



Buddhist Thoughts

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Rev. Hirano's contact numbers: Office: 363-4742,
home: 299-8727, emergency 718-5755

A Sufi Jewish Buddhist Tale

J.K. Hirano

The Nasrudin stories are known throughout the Middle East and have touched cultures around the world. Superficially, most of the Nasrudin stories may be told as jokes or humorous anecdotes. They are told and retold endlessly in the teahouses and caravanserais of Asia and can be heard in homes and on the radio. But it is inherent in a Nasrudin story that it may be understood at many levels. There is the joke, followed by a moral — and usually the little extra which brings the consciousness of the potential mystic a little further on the way to realization.

The Sufis Idris Shah (Taken from Wikipedia)

I would like to begin this article with a Sufi story I heard from Mark Epstein. He is a Jewish man who writes about and practices Buddhist Psychiatry. He has studied a great deal about Buddhism and considers his teachers people such as, Jack Kornfield, Joseph Goldstein, Stephen Batchelor and many other Buddhist scholars and teachers. From what I have read, he does not identify his Buddhism with any particular sect. This story I want to tell you is written in a couple of his books, but I can't remember if I first heard it at a talk of his I attended or read it in one of his books. The way I remember it is probably a little of both. But it is a story about a man named Nasrudin. As the short quote I began with explains, Nasrudin stories are told throughout the Middle East. There are many different ways people spell Nasrudin. They were originally about a real man born in the Middle East in the 13th century. Within the Sufi tradition, he is usually a combination of wise man and fool. In Jodo

Shinshu we often have similar stories about people we call Myokonin. Over the centuries there came to be many various stories about Nasrudin and I believe Nasrudin could represent any of us human beings.

In this story we find Nasrudin on his hands and knees in the village square. He seems to be searching for something, crawling around under a street light. Some villagers see Nasrudin and ask him, "Nasrudin what are you doing? Did you lose something?" He answers, "Yes, I lost my key and I can't seem to find it anywhere." One of the villagers asks him, "Did you lose your key here in the square?" Nasrudin answers, "No, I lost it at home." The villager questions him, "Then why are you looking here when you lost your key at home?" Nasrudin pauses and answers incredulously, "Because this area has the best light."

Mark Epstein talks about how he first heard this story from his teacher Joseph Goldstein, who used the story as an example of how people search for happiness in inherently

fleeting, and therefore unsatisfactory, pleasant feelings. He himself had a number of interpretations to this story. He then talks about reading this same story in another book called Ambivalent Zen by Lawrence Shainberg. In this book the author talks about liking this story and asking his Japanese Zen teacher about it. I will quote from Mark Epstein's book Going on Being.

"You know the story about Nasruddin and the keys?" Shainberg asked his master.

"Nasuruddin?" the Roshi replied. "Who is Nasruddin?"

After Shainberg described the story to him, his master appeared to give it no thought, but sometime later the Roshi brought it up again.

"So Larry-san, what's Nasruddin saying?" the Zen master questioned his disciple.

"I asked you Roshi."

"Easy," he said. "Looking *is* the key."

When I read this explanation, I understood the depth of Nasrudin. It wasn't in the details of how or where you got there; it was the search, the looking that was important.

Buddhism has many different forms and in the West, many of the teachings that we hear are an amalgam of Japanese, Indian, Thai and Tibetan forms. Our temple is a Jodo Shinshu temple, which is Japanese. We have been in America for over one hundred years and there are many things that have changed to fit our American environment. At the moment there are many things that are still changing (how ridiculous to think they won't change). As Shakyamuni Buddha advised, "Do not wish for the changing to be unchanging." However, our particular Sangha is Jodo Shinshu and the basis for our gathering is that we are a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist temple. I hope that our Sangha will never forget where we came from or as the Buddha said, "How will we know where we are going?"

With all this in mind I would like to mention one more book that I recently read: Outliers: The Story of Success written by Malcolm Gladwell. The definition for outlier is

as follows: *Outliers, noun,*

1 : something that is situated away from or classed differently from a main or related body

2 : a statistical observation that is markedly different in value from the others of the sample

I first heard about this book in the discussion session of our recent Mt. States District Conference, which I would like to thank Reiko Mitsunaga for so skillfully and successfully chairing. In the beginning of the book the author writes about a small Pennsylvanian town named Roseto. He writes how scientists first began studying this small town because of a chance encounter with one physician mentioning that it seemed as though the residents of Roseto didn't suffer heart disease. They did a study of the town and found that this was true. Scientists then began to try to find out why the Rosetans differed from their neighbors. Was it the food, the air, the water? What was it that made life less stressful for the Rosetans.

In their studies they found that it was none of these outside factors. I will quote from the book.

What Wolf slowly realized was that the secret of Roseto wasn't diet or exercise or genes or the region where Roseto was situated. It had to be Roseto itself. As Bruhn and Wolf walked around the town, they began to realize why. They looked at how the Rosetans visited each other, stopping to chat with each other in Italian on the street, or cooking for each other in their backyards. They learned about the extended family clans that underlay the town's social structure. They saw how many homes had three generations living under one roof, and how much respect grandparents commanded. They went to Mass at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church and saw the unifying and calming effect of the church. They counted twenty-two separate civic organizations in a town of just under 2000 people. They picked up on the particular egalitarian ethos of the town, that discouraged the wealthy from flaunting their success and helped the unsuccessful obscure their failures.

In transplanting the paesani culture of southern

Italy to the hills of eastern Pennsylvania the Rosetans had created a powerful, protective social structure capable of insulating them from the pressures of the modern world. The Rosetans were healthy because of where they were from, because of the world they had created for themselves in their tiny little town in the hills.

I would like to believe that our small Jodo Shinshu temple at the base of the Wasatch Mountains can become an outlier from other Sanghas within BCA and America in general; a place that creates a powerful, protective social structure capable of insulating us from the pressures of the modern world. It would be a place that supports and encourages one another, not flaunting our successes and not pointing our failures.

If you have been wondering, what these two stories have to do with each other, I would like to offer you my wish for our Sangha and explain why it is so important. The story of Nasruddin reminded me of another story of Shakyamuni Buddha. The Buddha was once asked by a disciple about what place did the Sangha hold in his teachings. In other words, how important was the Sangha in understanding the teaching? The Buddha replied, "It is everything." Just as Nasruddin's searching for his keys was not so much about the keys, but that the search itself was the key. I believe in a similar manner that there are many who believe that a Sangha is defined by the type or sect of Buddhism taught there and that the goal is knowledge of Buddhism or possibly enlightenment itself. In terms of universal truth, these are much too confining of parameters. In this interpretation they are misunderstanding the

true nature of the Sangha. The Truth cannot be defined in the simple terms of Jodo Shinshu, Tibetan, Zen, Buddhist, Jewish or Sufi. The Sangha is not the key to Buddhism, the Sangha is Buddhism itself.

President's Message Dot Richeda

Good news!! The renovation in the Temple has begun. You can see the new windows on the Hondo from the street. Thank you for your patience and understanding while we are going through this construction. When you see Brenda Koga or Ernie Kyed, please thank them for all their help in moving this construction forward. They meet with Cameron Construction every Thursday to do follow-up and set priorities.

On September 20th, we started our regular Dharma School schedule. Please excuse the inconveniences and join us for service. We meet in the West Building.

Thank you to Reiko Mitsunaga, Chair, for Mt States District Conference. We had friends from Ogden, Tri-State and Salt Lake coming together for a great weekend. We had a great time learning about the Dharma and Buddhist music from Rev Harry Bridge (movie star), our guest speaker. Thank you to Rev Harry Bridge and his wife, Mika, for coming to Utah and spending some time with us. Thank you to the Mt States Conference Committee, the Temple organizations for providing refreshments and especially, thank you, to the Ogden Temple for letting us use their Temple for the conference.

Our next Temple Board meeting will be Oct 8th at 6:00 PM.

State of the BWA

Jane Sakashita

In 1972, Jeanne and Jim Konishi gave me a book in which it states:

*Nature holds many pathways bordered by
flowers and ferns
That glisten with the morning
dew...covered with a mosaic of
Brown and golden leaves...shaded by
stately trees that brush
their branches against the sky...the
Golden Chain.*

This reminds me of the talk that Reverend Hirano gave at last Sunday's Ohigan service. He cited a couple of prayers from other religions and told us that the teachings of other religions all focus on the same principles in which we believe...the Golden Chain.

I can relate to this because I grew up in Garfield Smelter Camp and fourteen years of my life were spent with Czechoslovakians, Greeks, Irish, Native Americans, and other nationalities who all believed in different religions. They were all courteous, gracious, compassionate people whom I will never forget. I believe we all try to embrace the qualities that lead us on our pathways to faith.

The Mountain States District Conference that was chaired by our very efficient Reiko Mitsunaga was extremely successful, and everyone had a wonderful time while engaging in a learning experience. The BWA in Salt Lake hosted the luncheon that was coordinated by capable Reiko Matsuura, and we extend our thanks to both of these ladies.

A short meeting was held prior to the Ohigan service during which Brenda Koga gave us a report on the progress of the temple renovation. We strolled to the vacant temple and

saw the beautiful windows that replaced the old and noticed that the trees, bushes and huge stones were removed from the east location for the new Nokotsudo area. We're looking forward to the estimated completion date of November 30th at which time we will have a new kitchen facility among many other revisions to the temple. Our heartfelt gratitude to Ernie Kyed and Brenda Koga for heading this immense project.

During the meeting Reverend Hirano explained the resolutions that will be presented at the National BWA Conference in Sacramento. Our delegates-Christy Fong, Karie Minaga-Miya and myself-will be voting on the resolutions.

Many thanks to Reiko Matsuura who furnished the refreshments for our September meeting. The next BWA meeting will be held on October 18. We sincerely hope all the ladies of our temple will attend. Thank you.

Dharma School News

Chris Munson

Regular Dharma School classes will begin starting Sunday, Sept. 20th. Dharma School classes will immediately follow Dharma School service. Service and classes will be held in the West wing until the Temple renovations are complete. Due to limited space in the West wing we will be joining the Ogden Dharma School at the Ogden Buddhist Temple for the annual Halloween Party on October 25th. This year's Dharma School teachers are:

Preschool/Kindergarten: Hirabayashi/Faye Eng	Rise
First grade: Kyed/Ryoko Okamoto	Laverne
Second & Third grade: Watanabe	Judy

Fourth & Fifth grade: Christy
Fong/Gail Minaga

Jim Eng and Mark Minaga
Jr. YBA advisors

Sixth grade: Maya
Chow
Jr. YBA: Brenda
Koga
YBA: Troy
Watanabe

Building Update Brenda Koga

We would like to express our gratitude to these teachers for their willingness to volunteer their services for our Dharma School.

Great News!!! As of September 16, 2009, construction is well underway! There is just one more detail to work out with the city, regarding the curb and gutter; but it seems that things are moving in our favor thanks to the negotiations worked out through Bill Nate of Cameron.

Jr. YBA Mark Minaga

Demolition of the kitchen is completed, the main floor restroom has been stripped, new windows have already been installed in the classrooms and part of the hondo and the east side trees and shrubs have been removed. The new window are fabulous and in itself will make a big difference in aesthetics, energy conservation and sound proofing.

Most of the Jr. YBA attended the Mountain States Conference at the Ogden Buddhist Temple. Friday night the Jr. YBA had a sunshine trip reunion and watched a picture/video that brought back many fond memories for all who went on this trip. The Jr. YBA had a sleep over Friday night and on Saturday morning they prepared the continental breakfast before the official beginning of the Mountain States Conference.

Ernie Kyed has been dedicating countless hours working with the contractors and architects on all the details. He and I have been meeting with Bill Nate and Russ Sheffield for the past two Thursdays at 7:00 a.m. The meetings are very productive and comprehensive. I am very impressed by the leadership of those involved.

On Saturday the Jr. YBA listened to Reverend Bishop's talk and enjoyed playing volleyball and playing at the Toad's entertainment center. A couple of the Jr. YBA also participated in the golf outing and the ukulele class.

We are very fortunate to have the skills and knowledge that Ernie brings to the table. As an engineer and "Home Improvement Guru", he possesses insight and problem solving skills that have been invaluable in this process. I have been amazed!

Christy and Bruce Fong have devoted seven years to the Jr. YBA and have officially retired from being the advisors. A picture plaque and gifts was presented to Christy and Bruce for all they have done these past few years for the Jr. YBA. Jim Eng and Mark Minaga are going to take the reign from here and will be the new Jr. YBA advisors.

We also are very fortunate to be working with Cameron Construction. They have been very accommodating and willing to work with our needs. Several times they already have generously donated goods and services to our cause. They have changed my opinion of the stereo-typical contractor.

The big push right now is to get the exterior work completed as quickly as possible

due to the possibility of inclement weather. Please wish for this good weather to continue.

Of course all of this comes with a price. Although we are trying to minimize costs, we will soon begin paying for the expenses. We are very appreciative of all the donors that have contributed in the past and those who fulfilled their original obligations to allow us to initiate this construction project.

In the near future you will be receiving a letter asking again for contributions to not only fund this project, but other building needs which we see forthcoming. There are several additional projects that will require attention, and we hope to address them prior to our temple's centennial celebration in 2012.

Again, if you have questions/concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Service Projects Needed Brenda Koga

Since we are not able to hold our regular Dharma School services and classes, the Jr. YBA and Sr. YBA classes are seeking to find some service projects to complete on Sundays between approximately 10:00 a.m to noon. We are looking to possibly help out some of our **senior members** who are in need of **yardwork, painting and simple repairs.**

If you or someone you know could use this service, please contact **Error! Reference source not found.** as soon as possible at 801-466-6552. The jobs will be prioritized on a first come basis; however, degree of need will be taken into consideration.

Special Awards Jeff Watanabe

The special awards winners for the past three months are as follows:

July Cameron Sueoka
 August Chris Munson
 September Ernie Kyed

October Shotsuki Hoyo *Service will be October 18*

Deceased	Date of death	Next of kin
Akita Sakae	10/25/36	Janet Thomas
Iwasaki Ritsuko	10/25/61	Dean Iwasaki
Kano Gunpei	10/13/65	Marilynn Shimada
Masuko Kyushiro	10/25	John Kasubuchi
Mitsunaga Ruth	10/30/95	Faye Mitsunaga-Eng
Muto Chiyo	10/15/83	
Ninomiya Katsuji	10/20/42	Yoshiko Ninomiya
Nishihara Alice	10/20/90	Greg Matsuura
Oda Mitsuji	10/9/31	Mumatsu Sasaki
Ogawa Fusaye	10/19/31	Sugino
Ogawa Kuma	10/6/19	Sugino
Oike Katsuye	10/14/74	May Koike
Saito Shizuno	10/26/21	Yoshiko Ninomiya
Sasaki Sukeichiro	10/19/68	Charlie Sasaki
Shiba Yoshiro	10/19/52	Yuri Uyeda
Sugiyama Unosuki	10/27/84	
Tadehara Masami	10/9/87	Tadehara Family
Tohinaka George	10/28/95	Ayako Tohinaka
Tokunaga Shigao	10/27/90	Tokunaga Family
Tsuyuki Ikuzo	10/3	Mark Tsuyuki
Wakayama Gerry	10/7/94	Wakayama Family
Yamamoto James	10/25/71	Eleanor Nakamura
Tamagawa Frank	10/18/95	Shizue Tamagawa
Hisae Tsutsui	10/15/01	Geraldine Chappel
Frank Ling	10/02/02	Elaine Fukushima
Betty Yamaguchi	10/8/04	Jeannie Yamaguchi
John Imada	10/24/05	Reiko Imada

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

Richard Matsuno

Kiyoko Okawa

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