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June Announcements:

June 13th and 20th Introduction To Buddhism 9:30 AM

Our Introduction to Buddhism will be held in the morning before our services. This is a brief overview of Buddhism, Jodo Shinshu and explanation of what goes on at our services. A perfect chance to visit the temple for the first time or listen in again.

June 13th Service Rev. Castro from the Seattle Betsuin

All morning services this month held at 10:30 AM following our Introduction to Buddhism sessions. Rev. Castro will lead this service, everyone welcome to attend.

Loving Kindness Talk, Discussion and Practice June 19 with Bhante from Berkeley, CA

7 PM we are hosting a talk by Bhante Seelawimala, a professor from the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, CA. He will start with an explanation of Loving Kindness in the Buddhist tradition followed by an open discussion. There will be a short break with refreshments, followed by meditation practice lead by Bhante Seelawimala. We are asking for a \$5 donation at the door. Space is limited, so arrive early for a good seat.

June 20 Service led by Bhante

10:30 AM following the Introduction to Buddhism session we will have our service with our guest Bhante Seelawimala officiating. He always has an interesting Dharma message. Join us!

Sangha Services June 6th and 27th

Sangha Services (a Sanscrit word for Buddhist community) will be held at 10:30 am. The Sangha service is a traditional Jodo Shinshu service with chanting led by a Doshi, a lay member from the Sangha. Each week a different member presents a Dharma talk. Participation is what makes our Sangha truly unique.

Dharma Class following Service

Following the Sangha Service we go downstairs for snacks and a Dharma class. Currently we are studying a book titled ***Buddhism, Plain and Simple*** by Steve Hagen. We have copies available in our book store. Each week we cover a section of the book along with an informal discussion. This is held downstairs with our ever changing and delicious snacks! Curious, come and join us, share what you have discovered, be part of the Sangha. We finish around noon. See calendar for dates.

Ko Service, is held on Wednesday nights at 6:30 pm. This is an informal Sangha service and Dharma discussion group. Buddhism is a questioning religion.

Looking ahead...

July 17 Perry Street Faire

July 23 – 25 Retreat with Kenji Akahoshi “Practicing No Practice”

Christine Marr received this email some time ago and thought it might be of interest.

Your Path is Your Own

Dear Members, Recently, we received an email from Romania. It was from a lady who was worried about mixing Zen style practice (zazen) and Jodo Shinshu practice (nembutsu). I decided to use my answer as a Dharma message, because I think it hits on some of the questions newer; and even some older members, have in regards to Amida Buddha, practice and the

nembutsu. I hope you can find it of some use. In Gassho, Michael

Dear Marion, Your email was referred to me by the president of our temple. I am Michael Hayashi, one of two ministers serving Southern Alberta. I am specifically a Jodo Shinshu school devotee. I see no reason not to continue on with both practices; they seem to be working on at least some level. I would fear anyone who tells you that you cannot at least try the various flavors of the teaching that are out there. All practice is centred on getting you to an experience; some will suit you and some will not depending on your character, life stage, even, sometimes, mood. Do not worry about it. It is expected that your relation to the Buddhist teaching will change and grow. Our founder, Shinran Shonin, encouraged people to consult with other teachers, if they had any doubts about the Jodo Shinshu teaching. I guess the ultimate statement on his position is “I, Shinran, do not have a single disciple.” Since we follow a highly introspective form of the Buddhist teaching, the real relationship that we seek to establish is solely between Amida and ourselves. There can be no discipleship between Jodo Shinshu followers. There is no human who acts as an intermediary between us and Amida. Other people, even teachers, can at best be seen as ones who have assisted us, challenged us, accepted us and encouraged us to grow. That is a long way of saying your path is your own. The teachings are there as guides. As you follow any of the Buddhist paths, you are essentially discovering new aspects to yourself. You are free to wander a little; seek out new aspects of the teaching, as you

take this internal journey. No one can tell you whether to meditate or not, or whether to recite the name of Amida or not. **It is** very difficult to write in a second language, so there may be some things that I gleaned from your letter that you did not intend to say. Having offered this as an apology of sorts, I would like to offer some of my thoughts on Amida Buddha and practice in Jodo Shinshu.

I should point out to you that, although our school makes much of a vocalized observance, the nembutsu is not so much a thing to say; as a tool of sorts, to guide us on an inner search. Jodo Shinshu is certainly devotional, but it is less centered on a figure. Rather, the symbol of Amida, for me, quickly becomes representative of all of the people who have contributed to making my life wonderful. In some of your letter, I got the sense that Amida had taken on too much of a "God" like existence for you. I often call Amida the life force just to break myself out of my own tendency to think of him like a person. This thing (for lack of a better indicator) is much larger than our ability to conceive of it. Amida is a symbol of all of the love and caring that has supported me in the past and will carry me on into the future. As such, it (once again for lack of a better indicator) is seen to be an other power. I rather liked your explanation of the sense of other power in your practice. I rather liked hearing of this aspect of zazen practice. The other as I conceive of it manifests itself as we seek to let go of the reins so to say. I often think of "other" though in the sense that it is the others in my life that were often the source of my inspiration, guidance and acceptance. They were the ones that,

in a sense, allowed me to, or otherwise encouraged me to become (for better or worse) the person that I have become right now. The practice is saying the nembutsu and going on the inner search it leads you on. That is about it. Pretty simple, huh? Our life becomes the source of the teachings.

In Jodo Shinshu, you will not find instructional booklets or other guidelines to be followed. We do publish books, though. But they can only be reflections on one's personal interaction with the teachings. No one says that we each have to have similar experiences as we interact with the teachings. The books are of value to us only as they provide fuel for our own internal search. Later I will be writing down some publication data on some of the books that I have found to be nourishing to me. The introspective nature of our path naturally leads to gratitude. As we come to know ourselves better, our faults and foibles and our brilliant moments of idealism and caring, we realize that, in spite of all that has gone on, we have been constantly embraced by a loving force that we call Amida.

When we gather at temples, we sing songs, chant shorter sutras and engage in a Dharma talk/ discussion as a typical observance of our gratitude. We are grateful to Amida Buddha as a scriptural personage. We are grateful for the myriad of teachings that make up the Buddhist tradition. We are grateful to all those who have led us to the teachings. We are grateful to all of the beings around us now who put up with us, care for us and accept us -- because they are the ones who make

our lives worth living. Suggested reading:

1) Shinran: An Introduction to his Thought, Yoshifumi Ueda and Dennis Hirota (Hongwanji International Centre, Kyoto, 1989.)

2) Buddha of Infinite Light: The Teachings of Shin Buddhism, the Japanese Way of Wisdom and Compassion, D.T. Suzuki (Shambala Publications, Boston, 1998). ISBN 1-57062-301-5

3) River of Fire River of Water: An Introduction to the Pure Land Tradition of Shin Buddhism, Taitetsu Unno. ISBN 0-38548-511-5

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Namuamidabutsu,
Michael Hayashi

Passing Thoughts, By Ed Parker, a lay person in the study of Shin Buddhism.

Amida Buddha is infinite wisdom and compassion. The human condition is limited. At some point each of us experiences failure, physically, mentally or spiritually that causes us to let go of who we think we are. I believe this is the compassion of Amida Buddha reaching out to us.

It is hard to know the right thing to do. So much of life is meaningless distraction. How do we find who we are without drowning in our own ego, in that overpowering sense of I. So much is

distorted by who we think we are. The moment changes, the fog lifts, the clouds pass, and this I, rises and falls like the flight of swallows on a dewy morn. To say something is right is to cast it in opposition. This, no, this, and all reality seems to lie in the balance. Right and wrong are creatures of a fixed point of view, one that denies change. We marshal our facts, our witnesses, and with never a doubt, step boldly into the fray. In war, death, and destruction, we match our heroes against our villains. We fear our villains, but what will save us from our heroes? In this world of justice, the brightest light casts the darkest shadow. Where the brilliance of righteousness has eaten all the color, there can be no pastels.

Ever wonder if knowing the truth depends upon knowing when you are lying. Do you know when you lie to yourself? How do you know? It's a curious feeling, this ambivalent sense of being. Curious, but unless you know who you are, how can you know the truth? It is my belief that to see who we are, truly are, beyond our egos, we must rely on the compassion of Amida Buddha. This is so because we have this problem in common. What do we have in common? We are all humans? We all want to be happy. What makes us happy? For thousands of years the answer has been: Oh, if only.... Oh, if only I could get what I want. Oh, if only I had nicer place to put it. Oh, if only I could keep it forever. Oh, if only I didn't have to die. If things were different, then I would be happy. We want, indeed we thirst, we crave, that which we can't have. Some might say world peace would make them happy, but most want to be younger, thinner, taller, smarter, better looking, or just filthy

rich. One or two might say, "If I were a better person, I'd be happy." Some think that if they could just calm their minds, they would be happy. Who is satisfied with their life? Happiness is always about being something else, being like someone else. But this is not happiness. This is dukkha, the sense of being out of round, out of step with reality. Dukkha is suffering as one might suffer looking through glasses that need cleaning, while being unaware that you are wearing glasses. It can make your head hurt. Dukkha comes from trying to create reality rather than see it. We all do this. This is where the Buddha started; people were no different back then, he wanted to find the source of dukkha: why is life filled with dukkha? What can we know for sure? The Buddha narrowed it down to impermanence. Life is now, the beginning and end of eternity. The problem comes from trying to see reality through our delusions, our attachments, our blind passions in the form of our expectations and memories. Still this is where all of us must start. Life is impermanence; everything changes whether we want it to or not. Try this: What is most important in your life? Was this always so? Have you changed? Where is the person you were before? Who are you now? How did you get here? Who will you be? We live in delusion; holding on to what never existed, wondering why nothing seems quite right.

Each of us is a seeker. We seek meaning to explain our lives, our purpose here, today, now. Some look outside of themselves; others look within. Everyone questions until their questions are satisfied, outside themselves or within. Some find an answer and hold on to it long after the

question has changed. No answer, answers for long. The question changes us. It is not about answers. What can we know that in our knowing we have not changed? Buddhism begins with questions, whether asked aloud or whispered within. Becoming aware is about questions. We have all asked: What is the meaning of life? What will happen after I die? How can I be a better person? There are many questions, the best simply point to the next question. To a Buddhist the most important questions are the ones asked of oneself. "What am I?" "Who am I?" How am I seeing? Am I centered or leaning.

This self, this I, to whom we all speak, is a wall separating all that you know from the truth. Your words only reflect your sense of self. There is no question that you can ask that has not been answered, except what is on the other side of the wall. No matter how you ask, or how many times, you cannot know. Yet, you sense a power there, like light from under a door, but the door is closed. There is only the outline of possibility beckoning in its denial. *Namu Amida Buddha*. Words are useless here. All you have learned is meaningless here. The door remains closed and the wall remains a wall. This is failure. Until you know failure, there is no going behind the wall. Only this sense of failure beyond bearing, stills the voice, stops the ears, and opens the eyes. This, then, is the absolute failure of symbolic intellect in the face of pure experience. This is what the Buddha discovered under the Bodhi tree. This is the compassion of *Amida Buddha*.

All that we know defines the self; defines the wall; the sense of separation that is the knower, knowing

of themselves as something else, as an object, as a subject. Knowledge is finite. All that can be known is finite. It encloses the self. Ignorance is infinite and infinity is an absolute, it does not exist. Bowing our heads opens the door to Amida Buddha. In Amida Buddha there are no walls; no separation, no self. Nothing to be free from. Namu Amida Buddha

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts.



DONATIONS

The Spokane Buddhist Temple gratefully acknowledges the following donations received April 25 through May 23, 2004. Please notify Liat Parker of any omissions or corrections.

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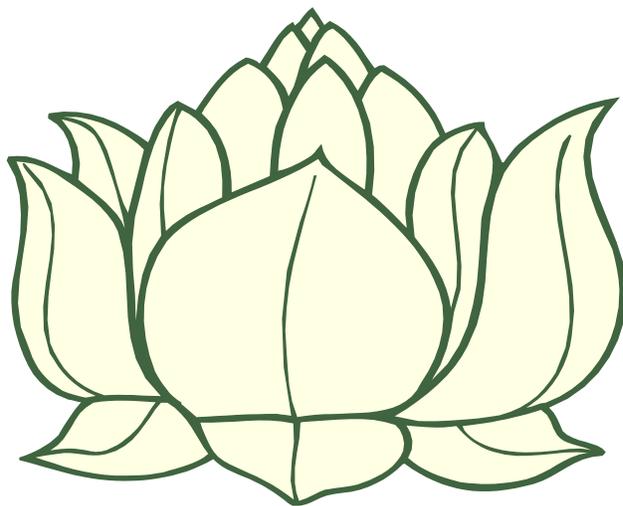
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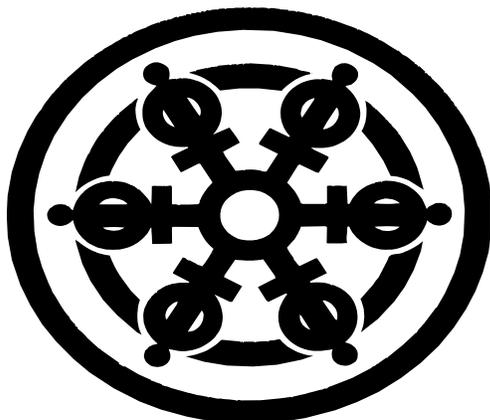
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Yoshi Yamamoto, Chiro Miyamae &
Don Miyamae



Jodo Shin Shu



BUDDHISM

Few feelings are as poignant as seeing yourself in the acts of others. However joyful or painful this feeling may be, it is illusion. We are foolish creatures limited by delusions of being more than we are; by our attachment to the egocentric world; by our blind passions. The effect of which is like following a road trod by countless others as if alone. The teachings of the Buddha would be meaningless if this were not true. Each of us is unique; each of us is the same: waves upon the ocean.