



# Fellow Travelers

The monthly newsletter of the Longmont Buddhist Temple

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606 Pike Road, Longmont, Colorado 80501, P.O. Box 2083, Longmont, Colorado 80502

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## Message from Sensei John Minister's Assistant

Karma – Dependent Origination  
Recently Christina emailed me this question:  
Can you explain the difference between the concepts of 1-Karma and 2-Dependent Origination, or causation? Is Karma more about your own actions influencing your life, and Dependent Origination about all things in existence being dependent on all other things in time and space? So, if we combine these two concepts, by my actions and Karma I'm influencing not only my life, but the lives of innumerable other beings through this web of Dependent Origination?

This is a remarkably complex question, and goes to the heart of Buddhism. The simple answer is no; but that is by no means the whole story.

First let's discuss Karma -

"What goes around comes around." Most of us would recognize this as the popular American understanding of Karma; however, it is only barely, slightly, partially accurate. Karma is often translated as action or doing. So, the statement by my actions and Karma, I am influencing...is redundant. In traditional Buddhism, the idea of Karma has several aspects:

- It is the result of our actions – good, bad or neutral. (*Most impactful personally*)
- It is the baggage we carry into this life from previous lives – again good, bad or neutral.
- It is the baggage we inherit from the actions of our parents, grandparents, etc. and that we pass on to our children and grandchildren, etc.
- It is the baggage we inherit from those around us in fact from all beings. (*Least impactful personally*)
- Karma is the law of moral causation. The theory of Karma is a fundamental doctrine in Buddhism.

For the teaching of traditional Buddhism, karma is the

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result of all moral action in all our lives throughout all of time. The goal of sentient beings wishing to become enlightened is to extinguish karma. And, karma is extinguished through earning merit. Switching gears, dependent origination is described by Go Monshu Kojun Ohtani as:

"Buddhism describes the true reality of this world and humanity using such phrases as 'impermanence' and 'dependent origination.' 'Impermanence' refers to the fact that everything changes moment by moment. On the other hand, 'dependent origination' explains that all things and phenomena are interconnected with one another, which bring about various causes and conditions that then give another set of causes and conditions and so on and so forth. Therefore, in this world we cannot find an unchanging and fixed 'self.'"

We can never know the exact process that Sakyamuni Buddha followed to experience Enlightenment he attained under the Bodhi tree. There is no doubt, however, that the key to understanding his teaching and reaching the truth is the "dharma of dependent

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origination," sometimes referred to as "dependent causation". This means that all things are related by cause, condition, and result. That is to say, all things in the world are interdependent and interconnected in a multi-dimensional, web-like structure of infinite details. The relationship of cause, condition, and result is not simply linear, as time and activity are often imagined to be. The Buddha Dharma does not concede miracles. Human beings must use reason to resolve problems and recognize the causes and conditions that brought them about. The basic principles underlying the Buddha Dharma are contained in these three formulations: 1. All conditioned things are impermanent; all things change in relation to causes and conditions. 2. Nothing exists independently or statically; everything exists only because of conditions that make existence possible. 3. Nirvana is peace; in transcending suffering, a person may live with untroubled peace of mind. Repeatedly instructing in this manner, Sakyamuni Buddha traced back to the cause of all the suffering from which no person is exempt. He then stressed that the basic cause for suffering was unawareness. The solution to spiritual problems, therefore, is to look into oneself and become aware of the problem for what it is. A mere intellectual understanding of dependent origination is insufficient for awakening. A person must change perspective in order to see and respond to the world in the context of interdependence. In effect, such awakening brings forth a paradigm of unshakeable truth.

Finally - Dependent Origination – What we experience as “reality” is not a fixed objective reality. This is true regardless of what seems to be – regardless of our beliefs – it just is. Dependent origination states the truth that everything we experience as physical reality is the result of innumerable causes and conditions that have occurred from the beginning (whatever that might be) of time. Karma is the effect, good bad or indifferent of all “moral” actions. The closer the action is to me the more personally impactful the karma is, but all karma affects me. To some extent it is probably correct to say that karma is a sub-set of items that are covered by the concept of dependent origination.

The Shin teaching on dependent origination is the same as above, but karma in Jodo Shinshu has a distinctly different flavor. On page 103 Number 39 of The Collected Works of Shinran, Shinran speaking about how those of us who are not capable of achieving enlightenment through our own merit can accept the

power of Amida to allow us to be born in the Pure Land.

“...’aspire for birth’ is the command of the Tathagata calling to and summoning the multitudes of all beings. That is, true and real entrusting is the essence of aspiration for birth...sentient beings of the countless worlds, floundering in the sea of blind passions and drifting and sinking in the ocean of birth-and-death, lack the true and real mind of directing virtues;...For this reason, when the Tathagata was performing bodhisattva practices out of pity for the ocean of all sentient beings in pain and affliction, in every single moment...he took the mind of directing virtues as foremost, and thus realized the mind of great compassion.”

I read the meaning of this passage as one of the key aspects of Jodo Shinshu. The teaching of Shinran Shonin is that he, and by extension we, are incapable of achieving enlightenment through our own efforts. BUT, the good news is that Amida Buddha through the great compassion her bodhisattva practices solved – extinguished the karma of all beings who, by calling the name, Namo Amida Butsu, entrust in the power of light and life and are assured of birth in the Pure Land after our time in this world of samsara is complete.

I will close with another quotation from the Go Monshu:

“I will endeavor to share Amida Tathagata's Wisdom and Compassion through simple and clear language with as many people as possible regardless of nationality and ethnic background. Let us encourage everyone to act in accordance with the Buddha's Wish in an effort to create a society in which everyone can live a spiritually fulfilled life. In the hopes of creating a joyous world, let us continue moving forward by putting these words into action and together walk on our path to the truth.”

Namo Amida Butsu, John Sensei

***President's Welcome Letter***  
**by Sean Lehman, Temple Board President**

November 2017 was a tumultuous time for the Lehman family. Aside from the hectic day-to-day work

and social lives that we all experience, the older two of our three teenage girls were facing significant life changes. High school, college, and the always stressful transition between leaving a young-adult life behind and embarking into the world of adulthood were concepts that weighed heavy not only on the young girls themselves, but their parents as well. We all needed some sense peace and stability to balance the chaos that seemed to endlessly swirl around us.

Like the stories we've heard over and over from newcomers, Sharon and I had passed by the gated parking lot of the Longmont Buddhist Temple many times before the need for change finally overwhelmed our sense of intimidation of walking into an unknown situation. Little could I have known that the foundational principles housed within the walls of the old Burlington Elementary School were a perfect match to those I'd come to know and embrace during my seven years living in Japan when I first learned about Shinto and Buddhism. Nor could Sharon and I have realized that our somewhat desperate attempt to reconnect with spirituality could have evolved into such a comforting embrace by a community as welcoming as the Sangha. That welcoming embrace is what encouraged Sharon and me to dive in with both feet, and find not only a deeper awareness in the Dharma, but the sense of family and community that we'd been missing since we left the tight-knit world of the overseas military environment.

Thank you for entrusting me with this position. That sense of welcoming is the theme that I would very much like to emphasize in 2019 and beyond as the President of the Longmont Buddhist Temple. I believe our society needs and yearns for that sense of inclusion now more than ever, and we are in a unique position to provide it through example and practice of the eight-fold path. I have no doubt that the Longmont community, much like our country as a whole, has its fair share of individuals who are searching for the same sense of peace and harmony as Sharon and I were. We all need stability to balance out the chaos that is rampant in our world right now, and the principles upon which Jodo Shinsu and our Temple are founded can provide that ballast.

At the same time, we also mustn't forget what makes Shin Buddhism unique and why each of us has made it a part of our lives. While it may not be everyone's chosen path, it is ours. So, let's all take to

heart our instruction from Sensei John, and use the teachings to reach out to others through compassion and wisdom. We are not just the interesting temple at the corner of Main & Pike, a mysterious and intimidating place where many are too shy to wander. We are the Longmont community's welcoming hug from a friend, and a respite from the storm.

In Gassho,  
Sean

### ***Shinran Shonin Day (Gotan E)*** **by Mike Shibata, former Temple Member**

Shinran Shonin was born near Kyoto on May 21, 1173. The loss of both parents at an early age moved him to enter the Buddhist priesthood. He studied for 20 years on Mt. Hiei, the site of 3000 monasteries where he endured the most difficult of meditations and practices.

At the age of 29, he abandoned the method of finding enlightenment by his self power (jiriki) and placed his faith in Amida's power (tariki) to realize Buddhahood.

Even though Shinran Shonin probably did not think about establishing the Jodo Shin Sect, it is now the largest and most flourishing sect in contemporary Japan. Shinran, like his teacher Honen Shonin, denied the formal temple-priest system of his time. After Shinran descended Mt. Hiei, he never lived in a temple, but in huts or small hermitages. Shinran stressed "household religion as more important than temple religion."

Shinran's teaching was not meant primarily for those who left their homes to enter the priesthood and attempt to follow the difficult path of discipline in search for Enlightenment. Without distinguishing between the priesthood and the laity, he pointed out that everyone without distinction of rank or class would be saved by reciting the Nembutsu with Faith in Amida Buddha. In his teaching, there was no distinction or discrimination between men and women, young and old, good and evil. Everyone was equal before the Buddha, and all could be equally saved by Amida's Compassion. This was Shinran Shonin's Faith in the Original Vow of Amida Buddha.

In celebrating the birthday of Shinran Shonin, let us quietly recall his life and visualize him quietly meditating on the depth of his karmic actions as well as visualizing Shinran Shonin happily embraced by the Infinite

Compassion of Amida Buddha which also shines upon us. This vision should show us the kind of life - filled with gratitude - which we should follow in our daily lives.

As all of us are “ondobo” and “ondogyo” or fellow practitioners of the Nembutsu, we are able to share together equally the Nembutsu. To be able to share equally the gratitude of Shinran Shonin’s birth on the occasion of Gotan E or Fujimatsuri is for us, indeed a blessing.

## Wheel of Dharma April 2019

### *Education of the Buddha*

By Rev. Kodo Umezu, BCA Bishop



My wife Janet and I were invited to the San Luis Obispo Buddhist Church’s famous crab feed fundraiser as the temple’s guests in February. As we were standing in the line to receive

the food, we started a chatting with a couple in front of us.

Our conversations took us to the issue of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer). After finding out that I was the Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America, the husband said to me with a strong voice, “Don’t be afraid to share the teaching. You are in the position to make changes in the world.”

He emphasized that we can change our attitude by being educated with right information -- meaning the Dharma.

It is so true that we can change ourselves and others by bringing the Dharma to us. Or the Dharma wants to come into us. After becoming enlightened, Gautama Siddhartha sat under the Bodhi tree savoring his great realization for a long time. At the same time, he was hesitant to share what he came to realize with people, because he thought that people would not understand the contents of his realization. It was then the Indian god descended and told him to get up and go out to share the real truth with everyone.

The truth he discovered was so profound. He knew it would be very difficult for people to understand and accept it, but he never gave up. He went from village to

village to share the treasure of the By doing so, he was educating people little by little. Many people listened to him. They followed him and enjoyed listening to his messages. This is the basic Buddhist education shown by Shakyamuni Buddha 2,500 years ago. It is called turning of the Wheel of Dharma.

And today, we have our temples where we can get together to receive the same Dharma education. We are given the place to hear the Dharma. Therefore, our practice is to keep listening to the Dharma. Listening to the compassionate words of the Buddha eventually changes our way of seeing the world by its own virtues. How we see the world and how the compassionate eyes see the world is completely opposite. If we do not allow the Dharma to come into our life, we won’t be able to find the true fulfillment.

I was so encouraged by the couple and I am more determined to dedicate myself for the original mission of the BCA -- to share the wonderful treasure with all people.

We, at the same time, need to understand that it takes time to “educate” us. It is a slow process, but a sure way to change our way of living our lives. By appreciating the Dharma, we can treat each other with more respect and help contribute to make the world a better place for us and our children to live.

Let us place a great value in our temples and churches and let us keep listening to the wonderful teachings transmitted to us through many generations.

Happy Hana Matsuri!  
Gassho

### *Ice of Blind Passion turns into Water of Enlightenment* By Rev. Katsuya Kusunoki Rinban, Seattle Buddhist Temple



One morning in February, I found everything mantled in a sheet of white snow. When I saw Wisteria Park in front of the temple through the window, it was so beautiful. I really enjoyed the time of having my morning coffee while watching the beautiful scenery. The experience was special and interesting for me because I have lived only in warm places before, like Nagasaki, Zimbabwe and California.

That morning, my wife, son, and I went out and played in the snow. It was not easy to make a snowman because it was a dry snow. We sled over the snow and dived into the snow. We enjoyed a fun time.

At that time, one member came to the temple to clear the road of snow and sprinkle salt. I learned what I need to do when it snows a lot, besides play with snow. The snow in front of the temple did not melt quickly because it is on the northside and there is not much sunlight. A few days later, the road became icy, especially where people or cars tramped hard on the snow. I found a lot of our icy footprints where we played. So, the roads were very icy and slippery. We had trouble walking. We could not drive anywhere. I realized that I could not go grocery shopping or to the doctor or hospital, if someone got sick or injured. I learned about difficulties in living in a heavy snow area.

Seattle is not the only place that had snow. I heard that California also had snow. It must be a blessed snow because they often have severe drought. When I was still living in California, one person told me, "Having rain is not enough to resolve drought. The mountains have to have snow. The snow melts little by little and provides water for us. It brings us the blessings of nature."

Shinran Shonin said in his hymn "Wasan":

*Through the benefit of the unhindered  
light,  
We realize shinjin of vast, majestic  
virtues,  
And the ice of our blind passions necessarily  
melts, Immediately becoming water of  
enlightenment*

The hindered light is the Amida Buddha's wisdom and compassion. Shinjin is the "entrusting mind" which we are given by Amida Buddha.

In this hymn, Shinran Shonin compared the ice to our blind passion and the water to enlightenment. Buddhists' goal is to attain enlightenment. One who attained enlightenment has no blind passion (bonno).

When I think of myself, I compare myself to other people and envy them. When I watch TV or the internet, my greedy mind for buying something arises. While continuing living my life like this, my desires and attachments pile up in my mind. These get hard and are stacked just like snow, tramped hard, and become

like ice on the road. Once these get stiffened and become the ice of blind passion, it is not easy to melt them. Moreover, the snow of desires and attachments falls one after another.

Shinran Shonin showed a path to people who cannot shovel and melt snow. It is the Nembutsu (recitation of Namoamidabutsu) path. It is the path for people who stack snow and ice and lose their way. The Nembutsu path is the path of listening. We listen to the Buddha Dharma and reflect upon our life. And then we recite Namoamidabutsu ("I take refuge in Amida Buddha") to express our appreciation.

While continuing to walk the this Nembutsu path, we realize that the ice of our blind passion melts and becomes the water of enlightenment. Because the snow of desires and attachment falls one after another and becomes the ice of blind passion, it is important for us, as ordinary people (bonbu), to keep walking the Nembutsu path. What kind of snow and ice do we have in our mind? We put our hands together and keep asking ourselves this question. The Nembutsu path opens up where we realize the snow and ice in our minds.

Early in the morning on that day, I was watching outside. A car stopped at my house. It was from the post office. In this heavy snow, the post office delivered a small package to us. When I opened the package, I found the Disney "Cars" toilet training underpants that my wife ordered several days before. My son was so happy and wore them. In the cold weather, they brought such a soft and warm gift and heart. I felt sorry for, and appreciated, their hard work.

**Volunteering at Longmont Buddhist Temple**  
by Sharon Lehman, Volunteer Coordinator  
[butterflyeffect411@yahoo.com](mailto:butterflyeffect411@yahoo.com)

Volunteer work is our expression of Dana; the selfless giving that reflects our gratitude to Amida Buddha. Some examples of Dana at the Longmont Buddhist Temple are: Toban hosting, Service Chairing, Fundraising, Chaperoning during Temple rentals, Temple Clean-up Day; Special Event set up and clean up. These are just a handful of the many volunteer opportunities to give back to our Sanga and our community, that will be offered in years to come. Volunteerism is not completely selfless, though. It connects us with our community, helps us develop skills, and provides us with opportunities to be

part of something bigger than ourselves.

My first major task as Volunteer Coordinator is to compile a working list of Sanga members and friends. I will not “voluntell” anyone to do anything. I will simply ask. Please email me so I may add you to my list. If you have any special interests or talents, I would love to know what they are! I am truly grateful for everything that you do, and I look forward to working with all of you to make this Temple the best it can be. In gassho.

## May Calendar

May 5	<b>Regular Service</b>	
	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
May 12	<b>Mindfulness Class with Sensei John Hughes</b>	10:00 am - 11:00 am
May 19	<b>Gotan-E Service</b>	
	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
May 26	<b>Memorial Service</b>	10:00 am
	<b>Upcoming Events</b>	
June 30	Clean Up Sunday	
August 4	Obon	
November 8-10	Mountain States conference	

<b>Contact Information</b>		
Temple Website:		longmontbuddhism.org
Temple E-Mail		info@longmontbuddhism.org
Minister's Assistant: John NyuDō Hughes	303-997-6896	<a href="mailto:sensei@longmontbuddhism.org">sensei@longmontbuddhism.org</a>
<b>Board Members:</b>		
President: Sean Lehman	303-325-1544	moonbug_88@yahoo.com
Vice President: Kelli Koga	303-910-0415	krkoga1010@gmail.com
Secretary: Christina Hildebrandt	720-284-8710	soundheals@earthlink.net
Financial Secretary: LaDonna Shea	303-494-2465	shearanch@aol.com
Treasurer: Gail Kanemoto Hogsett	303-776-9578	gkhogsett@ gmail.com