



# Buddhist Thoughts

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## View From the Tatami Mat

J.K. Hirano

*The Master said; "I discard myself and sit together with all of you. The Founding Master Shinran also said that persons of shinjin throughout the four seas are all brothers and sisters. Thus, I follow his words. My only wish is that, as we sit together, you will ask me about matters that are unclear to you and that you will realize shinjin." This is what the Master said.*

Words of Master Rennyo

This past month, Carmela and I had the opportunity to attend a seminar in Kyoto, Japan, at Nishi Honganji, the headquarters for our sect of Buddhism. I had been asked to attend this seminar for a number of years; however, because of a variety of reasons, I have had to decline the invitation. This year, because our temple was being renovated and our upcoming tour of Japan for the 750<sup>th</sup> memorial service in 2011, I thought I should go. Carmela had never been to Japan and was planning on going with me on this trip, but not on attending the seminar. However, we heard that there was only one volunteer from BCA to attend this seminar. It was surprising that there weren't many more that would want to attend, but the BCA lay representatives must pay their own way. I guess if your temple didn't pay for your trip, most people didn't want to go, because of the personal expense. As a result they asked Carmela to be one of the representatives. It was well worth the cost.

During the seminar, there were lectures and discussions by Rev. Dr. Ken Tanaka formerly of BCA now living and working in Tokyo as a professor at Musashino University and Rev. Dr. Toshikazu Arai of Soai University. We also had a tour of Chuo Bukkyo Gakuin (my alma mater) and Hino no Tanjo in (the birthplace of Shinran Shonin). There were many activities but I really enjoyed the 750<sup>th</sup> memorial service for Shinran Shonin held at Otani Mausoleum. It was an amazing service. Taking part were over 100 priests wearing some of the most beautiful colored robes I have seen. The Gomonshu-sama was the officiant with his son, the Shinmon-sama assisting. The service had close to fifty classical court musicians playing gagaku music to lead the processional. One of the musicians was Rev. Torimi, a former kaikyoshi in BCA. Gomonshu-sama's robe was without a doubt, the most elaborate robe I had ever seen. The outer seven paneled kesa was intricately embroidered in gold and silk. I asked someone familiar with robes, how much that might have cost. They estimated that its cost was well over \$100,000.00 and probably weighed over ten pounds. This service was one of many leading up to the actual Memorial service to be held at Nishi Honganji in 2011 that we are planning a group tour to. If this service was only a preview, I can't wait to see the real thing. This service lasted about an hour and the priests that first entered the Naijin must have been sitting seiza for over an hour. Just thinking about it made my knees ache. Thank goodness, we had chairs to sit in.

Later that evening the seminar attendees were invited to a dinner with Gomonshu-sama, Governor General Tachibana (administrative head for all of Honganji), Governor Sonooki (administrative head of Honganji international affairs), and Rev. Kiribayashi (Manager of Honganji International Center). It felt very formal to me, but in some ways quite informal. It isn't often that you attend dinner with Gomonshu sama and the leaders of Nishi Honganji. Many of our members probably do not realize how large our organization is. In Japan alone, there are over 10,000 temples, served by over 30,000 priests. Nishi Honganji is considered the largest religious institution in Japan. There are many overseas temples, such as our own, with temples in various parts of the U.S., Canada, Europe, South America, China and our newest country Nepal. At the seminar we had the opportunity to meet and talk with Rev. Sonam Wangdi Bhutia, formerly a Tibetan Buddhist monk, now Nishi Honganji Kaikyoshi in Nepal. I hope to invite him to speak in BCA someday. Nishi Honganji is truly one of the largest Buddhist organizations in the world.

The dinner was formal in that we each had assigned seats. At the main table was Gomonshu-sama, Governor General Tachibana, the two professors, Carmela and a couple of other ministers, I didn't sit at that table. At my table was Governor Sonooki and Rev. Eric Matsumoto of Hawaii and a few lay members from Canada and Hawaii. It seemed that Carmela's table was a little quiet; I think most of the people were a little intimidated in sitting with Gomonshu sama. Of course Carmela is not one to sit back in silence, so she started talking, having personal translators, Rev. Tanaka and Asai right there. I'm not sure what all she talked about but I heard Gomonshu sama commenting to Carmela, "You seem like a really fun person." I wondered to myself, "What could Carmela have said to the Gomonshu to elicit such a comment?" You will have to ask her about her experience.

At my table, I asked Governor Sonooki about the priests at the memorial service that had to sit there for well over an hour. I was wondering what happens to someone with a knee injury or someone that could not sit seiza. He answered simply, "They don't take part in such services." At first I was a little surprised. How many people are there that have problems sitting on their knees for an hour. He went on to explain how that particular ceremony was created to be attended by priests sitting in seiza. If there were chairs, although it may seem superficial, the meaning of the ritual for those taking part would be changed by the change in perspective. It was a very intricate and subtle conversation about the differences in Japan and the west. As Governor Sonooki talked, Rev. Matsumoto and I would look at each other and talk in English to make sure we were getting the subtlety of this conversation. Rev. Matsumoto speaks, reads and writes perfect Japanese, so it was extremely helpful to have him sitting next to me. My first thought when Rev. Sonooki mentioned the rationale of the differences in meaning and understanding by sitting in a chair or sitting in seiza was, that is an extremely ethnocentric attitude. However, I would have a change of heart the following day.

The last day of our seminar, Rev. Gene Sekiya formerly of Fresno, California gave us a tour of the buildings and grounds of Honganji. Up until that day, Rev. Sugimoto and Ms. Tabitha Kobata (daughter of Rev. Ron Kobata) of Honganji International center served as our guides and translators. It was in one of the treasured rooms that were designed for the Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi, that I began to understand what Governor Sonooki was talking about. Hideyoshi was the ruler of Japan, the Shogun, however, he was physically a very small man, just a little less than five feet tall. He had things designed to give him an advantage in those rooms through the use of perspective. For example, a room would be designed to make him look bigger to those entering the room. Even the color on the back wall of a Noh stage was painted to only completely reveal its design when viewed from a distance and not close up. In this particular room we were sitting in, Rev. Sekiya had us stand as he explained the basic details and then he had us sit on the tatami. The change in perspective revealed a number of things that could not be seen when standing. Suddenly you could see birds carved into the transom that could only be viewed while sitting on the tatami and not standing. I then understood what Governor Sonooki was talking about. It is like the statue of Amida Buddha in our naijin, when you stand straight and tall, you cannot see its face. Only when one bows and faces this symbol of Universal Truth with humility can you see its face.

Having had this wonderful opportunity provided by Nishi Honganji has rejuvenated my enthusiasm for my work of sharing the Nembutsu teachings as a Kaikyoshi of Nishi Honganji. Our tradition within Jodo Shinshu is rich with meaning and significance for each of our lives. There are times when we need to adjust our

perspective to see the deeper meaning. This reminded me of this passage that I began this article with. Rennyō Shōnin was the individual most responsible for the spread of Jōdo Shinshū throughout Japan and now the world. He felt that it was while sitting on the tatami mats, equal with the lay people that both he and they would be able to share in the Nembutsu teachings. It is a matter of perspective, it is while sitting on the tatami mat, that he was allowed to fully taste the Nembutsu teachings and I have also been allowed to share in this new perspective. Namo Amida Butsu.

## President's Message Dot Richeda

At our last Temple Board meeting, Ernie Kyed took the board members on a tour of the Temple. The construction in the Temple is going according to schedule. The Temple seemed empty but you can see the work being done. They have started work on the sidewalk and curb. Please be careful when attending church. Again, thank you for your patience and understanding.

As the Temple renovation expenses become due, we will start the second phase of fund raising for the Temple Building Fund. We will be sending out letters for contribution and donations. Please support this important effort. You may either support the Building Fund or make a contribution to the General Fund for every day expenses. Since we cancelled the Food Bazaar, we have a limited income in our General Funds.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Our Next Temple Board Meeting will be November 11, 2009 Wednesday at 6:00 PM.

## STATE OF THE BWA Jane Sakashita

"The purple mountains' majesty" have now turned a copper brown, brilliant orange, golden yellow, and ruby red among the emerald green pines. The miracles of nature abound in Utah and everywhere looks like a beautiful tapestry. Soon when November arrives, the silvery snow will completely drape the city, and we seek ways of surviving the bitter cold. The warmth of the Dharma, however, assist us in overcoming whatever hardships we encounter. The many lessons we learned from the FBWA Conference in Sacramento, as well as the friendships we made, help us to endure the problems we face in life.

Having arrived in Sacramento just prior to the Delegates Meeting, we were unable to join in the various tours that were available. From talking to Mrs. Seiko Tamura of Oxnard, the tour which took the people to the grave site of Okei was most informative. Okei came to the U.S. in the 1800's as a young girl and was homesick for her native land. She was the first Japanese girl at 19 who passed away in the United States.

The conference was presided by FBWA president Hiroko Tsuda, and the meetings were conducted in both Japanese and English. The delegates meeting was attended by Christy Fong, Karie Minaga-Miya, and myself. The meeting rules were cited as 92 delegates voted on the two primary resolutions, resulting in the one resolution being approved that supports the funding for the Center of Buddhist Education. The delegates meeting minutes held in Oakland on October 11, 2008; the general meeting minutes in San Francisco on October 2007; and the treasurer's report through December 31, 2008 were presented. I gave a report on the Youth Exchange students from Japan who were hosted by the Bruce and Christy Fong family and Reverend Jerry and Carmela Hirano. The delegates were totally amazed at the various activities the Ogden and Salt Lake BWA provided the students, making it a memorable experience for the young ladies.

A special Shinron Shōnin 750<sup>th</sup> Memorial Anniversary Service was held with Socho Koshin Ogui and Honorary Advisor Mayumi Ogui greeting the attendees. I attended the meeting featuring the Japanese keynote

speaker, Reverend Shinri Mariko Nishiyama, who stated that to celebrate the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary for one individual (Shinran Shonin) is miraculous. She also spoke about the spread and practice of Buddhism that is necessary to bring peace among the world nations. She frequently thinks about her mother making rice daily for the Obutsudan; believes that a child is a gift from the Buddha; that mothers work so hard to protect and nurture their children, and even through hardships mothers endure. She also urges us to treasure our life, to be yourself, and said that the Nembutsu is most crucial when suffering the most. Unless everyone is happy, one cannot truly be happy, and to appreciate our friendship with others.

The Coast District will host the FBWA conference on October 12-14, 2012 in San Jose; the Southern District in 2014, the location and dates to be determined. Central Cal District will host in 2016. A history of the FBWA was given by Jeanette Arakawa who is the current Secretary General to the World Conference, along with Janet Kameda. Mrs. Arakawa is working on the history of the BWA in the U.S., and any information we could add to her records will be appreciated.

At the final banquet, I was honored to receive, in behalf of the Salt Lake BWA, the BCA Certificate of Appreciation for our generous donation to the Campaign BCA - the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Also at the banquet Bruce and Christy Fong's daughter, Jennifer, gave an excellent, extraordinary report on her visit to Japan on the Youth Exchange Program. George and Ruby Doi's daughter-in-law, Janice, participated in the invitation to the next FBWA conference in San Jose. The conference concluded with a Dharma message by Reverends Diane Johnson and Mariko Nishiyama and the installation of the 2011-2012 FBWA officers.

The 14<sup>th</sup> World Buddhist Women's Convention will be held in Kyoto in May, 2011. Tours are being arranged by Kintetsu and JTB travel agencies. Monshu Koshin Ohtani's book, "The Buddha's Wish for the World" was also promoted at the conference..

This opportunity you gave me as a representative to the conference was an exhilarating experience for me--being greeted so friendly by the many ministers whom I knew, acknowledged warmly by several attendees from previous conferences, making new friends with whom I will correspond, and returning home with Christy, Jennifer and Karie knowing that Buddhism will continue to thrive when there was so much enthusiasm, achievement and competence among the BWA members. I thank you sincerely for this wonderful finale as your chapter and district president.

Our October 8<sup>th</sup> meeting was held at 9:15 a.m. in the West Wing of our temple. *Please note that our next meeting will be held on November 15 at 9:15 a.m.* and a Food Sale will be held on November 22, the day of the Eitaikyo service. Also, the Building Committee has asked the BWA to dust and clean the Obutsudan pieces before they are placed in the newly renovated temple, the date and time to be determined at a later meeting.

We are grateful to Fran Akimoto for the refreshments at the October meeting. I'll appreciate your attendance at the November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting at 9:15 a.m. Thank you.

## Salt Lake Jr. YBA

### Jim Eng & Mark Minaga

The Jr. YBA held their elections for the 2009-2010 Dharma School Year. The officers are as follows:

President – Trey Imamura

Vice President – K.J. Adachi

Secretary – Kayla Watanabe

Treasurer – Matthew Minaga

Thank you Brenda Koga for planning all the service projects for the kids. The Jr. YBA did a yard clean up for

a needy person in the area and will be doing other service projects during the holiday season.

The Jr. YBA are continuing the sale of scrip orders for the next bus trip to Northern California to visit a few of the Buddhist temples. We appreciate all your support with this fundraiser for our kids!

## Dharma School Registration

### Brenda Koga

The following Dharma School parents have registered students for the 2009-10 school year. Please check this listing.

If you feel there has been an error or if you need a registration form, please contact Brenda Koga (466-6552) as soon as possible. A directory will be compiled by the end of November using the registration information.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Dave and Holly Black, Chuck and Maya Chow, Samuel and Akemi Dean, Jim and Faye Eng, Bruce and Christy Fong, Nathan and Maria Friedline, Brian and Tammy Fukushima, Mike and Connie Furubayashi, Sherrie Hayashi and Mark Masters, Dean and Rise Hirabayashi, Rick and Bobbie Ikegami, Kirk and Lisa Imamura, Lisa Joko, Ernest and LaVerne Kyed, Mark and Gail Minaga, Ed and Tina Munson, Paul and Karen Seo, Mike and Karen Tohinaka, Robert and Tami Tokita, Jeff and Silvana Watanabe, Troy and Judy Watanabe, Rev. Jerry and Carmela Hirano.

## Building Update

As of the writing of this article, the following is the latest update on the construction project.

Cameron Construction continues to move ahead at a steady and quick pace. To date all the windows have been replaced. You will find some new light coming from above in the gymnasium and the entire room will be brighter with the lighter paint and new sound panels.

The new addition behind the onaijin has been framed and dry walled with some open storage available above the addition. A new canopy entryway has been created over the door leading directly to the hondo with a cement ramp allowing caskets to be wheeled directly into the hondo.

Cement work on the front stairs with a new ramp is now completed, along with new curb and gutter in front of the temple. The huge drop off into the gutter which has long been a safety hazard has been eliminated. Also the back patio area has been enlarged to include a handicapped parking stall.

The foyer, classrooms and main hallway have had repair work done to the walls and are being prepped for painting. The sliding door in the classrooms now has been replaced with new doors to match the decorative windows.

Work has begun in the kitchen with ductwork for a swamp cooler and the new hood and ventilation system. Work also continues to upgrade, restore and repair the soffit and fascia around the building.

Cameron is still projecting completion around November 30 or first week of December, depending on the weather. Due to all the construction activity, it is recommended that if you would like to see the temple that you contact Ernie Kyed or myself.

## We Have a Star Among Us

Congratulations to Emma Munson who recently has been featured in several newspaper articles regarding her performance as Alice in the production of "Radio Hour: Alice" which is an adaptation of Alice in Wonderland. Emma has received great reviews regarding her role in the show, which is presented by Plan B Theatre Company at the Rose Wagner Theatre. The show is virtually sold out for almost the entire run.

Emma is the daughter of Ed and Tina Aoki Munson. She is a member of the Jr. YBA.

Way to go, Emma!

## November Shotsuki Hoyo

November 22, 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	Rick Ikegami
Imada Mitaro	1/24/51	Matsuyo Imada
Imada Wasaburo	11/17/67	Shizuko Imada
Kaizumi Maki		Craig Kaizumi
Kashima Sawaki Kiyo	11/23/93	Hitoshi Suenaga
Kobayashi Naoki	11/13/71	Ken Kobayashi
Koga Sue	11/16/74	Koga Family
Koseki Toraji	11/22/79	Kathy Terashima
Matsuura GeorgeIwao	11/11/29	Ken Matsuura
Mitsunaga Tsurukichi	11/24/25	Tomio Mitsunaga
Muraki Yachiyo	11/21/87	Sam Muraki
Oishi Umeko	11/3/78	Victor 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	Dave Sekino
Sugino Mitsuye	11/29/91	Bob Sugino
Takagi Tami	11/25/89	Nancy Takagi
Watanabe Hikomune	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
Sudoku Taro	11/29/04	Nobue Sudoku
Sumiko Hattori	11/4/05	Gary Koga
Henry Imamura	11/11/07	Masako Imamura

## **BCA FBWA STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

The Mountain States BWA is happy to announce that we are accepting applications for the BCA Federation of Buddhist Women's Association (FBWA) Student Exchange Program for 2010. We will be sending two girls to Japan in the summer of 2010. The program in Japan is usually held around the end of July through the beginning of the first week of August, lasting for about two weeks.

This is a homestay program open to girls who are high school seniors or currently a college student of Jodo Shinshu faith, as a means of nurturing future leaders for Jodo Shinshu women's activities.

Travel expenses (minimum round trip air fares) from the United States to Japan shall be financed by the Federation.

Participants shall make a written report of their experiences to the Federation. In addition, an oral report shall be encouraged when a Federation conference is scheduled. All expenses of the youth to the conference will be paid by the Federation.

You may create this form in the word processing format of your choice or you may request to have the application sent to you in Word or WordPerfect format from your temple representative. Please write as much as you feel is needed to convey your answers.

Applications are due no later than January 4, 2010 so that the selection can be made to give whoever is selected time to obtain their passport.

Complete and return the application to your temple representative:

- Tri-State Buddhist Temple: Mitzi Kishiyama - kishiyamam@q.com
- Ogden Buddhist Temple: Ruth Kawashima - rakawashima@hotmail.com
- Salt Lake Buddhist Temple: Christy Fong - christykf@hotmail.com



## BWA Donations Connie Sakashita

Setsuko Nagata – Eshinniko Seminar	20
Yukie Okubo – Eshinniko Donation	30
Yuriko Matsuno - Special	15
Mary Kawakami Donation	100
Jerry & Carmela Hirano - LV Trip Donation	50
Takako Ogata (NV) - Obon donation	15
Nobu Aoki - Special	50
Maxine Furubayashi - Special	20
Jane Sakashita - Mt. St District Conf Donation	25
Paul Terashima - Special	25
Chizuko Ishimatsu - Special	25

### BWA Steak Picnic Donations

Alice Ogura	26
Christy Fong	25
Connie Sakashita	25
Grace Oshita	20
Lynne Doi	50
Maya Chow	25
Reiko Watanabe	25
Renee Matsuura	25
Ruth Kawashima	25
Tammara Kuramoto	20

### BWA Membership Pd

Susan Furubayashi                      Joni Sueoka

## OCTOBER DONATIONS Maya Chow

Kazuko Yakumo	50 Mtn States Conference
Kazuko Yakumo	20 Ohigan
Shizuye Nakagiri	25 Shotsuki Hoyo
Grace Oshita	25 Ohigan
Richard & Lynne Doi	25 Ohigan
Stan & Elaine Endo	50 Ohigan
Stan & Elaine Endo	50 Shotsuki Hoyo

Brenda Koga	50	Mountain States Conference
Miyake Family	75	25 yr memorial for Mitsuyoshi Miyake
Hideo & Kayoko Uno	100	Special
Eleanor & Scott Sasaki	25	Shotsuki Hoyo
Faye & Jim Eng	30	Shotsuki Hoyo
Charlie Sasaki	20	Shotsuki Hoyo
Dave Sekino	50	Shotsuki Hoyo
Tami & Robert Tokita	40	Shotsuki Hoyo

#### BUILDING FUND

Koyo Restaurant	100
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#### MEMBERSHIP DUES

Rick & Susan Spehar (Sydnie)  
Ichiro & Takeko Doi (2010)

#### JR YBA

Brenda Koga	50	Bus trip
Chizuko and Tomiye Ishimatsu	50	Appreciation

#### DOBO GAKKO

Cameron Sueoka	100	Special Awards
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