Discovering Shinran -- the Prolific Poet, Songwriter

By Lila Tsuda Grant

Shinran Shinon, founder of Shin Buddhism, was a poet and songwriter. My curiosity and eagerness to learn about Shinran’s poems and hymns is what attracted me to attend the “Winter Pacific Seminar – 21st Century” with the theme “Softened Words of Praise” – An In-Depth Look at Shinran’s Wasan.” I was totally unaware that many of the hymns written by Shinran Shonin in 21st century were actually Japanese wasan or hymns written by Shinran Shonin in praise or admiration for Amida, the Seven Pure Land Masters, and their doctrine.

Shinran wrote wasan to confirm his own understanding of Shin Buddhism and to convey his views to laypersons – everyday people like me. As promised, the keynote session by Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto did take me on an in-depth look at Shinran’s Wasan. What a delight to experience Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto for himself: today, many of these wasan are part of the Shin Buddhist service rituals.

The weekend was an opportunity for temple leaders to come together and to hear how the Dharma is manifesting itself throughout the BCA. Even though each temple is different and unique, the theme of making the Dharma available for all was visible. The weekend was positive and inspiring, and those who attended were INVigorated and left with new ideas to share with their temples.

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**Invitation to the 2019 Ryukoku – IBS Lectures**

**JSC to Host Ryukoku Lectures in March**

By Rev. Dr. Mutsumi Fujiiwara Wondra
Orange County Buddha Church

The 2019 Ryukoku Lectures are scheduled from 6 to 9 p.m. on March 12 and March 14 at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, and the special guest speaker will be Dr. Yukio Hayashi, professor of the Department of History at Ryukoku University.

When I visited Professor Hayashi in his Ryukoku office last September, the first thing that I noticed was the colorful tablecloth and his friendly smile. I immediately felt as if I were entering the different world. After talking with him for a couple of minutes, I became absorbed by his talk describing his stay in Thailand.

Professor Hayashi researched and studied at the Chulalongkorn University in Thailand in 1981 and completed the doctoral course. In 2001, he was conferred the doctoral degree from the Department of Human and Environmental Studies of Kyotou University.

His specialty is the history of Buddhism, particularly the Theravada Buddhism in the Southeast Asian countries. He worked as a vice-president at the National University of Ethology in Osaka.
by Richard A. Stambul
BCA President

Early on a freezing, yet sunny Thursday morning, I’m walking on the Philosopher’s Path in Kyoto. The route got its name, “Philosopher’s,” because of the influential 20th-century Japanese philosopher and Kyoto University professor, Nishida Kitaro, who believed that using it for daily meditation was good for the soul.

The path follows a cherry tree-lined canal between Ginkaku-ji and Nanzen-ji temples, and passes a number of other temples and shrines. It’s beautiful, peaceful and one of my favorite places in Kyoto.

In the distance I spot an elderly man walking toward me. He’s wearing slacks, a casual shirt and backpack. He stops me and asks in almost perfect English, “Do you walk here often?”

I’m taken aback and surprised by the approach. So we introduce ourselves to each other and a conversation begins. Mr. Tanaka, on his way to Kyoto University, shares his name, I’m told, because an innumerable cause and connection between the stranger and myself is held not only in Buddhist thought and is the glue that connects me personally with Shin Buddhists across BCA’s temples in America. And kindness is what I think about the innumerable causes and connections that impact our lives every day, but perhaps meeting Mr. Tanaka on the path wasn’t a simple coincidence. Perhaps it was a life lesson. Mr. Tanaka is a Shin Buddhist, and maybe his kindness grows out of a sense that we are all deeply and profoundly connected with each other.

Shin Buddhists talk a great deal about coincidences, about the innumerable causes and conditions that impact our lives every day, but perhaps meeting Mr. Tanaka on the path wasn’t a simple coincidence. Perhaps it was a life lesson. Mr. Tanaka is a Shin Buddhist, and maybe his kindness grows out of a sense that we are all deeply and profoundly connected with each other.

Path, the kindness involved in offering a welcome greeting to a stranger, as Mr. Tanaka had done when he saw me.

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The Buddhist Churches of America Federation of Women’s Associations (FBWA) has been receiving special donations in support of the 16th World Buddhist Women’s Convention, to be held from August 30 to September 1, 2019 in San Francisco, California.

The names below represent women being recognized and honored for their sacrifice, hard work, dedication, generosity, pursuit of the Buddha-Dharma, and help in the propagation of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. In recognizing your Out家人, mother, sister, or group of women, you are also honoring them for the very special role they have played in your life. Your name, together with the names of those you wish to honor, will be written on ten colored “Bodhi Leaves” corresponding to your donation level (please see donation form). The Bodhi leaves will be put on display throughout the weekend at the World Buddhist Women’s Convention website and click on the “Donation” button to download the form.

For information or questions, please contact Terri Masuda at terriamasuda@wbwconvention.org.

Donors are listed first, followed by the honoree’s name (in bold print). Thank you to all of you, and Arigato Obachan and all honorees!

Yoshi Yao – Sacho Iwami, Sacho Matsui, Priscilla Kojimoto – Mitsu Kojimoto, Sadame Kojimoto, Setsko Hara, Taiko Hara, Norma Eng-Wong, Minato Yamada, Shika Ide, Chisa Ide Fukuda, Susan Clark, Mary Jo Kaneko, Ann Kaneko - Mikiyo Nakamura, Ralph & Masayo Doi, Eitsuko Matsuda, Helen Inaba Nakamura, Troy, Hama, Margaret Itsuyo Morimoto, Judith Chizuko Morimoto Ishikawa ~ Sakiya Kono, Wakayo Itatani, BCA FBWA is a duly recognized organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Tax ID #94-1498382

BCA Job Announcement

The Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) is seeking an administrative assistant to provide administrative support and organizational skills to maintain the administrative and receptionist duties for the national headquarters office located in San Francisco. BCA offers non-exempt hours on Monday to Friday, 40 hours a week. Some weekends and overnights may be required.

Requirements:
- At least two years of college experience
- Strong interpersonal, oral and written communications skills
- Excellent organizational and clerical ability
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office and organizational experience
- Employment with the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) is considered a plus

The position is open until filled.

BCA Facilities Manager

The Buddhist Churches of America is seeking a facilities manager to oversee all aspects of facilities management for the national headquarters building in San Francisco and the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temple Center in Berkeley.

The facilities manager is responsible for providing efficient and safe environments for employees, students, and visiting guests.

The position is full-time, exempt and reports to the administrative office. Some nights and weekends are required and the position must be available to respond to and handle emergency situations.

Duties include:
- Managing the maintenance and repairs of the buildings including telecommunications, HVAC, and security
- Overseeing the efficient allocation of space and scheduling

Qualifications:
- High school diploma, bachelor’s degree or some college preferred
- Excellent interpersonal communications skills
- Strong problem analysis, planning and organizational skills
- General knowledge of electrical, mechanical, and plumbing systems
- Ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously

Employment with the Buddhist Churches of America is considered a plus. Salary is commensurate with experience. BCA offers a full benefits package that includes paid leave, medical benefits, and retirement plan.

For more information, call 510-300-8883 to apply, submit cover letter and resume to Gayle Naguchi, Administrative Officer at gnmaguchi@bcahq.org.
MARCH 2019

In his annual letter on behalf of the BCA Endowment Foundation, Charles Ozaki emphasized the importance of the long-term, rather than short-term fluctuations in the financial markets. The Endowment is an example of how the generosity of BCA members, guided by long-term investment strategies, can contribute to Buddhist education and outreach programs.

The Buddhist Churches of America Endowment Foundation’s 2018 Report Detailed

Support Buddhist Education Through BCA Endowment Foundation

The Buddhist Churches of America Endowment Foundation invests funds in equities, real assets and bonds to generate income and grow assets for donors, the Buddhist Churches of America and other affiliated organizations. The members, invested long term in order to benefit from growth of the financial markets that occurs through several financial cycles. The establishment of the Reverend Yoshittaka Tamai Chair endowed fund is an example of how donations have contributed to the program of IBS for many years.

In support of BCA fundraising efforts in 1986 members of the Treasure Chest Denver Buddhist Temples set a goal of raising $100,000 for the Tamai Chair and when that goal was exceeded a new goal of $500,000 was established and met in 1992 and supplemented by an additional $36,542 in donations over the years to a total of $636,542. Since the Tamai Chair fund was established, $1,185,877 in earnings has been provided over the years to the IBS for its programs and the fund balance is now at $822,365 to be invested to provide earnings in future years to the IBS.

Paramita. Every year, twice a year, we think about going to the Other Shore. This shore is samsara. The Other Shore is Nirvana. There is a separation that needs to be crossed but there is no need to go. Nirvana is empty. We experience nirvana as something because of our preconceived notions. It is not unusual for two people to experience the same thing in very different ways. Nirvana is, after all, just fermented beans. For some, it is the distinct smell of an elementary cafeteria cafeteria, for others it is a taste that is earthy, umami laden, sublime. How I experience Nirvana is the same way to differentiate it from my experience of Samsara. Hardwired, primitive instincts may be an influence in how I respond to it: eating things that smell bad could kill you. As unimportant as eating natto may be it can represent our response to other experiences.

As we live in tribes, we were wary of the stranger. There, the stranger may be someone of the other political party. We seem to be carrying the same tribal experience that shaped our early response to what was unfamiliar. That unfamiliarity is not natural.

When we hold on to what is familiar and reject what is unfamiliar, this can result in difficulties. Embracing the unfamiliar can also have its difficulties. To see things as they are not simply eating everything mindlessly.

To realize samsara is nirvana is to acknowledge the prejudice with which I engage the world.

Supportive donors, the IBS and grow assets to generate income from equities, real assets and bonds to help settle the bank loans. The Endowment Foundation to help move forward to create a thriving environment for Buddhism in America. The Institute of Buddhist Studies also continues its work toward accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), with an update expected later this year.

The initiatives to strengthen BCA programs and facilities allows the growth of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in America, and to support BCA members will support the Jodo Shinshu Center and the Dana Program for Buddhist Education.

To learn more about BCA giving programs or to set-up an online donation, go to buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/donate.

In 2018, 18 ministerial aspirants (10 from BCA) will travel to Vietnam for their tokudo ordination, and they are currently being hosted by the Center for Buddhist Education this winter and spring.

The Buddhist Churches of America Endowment Foundation invites all interested to participate in the BCA Endowment Foundation at donate@bcq.org or 415-776-3600 ext. 311.

BCA Endowment Foundation’s 2018 Report Detailed

Charles Ozaki
Endowment Foundation President

The Endowment Foundation asks all members and friends to support the good works of the BCA and IBS, which will benefit all of us.

Please participate in any way you can and contact Hideaki Mizuno, Executive Director at the BCA Endowment Foundation at hmizuno@bcq.org or (415) 776-5668 if you need any assistance.

26 affiliated organizations invest with the Endowment in custodial accounts. An additional $280,735 is deposited to current accounts for future use.

The BCA, IBS and the Endowment are working together to raise funds through the efforts of the Joint Committee on Development. The Dana Fund and $1,000,000 Debt Relief effort are yielding positive results in addressing the needs.

As is the case with any large organization, addressing the need to support programs and facilities are continuous and additional efforts will always be needed.

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having been destroyed as a result of the earthquake, my grandmother was charged with caring for the survivors at the temporary shelter. The following are some brief notes from my grandmother’s memoirs in which she reminisces about those early days in San Francisco. According to the article on Bukkyo Times, Seto Uchida wrote the memoir Aug. 25, 1962 and it was published on Jan. 5, 1963.

"In August of 1905, my husband and I went to the United States together. If I were to write about the experiences of that time, you would probably wonder what country I was describing about.  
“First of all, in those days, the Japanese population in United States was very small. In particular, the Japanese in San Francisco, they could not be worthwhile for all delegates. The first activity was to build a large Lego neighborhood where a small group of four to five people would take a part of the house and build it, with some restrictions, for example, requiring a flower or mini character. An escape room with little stations throughout the room, working together to determine the paramita represented in the problem and given a key to unlock the Obsidian message. The last activity was the water balloon volleyball. This was much easier to complete together as a group of four to six people were gathered around a large beach ball, attempting to catch the various balls, and throwing them back and forth. Each of the activities had a paramita theme incorporated within the discussion. After the long day, the Arizona JBA hosted an Obutsudan. Members brought food, card games and Super Smash Brothers were played until 11 p.m. There was a small surprise. A local Obutsudan volunteered to be one of our members, stopped by and served an assortment of ice creams. It was a refreshing way to end an eventful day.

On Sunday, everyone attended the temple’s Ho Onko service. The hall was full, and it was the loudest to wear Western style clothes properly. There was a time when Rev. Kaito Kii, who was serving at the Buddhist temple San Francisco (1903–1907) had to help me put on the back of my dress. I remember the waist was small, and long skirts covered the heels of my shoes. “In those days, the Fukushima was small, so we all got along well and we looked forward to listening the Dharma together once a month. The Buddhist church had English classes. A casuistic teacher and the kaikyoshi minister were teaching the classes. I still keep in touch with three people in my class, who are still healthy.

“Then there were no Japanese grocery stores yet, so I used to take a cable car to Chinatown to buy fish, vegetables and tofu every other day. Eight months after we arrived, the Great 1906 San Francisco Earthquake occurred (at 5:12 a.m. April 18, 1906). The Buddhist church as well as many houses burned down. I thought this was the time to return my grant to Amida Buddha, and after my husband along with other kaikyoshi and YBA members, day and night, to help our people who survived the earthquake. It was one of my unforgettable memories.

“There were very few automobile in those days. When Rev. Chisho Hara, who was assigned to the Sacramento temple (1903–1907), fell ill and decided to return to Japan, I wanted him to go to the port by automobile.

“Many people say that the Theravada is the monastic Buddhism, however, it has been in fact developed and supported by laypersons. It weighs on actual practice. It is a good habit for all people, where the teachings are accessible through an accessible, relatable medium.

It is very easy to attain its wisdom and teachings to busy everyday people different than Shinran in his time, you and I are challenged today in a digital world with the opportunity and responsibility to find a way to spread the depth of the wisdom and teachings to busy everyday people through an accessible, relatable medium. What if we have an online Shin Buddhist community for all people, where the teachings are accessible from anywhere, anytime, taught by Buddhist ministers, scholars, and authors, and we learn to practice Buddhism in our everyday lives, virtually?

Shinran continued from Page 2

in 1988 and began teaching at Kyoo University in Los Angeles through 2017, when he became a professor emeritus.

He is fluent in Thai and Vietnamese languages. Since 2017, Professor Hayashi has taught cultural anthropology, sociology, and Buddhist studies at Rikkyo University and the Department of History at Ryukoku University.

“People say that the Theravada is the monastic Buddhism, however, it has been in fact developed and supported by laypersons. It weighs on actual practice in more than the knowledge provided through the study of Buddhist sutras and commentaries,” he told me.

It was indeed an eye-opening comment for me. His lecture title is “The World of Theravada: Traditions and Transition from the Filed Observation since 1981.” He will share tremendous experiences when he was living in the Theravada society. I am sure that the lectures will discard your preconceived notion of the Theravada Buddhism and we will learn fascinating aspect of Theravada which respect knowledge and practice of actual practice in everyday life.

The 2019 Rukkyo Lectures are free and open to the public and are available on YouTube. For more information, please contact Rev. Dr. Mutsuo Womnda. We hope many people will come and hear his interesting lectures.

Professor Hayashi’s major books are “Practical Buddhism Among the Thai-Lao Region in the Making of a Region” (2003); “Dynamics of Ethnic Cultures Across National Boundaries in Southwest China and Mainland Southeast Asia: Relations, Societies, and Languages” (2000); and “Cultural Diversity and “Conversation in the making of Mainland Southeast Asia and Southwestern China, Regional Dynamics in the Past and Present” (2003).
縁起の中にある自分を
恵光寺 開教使 林斉昭

昨年、息子の大馳が誕生してから早9ヶ月が経ち、私達夫婦の間では今後の育児についての会話やインターネット検索を頻繁にするようになりました。いろいろ話し合ってはいるのですが、今後の育児の方向性は未だ定まっていませんし、むしろ全く検討もついてません。アメリカに住んでいますと、様々な文化の違いや考え方の違いを感じることがあります。特に子育てに関する考え方の違いに驚かされることがあります。例えば...で素直にそう答えますが、最初はこの質問の意図がわかりませんでした。お寺のメンバーにこのことを尋ねて初めてアメリカでは、赤ちゃんが生まれる前に子供部屋を用意し、ヒーローや妖精等のテーマを決めて壁を塗り替え、ベッドや家具を揃えることが多いことがわかりました。最近は添い寝が良いという考え方も出てきているようですが、それでも夫婦とは別に、赤ちゃんを子供部屋で寝かせることが一般的だそうです。違いはほかにもあります。例えば、日本特有の“裸の付き合い”という文化がありますように、親子が一緒にお風呂に入ることは一般的ですが、こちらではそういった習慣がありませんし、一緒に入ることはありえないとおっしゃった方もいました。そして幼い頃から物事を子供に考えさせ、自発的にそして...方針をとっているということがあげられます。(様々な違いを挙げましたが、これはどちらが良いとか劣っているということではありません、子供を思う親の気持ちは万国共通です。)アメリカほどではありませんが、日本でも少なからず自立ということを言います。しかし、振り返ってみますと私自身、自立して生きなければならないと思いながらも“自立”とは実際どうゆうことなのかと考えたことがありませんでした。自立という言葉を広辞苑で引きますと“他の力によらず自分の力で身を立てること”と記されています。三省堂の辞書にも“他からの支配や助けを受けずに存在すること”と定義されています。つまり、自分を立てようとするという意味を表しています。なぜなら、仏教では“縁起”という道理を中心原理として据えているからです。縁起とは万物がお互いに因となり縁となって依存しあい、刹那に生滅し流動しつつあるこの世の実相を示したものである。つまり、全てのものはそれぞれ互いに因(原因)となり縁(条件)となって支え合い連帯して存在しています。逆に言えば、自分の力で自立しようとすると因縁に阻まれ、思うように進まないことがあります。このように、自立と因縁は密接な関係をもっています。

この“私”の存在を証明させてくれるのは私自身ではなく、縁、つまり他者だからです。この道理を元に自立ということを考えると、他の助けを受けずに存在するということは不可能であり、仮に“私は自立している”と思う人がいたとしたら、それは煩悩によって真実として認識され、社会として受け入れていく。と警鐘を鳴らしています。では、真の意味での“自立”とはどういうことでしょうか。本願寺布教使の季平博昭先生はこういいます、「よく、人は自立して生きなければならないと言われます。しかし、自立とは、“なんでも自分一人でできること”ではありません。なぜなら、人はだれしもが他者に支えられなければ生きることができないからです。ゆえに“他者に支えられているからこそ生きられる”ということが自立しているということである。」

私達はつい自分中心に物事を見てしまう性質があります。その自己中心性の根源は煩悩だとお釈迦様は明らかにされました。この煩悩あるがゆえに私達は縁起という真理を知ることができません。違う言い方をすれば、縁起という言葉の意味はなんとなく理解していても、私自身が縁起しているというこの身の事実を知らないのです。そしてこの身の事実を知らないがゆえに、あらゆる人生の憂悲苦悩を生じさせています。つまり私達に大切なことは縁起の中に自分を見ることです。しかし、縁起の中に自分を見ると一言で言うのは簡単ですが、実際そうすることは大変難しいことです。だからこそ親鸞聖人はお念仏のみ教を私達一人ひとりの心の拠り所となるよう広く流布されました。お念仏には、願いを叶えたり、奇跡を起こす力はありません。しかし、お念仏は、自分を思う親の気持ちを伝えるだけの存在です。日々の生活の中でお念仏を唱えることで、少しずつ、そして確実に真実に向かわせてくれます。そんなお念仏に出会わせていただいたことは誠にありがたいことと改めて思うのであります。

南無阿弥陀仏

2019年8月31日から9月2日にかけてサンフランシスコで開催される世界仏教婦人会大会へむけた「ありがとうおばあちゃん」募金に多くの方々が協力してくださっている。これは婦人会をサポートする募金で、世界大会運営のために必要な費用、約30万ドルを集めることが目標。「ありがとうおばあちゃん」とは、一世や二世の世代の婦人会メンバーの方々が、お寺をサポートしてくださったことへの恩送りの意味が込められている。恩送りは英語ではペイエイットフォワードと言い、受けた恩を、他の人へ送って恩返しをする。過去の婦人会の方々が婦人会の創設のため、お寺をサポートするため、親鸞聖人に拝頼して募金活動に協力したことがよく知られています。ありがとうおばあちゃんの名前は、この伝統を受け継ぎました。お寺をサポートするために、お寺を訪れるために、お寺を愛するための活動をしています。皆さんに、お寺を愛していただくことを願っています。
2月9日にロサンゼルス別院においてIBSとCBE共催の冬季パシフィックセミナーが行われた。「Softened words of praiseやわらげほめ」がトピックで約130名の参加者が親鸞聖人の和讃について学んだ。講師は松本デイビッドIBS学長（英語）、オレンジカウンティー仏教会のワンドラ睦開教使（日本語）がつとめ、ガーデナ仏教会の関谷沙羅開教使が和讃のお勤めの指導をした。参加者は「今回のセミナーで和讃のことがよくわかりました。日曜日のサービスで和讃のおつとめをするのが楽しみです。」と好評のセミナーとなった。

2月1日から3日に浄土真宗センターで寺院のリーダーのためのワークショップが開催され、13ヶ寺の代表が集まった。テーマは「Cultivating Dharma-Centered Leadership」で仏法を中心としたお寺を維持、発展させるべく活発な意見交換をした。梅津総長やCBEの原田マービン開教使らがダルマセンターの意味するところを話し、参加者は「仏法を中心とすればお寺の問題の多くは解決できる」という視点に刺激を受けていた。ロサンゼルス東本願寺別院から伊東憲昭北米開教監督が同別院門徒と参加。伊東監督は「念仏する者同士がお寺の将来について話し合いを持つことはとても有意義でした。」とワークショップへの参加を喜ばれていた。

昨年の12月17日に、ご本山の阿弥陀堂に安置されていたご本尊の阿弥陀如来像が親鸞聖人のお木像が安置される御影堂に移された。阿弥陀さまのお木像は約1メートル（約3.3フィート）で御影堂のお内陣中央に安置され、そのため親鸞聖人のお木像はお内陣に向かって右側の脇壇に安置された。このご移動は阿弥陀堂お内陣の修復工事のため行われており、2022年3月に完了する予定。阿弥陀堂は1760年に再建された木像建築で、国宝建造物として指定されている。