



Buddhist Thoughts

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JODO SHINSHU BUDDHISM IN SALT LAKE CITY: THE ROLE OF THE BUDDHIST WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Carmela Javellana Hirano M.D.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so other people won't feel insecure around you. We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we feel liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others. — *Marianne Williamson*

There was a time when Salt Lake City or Utah meant mostly “white” and “Mormon.” There was a time when ethnic minorities were truly the silent minority instead of the thriving, bustling and expanding segment of this city contributing significantly to the rich cultural, political, and social matrix that it is now. In the same manner, we may be seeing similar growth in our Buddhist community as awareness of this diversity expands. According to the latest demographics, Salt Lake City has 28% Mormons and the rest a panoply of Catholics, Southern Baptists, Lutherans, and many others, including some of the ancient earth religions.

You may have noticed that our humble inconspicuous temple, gradually over time, has attracted attention from non-Japanese, some of whom have become active participants in the practice of Jodo Shinshu. Our website, slbuddhist.org has gotten hundreds, possibly thousands of hits in the past year. In my psychiatric practice, more and more of my patients have expressed deep desires to heal from the inside

out, not the other way around, as modern medicine has demonstrated its awesome advances and disappointing shortcomings. What could account for this growing trend? What is the role of Jodo Shinshu in America? And specifically, how can the Buddhist Women's Association facilitate this growing awareness?

After interviewing quite a number of women in our sangha, there appear to be a bimodal pattern of views regarding the role of women – one is the traditional role of women handed down from the Issei and Nisei, that of “okusan” role, literally “the woman from the back.” Women have historically supported the work of the men by providing the essential, though not so glamorous work of keeping house. This role has evolved out of the political and economic realities and demands of the time.

The sansei and yonsei women, on the other hand, have taken on the dominant American culture, holding full time jobs and supporting their families while raising children and taking care of aging parents. “The Sandwich generation” appears

to be caught between the mold of their cultural heritage and the responsibilities of modern times. Perhaps it is inherent in this generation to gingerly tread the narrow road of conformity versus individuality. Perhaps it is this seeming contradiction that makes the “Fujinkai” both intimidating and respectable.

Being non-Japanese puts me in both clueless stupidity and optimistic presumption that this very paradox can become a powerful and potentially effective driving force in crystallizing the role of women in this community. They can do it all!! Imagine what multitalented, professional, versatile women “behind” the Americanization of Jodo Shinshu could accomplish?

This would seem to be a natural progression within the legacy left to us by Shinran Shonin. To study Shinran’s legacy is to study his life, and to study his life is to study the unfolding of the practice of Jodo Shinshu itself.

So what is Shinran’s legacy?

He was born during a very tumultuous era in Japan, where the warrior clans were wrestling for power and control away from the nobility and aristocracy. In his own way, Shinran did the same, when he abandoned the highly esteemed but waning Mt. Hiei to find his own way to liberation. In the course of his quest he became a prominent student of Honen, who had earlier developed his own following based on his work on the recitation of the nembutsu as the path to liberation. It was during Shinran’s 100-day meditation and endless recitation of the nembutsu that he came to awaken to this teaching: the way of salvation and reaching the Pure Land was Namo amida butsu, which is to entrust yourself to the “Other Power” of Amida Buddha, regardless of your origins, social class, gender, age, and other “classifications.”

Enlightenment is impossible based on one’s own efforts, because the ego is still stuck in its own megalomaniac delusion of self-power, and inherent in this delusion is bonno, our never-ending greed, anger, and ignorance. It takes a leap

of faith, or shinjin, to jump from the 10,000 foot pole to land safely on the ground.

In this present day, we are being asked to do the same: abandon our preconceived notions and judgments and open our minds to change, to a revolutionary way of thinking, much like what happened in the Kamakura period. We are being asked to tear down the walls of divisiveness between generations, between Japanese and non-Japanese, between men and women, between young and old. Jodo Shinshu Buddhism is for everyone, the essence of the dharma and Shinran’s legacy the same, although the “container” may be different.

When I studied Zen I had no clue that the SLBT even existed, much less that it has been around since 1912. I thought I wanted to be a monk and eventually get my head shaved, as if that would affirm my “enlightenment.” I must have been really nuts then! When DT Suzuki, one of the most prominent teachers and scholars of Zen Buddhism declared that ultimately Jodo Shinshu Buddhism will become the most ideal Buddhist practice in America, he was right on the money. We crazy and busy people don’t have hours and hours everyday to sit. (But we have 45 minutes or so on Sundays, right here, to contemplate on what it means to live a Buddhist way of life.) At first, when I began coming here, my only regret was not discovering SLBT sooner. It had to take finding Jerry on the Internet to get here. Thank you, Honey!

Equality and nondiscrimination have always been central to Buddhist beliefs. It is “EEO: equal employment opportunity” in action. If the Catholic Church had been that way, I might have never made it here. I might still be back there, altar girl to some old Irish priest. You’ve come a long way, baby!

Women have played a crucial role in the development and prosperity of anything, whether it was the Mormon settlement here in Utah, or the efforts of Kakushinni in transforming Shinran’s mausoleum into the present day Honganji. The Fujinkai is now called Buddhist Women’s

Association to reflect the changing roles of women, who though still visible in the kitchen, are also becoming more visible in board meetings, fundraisers, business enterprises, politics, health care and education. Perhaps we can call this current crop of women the “Funky Fukinkai,” or better still, the “Fusion Fujinkai.” Women who have allowed themselves to not only carry on the legacy of previous generations, but who are also breaking out of the stereotypical molds of “okusan” – the woman behind. We can be the women in front when necessary. I therefore call on you, challenge you women out there to come out of your self-designated prisons and support our BWA by joining and sharing your talents, not just in the kitchen, but in everything else where our Temple needs our participation and support.

Namo Amida Butsu.

Thank You Everyone

We would like to thank the entire congregation for all your help with this years Bazaar. We know that everyone is busy and are very grateful for taking time out of your busy schedule to make this years Bazaar a very successful one.

We would like to express a special thank you to all the Dharma students for taking on extra duties this year. You all did a fantastic job and we appreciate all you did for us this year.

We would like to thank the BWA, YBA, Jr. YBA and all the chairpersons and volunteers for all your hard work. You all make chairing the bazaar easy for us because you all volunteer to help and that really makes it easy for us to organize this big event. THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

We would also like to thank Paul Terashima for his dedicated effort in helping us with the bazaar. Paul does a lot behind the scene that goes unnoticed and we wanted everyone to know just how much he does for the temple. So THANK YOU Paul for all your help!

We would also like to thank Koyo, Tsunami and Benihana restaurants for all your help with the bazaar. The restaurants always volunteer and we really appreciate what you do for the Temple.

Thank you again!

Gary Okamoto and Mark Minaga (2006 bazaar co-chairs)

Dharma School Laverne Kyed

The Salt Lake Dharma School is pleased to have the following officers serving for the 2006-07 year:

Karen Cone-Uemura – Assistant Superintendent
Tina Munson – Secretary
Karen Seo – Treasurer

We had a fun Back-to-School Picnic on September 10th at North Canyon Park in Bountiful with both Salt Lake and Ogden Dharma School students and parents attending. Special thanks to **Maya Chow** for organizing and running the games and purchasing the prizes. **Karen Cone-Uemura** and **Dave Cone** did a great job coordinating the picnic.

Our Dharma School classes are back in full swing. We appreciate the following teachers who have volunteered their time to teach/coordinate classes for our Dharma School students: **Judy Watanabe, Lisa Matsuda, Christy Fong, Karen Cone-Uemura, Gail Minaga, Maya Chow, Tina Munson, Faye Eng, Cheryl Nakano, Brenda Koga, Troy Watanabe** and **Masami Hayashi**.

A special thanks to **Sherrie Koga** for organizing the delicious Dharma School Building Fund Hawaiian breakfast served on September 24th. We appreciate all those who helped with this event in conjunction with our Ohigan service.

Special recognition to **Lisa Matsuda** for her organization and hard work, coordinating and supervising the Dharma School students who volunteered to bus tables during the Temple's Food Bazaar.

In Gratitude--
LaVerne Kyed

Jr. YBA Christy Fong

The Jr. YBA elected the following officers for the 2006-2007 year.

President – Katherine Seo
Vice President – Emma Munson

Secretary – Kelsi Tohinaka
Treasurer – Merissa Nakamura

We will continue to take Scrip orders during the year. Scrip are gift cards and certificates to restaurants, retail stores and gas stations in the area. They also make great holiday gifts. We will be taking orders:

October 29th (Halloween party)
November 12th
November 19th
December 3rd
December 10th (Bodhi Day)

Orders are available for pick-up the week after orders are submitted.

We will be holding an Appreciation Breakfast for our Sangha on November 5th from 8:30 – 10:00. This is our way of saying “Thank you” for your support of our fundraising efforts and goals. Come and enjoy a pancake breakfast on us, complimentary, and see scenes from our recent bus trip!

Dharma School Study Class

Chris Oki

The Salt Lake Buddhist Temple’s library would like to announce that it will be hosting a discussion group on Sundays following our Dharma school services. The aim of this group will be to deepen our faith in and understanding of Jodo Shinshu teachings. Through the reading of the group’s chosen text, listening to the views held by others, and expressing our own personal interpretations of Buddhism and how it affects our lives, we will be able to form a relationship with the teachers of Jodo Shinshu, both past and present, and their unique Nembutsu teachings.

For our discussions, we have chosen to use

Professor Alfred Bloom’s on-line study course, which can be found at www.shindharmanet.com. The course is comprised of twenty-five chapters, each one including discussion questions proposed by Professor Bloom.

This would be a very good for anyone, including parents who are waiting while their children are attending Dharma school. We will have an orientation on November 12, following our Dharma school service, to answer any questions as well as to set up a schedule for the readings.

November Shotsuki Hoyo

November 19, 10:00 am

Deceased	Date of death	Next of kin
Fujii Bunzo	11/26/81	Ritsuko Hayashi
Fujii Shigeno	11/24/99	Amy Tomita
Hachisuka Toma	11/15/87	Nancy Takagi
Hasegawa Fumi	11/19/85	Jane Sakashita
Ikegami Torako	11/18/93	Hiroshi Ikegami
Imada Mitaro	1/24/51	Matsuyo Imada
Imada Wasaburo	11/17/67	Shizuko Imada
Kaizumi Maki		Craig Kaizumi
Kashima Sawaki Kiyoko	11/23/93	Hitoshi Suenaga
Kobayashi Naoki	11/13/71	Ken Kobayashi
Koga Sue	11/16/74	Sachiko Koga
Koseki Toraji	11/22/79	Kathy Terashima
Matsuura George Iwao	11/11/29	Ken Matsuura
Mitsunaga Tsurukichi	11/24/25	Hiroshi Mitsunaga
Muraki Yachiyo	11/21/87	Sam Muraki
Oishi Umeko	11/3/78	Taichi Oishi
Okubo Kiyotaro	11/30/71	Harry Okubo
Omura Michiko	11/27/83	
Omura Toyome	11/13/94	
Sako Yoshimitsu	11/7/84	Sako Koko
Sekino Takasaburo	11/21/79	Lillian Sekino
Sugino Mitsuye	11/29/91	Bob Sugino
Takagi Tami	11/25/89	Nancy Takagi
Watanabe Hikomuni	11/7/93	Ida Watanabe
Yamane Kazuo	11/12/81	Eunice Yamane
Yakumo Ryujin	11/10/80	Kazuko Yakumo
Tohinaka Masayoshi	11/29/70	Sachiko Tohinaka
Iwamoto Kiyotoshi	11/11/02	Yuriko Iwamoto
Furubayashi Masato	11/9/03	Maxine Furubayashi

Matsuura Doris	11/1/04	Greg Matsuura
Akiyama Genevieve	11/2/04	Francis Akimoto
Shimizu Keiko Kae	11/6/04	Kerry Shimizu Lee
Namba Kumeno	11/21/05	Kaz Namba
Sudoko Taro	11/29/04	Nobue Sudoko
Sumiko Hattori	11/4/05	Gary Koga

With Deepest Sympathy

Our Temple offers our deepest sympathies to
the family and friends of

Tsuruko Imai
4/13/1921-9/23/06

We hope that through the nembutsu teachings
and the strength of your family and community,
you will find comfort in this difficult time.
Namo Amida Butsu.

November Toban

*Steve Tachiki *Shirley Farr *Tomio Mitsunaga
*Buster Mayeda
Becky Tachiki, Robert Farr, Junko Mitsunaga,
Rose Mayeda, Brent Shimada, Jolene Shimada,
Bill Mizuno, Shigeko Mizuno, Ernie Kyed,
Laverne Kyed, Kyle Matsumura, Kazuko Yakumo,
Paul Seo, Karen Seo, Evelyn Matsumura, Reiko Mitsunaga,
Brian Fukushima, Tammy Fukushima
