



WHEEL OF DHARMA

Official Publication of the Buddhist Churches of America

Donor Appreciation Issue



A thunderstorm forced attendees at Ekoji Buddhist Temple's Obon festival on July 12 to take shelter in the Hondo. Bonbu Stories and other musicians performed the BCA's new gatha, "Lantern Song," and more original songs. The Bonbu Stories trip to Ekoji and "Lantern Song" were funded in part by Dharma Forward. (Photos courtesy of Miko Shudo)

With Gratitude to You — Our Donors

By Michiko Inanaga

BCA Endowment Foundation
Director of Development

Once a year, we at the BCA Endowment Foundation express what we feel every day of the year — an immense appreciation to each and every one of you.

We also take a moment to reflect on the past year's accomplishments and plan for the future.

In the last 12 months, we have raised over \$1.1 million to support the efforts of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA), and the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS), whose missions include the teaching, learning, and sharing of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism and the Buddha-Dharma.

Your dollars go directly to

training and ordaining new ministers, to strategically placing ministers in regions across the United States, creating a fun and nurturing environment for youth and future leaders of Jodo Shinshu, and inspiring students to become teachers of the Dharma.

Our annual Donor Appreciation Issue begins on Page 7, but it is because of your yearlong effort that we can see a future where Buddhism is not only a trendy conversation topic but one in which we truly help ourselves and others to reveal our resilience.

In this issue, we update you on our largest effort — the Dharma Forward campaign, now close to completion.

We invite you to read the articles inside and to be a part of the momentum of this journey. Thank you!



Bonbu Stories members Kendall Tani and Vicky Zhang watch new friends Connor and Nami Horio perform with Dounen Taiko, the youth taiko group at Ekoji.

Bishop Is Focused on Reversing BCA's Membership Fall

Other Priorities Include Ongoing Shortage of Ministers, Reaching Dharma Forward's Goal

By Jon Kawamoto

Wheel of Dharma Editor

The BCA Office of the Bishop is prioritizing its membership decline and initiating several programs aimed at growing churches, temples and Sanghas "so that there is another 125 years of BCA history and Jodo Shinshu in this country."

In his Bishop's report at the National Board Meeting on June 7, Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada detailed the ways the office is taking

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Haste Street Dorm Seeking Donations

IBS Building Being Renovated

By Dr. Scott Mitchell

President

Institute of Buddhist Studies



Dr. Scott Mitchell

The Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) Haste Street dorm — the heart of IBS for nearly 60 years — is seeking donations to complete a renovation project

that began in February.

As part of the Dharma Forward campaign, the IBS is reaching out to the BCA community,

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PABT Hosts 'Ireicho Book of Names' on National Tour

Sangha Members Share Their Experiences, Emotions

By T. Hutchinson

Palo Alto Buddhist Temple

Issei Hall at Palo Alto Buddhist Temple (PABT) served as a host site June 5-7 for the "Ireicho Book of Names" during its nationwide tour.

The Ireicho contains more than 125,000 names of individuals of Japanese ancestry who were incarcerated in camps and detention centers during World War II.

The Ireicho has been accessible at the

Japanese American National Museum in the Little Tokyo neighborhood of Los Angeles since 2022. This year, the Ireicho began a national tour with the first stop held Feb. 18-21 — marking the Day of Remembrance Feb. 19, 1942.

The tour, which includes stops at several of the detention camps like Manzanar, Amache, Rohwer, Jerome, Heart Mountain, Minidoka and Topaz, arrived in the Bay Area from June 2-4 at the Berkeley Historical Society Museum. It attracted



Palo Alto Buddhist Temple members Yasuho and Julia Miyakawa stamp the "Ireicho Book of Names." (Courtesy of Julia Miyakawa)

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BISHOP'S MESSAGE

‘Honesty Is the Best Policy’ Really Rings True



By Rev. Marvin Harada
Bishop of the BCA

I have been the lucky recipient of honesty numerous times in my life. Recently, I realized that I had left my credit card at a restaurant and didn’t realize I had left it there until the next day.

When I called the restaurant, not only did they have it, but the restaurant had closed an hour earlier, and the owner said he would wait for me to come and pick it up. This is the second time I have left my credit card at a restaurant.

In Japan, many years ago, my father-in-law left his camera on the train. We went to the lost and found at the train station and there were shelves of lost and found items. The person there said, “Which one is it?” There, on one of the

shelves, was my father-in-law’s camera. I could’ve probably picked any camera on the shelf, but in Japan, people are so honest that he trusted me to pick the one that belonged to my father-in-law.

On another occasion, I was in a little coffee shop called a “kissaten” in Japan. I loved the little neighborhood “kissaten,” or coffee shops, often small and run by an owner and maybe one worker.

I was studying and having coffee alone, when the owner came up to me and said, “I am sorry. I have to run to the bank. I will be right back. Can you watch my store for me?” I said, “Sure,” but I didn’t really know the owner.

Shortly after he left, there were two customers who wanted to pay their bills and leave. They asked me where the owner was. I said he ran to the bank. The two customers left the money for their bills with me and left!

Within a few minutes, the owner returned and I gave him the money from the other customers. He thanked me profusely, but I couldn’t believe what just happened, especially coming from the United States. To trust a total stranger to

watch your shop with the cash register right there? Unbelievable.

Another time years ago when I was in Las Vegas, we watched a lounge show and my “extra wallet” with extra gambling money fell out of my pocket. I didn’t realize it till after I left the lounge some time later. I rushed back to the lounge, and sure enough, a cocktail waitress had turned it in to the bartender.

Still another time in more recent years, I left a slot machine in a rush and cashed out the ticket, but left the ticket in the machine. The person who sat down after me noticed me walking away and followed me clear to the other side of the casino until he caught up to me to return my ticket that was more than just a few bucks. My name was not on the ticket. He could have easily kept it for himself but he didn’t.

In our modern era, we are inundated with all kinds of scams, identity theft, and so on. But yet, while there are dishonest people trying to take advantage of innocent people, there are honest people who don’t take what is theirs and return or turn in what they find.

The old adage, “Honesty is

the best policy,” is really true and wisdom for today. If you are honest, then there are no regrets. If you are dishonest, you might get away with it now, but you might have a guilty heart later.

I remember that whenever we went out to eat, my dad would always add the check after he got it from the waiter or waitress. Nine times out of 10, he would find an error in their arithmetic. He always told the waiter or waitress, even when we were “undercharged” incorrectly. For my dad, “honesty was always the best policy.”

Rev. Gyomay Kubose, in his book, “Everyday Suchness,” writes the following in his essay titled, “Honesty.”

“There are many smooth talkers and many people who put up a false front and live double lives, but I would rather be cheated and be happy, and be poor by being honest, rather than cheat others for gain. There is untold peace and gladness in being honest to myself.”

I have been the recipient of the honesty of people many times over the years. I hope that someday I might be able to return the favor to someone.

Request Was Simple, Profound: ‘Speak From the Heart’

By Rev. Kazuaki Nakata
Rimban
Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple

Back in February, I received an invitation letter from the Gobind Marg Charitable Trust of Parma, Italy, one of the largest Sikh organizations in Europe. They requested that I attend their international convention in Parma as a representative of the Buddhist community in the United States.

Although I have previously spoken at federation-level gatherings — such as the Thai Buddhist National Conference in Boston, the Vietnamese Buddhist Federation in Houston, and even at a U.S. congressional office — this was my first international invitation of this kind. I consulted with our Fresno Betsuin board, and with their strong support, I humbly accepted the invitation as an official temple engagement.

Parma is located about an hour and a half from Milan. My flight itinerary was: Fresno to Denver to Frankfurt, Germany, and then to Milan, Italy. After an 18-hour journey, I arrived in Milan, where four kind gentlemen welcomed me, picked up my luggage, and drove me to Parma.

They had arranged a five-night stay in a high-end hotel, and treated me to lunch and dinner every day at various local restaurants. One evening,



Fresno Betsuin Rimban Rev. Kazuaki Nakata attended the “Wave of Humility Kindness and Love” conference in Parma, Italy, as a Buddhist representative in April. The conference was organized by the Gobind Marg Charitable Trust of Parma, Italy, one of the largest Sikh organizations in Europe. (Courtesy of Rev. Kazuaki Nakata)

I texted Lee Osaki, our Fresno Betsuin administrator, with a few photos, joking, “I’m being treated like the Dalai Lama!” Her husband, Cliff Osaki, later replied with his signature humor: “Don’t expect the same treatment here!”

Although the conference itself was only one day of my six-day stay, I was invited to offer multiple workshops and study sessions on Buddhism and how Buddhist perspectives can contribute to broader human values. I joined a roundtable discussion with young leaders, including a professor from New York University and a U.S.-based attorney, and was deeply inspired by their sincere dedication to sharing their teachings.

I also had the opportunity to learn how an organization with millions of followers operates and is managed. It was humbling and eye-opening.

The day before the April 5 conference, the 14 speakers were gathered and instructed: “Please do not speak about your religion. Instead, speak about how you contribute to humility, love, and kindness.”

This deeply moved me. At many interfaith events,

religious leaders often “preach” about how their own religion promotes peace and love. While well-meaning, these become more like showcases of faith traditions, rather than spaces for true mutual understanding.

But here, the request was simple and profound: Speak from the heart.

On the day of the conference, the massive Fiere di Parma convention center was filled with thousands of participants. Millions more joined online from around the world.

Standing on stage, I wasn’t nervous at all. Instead, I felt fully embraced by the collective love in the room. I was introduced as a Buddhist representative from Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple, California, and I shared a simple, personal reflection: I spoke about how much I enjoy cooking and serving food for our Sangha members — not out of obligation or calculation, but from a place of pure love and connection.

I spoke about the true meaning of “Reverend” in Jodo Shinshu: one who shows reverence to the teachings with

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Correction

In the July 2025 article about the FDSTL conference, the temple affiliation listed for Mae Yamasaki was incorrect. Yamasaki received the Bishop’s 10-Year Service Award as a member of the Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple.



Wheel of Dharma

(USPS 017-700)
Official Publication of the
Buddhist Churches of America

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Wheel of Dharma (USPS 017-700) is published monthly by Buddhist Churches of America, 1710 Octavia St., San Francisco, CA 94109-4341. Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WHEEL OF DHARMA, 1710 Octavia St., San Francisco, CA 94109-4341. Subscription free to BCA temple members; \$12.00 annual subscription for nonmembers.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Winding Down Summer With Successful Obon Season



By Steven Terusaki
BCA President

As another year of summer festivals comes to a close, let us acknowledge all those who made this Obon season a roaring success.

I've heard that attendance was up and food was in short supply at several temples. The "Lantern Song" Bon Odori, composed by the Bombu Stories group, was danced throughout the BCA.

I can truly say, "We are back!" It's been five years since the pandemic forced the shutdown of our traditional summer Obons. As the Buddhist "Hamilton" parody states, "We'll be back, we'll be grilling chicken teriyaki ... our temples have endured so much but always thrive through boundless love. Namo Amida Butsu."

Check out this prescient YouTube video written by Rev. Todd Tsuchiya and performed by Koichi Mizushima: bit.ly/3Ue5Qj3

Ekoji's Obon

I was able to attend the Obon festival at Ekoji Buddhist Temple in Fairfax Station, Virginia, outside of Washington, D.C., on July 12 and was deeply appreciative of the warm welcome I received by Supervising Minister Rev. Kurt Rye, Ekoji President Andrea Chapman, and Ekoji Obon Planning Team Brant and Maya Horio.

The weather was hot and humid, which led to a line of severe thunderstorms that approached the temple. With lighting flashes getting closer, security personnel ordered all festivities to be halted. Everyone was ordered to take cover inside the Hondo.

Moving an outdoor event into the Hondo and other indoor spaces was no small task and the Ekoji Obon Planning Team took it all in stride. Pivoting and taking advantage of the circumstances led to an impromptu musical performance by Bombu Stories (Miharu Okamura, Miko Shudo, Kendall Tani and Vicki Zhang). The crowd enjoyed the musical performance that made this Obon so special memory for many.



Ekoji Buddhist Temple members, supporters and friends, including BCA President Steven Terusaki, at right, pose for a group photo after the temple's Hatsubon service on July 13. (Courtesy of Evan Michio Cantwell)

These unexpected hurdles highlighted the impermanence of all things and the constant need to change and adapt. It was a powerful reminder that our Dharma teaches us to embrace flexibility and resilience.

As the skies lightened, the all-clear was given and the festival continued with games, food, taiko, Bon Odori and the candlelight service in the Ekoji garden.

In the heat and humidity, Ekoji's shaved ice was a delightful treat. The Fike family (Rob Fike is a Minister's Assistant) operate the shaved ice at Ekoji and make it special with homemade azuki beans and matcha syrup along with an assortment of flavors. My shaved ice hit the spot. Special thanks go to Stephen Fike for making it so!

Ekoji's Hatsubon service was held the next day, July 13, and was officiated by Rev. Erick Ishii, who reminded us that Obon is a time to remember those who have passed before us.

While other Buddhist schools may view Obon as a period when the spirits of our ancestors return, our Shin Buddhist tradition offers a profound understanding: Our loved ones are always here with us. They continue to work on us, helping us to address the challenges, frustrations and sufferings we experience in our everyday lives. Their presence is a constant source of wisdom and encouragement.

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Revs. Bob and Patti Oshita Join Sacramento Interfaith Peace Walk

By Sharon Ito
Buddhist Church of Sacramento

As chaplains for the California State Assembly, Revs. Bob and Patti Oshita joined religious leaders throughout Sacramento County for an interfaith peace walk at the state Capitol. People from different faiths linked arms in unity as they walked on the Capitol grounds.

The "Sunday's Best: Faith, Justice, Mercy & Health Peace Walk" took place on Sunday, June 22, on the west steps of the Capitol. Other speakers included Sister Michelle Gorman, chaplain to the California State Senate; Imam Mohammad Yasir Khan, the first Muslim who formerly served as chaplain for the state Assembly; YK Chalamcherla, Folsom Cordova school board member and representative of the Hindu community; and Pastor Efrem Smith of Midtown Covenant Church.

"We are living through some tense and troubled times around the world," Rev. Bob Oshita said. "We need to open our eyes and see that we are all one humanity, sharing this one and only Earth."



Sacramento Betsuin members, including Revs. Bob and Patti Oshita, join others at the "Sunday's Best: Faith, Justice, Mercy & Health Peace Walk" at the California state Capitol on June 22. (Courtesy of George Warren)

Throughout history, Rev. Patti Oshita said, "Spiritual philosophers, poets, and teachers have long recognized that all human disharmony is rooted in being selfish and self-centered. We all intuitively know that greed and selfishness make us lose sight, that we are all interconnected and one."

In addition to Buddhist

teachings, the Oshitas shared some of their favorite quotes and poems. One came from the Dalai Lama, who called on nations to educate young minds and nurture kindness and caring in young hearts. And there was another quote from famed UCLA basketball coach John Wooden, who said that "happiness begins where

selfishness ends."

One of the Oshitas' favorite poems came from Chuang Tsu, a Chinese Daoist poet and philosopher:

*"When the shoe fits, the foot is forgotten,
When the belt fits, the belly is forgotten,
When the mind is right, 'for'*

and 'against' are forgotten."

"When our minds awaken to the oneness of humanity, when our minds are right," Rev. Bob Oshita said, "there can be no 'for' and 'against,' for selfishness is melted away."

Rev. Patti Oshita shared a line from the Muslim poet Rumi, who said, "Beyond right and wrong, beyond good and bad, there is a field; I will meet you there." In other words, she said, "When we awaken to the oneness of life, we begin to care. For awakening to our shared humanity is the seed of compassion."

Joining the Oshitas in the peace walk were Buddhist Church of Sacramento President Bobby Tanaka and temple members Katharine Dickson, Sherri Inenaga, Sharon Ito and George Warren. The event also featured a gospel choir of volunteers from the community, including Keiko Makishima and Merv Maruyama from the Sacramento Betsuin Choir.

The event was organized by Martin Ross, deputy director of the nonprofit Health Education Council, who the Sacramento Bee recently named one of the top leaders changing the region's future.



The Institute of Buddhist Studies' (IBS) Haste Street dorm is seeking donations to complete a renovation project. (Courtesy of IBS)

IBS Dorm

Continued from Page 1

supporters and IBS alumni to help furnish the Haste Street dorm.

The Haste Street dorm dates back to the early 1960s, when the IBS was known as the BCA Study Center. The center was housed at the Berkeley Buddhist Temple to train and educate American-born ministers.

The BCA Study Center was later renamed and incorporated as the Institute of Buddhist Studies, becoming the first Buddhist seminary in the United States. To support this effort, over \$300,000 was raised by the BCA community and roughly one-third of that amount went to the purchase of a building on Haste Street in Berkeley, California.

For the next decade, the IBS was “Haste House,” as it was then called. Classes were held in the common rooms downstairs; faculty and visiting scholars lived in the rooms upstairs. One bedroom was converted to a shrine room where ministerial candidates would practice chanting and services.

In 1968, Rev. Haruyoshi Kusada was named IBS Executive Director and, along with support from others, developed the curriculum which allowed the IBS to become officially certified by California’s Department of Education as a graduate school and seminary.

For the next two to three decades, while the institute’s administrative offices and classrooms were moved to other buildings, Haste House became the Haste Street dorm. Generations of IBS students have lived in the building and have made good Dharma friends there.

FYI

To donate to the IBS Haste Street dorm renovation project, go to: bit.ly/3GPT6AK
Or use this QR code for donations:



Over time, the building was maintained as best as it could be with generous help from the BCA community, but crucial upgrades have been necessary.

Roots from a neighboring property’s trees ruined the driveway and diverted water into the basement. Original single-pane windows weren’t energy efficient, allowing heat to escape in the winter and letting in too much heat in the summer. Occupancy dropped to almost zero during the pandemic, and IBS leadership wasn’t sure what the future of the dorm would be.

With the generosity of Larry and Vicky Yamaoka, IBS has received the support needed to fully renovate the dorm. And the dormitory is on track to reopen in the fall.

The dorm’s floor plan has been almost completely reimaged. The old building is getting a fresh coat of paint, new windows, floors and wiring. A fire sprinkler system has been added for extra safety. Second-floor rooms are being reconfigured to maximize living space.

A modest donation of \$1,000 will cover the costs of a bed, desk and other furnishing for each residential room. Donors may also wish to have

a room named after their family or loved ones. Individual rooms may be named starting at \$5,000.

All donors will be listed on a commemorative plaque in the entryway. And, of course, IBS is grateful for any donation, large or small. All donations will go toward the benefit of the Haste Street dorm.

The needs and categories are as follows:

- A donation of \$1,000 will cover the costs of a bed, desk and other furnishing for each residential room. (11 rooms available).
- A donation of \$5,000 will go toward naming each individual room. (11 rooms available)
- A donation of \$5,000 will go toward naming a common room. (two rooms available)
- A donation of \$10,000 will go toward naming the attached apartment. (one room available)

Naming rooms in the dorm is more than placing a plaque on the wall — it is an opportunity to leave a legacy that shapes the daily lives of future IBS students. These names become part of the students’ stories at the dorm, a lasting imprint on the place they’ll one day call their second home.

A reopening celebration will be planned for later this fall. Please sign up for IBS’s email list at <https://www.shin-ibs.edu/> for updates.

Feel free to reach out to me directly with any questions about the IBS Haste Street dorm at scott@shin-ibs.edu or 510-809-1449.

And, as always, your support of Buddhist education is deeply appreciated!

Center of Buddhist Education | Living the Dharma Committee

Finding My Path as a Young Adult With Cancer



Guest Speaker

Paul Daisuke Goodman

Creative Director, Eight East Productions

Paul Daisuke Goodman is the creative director at Eight East Productions and the writer and director of the award-winning film, No No Girl. He is also an editor at the popular online Buddhist school, Everyday Buddhist and has contributed to publications such as Lion’s Roar and Pacific Citizen. Paul is a three time cancer survivor and began making feature films after his initial diagnosis in 2016.

17 September 2025

5:00 PM – 6:00 PM PT

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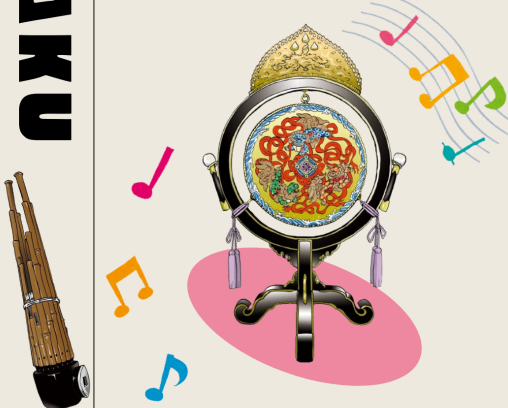
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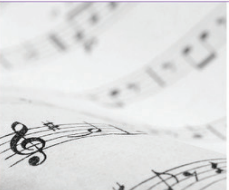
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BCA Music Committee

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that Bon Odori was danced during World War II at many of the temporary detention centers and at all 10 of the U.S. War Relocation Authority concentration camps?

Read the newly published article “Bon Odori in the American Concentration Camps” at Densho’s website: bit.ly/45aX9vY

Sept 13, 2025

3 to 5pm – Showcase

5 to 7pm – After-Party

Mountain View Buddhist Temple

Bonbu JAMS

Out of the Mud Grows the Lotus: Stories of Resilience

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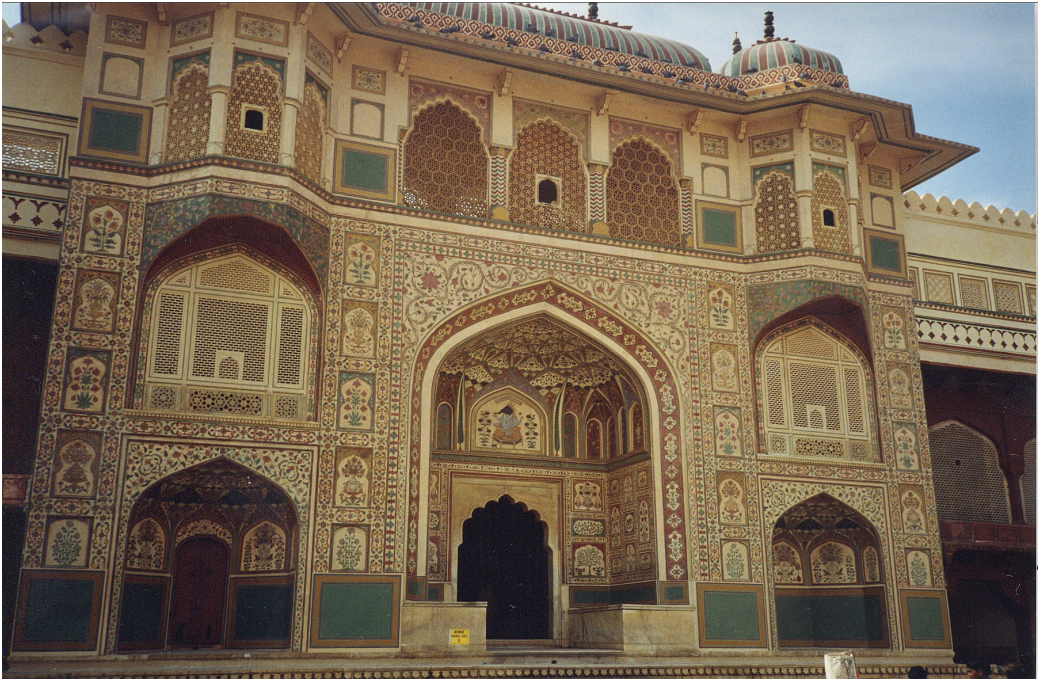
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Presented by the Buddhist Churches of America and Bonbu Stories

Hosted by Mountain View Buddhist Temple





San Jose Betsuin member Apala Egan has translated a collection of short stories written by her grandmother, Jyotirmoyee Devi Sen, titled “Behind Latticed Marble, Inner Worlds of Women.” The collection offers accounts of Indian palaces with links to Buddhism. At right, Amber Fort Palace, which was the scene for many of the stories, is shown. (Photos courtesy of Apala Egan and Jack Egan)

San Jose’s Apala Egan Translates Grandmother’s Book as Loving Tribute

‘Behind Latticed Marble, Inner Worlds of Women’ Offers Accounts of Indian Palaces With Ties to Buddhism

Editor’s note: Apala G. Egan was a Dharma School teacher at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin for 20 years where she incorporated EcoSangha principles, after it was initially introduced, in all of her lesson plans. She received the Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston scholarship in 2009, named after acclaimed writer of “Farewell to Manzanar.” This scholarship was awarded by the Community of Writers, formerly named Community of Writers at Squaw Valley, California.

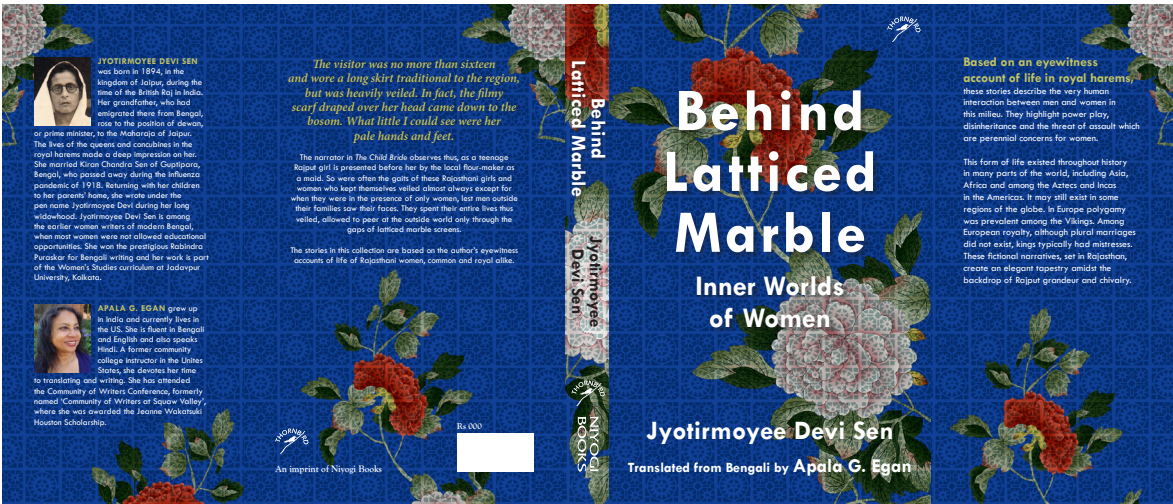
By Apala G. Egan
San Jose Betsuin Buddhist Temple

I have recently translated a collection of short stories by Jyotirmoyee Devi Sen, titled “Behind Latticed Marble, Inner Worlds of Women.” Sen won the prestigious Rabindra Puraskar award for Bengali writing in 1973.

This is based on a rare eyewitness glimpse of life in the innermost chambers of palaces in Rajasthan, India, during the early 20th century. The women’s pavilion was a scene of creativity as the dancers and singers nurtured their talent; it was also the setting for rivalries. This would have been similar to the life witnessed by Prince Siddhartha; in fact, his mother, Queen Maya, came from this region. He received the education befitting a prince, but he also observed the extravagance of royal life.

These stories are narrated from the feminine perspective. The entertainers were skilled exponents of dance and music such as the geishas of Japan and the courtesans of India; the queens and noblewomen were patrons of the arts and the work of artisans and often supported education and philanthropy.

The introduction itself provides an overview of women’s history and their



The book cover of “Behind Latticed Marble, Inner Worlds of Women,” which features photos of Jyotirmoyee Devi Sen and Apala Egan. (Courtesy of Niyogi Books)

contributions, including that of Amrapali, a famous courtesan, who after meeting Shakyamuni Buddha, decided to eschew her profession and became a Buddhist nun. Speaking of impermanence, she says in the Therigatha, “Once my hair was beautiful, adorned with gold, fragrant and soft, well plaited. Now, because of old age, it has fallen out. There is no error in the words of the speaker of truth ...”

Queen Devi, wife of Emperor Ashoka, built the famed Sanchi Stupa with its four gates with exquisite carvings depicting scenes from Shakyamuni Buddha’s life.

Lady Takeko Kujo of Japan, of our Jodo Shinshu tradition, founded Asoka Hospital in Tokyo during the early 20th century after a major epidemic.

Sen’s grandfather was the “dewan” or prime minister to the Maharaja of Jaipur during the time of the British Raj. When Sen was 25, she was tragically widowed and returned to her parents’ home where she devoted herself to writing. Due to rigid Hindu rules, she could only wear white sarees and restrict herself to a vegetarian diet.

Buddhist teachings, supported by rulers ever since the time of Emperor Ashoka, flourished in the subcontinent

for many centuries although indigenous worship continued as well. With the decline of Buddhism caused by the rise of Hindu orthodoxy and the Muslim invasions from the northwest around the 11th century, many positive aspects of society disappeared. Orthodox society enforced its caste barriers, and the mistreatment of widows became commonplace.

Nevertheless, you still have old Buddhist communities in the Indian subcontinent, especially in the mountainous regions and in eastern Bengal. Regardless, some Buddhist teachings also got swallowed up wholesale into Hinduism; Shakyamuni Buddha is viewed as an incarnation of Vishnu (one of the Hindu Trinity).

During the time of British colonization in the last 200 years, their archeologists discovered Ashoka’s edicts at Sarnath among other sites. The paintings and sculptures at the Ajanta and Ellora caves, which had served as monasteries and had lain hidden for centuries, were stumbled upon by an English army officer while hunting!

Thus, during the 19th century, thinkers and scholars began reaching back into India’s heritage, resulting in an outpouring of literature. Leading figures promulgated major social and religious re-

forms; this period is referred to as the Indian Renaissance. Consequently, educated families, while still observing societal rules, encouraged education for their daughters. Sen’s own extended family encouraged her literary pursuits and provided her considerable support during her long widowhood. The author is my grandmother, and I have worked on the translation in her honor.

As a matter of interest, Rabindranath Tagore, Nobel Prize winner for literature in 1913, wrote some poetry and plays in Bengali about the Buddha’s life. The leaders of the Indian independence movement in the 20th century adopted as a national symbol, Emperor Ashoka’s lion capital from Sarnath that includes the Dharmachakra or Dharma Wheel.

Nine out of the 10 stories were previously published in esteemed literary journals and magazines in the United States, including The Missouri Review, The South Carolina Review, Catamaran Literary Reader and the Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine. One was published overseas by Istanbul Review. This attests to the literary merit of the work and is a good resource for the pursuit of English Literature.

Stanford, Columbia, Berkeley and the University

FYI

To order “Behind Latticed Marble, Inner Worlds of Women” by Jyotirmoyee Devi Sen, go to: bit.ly/46djFW1 and bit.ly/4kQ4Xbh

of Illinois, as well as other universities, have ordered the book. In England, Oxford University and London University have ordered this book as well. The book has been a subject of a panel discussion hosted by UC Berkeley’s Institute of South Asia Studies, featuring scholars from Berkeley, James Madison University and Stree Samya Books, India.

A review may be found at: bit.ly/3UsmXNS

All royalty income is being donated to a nonprofit organization, Crafts Council of India, founded by a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. It supports artisanal enterprises that sustain the environment. For instance, makers of bedspreads, shawls and scarves use traditional looms that do not use much fossil fuels. In fact, I have been deeply influenced by the EcoSangha principles that BCA Minister Emeritus Rev. Don Castro spearheaded, and Karen Akahoshi adopted for our temple.

To order “Behind Latticed Marble, Inner Worlds of Women” by Jyotirmoyee Devi Sen, go to: bit.ly/46djFW1 and bit.ly/4kQ4Xbh

Please consider acquiring the book to read, or stock in our temple libraries for our younger generation as part of their Asian literary heritage or ask your local library to obtain the book. Or, purchase a copy to donate to the International Book Project, which distributes books to school and college libraries in developing countries. The address is: 1440 Delaware Ave., Lexington, Kentucky, 40505. (www.intlbookproject.org)

50+ Years in the Dance Circle: Aiko Hamada of Ogden

Editor’s note: “50+ Years in the Dance Circle” will pay tribute to the extraordinary dance instructors who taught Bon Odori at BCA temples for 50 or more years. This series continues with a tribute to the late Aiko Hamada.

By Dr. Wynn Kiyama
BCA and Honpa Hongwanji
Mission of Hawaii

Aiko Inouye Hamada (1925–2022) grew up in California and Japan, taught Japanese classical dance from her home in Utah, and led Bon Odori at the Buddhist Church of Ogden for over 50 years.

Aiko Inouye was born in 1925 to Kantaro and Tome Inouye in the Venice neighborhood of Los Angeles, California. She grew up on the family farm with her adopted brother, Toshiyuki Tom Omaye. Two older half-siblings lived in Japan, and one of them, Yukitoshi Inouye, moved to the United States as a young adult. Throughout her childhood, Aiko studied the koto, singing and Japanese classical dance.

Upon the death of Kantaro’s father in the late 1930s, the Inouyes moved back to Japan, living in Chiba during Aiko’s high school years and then in the paternal family’s hometown of Kuchiba in Shimane prefecture. She continued studying music and Japanese classical dance during this time. In the final days of World War II, the family witnessed the harrowing sight of a mushroom cloud over the decimated city of Hiroshima.

Rev. Ryuei Masuoka, who knew the Inouyes from Venice, arranged for a marriage between Aiko and Shigaru Hamada from Ogden, Utah. After the war, Aiko moved back to the United States by herself and met the young man and his family. The couple married in 1950 and settled in Ogden, where they owned a farm and raised their son, Raymond Takashi Hamada, born in 1951. Aiko taught Japanese classical dance at her home and was an active member of the Buddhist Church of Ogden, where she was known for her culinary skills with sushi, mo-



Aiko Hamada, center, and Ruth Kawashima Schriock, left, at the Ogden Buddhist Temple’s Obon in 1988. (Courtesy of Allyson Hamada)

chi and manju.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Hamada led Bon Odori at the temple, teaching countless dances such as “Bon Odori Uta,” “Ichi Tasu Ichi no Ondo,” “Soran Bushi,” “Tanko Bushi,” “Ueomuuite Arukou,” and “Yakyuken Odori.”

She coordinated dances with Noriko Maxine Furubayashi, Bon Odori instructor at the Salt Lake Buddhist Temple. As children, Aiko and Noriko had studied Japanese classical dance in the same studio in Los Angeles. The two rekindled their friendship in Utah and worked together for decades, learning and teaching dances at their respective temples.

At the Buddhist Church of Ogden’s Obon, Hamada would cook, work in the food booths and dress the dancers with her famously tight koshihimo (thin cotton bands). She led Bon Odori with passion and joy for over 50 years, gradually retiring in the 2010s. Though

wheelchair bound, she choreographed “Hokkai Bon Uta” with the help of granddaughter Allyson Hamada. The dance debuted at the temple’s Obon in 2022, the same year of her passing.

The Hamada family — son, granddaughters, great grandchildren and extended relatives — continues to attend Obon in Ogden and especially enjoys dancing “Hokkai Bon Uta” in her memory.

To view a full list of 50+ teachers, follow the link: www.bit.ly/fiftyplusyears. If you have an additional dance instructor for the BCA Music Committee to consider, please email Wynn at wynnkiyama@gmail.com.

Wynn Kiyama lives in Honolulu, Hawai’i with his family and is a member of the BCA and the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. He is currently working on a history of Bon Odori in the continental United States.

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BCA Endowment Foundation's Dharma Forward Program

 *** We are not endorsing gambling, but we appreciate the venue for the accommodations for this event.



DONOR APPRECIATION ISSUE



Vista Buddhist Temple members, supporters and friends, including yoga instructor Bob Matsueda, in center with palms together in gassho, pose for a group photo at a yoga seminar on Feb. 16. The yoga seminar was sponsored in part by Dharma Forward, which is increasing Sangha engagement.

Donations Are Making an Impact — Now They’re Increasing Buddhist Education, Sangha Engagement, Technology, Facility Safety

By Michiko Inanaga
BCA Endowment Foundation
Director of Development

We’re in the home stretch — and every donation makes a difference. Your support in spreading the word about the Dharma Forward campaign is deeply appreciated and so important today. We have already been able to increase: Buddhist education, Sangha engagement, ministerial education, graduate level education and the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) seminary, technology for better access to the Dharma, and facility safety and usage.

There is a full list on the BCA website on the Dharma Forward page under Giving at: bit.ly/4f0KKOx

FYI

To donate to Dharma Forward, go to: <https://bca.kindful.com/>

Not every temple has Buddhist education. Those that are lucky enough to have their own temple Buddhist education committees can tell you that it’s a great place for resources outside of Sunday services. BCA regularly provides supplemental learning opportunities through its Center for Buddhist Education (CBE).

Through Dharma Forward, we’ve also been able to level access for MInister Assistant’s learning at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, California. And provide audio books for commuters, the visually impaired, and anyone who wants to



learn by hearing.

Experiencing together helps us appreciate more, quickly. By providing opportunities to gather for fun and learning, BCA helps support your temple to build the Sangha community.

Opportunities like having live singing and instruction at Obon of Bonbu Stories’ new Bon Odori dance, “Lantern Song” is just one example. So, too, are the series of yoga seminars that have been led by the BCA’s own Bob Matsueda throughout the BCA temples and

Continued on Page 14

Why I Support Dharma Forward

Editor’s note: The Dharma Forward campaign is in its final stretch run for this year -- and needs your support to reach its goal of \$15 million. To underscore the importance of Dharma Forward, the BCA Endowment Foundation reached out to Sangha members and asked them why they are choosing to support the campaign. To donate, go to bca.kindful.com

By Gayle Denaco
New York Buddhist Church

Dharma Forward, the time is now!

When I first read that slogan I thought, “Of course, the time is now. It is the only time!”

I am a relative newcomer to the Jodo Shinshu path. My earlier practice was no longer resonating with me. After a lot of searching, I came upon Rev. Taitetsu Unno’s

book, “River of Fire, River of Water.”

He challenged us to just say the Nembutsu and not to try and convince, control or understand it. It sounded ridiculous to me, but I had nothing to lose. I tried it and my life forever changed.

I downloaded the BCA’s list of live streaming services and began to watch.

Since I live in coastal Maine and New Hampshire, the New York Buddhist Church (NYBC) seemed to work best for me. (There is no Jodo Shinshu temple closer to me.)

I am now a member, livestream the Sunday services, have partici-



Gayle Denaco

pated in the Kieshiki ceremony and participate in live Zoom groups on a regular basis.

I have never physically been to the NYBC, but I feel as if I now have a Sangha. The Zoom meetings are interactive and enable me to have Sangha friends.

I have come to appreciate that all this may be one of the positive side effects of COVID. As difficult as COVID was, it challenged us to discover new ways of moving the Dharma forward. I am one of the many recipients of those new ways.

Why do I give and support the Dharma Forward campaign? There is a financial cost to moving the Dharma forward. Funding the various programs is expensive.

I see it as my joy and my responsibility to contribute as I am able. For centuries, my predecessors have given their time and money and sometimes their very lives for the cause. I can do no less.

Dharma Forward Needs Your Support to Reach Its Goal

By Rev. Marvin Harada
Bishop of the BCA



Rev. Marvin Harada

The Dharma Forward campaign is now at 85% toward the BCA’s goal of \$15 million!

We only have another \$2 million to raise. We are almost there. First of all, our deepest gratitude to all of you who have donated to the campaign, enabling us to get this far. Just like a runner in a race, we are in our final sprint to the finish line, and with your support, we will reach our goal by the end of this year.

If you have yet to donate to the campaign, it is not too late. Any amount of a donation will help us meet our goal, which will enable us to share the Dharma with a world that deeply needs the teachings.

We continue to move the Dharma Forward. Ministers are addressing being more “effective ministers” in our Dharma talks and how we work with members, both new and lifelong. We are exploring ways to share the teachings in a more understandable, practical way, while still maintaining the essence of our teachings.

Our Sanghas are becoming more diverse and welcoming to new people. People are finding Jodo Shinshu to be their spiritual home that they have been seeking, for some, their whole life. May we continue to provide that spiritual home to all.

Ohtani Fund to Help BCA Temples

Loans Available for Repairs, Upgrades



Glenn Inanaga

By Glenn Inanaga
BCA President-elect

Any given Sunday, across the BCA’s 63 member temples, churches and Sanghas, the scene is typically the same. The Kansho bell rings and echoes through the Hondo and temple buildings calling everyone to morning service.

As you sit down in the Hondo and close your eyes, the smell of incense, and

Continued on Page 14

Dharma Forward Campaign
\$15,000,000



As of June 30, the Dharma Forward campaign has raised 85.33% of its \$15 million goal.



Thank You for Your Generous Offering

Thank you for entrusting us with your gifts of time and financial support. With your support, we can provide a family and community-based connection to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The following list includes offerings made by members and friends of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) and the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) that were processed by the BCA Endowment Foundation between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025. Donation levels reflect cumulative amounts given across different programs and campaigns; please see notes at the end of this list for further details.





Gifts to the BCA Endowment Foundation

Donor List

Continued from Page 8



Donation levels reflect cumulative amounts directed to the following programs and campaigns received by the BCA Endowment Foundation; Dharma Forward (General, BCA initiatives, IBS Chairs, IBS Programs, Debt Relief), Jodo Shinshu Center, Dana Program, Center for Buddhist Education, Social Welfare Fund, Zaidan, WABL Koromo Fund, Music, Bishop’s Expansion Fund, special programs and requests or unrestricted use.

Institute of Buddhist Studies Is Deeply Grateful to Its Donors

With deep gratitude, the faculty, staff, students and trustees of the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) thanks those who have made it possible for us to sustain and grow our academic mission, grounded in our core values of wisdom, compassion and community.

The list below acknowledges those gifts received between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025.

IBS Donations Received – July 1, 2024 thru June 30, 2025: \$683,085.24

Dr. Nancy Lin: Nurturing Buddhist Chaplains at IBS

She Is the Hanyu Chair, Carrying Forward Legacy of Compassion, Service

By Rev. Gesshin Greenwood
Communications and Admissions Director
Institute of Buddhist Studies

On Jan. 26, 2011, Mr. Noboru Hanyu pledged \$500,000 to establish an endowed professorial chair in honor of his late wife, Yaeko. The funds were gifted through the Hanyu’s living trust as part of the BCA’s 21st Century Campaign.

An endowment is a financial structure which generates a revenue stream from the earnings of the invested principal. Because only the earnings are used, the principal is kept permanently intact. An endowed professorial chair is a faculty position supported by the endowment created for that purpose.

Mr. Hanyu envisioned the chair as a way for the Institute



Dr. Nancy Lin

of Buddhist Studies (IBS) to “share the Buddha’s compassionate teaching to all students, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, through the work of chaplaincy.”

He saw chaplaincy as a means for IBS and the Buddhist Churches of America to “participate and contribute to society” by addressing the needs of all people.”

Dr. Nancy Lin was appointed to the Noboru and Yaeko Hanyu Buddhist Chaplaincy Professorial Chair in 2023, and

is carrying forward the important legacy of compassion and service.

Dr. Lin has embraced Mr. Hanyu’s vision, working with IBS students to equip them with both academic and embodied knowledge of spiritual care. Under Dr. Lin’s leadership, the chaplaincy program at IBS has grown to include eight current students, with more incoming. Most are pursuing Master of Divinity degrees, and some are in the Buddhist chaplaincy certificate program.

Dr. Lin teaches core courses such as Buddhist spiritual care, which is a requirement for all Master of Divinity students.

“The point of that class is to integrate spiritual care principles and literature with Buddhist principles and teachings,” Dr. Lin said. Students read texts on pastoral care alongside Buddhist sutras and writings by Buddhist chaplains.

For example, students might read primary texts such as the Avatamsaka sutra, exploring the concept of “Indra’s Net” and

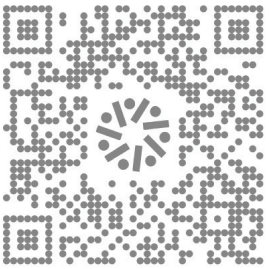
how interdependence is a core principle of Buddhist chaplaincy, while also reading articles by contemporary Zen and Tibetan Buddhist teachers on the art of listening. In addition to reading academic and spiritual texts, students engage in hands-on exercises like practicing active listening with their fellow students.

As part of her commitment to our chaplaincy program, Dr. Lin volunteers weekly at Laguna Honda Hospital in San Francisco through the Zen Caregiving Project, offering her presence and listening to residents. She encourages her students to pursue similar volunteer opportunities as part of their training.

“What we do (as chaplains) is offer our presence and offer to listen and see what comes out of that,” Dr. Lin said of her volunteer work. “Sometimes that means watching TV with them, their favorite shows. And sometimes ... they’re telling you their life story.”

Although chaplaincy is serious work, Dr. Lin acknowl-

FYI
To donate to the IBS Hanyu Chair, go to:



edges that it’s not always sitting in silence listening. Bingo night is an important event at Laguna Honda Hospital.

“What is religion and what is religious?” Dr. Lin said. “We could make a case that bingo serves a spiritual need. You look at church bingo, it’s a whole thing. It’s part of community —the joy of it, the joy of winning, the providence or luck of winning.”

Dr. Lin’s work ensures that the legacy of compassion and service envisioned by the Hanyus will continue to flourish.



Ireicho at PABT

Continued from Page 1

a crowd of former internees, their descendants, friends and supporters, including several Sangha members from Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco and beyond.

When the Ireicho arrived at the PABT on June 5, an opening ceremony was led by Rev. Henry Adams, Resident Minister of the San Mateo Buddhist Temple, on behalf of Palo Alto Buddhist Temple Resident Minister Rev. Dean Koyama, who was recovering from knee surgery. The Dharma talk was given by Ireicho founder Rev. Dr. Duncan Ryuken Williams.

For three days, people traveled from near and far — from Monterey to Sacramento — to stamp names in the Ireicho. They came to stamp the names of family members and friends, ancestors, their own names and of Issei whom they had not met.

After the last stamping appointment, the Ireicho rested on the altar in a closing ceremony led by Rev. Igor Makasyuk of Palo Alto Buddhist Temple and Rev. Devon Matsumoto of Mountain View Buddhist Temple.

Representatives for each of the detention camps offered incense and touched the ceramic tile composed of soil from each of the camps, and Rev. Dr. Duncan Williams gave a Dharma talk.

The experience of stamping names in the Ireicho was emotional for many people as it offered a “window” and a way “to connect with the past in a deeply personal way.”

The following words are excerpts from experiences of PABT members who stamped the Ireicho and, in some cases, also served as host volunteers:

Elisha Davis

“It was an honor to stamp an unstamped internee, Kikue Hamada (born in 1895). Volunteering in the room where people wrote remembrance cards was so powerful! Some were remembering their experience, some remembering loved ones. Listening to their stories reminded me of my father’s stories.”

Shiz Kobara

“I was very impressed with (Rev. Dr.) Duncan Ryuken Williams and his team during the entire Ireicho viewing and stamping process. Having the introduction and history of Ireicho book was very informative and fascinating. It was very emotional to see family members documented and remembered after all these years. The artistry and enormous undertaking to compile all the names from the years of internment was impressive. Thank you to the Ireicho project for keeping their memories alive.”

Lance Matsumura

“Your efforts gave our community a powerful opportunity to connect with the past in a deeply personal way.

“It was a moment to remember the sacrifices and quiet re-



Tyler Tirsell stamps the “Ireicho Book of Names” with parents Anne and Don Tirsell. (Courtesy of Don Tirsell)

silience of both unknown Issei and my own relatives. Stamping the book for people I didn’t know reminded me of standing before the Alta Mesa monolith stone and silently offering, ‘Otsukaresama. I remember you. I’m here because of you. Thank you.’ For the names of my grandmother and uncles, family I never had the chance to meet, it was a way to finally connect. Reading their names aloud felt like meeting them for the first time.

with a pinch of soil from all of the camps and detention sites baked in. We are thankful to the volunteer who took pictures for us using our mobile phone as we touched the ceramic tile and stamped the many names. The pictures we will treasure show us stamping the names and even including pictures of our own names.

“Friday and Saturday, I volunteered for 2½ hours each day and was asked to take pictures for families if they so desired.

PABT, my wife and I spent time researching her family tree, uncovering the true names of her parents, aunts and uncles, and identifying where they were interned. Seeing their names in print was incredibly emotional; many have passed in recent years and it brought back a flood of memories.

“I had the privilege of stamping my father-in-law’s name, a name we share, and my son participated, creating a memory I know he’ll carry

“For me, the experience of stamping my grandparents’ names stirred up memories of my childhood. An innocent time when I had no clue what they had endured a few decades before. My Nisei parents carried the burden of having been incarcerated and though they tried to shield us from the dark side of their experiences in the camps, the stigma carried onto my generation and beyond. It is this stigma, however, that allows us to never forget what our ancestors went through and drives our hope that this will never happen again to any group of people.”

— Carl Yanari, Palo Alto Buddhist Temple

“My son’s impression was that the Ireicho was ‘big.’ He felt the introduction and wait before stamping were a bit long. Still, I think the scale and process helped underscore the gravity of what we were doing.

“For my wife, who was born and raised in Japan, this was an educational and emotional experience. Japanese schools don’t teach about Japanese Americans. Through the Ireicho, she learned more about our community’s history and struggles than she ever had before.”

Julia Miyakawa

“My husband and I had an appointment to stamp our own names plus grandparents, parents and siblings. We realized it was a very solemn occasion to remember our grandparents’ and parents’ lives as we were babies at the time and carry no memory of camp days.

“The book with all the listing of the names was very impressive, especially with the ceramic tile in the inside cover

“At times, as I was taking the pictures, I would have tears in my eyes as they often spoke of their ancestors as they remembered them.

“There was a folder to the side of the book with amendments with corrections as the camp documents were often-times blurred, but a lot of the times, the administrators being very unfamiliar with Japanese, often misspelling them. The amendments were made with input by surviving family members.

“But the whole event was such a heartwarming experience. The group that tours the book deserves so much gratitude to take on such a big project.

“It gave us an opportunity to look into a window to our very important history.”

Don Tirsell

“My connection to the Ireicho is personal, stemming from my wife’s Sansei Japanese American heritage.

“When we confirmed our chance to stamp the Ireicho at

forever. We all touched the tile at the beginning and hearing about its composition and the origin of its materials was deeply moving.

“My family and I are incredibly grateful to the Ireicho organization. Rev. Dr. Williams and the team are truly dedicated to visually and profoundly honoring the more than 125,000 Japanese Americans whose lives were uprooted and permanently altered. We will never forget this powerful experience and the deep dive into our family history.”

Taryn Tsuji

“As I stood in the room with the Ireicho, there was a sort of weight on my shoulders, knowing that this would likely be one of the most meaningful events that I had ever participated in.

“Over the course of this year, in particular, I took time to truly explore my family’s history and the history of Executive Order 9066 in more depth.

“Sometimes, it’s difficult to realize that Japanese American

FYI

More information on the Ireicho, including the national tour and the online list of names, can be found at: <https://ireicho.org/tour/>

NBC Bay Area reporter and Mountain View Buddhist Temple member Mike Inouye interviewed Rev. Dr. Duncan Williams during the Palo Alto Buddhist Temple tour visit: bit.ly/3GuGeuS

incarceration continues to impact those around me. The same people I visit during the holidays, share meals with and laugh alongside experienced drastically different realities than what I do now when they were my age. My relatives don’t often mention their past, which I can understand, but this underscores the importance of remembering their stories and experiences. The Ireicho project provided this opportunity.

“As we flipped through the book, my attention was caught by the small dots on each page. When we reached my relatives’ names, there were already many small stamps, likely from my other relatives throughout America.

“Being able to visually see how this part of history impacts and connects our family and community was nothing short of surreal. In that moment, I felt a profound sense of connection — not just to my relatives, but to the broader community that shares this history. This served as an important reminder of the importance of our stories, though often unspoken, that bind us together across time and distance.”

Carl Yanari

“On a bright sunny day in June under a cloudless sky, our family congregated in Issei Hall to experience the stamping of the ‘Ireicho Book of Names.’

“How fitting, I thought, that this event was held in a building dedicated to the Isseis who perhaps suffered the most during the internment ordeal. How ironic, I thought, that the weather be so perfect compared to the harsh conditions that my ancestors endured during their time in the incarceration. And how fortunate that I was able to make this connection with my ancestors to remind me of the atrocities that they endured and survived.

“Never before had there been an effort to collect all the names that were a part of this process. Having the names is essential to provide a sense of individuality to the internees rather than just being a part of a statistic.

“Through the process of allowing descendants to place a stamp, an ink dot, next to the name of their ancestors allowed for a sense of connection to the past and ensure the ancestor will not be forgotten.

“For me, the experience of stamping my grandparents’ names stirred up memories of

ECOSANGHA PERSPECTIVES

New EcoSangha Committee Member Shares Views on Interconnectedness

By Kelli Hata
Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple

My name is Kelli Hata and I’ve just emerged from the crucible of academia with a Master of Arts in Religion, with a focus on the intersection of Religion and Ecology from Yale Divinity School.

I was raised Jodo Shinshu Buddhist, yet my intellectual journey has been steeped in Christian theologies. Now, I find myself desiring to reconnect with my Buddhist roots and explore this rich tradition that has profoundly shaped my thinking and becoming.

As I navigate the spaces that lie in both, in between, and in beyond Buddhist and Christian perspectives, I look forward to journeying at the margins in the work of EcoSangha.

The relationship between humans and the land is intrinsic, yet it takes on a uniquely profound dimension for Japanese Americans. One such dimension, rooted in Buddhism, is the notion of interconnectedness, which stands in stark contrast to the Western Baconian penchant for control and categorization that often treats nature as a resource to be bent for human purpose and confined within tidy, geometric boundaries.

For Issei and Nisei, many of whom toiled in agriculture and



Kelli Hata, of the Fresno Betsuin, is a recent graduate of Yale Divinity School and a new BCA EcoSangha Committee member. (Courtesy of Kelli Hata)

carved their identities in the soil, they passed down a legacy of relationships that fostered a deep-seated dialogue with the environment.

In Buddhism, the concept of “thusness” (nyoze/tathata) posits that every being possesses its own intrinsic nature or essence. In this context, Japanese Americans often engaged in gardening as a means of manifesting and nurturing this principle.

This was highlighted in my research at Yale, where I explored the intersection of environmental justice and eco-theology within World War II internment camps.

The ornamental and victory gardens cultivated within these confines were not merely acts of survival; they stood as

powerful assertions of religious and cultural identity and justice against forces that sought to erase them.

At the same time, as the landscapes of internment camps like Manzanar were rendered barren and stripped of their natural integrity due to aggressive water extraction practices, these cultivated gardens reasserted the freedom and flourishing of both interred people and the land itself.

I reflect on this interconnectedness through my childhood experiences and how they have shaped my academic pursuits. I often recall the church song, “Swim, swim, little fish, Buddha loves you, little fish,” finishing with a playful smack of my lips.

Certainly, my life has been deeply influenced by non-human beings. Growing up in the Central Valley, I wasn’t just a passive observer; I was an active participant in a complex and interconnected ecological community. I forged bonds with stray cats, became the sentinel of ants and blue-bellied lizards and helped my grandparents, Makoto and Harue, pull weeds at the old Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple.

I watched the rhythms of the farm workers tending to my grandpa’s grapevine fields. I evaded tumbleweeds and carefully avoided stepping on worms that surfaced onto the concrete during the rainy season. I listened to the coyotes’ cries at night, drove my grandpa’s golf cart through dusty fields, tossed my mother’s vegetable scraps over the fence into a field where bugs and birds foraged, and experienced the pang of guilt when my cousin showed me how salt cruelly turned snails into bubbly victims.

I’ve dug imaginary tunnels to China with my sister and cousin, swatted flies with grandma’s battered fly swatter, yet saved bees and insects from my Auntie Rona’s pool. And, I concocted makeshift soups from dog food for my grandpa’s canine companion, Poochi.

These moments were pro-

found lessons on coexistence. They not only highlight examples of mutual flourishing, but also reveal relationships marked by injustice, power imbalance, suffering and death. The term “interconnectedness” effectively describes the ecological realities of sharing this planet with others.

Indeed, injustices such as the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans and ecological degradation reveal the challenging dimensions of interconnectedness — a web of relationships that is, nonetheless, imbalanced and unjust.

Therefore, in my new role as a member of the Fresno Betsuin Buddhist Temple’s EcoSangha Initiative, I hope to contribute my perspective on “interconnectedness” as a prescriptive way to be, suggesting more life-giving ways of ecological care rooted in Jodo Shinshu teachings.

As I write this, I’m observing the wild birds feasting at my window feeders, who also enrich the soil and plants surrounding my apartment. This practice is part of my commitment to mutual flourishing and my effort to assist other beings in cultivating “thusness.” As a new EcoSangha Committee member, I look forward to exploring how Jodo Shinshu can extend Amida Buddha’s compassion to include all beings.

The Origin of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching — Part 2

Editor’s note: This is the second of four articles on “The Origin of Jodo Shinshu Teaching” by Rev. Giei Sasaki that will appear in the Wheel of Dharma. Rev. Sasaki holds the position of Bishop at the Nishi Hongwanji in Kyoto, Japan, where he is involved in training students, and has the special title within Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha of “Shikyo,” which literally means “conduct training” in English. “Shikyo” is the second-highest academic position in Jodo Shinshu studies. Rev. Sasaki teaches at Ryukoku University and the Central Buddhist Institute.



By Rev. Giei Sasaki
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha

Who then guided Genshin to the teaching of Amida Buddha?

Let us refer back to Shoshinge again. There is a line that reads as follows, “Zendo doku myo

busshoi,” or “Shan-tao alone in his time clarified the Buddha’s true intent.” (CWS I, p. 73)

So the one who led Genshin to the teaching was Shan-tao (613-681). The origin of the Jodo Shinshu teaching can be traced back to China across the Sea of Japan.

Shan-tao was born approximately 1,300 years ago in Shandong province, China. The era of Shan-tao coincided with that of the Tang dynasty (618-907), one of the most flourishing kingdoms in Chinese history. Shan-tao was such a great propagator who adopted a unique preaching method using large pictures that visualized what was written in sutras. He was also well acquainted with Buddhist liturgy, including chanting and created a number of liturgical texts.

He even directed the construction of the great Buddha statues of the Longmen grottoes, which is one of the three notable grottoes in China along with Yungang and Dunhuang Mogao, each of which has been designated as a World Heritage site.

The other two caves had been constructed since the time of T’an-luan, about whom I will refer to later.

Let’s go back to the topic of

Shan-tao. Many of his works, such as “The Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra” and a variety of liturgical writings had been brought across the ocean to Japan and kept at the libraries in Mount Hiei. The collection of these works by Shan-tao introduced Genshin, Honen and Shinran to the teaching of Amida Buddha.

Who introduced Shan-tao to Amida Buddha’s teaching?

Let’s refer again to Shoshinge, in which you will find a line that reads, “Doshaku kessho do nan sho, Zo matsu ho metsu dohi’in” or “Tao-ch’o determined how difficult it is to fulfill the Path of Sages, and reveals that only passage through the Pure Land gate is possible for us.” (CWS I, p. 72)

In other words, this verse says that Tao-ch’o (562-645) clarified that it is extremely difficult to attain enlightenment by oneself in this world, and he encouraged people to aspire for birth in Amida’s Pure Land to achieve Buddhahood.

As you know, Shinran was Honen’s disciple. Similarly, Shan-tao was a disciple of Tao-ch’o. Their age difference was as much as 51 years. Shan-tao must have looked like a great-grandson of Tao-ch’o.

It has not been often re-

ferred to, but Tao-ch’o lived through an extremely turbulent age and put his life in danger many times. Due to space limitations, I cannot detail the historical background, but Tao-ch’o lived under four different dynastic kingdoms during his lifetime. The four dynasties were: Northern Qi (550-577), Northern Zhou (556-581), Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907).

In his childhood, the kingdom under the rule of the Northern Qi went through a number of natural disasters and famines that deprived people of hope for life.

In his youth, Tao-ch’o saw his nation completely destroyed by the Northern Zhou, which carried out a severe persecution for Buddhists in Chinese history. In such terrible social conditions, Tao-ch’o sought salvation in the teaching of Amida Buddha. When the Sui dynasty began, he was finally allowed to publicly share the Buddha-Dharma again.

According to the documents at the time, more than 100,000 Buddha statues were newly erected or restored and more than 130,000 sutras were reproduced.

From these figures, we could tell how fiercely Buddhism had

been oppressed by the previous government. In such a challenging time, Tao-ch’o traveled until encountering Amida Buddha’s teaching.

Without being discouraged, Tao-ch’o visited a modest temple in his home province. This temple is called Xuanzhong and it still remains in Shanxi province, China.

The temple was where T’an-luan (476-542) lived. Although the temple building had been completely destroyed when Tao-ch’o visited, a stone monument remained and it has an inscription written by T’an-luan.

What T’an-luan inscribed on the monument is believed to be his appreciation for the Nembutsu that is nothing but Amida Buddha’s salvific working.

Tao-ch’o later rebuilt the temple, and as if being in accord with T’an-luan’s words, he also followed the Nembutsu path throughout his life. Xuanzhong temple was also where young Shan-tao called on Tao-ch’o in his later days.

The origin of the Pure Land Buddhist teaching that we appreciate today was thus succeeded at this Xuanzhong temple from T’an-luan, Tao-ch’o and onto Shan-tao.

Bishop

Continued from Page 1

the lead on efforts to increase membership.

“Effective websites, Buddhist education programs, marketing our BCA and local temples better and initiating meditation or other new programs are all ways to begin to grow our temples,” he stated.

And Rev. Harada emphasized: "The main point is for each of our local churches and temples to begin to initiate something that might add to the growth of their membership."

Rev. Harada singled out two other major concerns — the ongoing shortage of ministers and the conclusion of the BCA's Dharma Forward campaign at the end of the year.

He said the BCA will continue to have a shortage of ministers “for a few more years,” but noted that the current situation isn’t as dire and alarming as it was during the pandemic — when all ministerial training and certification was suspended for a few years by the Hongwanji-ha in Kyoto.

“We do have ministers in the pipeline,” he said, adding that several individuals have received Kyoshi certification

this year. Some, he said, will begin to serve later this year and another individual will hopefully serve next year.

In addition, he said the BCA has five ministerial candidates who will be receiving Tokudo training in October. Of the five, two have aspirations to serve as Kaikyoshi ministers "and one might be a volunteer or part-time minister someday," he said.

campaign) will be to the benefit to all the BCA and all of our temples and new programs like the Task Force on Buddhism and Spiritual, Psychological Well-Being," Rev. Harada said.

The new task force is chaired by Gregg Krech of the Todo Institute in Vermont.

“We want to connect Buddhism to mental health issues and to create programs at the

“The main point is for each of our local churches and temples to begin to initiate something that might add to the growth of their membership.”

— Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada

"So, we will eventually begin to fill the void of our shortage of ministers and hopefully will be able to keep up with the rate of ministers retiring," he said. "But we are going to have to make do for another few years."

Rev. Harada also mentioned the Dharma Forward campaign, which, to date, has reached approximately 85% of its goal of \$15 million.

"We're almost there, but it's going to take all of us, all of you leaders to pass the word on at the local and district level for us to complete this last 15 percent," he said.

"It (the Dharma Forward

local, district and national level," he said.

Rev. Harada also pointed out the accomplishments of another new BCA committee — the BCA Film and Video Committee — chaired by Glen Tao.

The committee has completed a number of projects that include: creating several videos for the 125th anniversary; a video of all the BCA churches and temples; and a video of the message of Rev. Yoshiki Sonoda, the great-grandson of the first BCA minister, Rev. Shuye Sonoda, in Japanese with English subtitles.

President's Message

Continued from Page 3

I was honored to be mentioned as a special guest along with Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai America President Mikio Yamashita, and Carolyn Seeger and her husband Steve Seeger. The Seegers attended the Hatsubon service as representatives of the Tsuji family for their late mother, Sakaye Tsuji, who passed away on Feb. 14.

Rev Kenryu and Mrs. Sakaye Tsuji, along with BDK America and the BCA, are the pillars of the Ekoji Buddhist Temple, founded in 1981. It felt special to share in this Hatsubon for Mrs. Tsuji.

As I write this article in the latter half of July, I am looking forward to many other BCA Obon festivals in the coming weeks. Our BCA Music Committee has been a true catalyst, bringing our Obon traditions to the forefront. The introduction of new Bon Odori, the sharing of much-loved Bon Odori from other temples, and the joyous dancing of traditional Bon Odoris truly manifest Obon as “Kangie” (“Gathering of



Stephen Fike of Ekoji Buddhist Temple serves up refreshing shaved ice at the temple's Obon. (Courtesy of Steven Terusaki)

Joy”). It’s a beautiful expression of our shared heritage and vibrant community.

Donor Appreciation

This month's Wheel of Dharma includes the Donor Appreciation Issue, acknowledging and thanking the many members and non-members alike who have supported the BCA and the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) over the past year. With the generosity of these individuals, foundations and organizations our future is bright.

I want to emphasize the importance of “Dharma

Forward.” This campaign is crucial for ensuring the future of both the Buddhist Churches of America and the IBS. Let us surpass our campaign goal to secure the longevity and continued impact of our institutions. My heartfelt appreciation goes out to all the donors who are making a significant difference with their generosity in supporting this campaign. If you haven’t yet participated, please consider a gift that will ensure that the Dharma will be heard for generations to come.

Looking Ahead

August signals the end of summer, and with it, the anticipation of what fall will bring: cooler, shorter days; the start of the new academic school year; the excitement of football; and the gradual slide into the year-end holidays.

It's a time of transition, much like our spiritual journey. There is much to work on at the BCA and in each of our temples and churches. I encourage you to do your part to step forward and make a difference in building community, supporting our ministers and welcoming new individuals to join us in the big tent of Shin Buddhism.

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Dharma Forward

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[additional areas on back page]



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Rev. Nakata

Continued from Page 2

a humble mind, and commits to being a lifelong learner. That is the heart of humility.

After the talk, many attendees came to me and said: “Rev. Nakata, your words spoke for us — from the same perspective — expressing exactly how we feel.”

Even though my message was simple, as always, I was deeply moved by how it resonated with so many.

Throughout the trip, however, one persistent question remained in my heart: “Why am I being treated so well?”

Eventually, the conference organizers shared the story.

They had originally planned to invite His Holiness the Dalai Lama from Dharamsala, India.

He is a close friend of the Sikh spiritual leader, Baba Ji, the “living saint” of the Sikh community. However, due to circumstances, it became difficult for the Dalai Lama to attend. In his place, they urgently needed to find a Buddhist representative, and a selection committee was formed.

During the selection process, my name was brought up. And I was later told that the living saint himself ultimately decided: “As God’s decision, let’s invite him — Kaz.”

I do not believe that I, myself, am worthy of representing the Dalai Lama. But as I reflected, I began to understand something: Perhaps it is this very humility — the belief that I am not worthy — that is precisely why I was invited to a “Conference on Humility.” In that moment, the

FYI

To view Rimban Rev. Kazuaki Nakata's speech in Parma, Italy, go to: bit.ly/43gSNmb (starts at 2:08:15)

reason I had been chosen finally made sense.

I am truly grateful to our Fresno Betsuin board for its trust, and to the Gobind Marg Charitable Trust for the invitation. It was a life-changing journey — one that reminded me of the power of humility, love, and kindness.

Please take a moment to watch my recorded speech, and let us continue to walk the path of Jodo Shinshu together — learning and living its teachings each day.

By the way — the Italian gelato was absolutely delicious!

Ohtani Fund

Continued from Page 7

the sound of people talking and catching up on the week brings you back to a special place.

Many refer to their temple or church as their second home. It is a place where families get together to physically connect to a sense of community and become a Sangha. One understated character in this story that often does not receive as much appreciation is the actual building which surrounds the Sangha.

Across the country, over the last 125 years, our pioneers mortgaged their homes, farms, and pledged their business assets to qualify for loans and financing to construct these amazing buildings in our community, with an inspiring amount of foresight and sacrifice.

These remarkable reminders

of our history are now experiencing their own challenges. Wildfires, climate change, arson, vandalism, and even basic deferred maintenance issues threaten these structures.

With that in mind, the BCA has restored and funded the Koshin Ohtani Building Fund for the benefit of our member temples and churches. The fund provides low-interest loans with favorable terms for the repair, remodel, and new construction of temple facilities across the BCA.

With an initial grant of \$200,000 from the Dharma Forward campaign, the fund will provide applicants with the ability to start emergency repairs, supplement their existing financing, or even refinance all or a portion of their existing loans with higher interest rates.

As applicants repay their loans and the lower rate of interest, the fund will make additional loans

available to other applicants, which means BCA member temples and churches will be helping each other through the fund, ensuring that our collective efforts will not only benefit our own temple buildings, but also the facilities of other temples and churches in the BCA.

Sadly, we may never know when the fund might be necessary for your temple, but we hope that you will utilize these funds to honor our pioneers and help save or maintain your buildings for future generations.

Thank you to those who contributed to Dharma Forward to allow for the fund to be restored. If your temple is interested in applying for these funds, or if you would like to make an individual donation to increase the funds available for our member temples and churches, please contact Glenn Inanaga at ginanaga@bcahq.org.

Dharma Forward

Continued from Page 7

churches.

We can appreciate the collective kinship we feel of dancing in a circle, sometimes barely knowing the moves. It’s a physical reminder that we can make music, we know how to experience together, and to appreciate the talents of one another.

Educated ministers lead us to more questions. Buddhism

explores the power of self-reflection. Ministers can help us to explore our own ignorance, give us the nudge to ask the questions, and explore more frequently how to understand our own circumstances.

There is so much happening. We don’t want anyone to miss out! Please join us in ensuring the future of our sanghas, our temples and our organizations as a way to continue our unique way of beginning to unravel the complexity of life.

The impact of our work isn’t always immediately visible. But like a seed quietly growing beneath the soil, transformation takes time. We have been nourishing ourselves with the fruits of past cultivation. And your support is an investment in the future — fruit that will benefit individuals, sanghas, communities and the world.

Let’s finish this together! Let’s step into the next chapter with strength, clarity and a heart full of purpose.

Ireicho at PABT

Continued from Page 11

my childhood. An innocent time when I had no clue what they had endured a few decades before.

“My Nisei parents carried the

burden of having been incarcerated and though they tried to shield us from the dark side of their experiences in the camps, the stigma carried onto my generation and beyond.

“It is this stigma, however, that allows us to never forget

what our ancestors went through and drives our hope that this will never happen again to any group of people. This experience was truly moving and meaningful. I am grateful that I had this chance and hope that others will have this experience as well.”

BCA Donors

Continued from Page 9

Donors include individuals, foundation, trusts and bequests. Gifts given directly to the IBS for their giving programs and gifts to BCA’s Student Financial Assistance

Program are managed separately and are not included in this list.

If you would like to receive a record of a specific donation, did not receive an acknowledgment for a recent donation, would like names listed differently in the future, or have any other questions, please contact the BCA Endowment

Foundation.

Our intention is to honor your contribution, so we ask that you kindly allow us to correct any errors. Contact the BCA Endowment Foundation at 415-776-5600 or donate@bcahq.org for further assistance and review. Corrections will be published as soon as possible.

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今月の法話

「お盆の時だけ行ったり来たり?」



Rev.Kiyonobu Kuwahara

バークレー仏教会

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8月号のご法縁をいただきましたので、お盆についてお話しさせていただきます。日本では地域によつて7月にお盆を迎える所もありますが、全国的には8月にお盆を行うのが一般的です。この時期には会社なども休みに入り、実家に帰省して家族や親戚と一緒に過ごされる方も少なくありません。アメリカでの生活を始めた頃、サングスギビングやクリスマスの過ごし方が、日本のお盆に似ていると感じました。お盆には家族や親戚が集まり、お坊さんをお仏壇の前でお参りをしたり、お墓参りに行ったりします。私たち僧侶にとつては、忙しい時期となります。

自分はお寺の出身ですが、うちのお寺ではお盆の時期にご門徒さんのお宅を一軒一軒まわつてお参りはしておりませんでした。ですから、京都の龍谷大学で学んでいた時は、三重県津市にある知り合いのお寺にお手伝いに行つておりました。この地域は7月盆でしたので、7月10日から15日までお手伝いをしておりました。ご門徒さんが大変多いお寺で、住職、副住職、自分を含めたお手伝いのお坊さん3〜4人で手分けして回つておりました。朝8時ぐらいにお寺をスクーターバイクで出発し、夕方5時ぐらいにお寺に戻ってくるまで、30〜40軒のご家庭をまわります。6月ぐらいから、お寺の方ではご門徒さん一軒一軒に連絡を入れ、何月何日の何時ぐらいにどこのお宅かというスケジュールを組んで下さいます。お参りにまわる私たちお坊さんはこのスケジュール表をお寺に着いた日にいただきます。そしてそこから大変なのが地図作りです。お手伝いに行つていたのは20年以上前のことで、その当時は携帯電話はありませんでしたが、会話と簡単なテキストメッセージができるぐらいで、今のように住所を入れて、目的地まで案内してくれるようなスマートフォンではありませんでした。スケジュール表をいただと、大きな津市の地図帳を持ってきて、住所をもとにその家を見つけ、地図のページをコピーします。そのようにして次の日に回るお宅一軒一軒の地図を作る作業

を前日の夜に行います。お参りの当日、朝食をいただいた後、他のお坊さん達と共にお寺を出てお参りに向かいます。暑い時期ですので、夕方にお寺に戻ってきた時には、毎日汗で白衣が文字通りびしょびしょでした。

これはある年の7月15日のお参りの際のことです。スケジュール表のほぼ最後の方で、時間的にはもう夕方5時頃でした。地図をもとにあるお宅に向けてスクーターを走らせていると、その家の前でおばあちゃんが待つていらつしやるのが見えました。大体の時間はお寺の方からご門徒さんには伝えてありますが、やはり夕方近くです。で、まだか、まだかと待つていらつしやったのかと思ひ、スクーターを停めると、「すみません。遅くなつてしまいました。」とまずお詫びの言葉を申しました。するとおばあちゃんは、「急いで下さい」と言い、早く家に入つてお参りをするように促されました。「もしかしてこの後、何かご予約がありました?すみません。すぐに始めます。」と言うと、おばあちゃんは「地獄の釜の蓋が閉まるから、急いで下さい!」と言いました。それを聞いて、自分は「???」となり、どういうことかおばあちゃんに聞くと、「7月15日はお盆の最終日で、夕方5時になると、地獄の釜の蓋が閉まつてしまい、お盆の時期に地獄からこの世に戻つて来ていたご先祖様が地獄に帰られなくなるから、5時までにお参りを済ませて、ご先祖様が地獄に帰れるようにして下さい。」と仰いました。自分の頭の中はまだ「???」という感じでしたが、一方でこうも考えました。「いやいや、地獄は本当に大変で辛いところだから、誰もそんなところには帰りたくないでしょう。寧ろ釜の蓋が閉まつて帰られなくなる方がご先祖様も喜ばれると思うけど・・・」しかし、おばあちゃんは大変真剣であつたため、取りあえずお仏壇のところまで行き、おばあちゃんと共にお参りをしました。なんとか5時までにお参りを済ませ、少し落ち着かれたおばあちゃんとお盆のお話をさせていただきました。お盆の期間中はたくさんのご家庭にお参りに行きましたが、このことは今でも鮮明に覚えております。

お盆の時期に亡くなられた方々がこの世に戻つて来るということや、割りばし等で足をつけたキュウリとナスをご覧になったことはありませんか?これはキュウリの馬とナス



の牛です。なぜお盆の時期に作るかということにはいくつかの説があるようですが、一つにはお盆の時期に、ご先祖様や先立たれた方々がこの世界に戻つて来る際に、彼らが少しでも早く帰つてくれるようにという思いから、足の速い動物である馬を夏野菜であるキュウリで作るそうです。そして7月15日や8月15日にお盆が終わると、彼らはまた地獄や黄泉の世界に帰るので、名残惜しさから歩みの遅い牛をナスで作るそうです。

亡くなられた方々が、まだ生きている私たちのもとに戻つてくるという考え方は世界の様々な宗教や地域で見受けられます。お盆の時期に亡くなられた方々がこの世界に戻つてきて、お盆が終わるとまた帰つていくというのはその一例かと思われます。では私たちの浄土真宗ではどうでしょうか?

この世界での命を終え、浄土に往生され、仏と成られた方々は、この迷いの世界に再び戻つてこれられると浄土真宗では説きます。これを「還相(げんそう)」と申します。しかし、戻つてこれられるのは、これまで述べたようにお盆のある決まった期間だけに戻つてこれられるわけではありません。この迷いの世界で絶え間なく苦しみ悩む私たちに向けて、先立ち仏と成られた方々や阿弥陀仏は、浄土から絶え間なく働きかけて下さっています。

そしてなぜ私たちのもとに戻つてこれられるのでしょうか?それは先ほども申しましたように、この娑婆で生きる私たちが絶えず苦しみ悩んでいるからです。私たちの苦しみ悩みを何とかせんとして戻つてこれれるのです。阿弥陀という仏様、そして浄土に往生し仏と成られた方々は、智慧と慈悲をまどかに備えていらつしやいます。智慧とは苦しみ悩みを解消する源であり、阿弥陀仏はその智慧を私たちが受け取りやすく、称えやすい「南無阿弥陀仏」へと仕上げて下さいました。慈悲とはそういった智慧を苦しみ悩む者に共有していくことであり、浄土真宗では阿弥陀仏の私たちに対する深い思いや願い、そして「南無阿弥陀仏」を広く伝えていくことであります。浄土にて成仏された方々は、その智慧と慈悲に基づいて、私たちもまたこの迷いの世界から解放され、浄土にて仏となれるよう、休むことなく働き続けて下さっているのです。言い換えると、私たちはそういつた仏様の絶え間ない働きの中で毎日の生活を送っているのです。浄土に往生された方々に関して、親鸞聖人はご和讃でこのように述べていらつしやいます。

安樂浄土にいたるひと 五濁悪世にかえりては 釈迦牟尼仏のごとくにて 利益衆生はきわもなし

浄土真宗ではお盆の法要のことを「歆喜会(かんぎぎい)」とも申します。ご先祖様をはじめ、亡くなられた方々に思いを馳せるつも、それ以上の大きく、深い思いが仏様の方からこの私に向けられていたことに気づかせていただき、そのことをよろこばせていただく法縁であります。そのような気づきはやはり日々の聞法によつて培われるものであり、これからも聞法を続けていただければと思います。

(一面「浄土真宗の源流」の続き) その頃、皆さんは何をしていましたか。覚えていらつしやるでしょうか。因みに、その頃の日本は、悪くいえば、片手に青銅器・bronze wareをもつて獣を追いかけていたかも知れません。そして、住んでいるところは洞穴であつたかも知れません。良くいえば、ようやく住居らしき建物を作り、稲・paddy riceを育て始めた頃でしょう。一方、当時の南インドは先進国でした。龍樹菩薩の居られた頃の南インドの地層から、西ローマ帝国の金貨が発掘されているのです。ですから、当時の南インドでは、西ローマと貿易をしていたということが分かつています。このように当時の南インドには、高度な文明社会がありました。そのおかげで、龍樹さまのお書きになっていた書物が失われることなく、現在に至るまで伝わっているのです。

さて、それでは、この龍樹菩薩に阿弥陀さまの教えを伝えられた方は、どなたでしょうか。もうお分かりでしょうか。4月8日と申し上げたら、お分かりですね。それは、釈尊です。皆さんが、法要の時に聞きになつてゐる「浄土三部経」は具体的には何でしょうか。それは「仏説無量寿経」「仏説観無量寿経」そして「仏説阿弥陀経」ですね。この「仏説」というのは「釈尊によつて説き示されたもの」という意味になります。そうすると、釈尊の説法を通して阿弥陀さまの教えを聞いているということになりますね。これまで「浄土真宗の源流」と題して、駆け足でお話を進めてきましたが、私たちが浄土真宗の教えに出会うまで、時間になると、釈尊の居られた2500年前からということになります。そして、距離にすると、インド、中国、日本、アメリカまで、実に15000マイルを超えて、阿弥陀さまの教えを聞いているということになります。私たちは、この歴史的・地理的な重みを感じずには居られません。

法輪

2025年 8月号

発行所
米国仏教団
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San Francisco, CA 94109
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総長メッセージ

「正直は最善の策」

Honesty is the best policy

米国仏教団総長 原田 マービン



Bishop Rev. Marvin Harada

私はありがたいことに、何度も正直な方々からの恩恵を受けてきました。

最近のことですが、レストランにクレジットカードを置き忘れてしまったことがあります。気づいたのは翌日で、慌ててそのレストランに電話をかけたところ、「ありますよ」と言われました。その日はもう営業時間が終わっていたのに、店主は「待っていますから取りに来てください」と言ってくれました。

昔、日本で義理の父が電車にカメラを置き忘れたことがあります。私たちは駅の遺失物取扱所に行きました。そこには忘れ物が棚にずらっと並べられていました。係の人が「どれですか？」と聞いてきました。棚を見ると、なんと義父のカメラがあつたのです。棚には他にもカメラが置かれていたので、私は別のカメラを義父のカメラだと言って持つていくこともできます。けれども、日本では人々がとても正直なので、係の人も私がそんな不正直なことをするはずがないと、私が義父のカメラだと言ったものを渡してくれました。

またあるとき、日本の小さなコーヒESHOPP、いわゆる「喫茶店」にいたときのことです。私はそのような小さな個人経営の喫茶店が好きで、よく行っていました。その日も一人でコーヒを飲みながら勉強していたところ、店主が近づいてきて「すみません、ちょっと銀行に行ってきます。すぐ戻りますから、店番をお願いできますか？」と言いました。私は「いいですよ」と返事しましたが、実は店主とはほとんど面識がなかったのです。

店主が出て行つてすぐに、二人のお客さんが支払いを済ませようとレジに来ました。私は「店主さんは銀行に行っています」と伝えると、その二人は自分の支払い分を私に渡して帰っていきました。

数分後、店主が戻ってきたので、そのお金を渡しました。店主はとても感謝してくれましたが、私はその出来事にとっても驚きました。アメリカでは、見ず知らずの人にお店を任せるなんて、ましてや現金の入ったレジがあるのに、考えられないことです。

また何年も前、ラスベガスでラウンジショーを見たとき、「予備の財布」（ギャンブル用の余分なお金が入ったもの）をポケットから落としてしまいました。しばらくして気づいて戻ると、カクテルウェイトレスがそれを見つけてバーテンダーに届けてくれていたこともありま

さらに最近のことですが、スロットマシンをしていて現金化したチケットをマシンに置いたまま離れてしまいました。次にその台に座った人が、私が離れていくのを見て、わざわざカジノの反対側まで私を追いかけてきてくれて、チケットを返してくれました。そのチケットには私の名前など書かれていなかったのですが、やろうと思えばその人は簡単に自分のものにできます。でも、その方はそうはしませんでした。

現代社会には、詐欺や個人情報盗難など、あらゆる不正があふれています。しかし、そんな中でも、落とした物を正直に届けてくれる人、他人のものを自分のものにしていない人たちが確かに存在するのです。

「Honesty is the best policy. 正直は最前の策」という昔からの言葉は、まさに今の時代にも通じる知恵です。正直であれば、後悔はありません。不正直なことをして、一時的に得をすることがあるかもしれませんが、後で心に罪悪感が残るかもしれません。

私の父は、外食をするとき必ず伝票の計算を自分で確認

していました。十回のうち九回は計算ミスを見つけていました。父は、お店の計算間違いで、料金が安くなっていた場合でも、必ず店員に伝えていました。父にとって「正直は最前の策」だったのです。

久保瀬曉明先生は、その著書『Everyday Suchness』の中の「Honesty (正直)」という章で、こう書いています。

「上手に話す人、表向きはよく見えても裏の顔を持っている人はたくさんいます。でも私は、だまされてもいいし、貧しくなってもいい、正直に生きて幸せでいたい。他人をだまして得をするより、自分に正直に生きることが得られる平和と喜びは計り知れません。」

私は、これまで何度も他人の正直さに助けられてきました。いつか、誰かにその恩返しができるといいなと思っています。

浄土真宗の源流

【全4回連載 第3回】

本願寺派司教 佐々木 義英



Rev. Giei Sasaki

では、曇鸞大師は、どなたから阿弥陀さまの教えをお聞きになったのでしょうか。「正信偈」には「天親菩薩論註解」とありますね。また、よく似たフレーズには「天親菩薩造論説」とあります。さて、どちらが先に出てくるフレーズでしょう。これを間違えると、ループして、いつまでも「正信偈」のおつとめが終わリませんね。もうお分かりでしょう。はじめに出てくるのは「天親菩薩造論説」です。後に出てくるのが、「天親菩薩論註解」ですね。

このうち、はじめのフレーズの意味を、少し言葉を足して訳しますと、「天親菩薩は、阿弥陀さまとその浄土にぞなわるはたらきについて書物をお書きになった」ということです。次いで、後のフレーズの意味を訳しますと、「天親菩薩がお書きになった書物に、曇鸞大師が註釈を施された」ということです。

そうしますと、中国の曇鸞大師は、約5000マイルという長いシルクロードの先にある北インドで活躍なさっ

ていた天親菩薩の書物を通して、阿弥陀さまの教えに会われているということです。天親菩薩は、西暦400年から480年まで北インドで阿弥陀さまの教えをお説きになっていました。また、曇鸞大師は、西暦476年から542年まで中国で活躍になっています。

お二方の年代を比べてみますと、わずか数十年の違いしかありません。ここには、驚くべき事実が二つあります。一つは、この短い期間に、あまたの無名の僧たちが、中国からインドへと、往復10000マイルという気の遠くなるような道のりを超えて、命がけで経典を求められていたということです。そして、その中に、天親菩薩の書物があつたということです。

もう一つは、天親菩薩はインドの方ですから、言語は古代のインドの言葉です。また、曇鸞大師は中国の方ですから、言語は古代の中国の言葉です。ですから、お二人の言葉の壁を超えるためには、どちらの国の言語にもしている僧侶がいらっしゃったということです。

今は、インターネットもあり、いろいろ便利な時代になりましたが、当時、このようなものではありません。そうしたなかで、天親菩薩の書物が翻訳され、それが曇鸞大師に伝わり、そして、それをお読みになった曇鸞大師が、註釈を完成されるまで、わずか半世紀ほどしか、かかっていないということです。これは今から約1500年前の出来事です。まさしく奇跡的な偉業といえるでしょう。また、別の機会にお話しをいたしますが、その天親菩薩さまも、実は大きな事業を行っておられたのです。実は、世界最古の大学設立の礎をお作りになっていたのです。それは「ナランダー大学・Nalanda University」です。今もその遺跡はインドに現存しています。そのスケールの大きさは、見るものを圧倒します。

さて、話を元に戻しますが、天親菩薩の誕生から、さらに400年ほどさかのぼりますと、南インドで、お念仏を喜んでいらつしやった方がおられます。「正信偈」には「龍樹大士出於世」とありますね。龍樹菩薩さまです。この「正信偈」の文の意味は「龍樹さまが、この世にお出ましになった」ということです。龍樹さまが活躍になっていたのは、西暦150年から250年頃であるといわれています。

今から1800年も前のことです。

二ページへ続く