in our daily life can be ultimately transmuted into sources of self-knowledge and received wisdom.

The process of deep hearing culminates with our birth in the Pure Land, but the Pure Land is not the ultimate goal. It is a mere way station from which we return to our world of samsara. Now endowed with wisdom and compassion the welfare and salvation of all beings become the ultimate concern. pp65-66.

Namo Amida Butsu,
John Sensei.

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

Winter has finally arrived! March and April have been some of our snowiness months. Please make sure you are on our e-mail list or know our website in case we have to cancel a service because of inclement weather. February 18th we had our annual Temple meeting. Please thank and congratulate Kelli Koga for accepting the position of the Vice President. Kelli also produces the LBT newsletter for us every month so thank her for that also. Please take a moment to thank our board members and committee chairs for all the hard work they do to help keep our Temple moving forward. Anyone interested in joining the Fundraising committee please contact me. We are forming a committee to decide what type of events we would like to have this year and next to help our Temple meet our financial needs.

I'm sorry to say the board has decided to cancel this year's Diversity Concert on March 10th. We have decided that the considerable limitations we face with manpower and resources will prevent us from putting on the size and type of production to which we are accustomed, and all would like to see. We would like to thank everyone who already has donated auction items toward the show. Not to worry, we will auction your donation at one of our future events. February 23rd I'll be on my way to Sacramento to represent our Temple at the Buddhist Churches of America annual meeting. It's a nice way to meet ministers and other sangha members to discuss similar issues our Temples are all experiencing.

April 1st we will be holding our Hanamasturi service with a potluck to follow. Hanamasturi service is the celebration of

the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha. Please come join us in the celebration.

Lately my faith in humanity has been shaken too many times. What has happened to our country? What happened to respect for humans and human life? What are we all doing to stop the violence? It's a sad day when it takes the younger generation to raise their voices, to take action to try to make a change. I have heard and I have also said that if you want change to happen you have to be the change. You should start by getting out of your comfort zone, start visiting, socializing, have the difficult conversation with people of cultures other than your own. In your everyday busy schedule please take a moment to be kind and thankful to someone and most importantly let them know you appreciate them.

In gassho,
Jackie

Wheel of Dharma **February 2018**

From Practical Buddhism to Truth-Level Buddhism **By Rev. Marvin Harada, Orange County Buddhist Church**



In my mind, there are two levels of Buddhism. The first level is "practical Buddhism." We all begin with this first level, and ask questions like, "What can Buddhism do for me in my life? Will it make me happier?

Will it make me more serene? Will it lower my blood pressure? Will it ease my stress and anxiety?"

Especially here in the west where people are very practically oriented, I think that those are the very natural questions that we all have at this level. Buddhism, however, challenges us to go deeper, to realize the teaching not for its practicality, but for its truth-value. The person at the truth level already knows what Buddhism does for you in your life. For the person at the truth level, Buddhism is everything. The teachings are everything. The greatest meaning and value of life is found in the Dharma for the person who arrives at the truth-level of Buddhism.

I think that one of the reasons why Shin Buddhism has not "caught on" in the west like other schools of

Buddhism is that we have yet to show this “practical” side; the practical level of Shin Buddhism. Other Buddhist writers like the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh write directly about this practical level. Take, for example, the best seller, *The Art of Happiness* by the Dalai Lama. In that book he opens with the statement, *I believe that the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness. That is clear. Whether one believes in religion or not, whether one believes in this religion or that religion, we all are seeking something better in life.*

In that opening sentence, the Dalai Lama grabs each and every reader of his book. Who is there that doesn’t want to live a happy life? Truly, the Dalai Lama has connected with all people in his writings.

Thich Nhat Hanh, also writes beautifully and addresses this practical level of Buddhism in his books. For example, on page 30 in his book, *Anger*, he writes, *Embrace your anger with a lot of tenderness. Your anger is not your enemy, your anger is your baby. It’s like your stomach or your lungs. Every time you have some trouble in your lungs or your stomach, you don’t think of throwing them away. The same is true with your anger. You accept your anger because you know you can take care of it; you can transform it into positive energy.*

Such contemporary writers are introducing Buddhism to the west much more effectively than we Shin writers and thinkers. They have embraced the practical level of Buddhism and have made Buddhism accessible to the everyday person. It will be our challenge to present Shin Buddhism in a more palatable way.

Let me turn now to truth-level Buddhism. How do people at that level speak of Buddhism? In *The Teaching of Buddha*, Shakyamuni Buddha left these final words to his followers in his dying moments:

“...the true Buddha is not a human body: -- it is Enlightenment. A human body must die, but the Wisdom of Enlightenment will exist forever in the truth of the Dharma, and in the practice of the Dharma. He who sees merely my body does not truly see me. Only he who accepts my teaching truly sees me.

Here, the Buddha encourages, admonishes us to discover the true Buddha in life, the wisdom of enlightenment. Shinran Shonin makes this kind of statement in his writings:

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

(Collected Works of Shinran, p. 325)

The wisdom of enlightenment that Shakyamuni Buddha spoke of in his final words, Shinran Shonin encounters,

receives, as the light of Amida Buddha. Shinran Shonin does not negate the practical benefits of Buddhism, but he expresses the greatest benefit, the greatest value of Buddhism as receiving the light of wisdom into our hearts and minds. His heart of ignorance and darkness was transformed by the light of the Buddha, the light of wisdom, the light of *Namoamidabutsu*. It is at that point where practical Buddhism and truth-level Buddhism converge into one.

Orei

By Rev. Masao Kodani, BCA Minister Emeritus



The term *orei* has the following meanings: salutation, propriety, ceremony, worship, good manners, politeness, courtesy, respect, reverence, thanks, appreciation, remuneration, return present, etc.

There are additional meanings depending on what religious tradition is using the term; Buddhist, Confucian, or Daoist. In Japanese “o” is an honorific prefix making the following word more polite or formal.

Jodoshinshu Buddhist temples in the U.S. were originally supported entirely on an *orei* system. As the *Nisei* generation came of age, they introduced a system of membership dues, which they added to the *orei* system. This system of requiring a set annual fee to become a member of a temple began in the 1960s and is unusual, even by American religious standards, for which voluntary donations are the norm.

What then is the difference between *orei* and membership dues? Bluntly put – Attitude. The paying of money for membership is a businessperson’s way of thinking. If someone pays membership dues for membership in anything, the first thought that occurs is, “What do I get for this?” When you find out what you will get, you then judge whether it is worth it to you or not.

In the more Buddhist *orei* system, you are asked to donate to the temple and minister for services rendered for you or your family (funerals and memorial services), personal use of facilities, etc. When you ask, “about how much,” the usual answer is “*kokoromochi*” or “whatever your heart dictates.” This answer was as difficult for the *isei* and *nisei* as it now

is for *sansei* and *yonsei*. One has to pursue further and inquire what an average might be.

Senshin Buddhist Temple continues with the vague and challenging *orei* system. Why? Because it places the responsibility on the giver to think of why he or she wants to give and how much. Life at a temple is not a business where you know what the product is and how much it is worth. When you go to a Buddhist temple for the first time, do you know what it's all about, and can therefore put a value judgement on it? And what is the real value of chanting, burning incense, and bowing, other than the exotic meanings you put into it, or how you define Amida Buddha and the Pure Land and summarily dismiss it as superstition? For authentic religion, one doesn't go shopping for a religion that agrees with you, but for one that changes you.

The Buddha emphasizes *dana* as a primary practice to understand *bodhi*. This means giving to others, money, things, service, and yourself, without expectation of reward or praise. It is the most important and difficult of acts – this *dana* – this giving oneself away. Its value or worth cannot be set and, depending on one's *kokoromochi*, \$10 may be more than another's \$100. *Dana* therefore can never be a set price; it moves as the heart moves. It does not calculate in ounces and pounds. As the heart moves, so the temple rots or flourishes. This special kind of well-defined giving called *dana* is the Sanskrit word for which its sister language, English, uses the term donation.

Issei: immigrants from Japan

Nisei: children of Japanese immigrants born in the new country

Sansei, Yonsei: third and fourth-generation Japanese-Americans.

Bodhi: awakening or enlightenment

SAKE: An Introductory Seminar

March 31st, 2018

13:00 to 17:00

Tri-State Buddhist Temple

The cost is \$55.00. All proceeds go the Ministerial Scholarship Fund. Details and tickets available at

www.tinyurl.com/SakeSeminar \

Must be 21 or over.

Katie, one of the minister assistants at the Denver Temple, has recently started taking classes at the Institute of Buddhist Studies with the ultimate goal of becoming a chaplain in the US Army and a Jodo Shinshu minister. Katie

is very knowledgeable in the history, brewing and tasting of Sake as well as a hoot to know. If you have an interest in learning more about Sake, this is a rare opportunity.

John Sensei

March Calendar		
March 4	Eshinni/Kakushinni Service	
	Newcomers Welcome	9:30 am - 10:00 am
	Meditation Service	10:00 am - 10:30 am
	Service and Dharma Talk	10:30 am - 11:30 am
	Toban (Coffee/Tea Hour) in Community Room	11:30 am - 12:30 pm
	Temple Board Meeting	12:00
March 11	Mindfulness Class with Sensei John Hughes	10:00 am - 11:00 am
March 18	Spring Equinox (O-Higan) Service	
	Newcomers Welcome	9:30 am - 10:00 am
	Meditation Service	10:00 am - 10:30 am
	Service and Dharma Talk	10:30 am - 11:30 am
	Toban (Coffee/Tea Hour) in Community Room	11:30 am - 12:30 pm
March 25	Mindfulness Class with Sensei John Hughes	10:00 am - 11:00 am
	Upcoming Events	
April 1	Buddha Day (Hanamatsuri) Service	
	Newcomers Welcome	9:30 - 10:00 am
	Meditation Service	10:00 am - 10:30 am
	Service and Dharma Talk	10:30 am - 11:30 am
	Toban (Coffee/Tea Hour) in Community Room	11:30 am - 12:30 pm
April 8	Mindfulness Class with Sensei John Hughes	10:00 am - 11:00 am
April 15	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 - 11:30 am
	Toban (Coffee/Tea Hour) in Community Room	11:30 am - 12:30 pm

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