

September Announcements:

**Ohigan Service (Fall Equinox)
lead by Reverend Castro at
10:30 on September 26th**

**Introduction to Buddhism
Held at 9:30 am on Sunday Sept. 26.**
This is an informal way to see what goes on at our temple. We cover what to expect when attending a Jodo Shinshu Service. We then give a brief overview of Buddhism with a question and answer session as time allows.

September Sangha Services

Our Sangha Services (a Sanscrit word for Buddhist community) this month will be held September **5, 12, 19** 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).

Dharma Class Video

Following the Sangha Service it's downstairs for snacks and a Dharma class. We are watching, ***Great World Religions: Buddhism by Professor Eckel***. This is a guide to all schools of Buddhism around the world including our own Jodo Shinshu. Each lecture stands on its own, feel free to join us. We finish around noon.

Ko Service, Wednesday nights at 6:30 pm. The Ko is an informal Sangha service and Dharma discussion group. The service is lead by a Doshi followed by a discussion group facilitated by the Doshi. Note: the Doshi is not a teacher. Each of us is a student of our own foolish delusions.

Looking forward without attachment

Oct. 10 Rev. Tetsuo Unno from Los Angeles, CA will lead a 10:30 am service

It's Back! Senbei Making

October 16, we make the Japanese rice crackers called Senbei. It is a fun day working with other members of the Sangha, rolling dough, cutting, frying, baking and bagging this delicious treat.

November 7, Fall Food Bazaar.

We will be pre-selling tickets for a Chicken Teriyaki Dinner. Our Humble Best!



Spiritual Overhaul for a Western Mind by Paul J. Vielle

When our car's engine loses power, we know its time for an overhaul. The mechanic replaces worn-out parts, readjusts the settings and power is restored.

Minds are like engines too. So long as they operate within the knowledge limits set by the owner's culture, they can operate smoothly, even for lifetimes. Daily, they accumulate knowledge, make decisions and render judgments about everything in the world. In time, our minds figure out how the world works. We become attached to notions about what is good and evil; what is wholesome and what is abhorrent. These ideas are firmly entrenched in our psyche and define who we are and enable us to make sense of the world. But the mind-engine can develop serious malfunctions when placed in an unfamiliar environment. Such was the case for me last month, when Karen and I traveled in India. My Western mind was not prepared for the reality that is India. It turned out that nothing short of a spiritual overhaul could restore balance and calm to my agitated mind.

I knew India was a third world country. In a vague bookish way, I understood that to mean: overpopulation, poverty and pollution. But nothing in my experience prepared me for what awaited us at the train station in Bodhgaha, our first major stop on the trip. We had taken the overnight train from Delhi and arrived in Bodhgaya (the place where the Buddha received his Enlightenment) a little before 5:00 in the morning. It was just beginning to get light. We stepped

off the train, gathered our bags and started walking toward the station entrance. As my eyes adjusted to the dim light, I became aware of movement on the ground; of grey shapes stirring. They were people who had been sleeping on the ground, and now rousing themselves. Suddenly, it seemed everyone at once jumped to their feet and moved toward us. "Carry your bag sir?", "Need a guide, sir?" "Madam, take your bag?" "Sir...sir..." Beggars with wretched faces closed in, their grimy hands outstretched. "Please, sir! Something for the poor?" The acrid odor of sweat and the sewer rolled over us. We pressed our way through the crowd, (-refusing every offer of assistance). Moments later we were jostled on all sides as other travelers streamed through the front door of the station. The noise was deafening; a cacophony of shouting porters, blaring loudspeakers, crying babies, and shrill whistles. Outside the station door, the way opened onto a large plaza. Scores of people were still on the ground; -some still sleeping and some preparing tea on small fires. Cars and busses roared up the station, weaving in and out among the people, horns ablaring. Cows roamed freely rooting in the trash that littered the plaza; their excrement seen everywhere. Moments later we were in a mini-van lurching our way through a narrow, congested, pot hole-covered street to our hotel. I was in sensory shock, nothing short of total emotional overload. My mind reeled with initial reactions of denial, disbelief and revulsion. "This is insane! It's awful! How can they live in such misery? Have they no pride?" The only way my Western mind-engine could cope with what I saw, was to conclude: "I am not

like these people. I have nothing in common with them.”

Several depressing days followed. At times, I felt close to tears for no apparent reason. Clear thinking eluded me. I felt dopey, unsteady on my feet and vulnerable to physical injury. I struggled to understand what was happening. Over and over, the question came up: “Why all this mental agitation? Why is this so hard for me?” On the fourth day, we were in a bookstore. I happened upon a copy of the Dhammapada; a collection of the Buddha’s teachings. I opened it to the chapter entitled “Twin Verses” and read the familiar:

Our life is shaped by our mind;
We become what we think.
Suffering follows an evil thought,
As the wheels of a cart follow the ox
That draws it.

Our life is shaped by our mind;
We become what we think.
Joy follows a pure thought
Like a shadow that never leaves.

Reflecting on this insight, it came to me that the cause of my depression was in my head. Not out there. The old mind-engine was sputtering because my long cherished Western attitudes didn’t apply here. My spiritual overhaul had begun. The first faulty part to be stripped out was my perception that life here was intolerable. True enough, potable drinking water and toilet paper were not available everywhere, as I expected they should. So what? Life goes on. People adapt. You carry bottled water. You adopt new toileting behaviors. True, life in the street was chaotic and at times frightening. But

looking closer, I saw that people were not frantic, no one was yelling; there were no shaking of angry fists. Looking at myself, I still had all my limbs and had not been physically threatened in any way. I realized my first task was to stop characterizing everything as bad or undesirable. The overhaul continued. The second component to get tossed was my foolish delusion that I, me, myself,was somehow different from (and superior to) the people around me. Now, it is self-evident that everyone: Americans, Indians, Buddhists, Christians, young or old -all people everywhere grasp at things they believe will make them happy, and avoid situations they believe will bring unhappiness. The Buddha taught that all things and events in the universe are impermanent and interrelated. We suffer when we don’t get what we want, when things “out there” don’t live up to our expectations. He went on to show that what we think of as reality (the world of permanent, separate things out there) is in fact in a constant state of flux. Since phenomena are always in flux they can possess no fixed, permanent attributes of their own. They just are. Neither good nor bad. Neither better nor worse. We can see reality by just looking; before any thought, or judgment, or evaluation is brought to it.

These insights reminded me everyone acts from similar motives. My arrogant belief that I was “better than” the people around me, had no relevance to Truth. Such views arose purely from my arbitrary judgment that having a nice home, a clean toilet, new clothes, fresh bedding, sparkling water, and wholesome food all conferred superiority. I understood

that having or not having these things had nothing to do with goodness or entitlement. They simply represented the unfolding of the universe in this particular moment; all could change in the very next. Nothing is permanent. Things got better for me after that. My Western mind-engine began to perk up. I stopped trying to compare everything to conditions at home. Thereafter, I just tried to be in the moment, ...moment by moment, simply watching whatever there was to see. And I began to see all kinds of wonderful things, just as they unfolded. A woman climbing out of the Ganges River, shouted happily, "Om nama Shviya!" (Praise to Lord Shiva!) to no one in particular. A beggar smiled when the 5 Rupee coin dropped into his cup. An old man gently pushed a cow away from his fruit stall. A barefoot child darted past me wearing a garland of marigolds. Everything was just as it should be. There was nothing to fear. There was nothing to need. Letting go of preconceived ideas is a wonderfully liberating experience. Like the Buddha said, you are what you think. Like cars, all minds benefit from spiritual overhauls now and then. *****

From the Collected Works of Shinrin: Deep mind [jinshin]

The second of the three minds in the Contemplation Sutra, which includes sincere mind, deep mind, and mind of aspiration for birth. Shan-tao regarded these three as essential for birth in the Pure Land. Deep mind is none other than profound entrusting

which has two aspects: the awareness of *ki*, the finite and limited self steeped in blind passions (object of Amida's Vow), and the awareness of *ho*, the working of Amida's Vow directed to the foolish self (dharma that functions solely for the sake of such a being). Honen focused on deep mind as central, treating sincere mind and aspiration for birth as one with deep mind. Deep mind, then, is none other than shinjin, and the nembutsu which spontaneously arises from it becomes the cause for birth in the Pure Land.

Shinran explored the relationship between these three minds and the threefold mind of the *Larger Sutra* (sincere mind, entrusting, and aspiration for birth), and he gave two interpretations of the *Contemplation Sutra* teaching, explicit and implicit. The former regards the three minds of the *Contemplation Sutra* as an expression of self-power, and the latter identifies them with the threefold mind of the *Larger Sutra*. Thus, according to Shinran, deep mind properly understood is ultimately the one mind of Other Power, the true and real mind bestowed on a person by Amida, and hence completely free of doubt.

Dharma most difficult to accept [gokunanshin ho]

An expression of reverence and praise commonly found in Buddhist sutras asserting that the teaching is most difficult to accept if one applies commonsense thinking based on the conventional values of ordinary life. Shinran adds another dimension on the difficulty of acceptance. In the concluding portion of *Passages on the Pure Land Way* he quotes the following statements: The most difficult of all difficulties is to hear this sutra and accept it in shinjin; nothing surpasses this difficulty. It is the dharma that, for all people in the world, is most difficult to accept.

Shinran sees that what is most difficult to accept is "to hear this sutra and accept it in shinjin," because of the deep-rooted attachment of self-power. Since shinjin is the manifestation in a person of the working of the Other Power of the Primal Vow; it is beyond calculation or will. Thus, no matter how pristine a person's religiosity may appear, as long as there is even the slightest ego design, it is not shinjin. Basically, shinjin is the state realized in the absolute negation of all human

calculation; it is not a mere matter of believing or simple trusting. This difficulty of negating calculation is one with the difficulty of accepting or realizing shinjin. Thus, that which is "most difficult to accept" involves both the difficulty of awakening shinjin and of negating human calculation.

After reflecting upon Rinban Fuji's lecture regarding the Pure Land and the compassion of Amida Buddha, by Ed Parker

Since I was a child, I have always questioned and I have questioned nothing more than this dream of existence, this delusion called self. Like truth, I have only this passing moment of examination: "What am I?" Truth grows by each questioned layer stripped away, as does reality. What self lays beneath the fantasies, pretensions, and delusions of self? I question, but doubt all answers, having found answers temporal and relative. Answers have pretensions of permanence, but must perish for they exist only by the strength of conviction of those who cling to them. What are answers, but reflections of the deluded questioner?

Both my successes and my failures have taught me that I am only a limited being filled with blind passions. I examine my successes with a dubious eye and turn a skeptical ear to praise. I make mistakes, do foolish things, I see, but none to clearly, knowing full well that I swim in a sea of delusions. Guilt and remorse are simply part of my deluded sense of self, as is pride, arrogance and greed.

How can I be more than I am? We fill ourselves with delusions of who we wish, or fear, we are, and are blinded to our own reality, I am no different. How can I know who I am? I am only a human being, limited and foolish. Still, I do my best, knowing that success and failure are interesting stories, but not to be relied upon. Sometimes I wonder, were my delusions to vanish would I be awake or gone as well?

We are finite creatures with finite intelligence, finite wisdom, indeed we are incapable of perfection. Perfection is an absolute and absolutes cannot exist existentially. But the Pure Land, the Pure Land is beyond our limitations. The Pure Land pulls us to that state of purity just beyond our conception, beyond our dreaming wonder and fantasy. It calls, just as Amida calls and in calling creates possibility of our deepest dreams' attainment. Yet, Amida accepts us as we are, as we must accept ourselves. This is the compassion of Amida Buddha. Amida alone is infinite. Each of us must do our best and having done that, rely upon Amida's wisdom and compassion. Namu Amida Butsu

Condolences to the family of
Robert "Bob" Yamagiwa
10/5/1943 – 8/20/2004

DONATIONS

The Spokane Buddhist Temple gratefully acknowledges the following dues and donations received from July 22 through August 14, 2004. Please notify Fumi Uyeji or Liat Parker of any omissions or corrections.

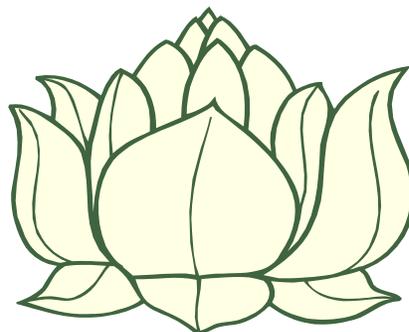
Dues listed are those received during this period, often times dues are paid for a few months or a year at a time and are acknowledged once when received.

Dues

Corrections:

from July; Leo/Yuriko Kiyihiro
from August; George/Toshie Kawahawa

Sam Gordon/Karen Kessler
Jeffrey Workman
Kazuo/Kazuko Kuwada
Satoshi/Mary Terao
Mary Nabor
Ann Heinemann
James Lea/Judi Davis

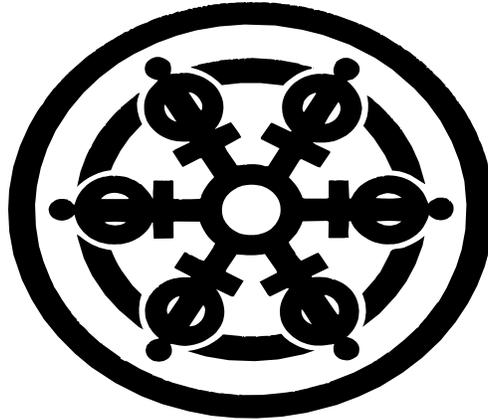


Dana

Kristina/Sicco Rood	20
Edward Tsutakawa	25
Jim/Shirley Bennett	25
David/Kenna Latwesen	200
Ann Heineman	20
David Weibel	25

Kobara Scabrock Golf Tournament –
596.00

Jodo Shin Shu



BUDDHISM