



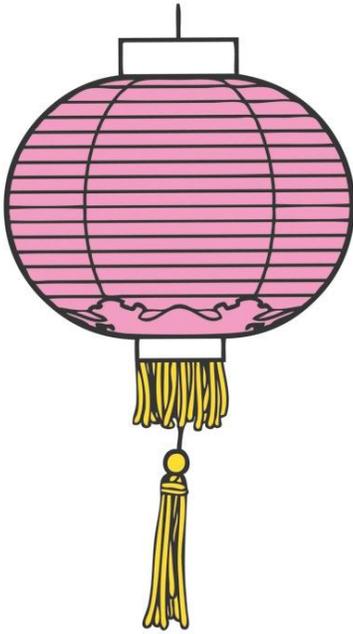
Buddhist Thoughts

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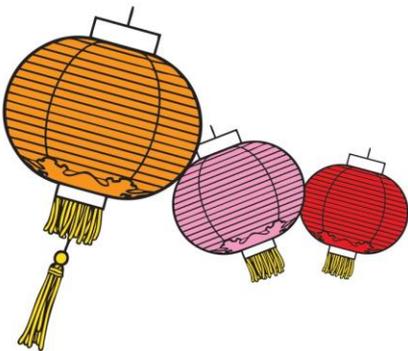
SALT LAKE BUDDHIST TEMPLE OBON JAPANESE FESTIVAL

Saturday, July 12, 2014
211 West 100 South, SLC



Japanese food served from 1 pm
Japanese items and gifts for sale
Snack bar open from 3:00-10:00
Memorial Lanterns are \$5

Chapel Tours 2:00-7:00
Taiko Drum Exhibition 7:00
Obon Street Dancing 8:00



For further information
www.slbuddhist.org

Obon is to Live in Joy (A Time to Let Go and Just Dance)

J.K. Hirano

Death may be our greatest teacher. Whether the death is that of a loved one or the thought and fear of our own, there is no denying its strength in teaching us how we should live. Death comes in many forms. One of the most important Buddhist teachings is the law of impermanence. Change is also a form of death.

Teriyaki Priest

I'm quite surprised at my reaction to my daughter Kacie's moving away for college. The hollow feeling inside and the irritating, uncomfortable emotions I am living with, although not new, have surprised me at how they have surfaced as a result of her moving away. I understand that I have not lost my child to physical death. The emotions I am experiencing are like the feeling of breaking up after a long-term relationship. In Buddhism, we usually categorize the death of a loved one as "Aibetsu Riku" the suffering associated with being separated from those we love. The degree of separation is secondary to the experience of loss itself. Separation from those we love, whether physical or mental does not resolve the empty feeling of loss that this form of suffering causes us. It is not only about physical death.

For most of Kacie's life, since she was aware of college and the necessity of her getting a college education, we have discussed where she would go. She has wanted to move to California for years. There is a fascination with California for many young people growing up in Utah. I remember when I was a teenager there were many of my friends wanting to live in the Sunshine State. I was always a strong advocate of attending the University of Utah. I think it is an ego thing -- "It was good enough for me; it should be good enough for my daughters." As with Katie, my stepdaughter and Carmela's daughter, we believed it was ridiculous to spend the exorbitant out of state tuition in California for an undergraduate degree. Although Katie didn't like the idea at first, upon graduating from the U of U and then moving to California to Stanford for graduate school, although not stating that we were right, she agreed that it was the right path for her. Besides, I was definitely a Mama's boy as my friends and family will attest to. Why would I leave a comfortable home and my mother's delicious cooking and pampering to make it on my own?

The suffering I am experiencing isn't so much a result of Kacie's actions, but my own ego-centered feelings of the way I think things should be, and once again, my ego resisting change and impermanence. For Kacie, her life is just right for her. It is not good or bad but just right for her. It is the same for me, my life is just right for me. However, my ego has created this scenario of how things should be. The world should center upon my desires rather than needs and my daughters should be with me always, but how is this possible?

Kacie wrote me a note for Father's day stating that no matter where she is I will always be in her heart. I believe this may be the only way of understanding our feelings of loss from "Aibetsu riku." We create our suffering by living a life of ego-centered feelings. Those we truly love are always with us, in our hearts. The tie we have with them, whether short or long, makes us who we are. Relationships of all types are constantly changing, whether or not we want them to. We can only live with them. We must find the meaning and significance for how they allow us to live at this moment, not in the ego constructed past or future, but in the eternal now.

To understand Obon, we must understand why we also call it “Kangi E” (a Gathering of Joy). It is a gathering of joy when we can recognize this connection with all life, past and present that allows us to live in this moment. Kacie’s birth over 18 years ago has helped to shape this life I am living at this moment. Her moving away is also allowing me to better understand who I am. During Obon when I dance, I experience and acknowledge the changes and impermanence of life. While I dance, I am able to let go of the ego attachments of how I think things should be and recognize the joy in how they are. The sufferings in my life are only suffering to my ego self, but for me, they are just right. As I dance during Obon, I also recognize how my deceased Mother, Father, Grandparents and those who have touched my life, both living and dead are with me at all times. If it were not for them, I would not have this moment of Joy. This dancing in Joy is a physical embodiment of the Nembutsu. It is the dance of life, the call of Amida Buddha.

I hope that those of you who have experienced “Aibetsu riku” namely all of you reading this, will join us at Obon and let go, dance and experience the embrace of compassion. We are never truly alone. Namo Amida Butsu. Our Obon Dance this year will be on July 12th. The Obon/Hatsubon service will be on July 13th at 1:00 pm.

Hongan: Hope for the Damned (Part II)

Carmela Javellana Hirano M.D.
(continued from Buddhist Thoughts June 2014)

Hope for the Damned

The answers to these questions can be found in the ancient wisdom of the sutras, specifically the Triple Sutras of the Pure Land Tradition. The sutras were expounded upon by Sakyamuni Buddha out of his clear understanding and great compassion for suffering beings, including the “mentally ill.”

In the *Contemplation Sutra*, Queen Vaidehi, in the depths of utter depression and hopelessness, tells the Buddha, “*I beseech you, World-Honored One, please explain to me in detail a place that is free of sorrows and afflictions. I wish to be born there. I do not wish to live in this defiled world of Jambudvipa, filled with beings in hell, hungry spirits, and animals, and where there are many vile beings. I wish that, henceforth, I may hear no evil words and see no evil people.*” (p. 22, *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, Vol. I, Shin Buddhism Translation Series.)

The Buddha, in response, “prescribes” various levels of contemplations from difficult to easy, though still self-powered (p. 137, *Appendices, Three Pure Land Sutras Vol. II*) leading to “*birth attained beneath the twin sala trees: borderland and the realm of pride and indolence.*” Shinran wrote about this in *Hymns of the Pure Land Masters* (p. 377-378, v. 65 & 66, CWS I):

*“Sakyamuni, revealing the “essential” gate
To lead people of meditative and nonmeditative practices
And provisionally teaching the right and sundry practices
Wholly urges us to perform the saying of the Name alone.*

*Performing auxiliary and right practices together is “mixed praxis”
Since those who endeavor in this way*

*Have not attained the mind that is single,
They lack the heart that responds in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence."*

The Buddha's benevolence may be understood as the matter-of-fact universal laws of cause-and-effect, impermanence, and interdependence, and the healing power of unconditional love. This love is embedded in the phrase "Namo Amida Butsu," which means "I take refuge in Amida Buddha." "Taking refuge" is a leap of faith in what one considers to be safe, unwavering, and reliable, definitely that which goes beyond the working of the human ego. If human love is limited and self-centered, the only "cure" has to be based on factual evidence that kindness and compassion exist without having to ask for them. The selfless service of the natural world and its provision of life-sustaining resources, the labors of countless beings, despite their own self-centeredness, the multitude of "things" that make living convenient and comfortable – these are concrete manifestations of dynamic compassion at work – *Hongan* itself -- can be experienced directly with Naikan (self-reflection) – as developed by Ishin Yoshimoto (1916-1988), a devout Shin Buddhist. (Naikan: Gratitude, Grace, and the Japanese Art of Self-Reflection by Gregg Krech by Stone Bridge Press, 2001.)

Out of the Buddha's benevolence came the sutras, such as the Three Pure Land Sutras, which reveal the Vow of Amida Buddha to save all sentient beings, as stated in the Larger Sutra of Bodhisattva Dharmakara's 18th Vow (*Hongan*):

*"If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, who, with sincere and entrusting heart, aspire to be born in my land and say my name even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment. *Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right Dharma."* (p. 22, Vol. II, The Three Pure Land Sutras, Shin Buddhism Translation Series.)

Along with the other 47 vows, *Hongan*, the Primal Vow, are specifically targeted towards suffering human beings without exception. The exclusion clause* highlights the gravity of the 5 grave offenses (killing mother, killing father, killing an arhat, disrupting the harmony of the sangha, and spilling the blood of the Buddha) and slandering the right dharma.

If the sutras were meant for all suffering beings, then they would hold up to the timelessness of human suffering itself, without discrimination or exclusion, and therefore can be understood, interpreted, and made relevant now, as they were 2600 years ago. They also explain how the medicine of the 18th Vow embodied in Namo Amida Butsu works – it works because of its unconditionality, reliability, constancy, and transcendence of "defiled" human ego. Therefore it is pure, sincere, comes to us of its own accord, very natural, and easy.

The *Amida Sutra* states the cause of birth in the Pure Land (i.e., the efficacy of the Buddha's medicine for mental illness): *"Sariputra, one cannot be born in that land through the cause of small roots of good and small virtues...if a good person, either a man or a woman who, on hearing of Amida Buddha, holds steadfast to the Name single-mindedly and unwaveringly for one day, two days, three, four, five, six, or seven days, that Amida Buddha, along with a multitude of sacred beings will appear before that person at the moment of death. At the moment of death, that person, without becoming distraught, will immediately be born in Amida Buddha's Land of Perfect Bliss."* (p. 8-9, Vol. I, The Three Pure Land Sutras, Shin Buddhism Translation Series.)

Likewise, in the *Contemplation Sutra*, the Buddha told Ananda and Queen Vaidehi: *“Those who attain birth in the lowest rank are as follows: suppose there are sentient beings who commit such evils as the five grave offenses and the ten transgressions, thus burdened with all kinds of evil. Such a foolish person, because of his evil deeds, is destined to fall into evil realms, where he transmigrates for many kalpas and suffers agonies endlessly. When he is about to die, he may meet a true teacher who consoles him in various ways and, preaching the wondrous Dharma, advises him to be mindful of the Buddha. But he is too tormented by pain to do so. Then this good friend says to him, ‘If you cannot concentrate your thought on the Buddha, you should simply recite the Name of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life.’”* (p. 59-60, Vol. I, The Three Pure Land Sutras, Shin Buddhism Translation Series.)

Shinran (p. 29-30, CWS I) wrote how Sakyamuni urged his own father the King to practice nembutsu-samadhi: *“His father, the King said to the Buddha: Why do you not have me, a disciple of yours, practice the virtue attained in the Buddha-stage – suchness, true reality, the highest truth of emptiness? The Buddha answers his father: The virtue attained by the Buddhas is a realm unfathomably profound and excellent, where one attains supernatural powers and emancipation from blind passions. Since this is not a realm to be practiced by foolish beings, I encourage you, my father the King, thus to practice nembutsu-samadhi.”*

Here, Shinran explains the Buddha’s great compassion for his father by sparing him the mechanics of difficult practice, and follow the easy path instead of nembutsu-samadhi.

“His father the King asked the Buddha, “What are the characteristics of the working of the Nembutsu?” The Buddha replied to his father the King:

Suppose there is a forest of eranda trees forty yojanas square, in which there is a single gosirsa-candana tree. The candana has roots and sprouts, but has yet to arise forth from the soil. The eranda forest emits only foul odors, without the least trace of a pleasant scent. If one should ingest its flowers or fruit, one goes insane and dies. In time, the roots and sprouts of the candana gradually shoot forth, and just as it grows into a tree, its fragrance fills the air, finally transforming the forest and imparting everywhere its own fragrance. Sentient beings who see this are struck with wonder.”

The Buddha said to his father the King: “Thus is the heart of the nembutsu for all sentient beings in birth-and-death. If one simply engages in the nembutsu and does not cease, without fail one is born into the Buddha’s presence. Once one has attained birth, all one’s evils are immediately transformed and one realizes great compassion. This is likened to the transformation of the eranda tree by the fragrant [candana] tree.”

The cultivation of a sincere and entrusting heart-mind aspiring for birth in the Pure Land is like growing this fragrant tree and ultimately eradicating the scent of the foul-smelling tree. The seed of the candana tree is planted with *Namo Amida Butsu*, and nurtured by *Namo Amida Butsu*, just as human beings’ *bon no* is transformed to enlightenment by *Namo Amida Butsu*.

CONCLUSION:

In our contemporary times, there is a great need, and I dare say, great hunger for “effective” medicine. The plight of mental illness is universal in the sense that the mind of self-power cannot possibly enlighten itself. It has to rely on the mind of enlightenment itself -- the mind of Truth -- whose light penetrates all delusion and whose compassion excludes no one. If the sutras are authentic, then the truth

embodied in them would ring true to those who have never even encountered the Nenbutsu teachings.

The Triple Sutras provide insight into the timelessness of body-mind suffering itself, and deepen our multidimensional understanding of the human condition. Health care professionals, including those in the mental health field, have to be guided by something of unquestionable integrity. The Bodhisattva path, which Dharmakara undertook when he formulated his 48 Vows to become Amida Buddha, offers a clear path for the therapist/physician. The six paramitas – generosity, ethics, energetic effort, perseverance, mindfulness and wisdom – constitute the aspiration of every helping professional in not only understanding their own weaknesses as mere human beings, but also in conveying this message of understanding, acceptance, and compassion to their patients.

Shinran interpreted the 3 sutras on their “explicit” and implicit” meanings for the Nenbutsu followers of his time. So too should people in the 21st century be encouraged to bring understanding and significance of these ancient and well-tested principles into their own lives, here in the West. Our verbal and nonverbal communications carry explicit and implicit messages that require us all to *deeply listen* to each other and orient our minds towards the Wisdom and Compassion in the here and now, towards Amida Buddha.

To be a human being is to be Bombu. To be Bombu is to be mentally and physically tortured by delusion, endless craving and hatred. To suffer in this way is to be wounded, vulnerable and open. To be open is to allow oneself to receive whatever is given. To receive is to entrust oneself in the process with some degree of faith that what one is receiving could alleviate the pain of that wound, because nothing else has helped, even to the best of one’s ability. To recognize the limits of one’s ability and egoic manipulations is to be damned in one’s powerlessness and inefficacy. To be powerless is to be humbled, which gives way to gratitude. To be grateful is to be content, joyful, and peaceful. This is how Namo Amida Butsu offers a path of hope in the contemporary damnation of mental illness.

Hatsubon 2014

(Hatsubon means first Obon after death)

1 Roy Endo	7/22/2013	Ogden (O)
2 Mary Shizuko Okada	9/1/2013	Honeyville (H)
3 Ben Tsutomu Terashima	9/3/2013	Salt Lake (SLC)
4 Milton Nobuyuki Yagi	9/4/2013	H
5 Hatsue Masuda	9/16/2013	SLC
6 Miyuki Nakano	11/24/2013	SLC
7 Tadayoshi Sameshima	11/22/2013	O
8 Jayden Endo	12/5/2013	O
9 Yuriko Iwamoto	12/12/2013	SLC
10 Kiyoshi Aoki	12/22/2013	H
11 Harry Kazutoshi Fukuda	12/31/2013	H
12 Ida Hiraga Watanabe	1/9/2014	SLC
13 Roy Shiki	1/13/2014	O
14 Rose Yoshiko Watamura	1/20/2014	SLC
15 Jeanne Toyoko Nagao	1/31/2014	H

16 Yoshiko Ida Ninomiya	2/20/2014	SLC
17 Ethan Zachary Cone-Uemura	2/26/2014	SLC
18 Masako Imamura	2/25/2014	SLC
19 Grace Shinako Kasai	3/8/2014	SLC
20 Ted Teruo Yamada	3/28/2014	O
21 Debbie Yoshimura	4/7/2014	O
22 Asano Higashiyama	3/29/2014	O
23 Sumiye Taniguchi	4/3/2014	H
24 Dale Kano	5/30/2014	O
25 Misuko June Shimada	6/3/2014	O, SLC

Each of these names represents more than an individual. They were fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters. These twenty five names represent hundreds of individuals who have been touched by death over the past year. These Dharma friends were loved and had touched the lives of many and their influence lives on in this world.

Amida Buddha's compassion embraces us in the worlds of past, present and future. Obon is the bridge of love that spans these worlds. It is a time we breach the divide that we put up between them and us. It allows us to celebrate along with our Mothers and Fathers, Grandfathers and Grandmothers, brothers and sisters who have died before us. We dance in love. We gather in joy. In Love, the world of the living and dead are one.

Our Obon festival is on July 12th, we can use the help of all members and friends in preparation. If you are available to help, please see Dot Richeda.

Shotsuki Hoyo

July 13, 1:00 pm

Deceased	Date of Death	Next of Kin
Beppu Yoshio	7/25/55	Jane Sakashita
Fujii Daiji		Amy Tomita
Hasegawa Masuta	7/1/81	Roxanne Hasegawa
Kameda Tasaku	7/14/84	
Konishi Becky	7/14/91	Jeanne Konishi
Konishi Isamu Lawrence	7/1/91	JeanneKonishi
Matsuda Kanji	7/1/63	Dick Matsuda
Matsumiya Kaoru	7/1/54	Sego Matsumiya
Matsumori Tome	7/12/86	
Matsuura Yosaku	7/31/40	Reiko Matsuura
Mochizuki Jiro		Jerry Mochizuki
Nishida Roy Kazuo	7/10/03	Aiko Okada
Okino Shoichi	7/31/89	Kazuko Okino
Sanada Shintatsu Rev.	7/6/82	Tracy Roberson
Sasaki Shozo	7/73	Charlie Sasaki
Satomura Tome	7/20/86	Kimiko Mizuta
Sugino Kizo	7/28/52	Bob Sugino
Tohinaka Heizo	7/15/53	Sachiko Tohinaka

Yamaguchi Hoshiro	7/14/91	Jeanne Yamaguchi
Sumida Kimiyo	7/9/95	Barbara Mitsunaga
Tadehara Yukiyei	7/22/98	Amy Tomita
Roy Naosaburo Tachiki	7/16/01	Steven Tachiki
Ken Ogura	7/20/07	Alice Ogura
Rowena Ling	7/21/07	Elaine Fukushima
Henry Hirano	7/29/11	Jerry Hirano

COME AND JOIN US!!

2014 OBON FESTIVAL ACTIVITES

JULY 12, 2014-SATURDAY SCHEDULE

- FOOD: 1:00 – 8:00 PM
- YBA SNACK BAR 3:00 – 10:00 PM
- SALT LAKE BLDG FUND 1:00 - 10:00 PM
- CHAPEL TOURS: 2:00 - 6:00 PM
- DANCE FESTIVAL:
 - OGDEN TAIKO GRP 7:00 - 8:00 PM
 - OBON DANCE 8:00 - 10:00 PM

JULY 13, 2014-SUNDAY SCHEDULE

1:00 pm OBON_SERVICE:

OBON CEMETARY VISITS

July 11th 6:00 pm Redwood Memorial States
 7:00 p.m. Mt. View Memorial Estates
 July 13th 10:00 pm Salt Lake City Cemetery
 beginning at the Northernmost section