



# Buddhist Thoughts

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## Sitting Namu Amida Butsu J.K. Hirano

“Those who feel uncertain of birth should say the nembutsu aspiring first for their own birth. Those who feel that their own birth is completely settled should, mindful of the Buddha's benevolence, hold the nembutsu in their hearts and say it to respond in gratitude to that benevolence, with the wish, “May there be peace in the world, and may the Buddha's teaching spread!” Please consider this carefully.”

Shinran Shonin, CWS 560

The question, “What is Namu Amida Butsu?” can be very difficult. Yet it is so simple to just say “Namu Amida Butsu.” When I say Namu Amida Butsu, what is it that I am doing? When I was a child, I would listen to the sensei tell us, “Please join me in Gassho.” I would put my hands together and when he said, “Namu Amida Butsu”, I would repeat, “Namu Amida Butsu.” This would happen three times. Later in my life, as I was riding on a plane hoping that I would be able to see my mother before she died, I imagined her in her bed dying, and suddenly “Namu Amida Butsu” came from my mouth. Sometimes when I am just breathing in and out, I can hear “Namu Amida Butsu” in my head..

Is the nembutsu which we call Namu Amida Butsu something that I am doing or is it something that is around me that comes through me? The air I breathe is all around me, but it becomes a part of me when I breathe in and out. Breathing is said to be an involuntary physical act, meaning that whether or not we try, we just breathe. However, I am hooked up to a CPAP machine at night, because the doctor says that sometimes I stop breathing in my sleep. So is it me that is breathing or is it the machine? In a

similar vein, is it me that is saying Namu Amida Butsu or is it Namu Amida Butsu that is coming through me? It is hard to say which is the cause and which the effect. In other words, is shinjin the result of nembutsu or is nembutsu the result of shinjin?

Within Shinran's Mattosho, (Lamp for the Latter Ages), he states in reference to the saying of the nembutsu as an act separate from shinjin, “The reason is that the practice of nembutsu is saying it perhaps once, perhaps ten times, on hearing and realizing the birth into the Pure land is attained by saying the name fulfilled in the Primal Vow. To hear this Vow and be completely without doubt is the one moment of shinjin. Thus, although shinjin and nembutsu are two, since shinjin is to hear and not doubt that you are saved by only a single pronouncing, which is the fulfillment of practice, there is no shinjin separate from nembutsu.” No matter what the cause or reason in Jodo Shinshu may be, it is often said to just say namo amida butsu. If you are unsure of how or why, just do it. I believe the same can be said for the sitting meditation of Soto Zen.

There are some who do not want to take part in meditation. They say that meditation is a self-powered practice while Jodo Shinshu teaches

the other power of the Nembutsu. I do not believe meditation or nembutsu is a practice per se. It is not the means to attain enlightenment. Rather it is a way to express that which has already been awakened to.

Within the Soto Zen school founded by Dogen Zenji, about the same time as Shinran Shonin was developing his thoughts on the Nembutsu, the type of meditation they do is called "Shikantaza" which is usually translated as "just sitting". Dogen states in his Fukanzazengi, (Universally recommended practices for Zazen), "The zazen I speak of is not meditation practice [in the traditional buddhist sense]. It is simply the dharma gate of peace and bliss, the practice-realization of totally culminated awakening." In my mind, there is no difference between this type of sitting to our saying the nembutsu. This "practice-realization of totally culminated awakening" is shinjin.

To recite the nembutsu as a response or with a deep sense of gratitude that comes from something more than myself is my nembutsu practice. We may say this nembutsu comes from the mind of Amida to my mind. In a similar manner when I sit it is an expression of the awakening of the mind of Amida within me. To sit or to say Namu Amida Butsu, I believe they are the same. As I sit, I breathe in and out. As I recite Namu Amida Butsu, it is as my breath. Both are the manifestation of the great compassion that embraces us all. I sit in Namu Amida Butsu.

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## President's Message

Stan Endo

Please accept my apologies for not getting an article in our newsletter for the past two months. Our Sangha does great things and I do want to acknowledge the work. Thanks to those who supported the following:

- Parsonage cleanup, lots of hard work done and we saved a lot of money in the process.

- Temple cleanup which is getting easier every year. Cleanup of the west building was an added task but was very successful.
- Hanamatsuri was fantastic and everyone had a very enjoyable time.
- Nihon Matsuri had another large crowd and the fundraising brought lots of funds into the temple.
- Movie Night, a great success bringing lots of friends together to just relax and enjoy the movie.

There are too many names to mention but to all of you that had helped, THANK YOU!

A quick status of the properties, the Parsonage will be going on the market shortly and will hopefully sell quickly. The west building needs to have some work done to repair minor damage, wear and tear. We will be renting part of the building as the Dharma School and library will stay in the building. Spread the word on the availability of both.

Thanks to Mark Minaga for coming up with a new way to get volunteers in place for the OBON and Bazaar. This approach will use individuals from each organization who will chair different efforts and become familiar to chair future Obons and Bazaars. Thank you Brenda Koga for being the chairperson for the Obon and Mark for the Bazaar. Please volunteer if asked to support these important fundraisers they are a major source of funding for the operation of the temple.

August 9 is the Las Vegas Obon. Our temple along with the Ogden Buddhist Church will be sharing a bus and reserving hotel rooms to attend. Contact Dot Richeda or me to get your name on the list. Space is limited. I have attended this Obon once before and it was a great time.

## Dharma School News

Faye Mitsunaga and Gail Minaga

**H**anamatsuri was celebrated on April 13<sup>th</sup> with a wonderful program and luncheon. Thank you to Tracy Akimoto-Roberson for chairing the program and Tina Munson for taking care of the performer's gifts. We appreciate all the hard work and creativity that the Dharma School teachers put into preparing for this special event. The Dharma School students were so delightful in their musical numbers, dances, and skits. Thank you to the BWA for providing the rice musubis and Sakura manjus. Everyone enjoyed the luncheon provided by the Temple. A very special "thank you" to Bruce and Christy Fong for helping to serve the chicken and cleaning up after the event.

We would like to thank everyone who came out to help the Dharma School and Temple during the Nihon Matsuri Festival which was held on April 26<sup>th</sup>. A very big "thank you" goes out to Reiko Matsuura and Reiko Watanabe for coordinating the food preparations for the food booth. Because of their great organizational skills and meticulous attention to details, this event was very successful. The delicious Chicken Katsu Obentos and Spam musubis were sold out by 2:30 p.m. that day!!!

Nikkei Center Luncheon was held on May 10<sup>th</sup> hosted by the Salt Lake Dharma School. Thank you to Karen Tohinaka and her "crew" for organizing a delicious Chinese luncheon for the Seniors. Dharma School provided the entertainment with a beautiful duet performed by Emily and Jenni Rasumussen, and a cute

song/dance performed by Brandon Okamoto, Brighton Papac, and Anna Fukushima.

Parent's Day was celebrated on May 18<sup>th</sup> with a special service and luncheon. We appreciate Tina Munson and Brenda Koga for getting the Parent's Day gifts. Thank you to the YBA for the delicious luncheon. It was enjoyed by all.

We'd like to thank Gary Okamoto and Jim Eng for organizing the Temple Movie Night on May 17<sup>th</sup>, and bringing back some nostalgia to our Temple. Everyone seemed to enjoy the movie, "Hula Girls". We were also treated to a very special "Dharma School Previews" which showed various DS activities and events from the past 5 years, edited and compiled by Mark Minaga. We appreciate the time and energy that Mark put into making this wonderful video. Thank you to the Jr. YBA for providing the food, snacks and drinks. It was a very fun event.

Some upcoming events to look forward to:

Jr. YBA Chow Mein Dinner-May 31, 5:00-8:00 p.m.

DS Lagoon Day- June 1<sup>st</sup>- Salt Lake Dharma School will be providing the desserts.

DS Graduation Service- June 8th

## BWA News

Dot Richeda

The BWA will be donating items for our Summer Japanese basket for the Obon silent auction. Brenda Koga is chair for the Obon and Reiko Matsuura will represent the BWA. June 8th will be Eishinne sama. Lucheon will follow at the Golden Dragon. Reservation to Jane Sakashita. As I grow older I seem to forget a few things and I apologize. I would like to thank Takeko Doi and Terry Fujinami and all the ladies for preparing the sakura mochi for Hanamatsuri. They are delicious.

Please let me know if you would like to go to the Las Vegas Obon. Bus is \$100.00. Hotel will be Sam's Town for \$89.00 per person per night.

Naikan Workshop is May 31st at 10:00 am.

June 7<sup>th</sup> 4:00 pm BWA seminar:

"Honganji, what is it?" Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara from representative from Honganji to BCA

Summer picnic will be August 24th.

Thank you for your support.

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## Jr. YBA

Christy Fong

The Jr. YBA helped raise funds for the temple selling a variety of concessions at Movie night. Thanks to LaVerne Kyed, Mark and Gail Minaga and Lisa Imamura for their help. Thanks also to Trey, Shelby, Sam, Matthew, Marisa, Kenny and pre Jr. YBA'ers

Mitchell and Kyle. What an enjoyable evening with Sangha friends!

The next and last Scrip order before summer will be taken on June 8<sup>th</sup>. Orders will be available for pick up during Obon practices or Obon.

Thanks for all of your support.

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## Obon Festival Silent Auction

The Temple will be hosting a Silent Auction during its annual Obon Festival on Saturday, July 12th. If you would like to contribute to the silent auction, please contact auction chairpersons, Faye Mitsunaga-Eng at 262-9287 or Rise Hirabayashi at 277-2734.

Items needed but not exclusive to:

- Bottles of wine with the "Utah sticker"
- Restaurant gift certificates
- Tickets to sporting and cultural events
- Monetary donations
- Artwork
- Jewelry

Thank you!

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## Obon Dance Festival and Service

The Salt Lake Buddhist Temple Obon Dance Festival will be held July 12, 2008 with the Obon service to follow on July 13, 2008 at 1:00 p.m.

**Dance practices** will begin on June 30, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. The practice schedule will be as follows: **June 30 & July 1-3** and **July 7-10**. All practices will begin at 7:00 p.m. and run to 9:00 p.m. in the temple gymnasium.

Food preparation will begin at the temple on Friday, July 11, 2008 at 8:00 a.m. Anyone who is available is requested to help. On Saturday, July 12 the sushi preparation will begin at 7:00 a.m. Food will be served from 1:00 p.m. on that date.

If you would like to help and have not been contacted or have further questions, please contact Brenda Koga 466-6552.

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## Movie Night: *Hula Girls Aloha!*

**A** very big *Mahalo* to the many guests and *sanga* members who joined us in the temple gym on May 17th for our feature Japanese film, *Hula Girls*. For those who missed it, the movie depicted the difficult struggle for individuals, families, and the entire 1965 coal-mining community in northern Japan as it tried to transform itself into a modern Hawaiian theme park attraction complete with real palm trees and dancing girls! The theme hit a special chord to us as Jodo Shinshu Buddhists since it once again shows the impermanence of everything around us including our livelihood. Congratulations to Marisa Eng, Shelby Matsumura, and Tammy Tokita for winning the hula hoop contest! We also would like to give a sweet *mahalo* to Mark Minaga for making a wonderful video compilation of the Salt Lake and Ogden Temple Dharma students,

Troy Watanabe for providing the wonderful sound system, Jim Eng for putting everything together, and Christi Fong, Bruce Fong, Lisa Imamura, and the many Jr. YBA individuals who served up snacks and refreshments during the evening. Plans for our next Japanese film, *Always 3-chome no yuhi*, have already begun for a showing after the summer recess.

In gassho,  
Gary Okamoto, Mark Minaga, and Jim Eng

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## June Shotsuki Hoyo

*Service will be June 8*

Deceased	Date of death	Next of kin
Akiyama Uhichi	6/12/67	Genvieve Akiyama
Fujimoto Kanta	6/7/56	Grace Oshita
Fujinami Tomakichi	6/12/68	Mitsuru Fujinami
Harada Tsuyono	6/2/85	Frank Harada
Imai Fujii	6/28/91	Ruth Aoki
Kobayashi Tsui	6/20/43	Miki Hasegawa
Mayeda Buntaro	6/5/89	Toshi Mayeda
Muraki Sakae	6/24/87	
Nakamura Chogoro	6/28/45	Takae Nakamura
Noda Ben	6/29/92	Reiko Jean Noda
Sakinada Kathleen	6/4/89	
Sasaki Nobuko	6/22/34	Charlie Sasaki
Shiba Eiji	6/30/85	Takataro Shiba
Suzuki Kiyoji	6/11/69	Masako Suzuki
Tadehara Mary	6/30/84	Rose Kamaya
Tani Hatsuye Mary	6/17/84	Elanor Nakamura
Yokome Roy	6/26/95	Ray Uno
Araki Aiko	6/16/98	
Aoki Fred Toshio	6/17/98	Kay Aoki
Niwa Teruchiyo	6/11/00	Pat Ninomiya
Karen Haruko Shiba	6/17/00	Tosh Shiba
Kiyo Nakamura	6/10/04	Phil Nakamura
Fusano Mayeda	6/21/76	Yoshiko Kido

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BWA Seminar  
Open to the Public  
“What is Honganji?”  
June 7, 2008  
4:00 pm  
Rev. Kiyonobu Kuwahara  
Honganji Director of Jodo  
Shinshu Correspondence Course  
  
Salt Lake Buddhist Temple