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Reflecting on the New Year, I am astounded by the progress at Seattle Betsuin on valuing the LGBTQ community. Just a year ago, this topic wasn’t regularly discussed. But after a few dozen Buddhist Women’s Association members and Betsuin school families walked together in the 2017 Women’s March on Washington, DC, the energy as Buddhists to engage in social activism brought us to plan our first participation in the Seattle Pride Parade. After the parade, the planning committee continued meeting and organized “Rainbow of Infinite Light: A Seminar on LGBTQ in Jodo Shinshu,” with the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) Center for Buddhist Education. The one-day seminar, held November 18, 2017 and attended by 100 people, featured a talk by Rev. Dr. Jeff Wilson on “LGBTQ in Buddhist History,” a personal story from Marsha Aizumi and her transgender son Aiden Aizumi, and a panel of local LGBTQ Buddhists.

Rev. Wilson explained that, in classical monastic so- ciety, the distinction between laypeople and monks was celibacy. Monks were banished from monasteries if they had sex—regardless of with whom (or what). When Shrinran Shonin was exiled, he and his followers became “gender—regardless of with whom (or what). When Shinran's future wife and lead- shonin were the last she came out to, because she hadn’t known anyone else coming out at the temple. She was relieved her friends told her they loved and accepted her. Another panelist was transgender.

When Shrinran saw a vi- sion of Bodhisattva Kannon at Ryokakku-do, Kannon appeared as Prince Shonshou, and said he would manifest as Shrinran’s future wife and lead him to the Pure Land. “This is significant,” Wilson said. “Kannon is famous for gender-bending, so there is nothing odd about this in the Buddhist tradition. Shrinran went on to carry the tradition and believed his wife to be a manifestation of Prince Shokutou.”

The Aizumis shared their life experience of Aiden growing up female, but truly being a male inside. He was accepted as a tomboy in elementary school, but in middle and high school the boys closed their group by my son. Today, I feel that shame has turned to pride...”

Minister’s Assistant Elaine Donlin of the Buddhist Church of San Francisco moderated the LGBTQ Buddhist panel. One panelist said her friends she grew up with at Seattle Bet- suin were the last she came out to, because she hadn’t known anyone else coming out at the temple. She was relieved her friends told her they loved and accepted her. Another panelist was transgender.

These youthful BCA leaders (left) attended the second Temple Leadership Workshop organized by the CBE. (Right) The seminar, which served 40 leaders from 24 BCA temples, was held at the Jodo Shinshu Center.

2018 Temple Leadership Seminar: “Re-energized!”
Forty Leaders Focus on Dharma-Centered Leadership, Sharing, Networking, and Fun

By Tara Tamaribuchi, Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple

Infinite Light

By Tara Tamaribuchi, Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple

2018 Temple Leadership Seminar: “Re-energized!”
Forty Leaders Focus on Dharma-Centered Leadership, Sharing, Networking, and Fun
I don’t know if I can survive with high technology in the world-to-come. I already have difficulty with high technology. We are surrounded by things that didn’t exist before the last ten years or so. I even hear in the news that Artificial Intelligence (AI) or robots will replace many of our workers in the near future. All this may make some things more convenient for us, but I feel we are living under more stress. Yet we enjoy technology and it is difficult to turn the clock back to the past life style. We have a lot of desires. Information Technology (IT), Virtual Reality (VR), AI, etc. are allowing us to make our dreams and desires to come true. In this forest of IT, aren’t we losing something? Buddhist Churches of America’s President, Mr. Ken Tanimoto and I took a short trip to Hongwanji in Kyoto, Japan to attend the Hoon-ko Services, which are gatherings to express gratitude to Shrinan Shonin on his memorial day. The services are always observed for seven days from the 9th to the 16th of January. The tradition of Hoon-ko began on January 1, 1967, Shrinan Shonin’s 33rd memorial year and has been observed every year, even during the time of the Japanese Warring States (Rennyo Shonin’s time), the Ishiyama Battle (Kenro Shonin’s time) and many wars throughout history, including the World II. Each temple in Japan observes its own Buddhist service. Everything is everything. The Hongwanji’s so that members are able to go to Kyoto to attend the Hongwanji’s Hoon-ko Services in January.

This was a first experience for both of us. After attending the services and seeing everything with our own eyes, Mr. Tani moto commented that photos cannot capture the atmosphere. Though it really was, truly cold inside the wooden building, we did feel the warmth of people’s religious appreciation. We were joined by Rev. Anan Haranaka and two other devout Jodo Shinshu members. One is a BCA member and the other is from the United Kingdom. Both of them really appreciated the wonderful opportunity to participate in very traditional observances.

When we stayed in Kyoto, what I noticed was not to be bothered by phone calls and emails. Because I did not use the phone or computer, I was able to immerse myself in the timeless time during those three days, and feel something important in our daily lives.

The Buddhist term “useless use” describes something that doesn’t serve any practical purpose for our daily lives, yet it does serve us in different ways. Hoonko services fall into the category of “useless use.” We can live without Hoonko services. They are useless. Yet, to me (and the thousands of other people who attend), in my personal life, Hoonko services are very useful. They remind me of the true and real life I am striving for a place and space so that we do not lose our spiritual vision. The call coming from the timeless past is urging us to hear it and we respond by saying Namo Amida Butsu. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to those who have passed on to us this spiritual gem so that we can live our lives with humility and joy.

From Practical Buddhism to Truth-Level Buddhism

By Rev. Marvin Harada, Orange County Buddhist Church

In my mind, there are two levels of Buddhism. The first level is “practical Buddhism.” We all begin with this first level, and ask questions like, “What can Buddhism do for me in my life?” Will it make me happier? Will it make me more serene? Will it lower my blood pressure? Will it ease my stress and anxiety?”

Especially here in the west where people are very practically oriented, I think that those are the very natural questions that we all have at the level of Buddhism, however, challenges us to deepen our understanding and practice beyond the teachings, we’re coming to the truth of our religious convictions. We were joined by Rev. Anan Haranaka and two other devout Jodo Shinshu members. One is a BCA member and the other is from the United Kingdom. Both of them really appreciated the wonderful opportunity to participate in very traditional observances.

What the planning committee was managed by Kathy Nishimoto, Ron Suzuki, Janet Uyeno, and Margie Mio, who served as Master of Ceremony. Gordon Tani designed the programs and beautiful Tenmu flags that were shipped to us from Japan. Lynn Morita and Aaron Nagayama created and presented a memorable archival video of ABA with 50 colorful years of “Fun, Food, and Friendship.”

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The Adult Buddhist Association (ABA) at Orange County Buddhist Church (OCBC) celebrated its 50th Anniversary on October 28, 2017 at the Royal Garden Restaurant in Cerritos, California. It was a time of great joy and acknowledgement of its pioneers. Past presidents and officers were honored for their dedication and leadership, including Dr. Henry Senamatsu who was the first president in 1967 and Reverend John Doami who was the first Buddhist Minister in Southern CA.

ABA has provided strong leadership for many temple Boards and committees; Hanamatsuri and Obon festivals; delicious lunch; fundraising events such as bingo; many trips to Japan, Canada, and U.S. scenic spots; and religious literature that supported OCBC through the years. Past presidents Kaz Ichikawa and Ed Tanaka shared their wit and wisdom as they gave a vivid description of events that took place in years past.

Today, we are 78 members strong. All members, past and present, have contributed to the growth and prosperity of ABA, and therefore, to OCBC through their continued involvement and support.

OCBC Adult Buddhist Association’s 50th Anniversary

By Margie Mio

ABA President, Orange County Buddhist Church

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Back to Low Tech

By Rev. Kodo Umeme, BCA Bishop

Shrinan Shonin’s 1173-1262 Drawing by Masanori Watanabe

Like the Buddhist Churches of America
In Memoriam: Judge Mikio Uchiyama

The Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) announces with great sadness the passing of Judge Mikio Uchiyama, former BCA President (1986-87) and current BCA Board of Directors member. Judge Uchiyama passed away on November 8, 2018 in Fresno, California.

The Honorable Mikio Uchiyama was born in Sanger, California and spent much of his life in the Central California area. He was the first Asian American to graduate from the University of Texas Law School. After World War II, he was assigned to General Douglas MacArthur’s general headquarters in Tokyo, Japan, where he helped to re-write the Japanese penal code. He was appointed to the post-war law courts and also served at the International War Crimes Tribunal.

The Honorable Mikio Uchiyama served as City Attorney for the City of Fowler and regularly spoke on the Four Noble Truths to his courtroom before being appointed as judge to the Municipal Court. He was also the first Asian American to graduate from the Central California Buddhist Churches of America weekly radio program, “KMM-Matsuda.” He was active in the Central California Japanese Citizens’ League, the Japanese American Citizens’ League, and the Buddhist Churches of America, where he spent much time giving back to the community.

The BCA expresses its deepest appreciation to the late Judge Mikio Uchiyama and the Uchiyama family for his many years of dedicated service to the BCA Sangha.

In President’s Message: Looking To Our BCA Future

By Ken Tanimoto, BCA President

A few months ago I had the pleasure of attending the Gardena Buddhist Church Sunday Service. There were many Dharma School children then present. I was overjoyed seeing their energy, innocence, and the excitement of being with their friends. When I was attending Dharma School (called Sunday School in those days) I had the same experience and, to tell the truth, learning about Buddhism and the life of Shrinran (the founder of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism) has the same experience and, to tell you the truth, learning about Buddhism and the life of Shinran Shonin is as good as going to a Sunday School to me.

I think many of the Dharma School students you see in the picture feel the same way. To-day, many kids use iPhones to take pictures feel the same way. To-day, many kids use iPhones to connect with their friends, but I see the same thing as when I attended. As I talked to friends at the Dharma School about our temple and the Dharma School children, many kids use iPhones to take pictures feel the same way. Today, many kids use iPhones to connect with their friends, but I see the same thing as when I attended. As I talked to friends at the Dharma School about our temple and the Dharma School children, I think many of the Dharma School students you see in the picture feel the same way. To-day, many kids use iPhones to take pictures feel the same way.

In my perspective, the future of our temples depends on our Dharma School and youth programs, thus possibly increasing membership.

With these families come grandparents and relatives, and other families as well. This simple foundation was the start of our first BCA temple when it was established over 100 years ago. Our temples could be reinvigorated with a loss of at least 10% of our membership.

Erik Hammerstrom, an active member of the Tacoma Buddhist Temple in Tacoma, talked about this issue in his lectures. He believes that the future of our temples depends on how we invest time in our youth, as well as on diversity and inclusivity. He mentions that the Dharma School children, temples new life with families coming together to listen to Buddha’s Wisdom and Companionship.

Brian Nagata, the Wheel of Dharma editor, sent me an article few years back about decreasing youth involvement in the Buddhism today. Why? Because it places the responsibility on the giver to think of what the product is and how much. Life at a temple is not a business where you know what the product is and how much it is worth. When you go to a Buddhist temple for the first time, do you know what it is all about, and can therefore put a value judgement on it? And what is the real value of chanting, burning incense, and bowing, other than the poetic meanings you put into it, or how you define Amida Buddha and the Pure Land and summarily dismiss it as superstition? For authentic religion, one doesn’t go shopping for a religion that agrees with you, but for one that changes you.

The term dana has the following meanings: salutation, appreciation, remuneration, use of facilities, etc. When you attend regular services, you are asked to donate to the temple for services rendered for you or your family (funerals and memorial services), personal use of facilities, etc. When you ask, “about how much,” the usual answer is “biokuromo” or “whatever your heart dictates.”

This answer was as difficult for the ise and nisei as it now is for nisei and yonsei. One has to pursue further and inquire what an average might be.

Senshin Buddhist Temple continues with the vague and religious “dana.” This is different. How do you define “dana”? Because it places the responsibility on the giver to think of what the product is and how much. Life at a temple is not a business where you know what the product is and how much it is worth. When you go to a Buddhist temple for the first time, do you know what it is all about, and can therefore put a value judgement on it? And what is the real value of chanting, burning incense, and bowing, other than the poetic meanings you put into it, or how you define Amida Buddha and the Pure Land and summarily dismiss it as superstition? For authentic religion, one doesn’t go shopping for a religion that agrees with you, but for one that changes you.

The Buddha emphasizes dana as a primary practice to understand bodhi. This means giving to others, money, things, service, and yourself, without expectation of reward or praise. It is the most important and dif- ferent of acts – this dana – this giving oneself away. Its value or worth cannot be set and, depending on one’s karmic karmic karma, $10 may be more than another’s $100. Dana therefore can never be a set price; it moves as the heart moves. It does not calculate in ounces and pounds. As the heart moves, so the temple runs or flourishes. This special kind of well-defined giving called dana is the Sanskrit word dana in its original meaning. The Sanskrit word dana means a gift. In English, uses the term donation.

In Memoriam: Judge Mikio Uchiyama

By Rev. Masao Kodani, BCA Minister Emeritus

Enmanji Wildfire Survivors’ Benefit, Feb. 28

In early October 2017, much of California was covered by a blanket of thick smoke with around 250 wildfires burning in many areas of the state. The worst started on October 8 in Northern California around the Napa region and ended up destroying some 245,000 acres. Hotels, offices, stores, homes, and businesses went up in flames in a matter of minutes with little or no warning. The Enmanji Buddhist Temple and even the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley became temporary evacuation centers for several Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) facilities threatened by the various fires.

Now thought to be the costliest wildfire in U.S. history, total economic losses are estimated at more than $8 billion dollars. Several BCA members and families of members have lost their homes and property due to these fires. The Enmanji Buddhist Temple in Sebastopol, California will be hosting a fundraiser at the temple on February 24 to benefit those who lost their properties.

The event will be a luncheon from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Proceeds will be distributed to eight families and individuals in the greater Enmanji community who suffered personal losses due to the fires. For further information, please contact Enmanji President Kent Matsuda at kmatsuda@globalbol.net.
A Different Kind of Vegas Visit

By Rev. Peter Hata, Los Angeles Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple

On October 1, 2017, a lone gunman opened fire on 20,000 concertgoers at a music festival on the Las Vegas Strip, and killed 58 and injured over 500. It was the deadliest mass shooting committed by an individual in U.S. history. Coincidentally, I had been invited to be a guest speaker for a Sunday Service at the Las Vegas Buddhist Sangha only one week after the tragic shooting. The temple members were of course shaken. One of their younger members, a student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), told me she had friends that attended the concert and who had been shot. Her friends were some of the “fortunate” ones, and would recover.

This tragic shooting—and unfortunately too many others like it—expresses two key teachings of Buddhism, which are the truth of the impermanence and the interdependence of life. As evidenced by the shooting itself, not only is life constantly changing, unpredictable, and impermanent, in that constant flow, all life is interrelated and interdependent, as evidenced by the grief felt by the temple members.

Because of their deep sadness, I officiated a short memorial service before their regular Sunday Service. I mentioned that dealing with the death of loved ones and friends, or even just one’s fellow Las Vegas residents, are very difficult losses to bear. This is why we hold funerals and memorial services in Buddhism. At these services, while we share our grief, we are also given the opportunity to listen to the teachings of Buddhism. Buddhism teaches that it is the awareness of death that leads to our living fully and appreciatively. When we acknowledge the reality of death, we appreciate and value each moment of our life, knowing each moment will never occur again.

In addition, it is in our encounters with the powerful reality of impermanence that the “shell” of the ego is broken down and the illusion of our separate ego-self recedes. When the illusion of our separate ego-self recedes, we simultaneously begin to appreciate not only our own life, we begin to see our deep connections with all other lives. Therefore, while impermanence is a key teaching of Buddhism, we could also say that a deep and compassionate appreciation for the interdependence of all life is in sight.

I closed the special memorial service by expressing my sincere hope that the wisdom of the Buddha can someday touch all people.

And what about that UNLV student? After the service, she mentioned to me that in the wake of the shooting, because of the large number of victims, many hospitals and other centers had begun to collect blood. And that, despite her great fear of needles, she was determined to go give blood and do what she could to help.

Rev. Peter Hata is a minister of the Shinshu Otani-ha assigned to the Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles. He is also a musician, having been an original member of the fusion jazz group, Hiroshima, and a music lecturer at California State University, Los Angeles from 2006 through 2011. Rev. Hata has spoken at several BCA Center for Buddhist Education events.

Sympathy & Empathy

March 9-11, 2018

TECHNOBUDDHA CONFERENCE

SYMPATHY & EMPATHY

Come join us for the 11th annual TechnoBuddha Conference at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley. This year’s theme is centered around Sympathy and Empathy and the subtle differences between the two. We’ll be exploring meditation, nutrition, the joys of impermanence and so much more. This year our keynote speaker (and former TechnoBuddha attendee) is Rev. Candice Shibata of the Buddhist Church of Florin. Standard registration: $70, from January 5 - February 9; Late registration: $85, from February 10 - 23. Register online at buddhistchurchesofamerica.org.

This annual event, hosted by the Center for Buddhist Education, is for people between the ages of 21-39. The conference aims to provide an opportunity for young professionals to find a community of like-minded individuals and introduce Jodo Shinshu Buddhism to those who are interested in learning. For more information, visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/technobuddhaconference or email chairs@technobuddhaconference.org.

On Sunday, December 3, 2017 the Orange County Buddhist Women’s Association (OC BWA) held its annual service honoring Eshinnisama, the beloved wife of Shinran, and their dedicated daughter, Kakushinni. It was also the 60th anniversary of the OC BWA. Rev. Marvin Harada read the list of women who laid the foundation for the organization, followed by heartwarming messages from herself and Rev. Mutsumi Wondra. After the service, a nice luncheon in the social hall was well attended by 80 members and guests. The BWA ladies wore beautiful new nenju (Buddhist beads) and custom-made monto shikisho (a formal cloth worn around a lay member’s neck), and everyone enjoyed the spirited atmosphere of camaraderie and friendship. Photo by Kent Suzuki.
2018 BCA Educational Events

Programs subject to change.

Events at the Jodo Shinshu Center unless otherwise noted.


February 25 ~ “New Takes on Pure Land Practice & Realization in the Mahayana tradition will be led by guest presenter, Professor Koitsu Yokoyama, professor emeritus of Rikkyo University.


March 26-30 ~ Gathering to Read Thirty Verses of Vasabandu. This intensive, five-day Buddhist seminar on “consciousness only” thought in the Mahayana tradition will be led by guest presenter, Professor Kazuo Yokoyama, professor emeritus of Rikkyo University. Registrants must be fluent in Japanese. Some background in Buddhism is preferred and helpful. Registration: $300, includes lectures and meals. Register online by April 1 at buddhistchurchesofamerica.org.

April 5-7 ~ Spring Minister’s Assistant Program (MAP) Seminar.

April 25-27 ~ Ministers’ Continuing Education (MCE) Seminar.

April 27-29 ~ FDSTL Conference: “Intersections” in Foster City, CA. Contact Cari Yanai at fabi2018conference@gmail.com. See flyer on page 1.

April 29 ~ Seminar with Rev. Dr. Ken Tanaka, 1:45-3 pm at Enmanji Buddhist Temple, 1200 Gravenstein Hwy S, Sebastopol, CA. on: Introduc- tion to Shin Buddhism in America; The Nature of Shin Awakening; and The Way of Naturalness. Registration information at sonomajuddhisttemple.org under “Events.”

Dharma Fun: A coloring activity for kids of all ages

The Buddha lived many years ago and taught us many things. He taught that in this life, there is suffering. He also taught that all things are impermanent; all things come to an end. February 15 is Nirvana Day, the day that the Buddha passed away. Nirvana means perfect peace, or the end of suffering.

The Buddha became ill when he was eighty years old. He smiled warmly and said to his sad friends, “Do not weep. Everything that is born must also die. Such is life. But the Dharma I have taught will never die. Keep this Dharma in your hearts.”

The Buddha passed away 2,500 years ago. Since then millions of people have been helped by his greatest gift of all…the Dharma.

From The Life of Buddha Picture Storybook, Published by Sunday School Department, Buddhist Churches of America, 1971. Illustrated by Atsutaka Saito

Before the Compassionate Eye

By Lady Takeko Kujo

The win-or-lose aspect of our world clearly reveals how unable we are to separate ourselves from the anguish of our past karma. But being defeated by the world and cursing it—or in the case of a very great loss, professing our weakness—is gain the sympathy of others—is an unsightly thing to do.

Sympathy is not something to be sought, nor is it something that can be forced. Precisely because the blessing of sympathy is something we cannot ask for, are we so grateful when we receive it.

How pathetic that some seek to hide behind the blessing of the dharma, and yet continue to pile up one evil after another. We should never become so used to the Buddha’s compassion that we play with or take pleasure in it. When we reflect on our weakness and our inability to completely attain the goals that we set for ourselves, we should savor the blessing of being within the Buddha’s vow to bring about our enlightenment.

True strength is the weak realizing their weakness.

What a sorrow! Without even knowing the evils of our transmigrating world, We’re indigent in his merciful compassion.

Lady Takeko Kujo (1887-1928) founded the Buddhist Women’s Association (Fujinkai). This passage is from her book Muppug: Flower Without Sorrow, available from the BCA Bookstore. To order, visit buddhistchurchesofamerica.org and click on the bookstore icon.

BCA Summer Youth Retreat Program

July 1–8, 2018 at the Jodo Shinshu Center

The Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) announces a new and invigorating Summer Youth Retreat program for high schools that will take place at the Jodo Shinshu Center (JSC) in Berkeley from July 1 – 8, 2018.

We invite interested BCA youth to participate in a week of relevant and meaningful lectures, workshops, field trips and discussions on how to incorporate the Buddhist teachings into their lives as young 21st century Americans. Lodging and most meals will take place at the JSC, located across the street from the UC Berkeley campus. More information and registration materials will be made available for all temples at the BCA National Council Meeting in February.

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The following is Dean Scott Mitchell’s February newsletter message. The Dean’s newsletter is distributed monthly to faculty, students, researchers, and friends. To sign up for the newsletter, go to http://epurl.com/IBORS).

Happy new year from the Institute of Buddhist Studies. 2017 was an important year for the Institute. In the fall of 2017, we were awarded candidacy for accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Since holding a retreat on the future of the IBS in 2015, the Board of Trustees has remained committed to moving forward to what 2018 holds in store.

By far, the biggest news for the Institute in 2017 was the decision to go forward with the accreditation process. This is an important part of this vision as it affords us legitimation and recognition in the realm of higher education.

The next step in attaining accreditation won’t be complete until 2019. Between now and then, we’ve got a lot to do — but mostly this work is “behind the scenes” (setting up computer systems, budgets, and so forth). This work isn’t particularly exciting and can feel far removed from our core purpose of Buddhist studies; nevertheless, it is vital, important work as it creates a solid foundation to ensure the continual growth of the Institute in the future, so that we can attain the vision of being a world-class center of Buddhist studies.

Meanwhile, the real work continues. We already have big plans in store for 2018, including new research initiatives, scholarships, and other programs.

As always, in March IBS was the premier location for the Center for Buddhist Education and Research piloting the Pacific Seminars and the upcoming symposium on “Religious and Social Consciousness in the United States" at the BCA National Council Meeting in Sacramento on March 30. Please visit the IBS website for more information.

Also in March IBS is honored to be hosting the regional meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR). The AAR is North America’s largest professional organization for scholars of religion, and most IBS faculty are members, regularly presenting papers in November regional meetings which attract up to 10,000 attendees. The regional center of Buddhist studies, IBS, expects to host 100 scholars to be here in Berkeley the weekend of March 23. Having been asked to host by the AAR was a great honor, and we hope to further raise IBS’s profile among the presenters and audience.

Beginning in January, IBS will be hosting a visiting scholar from the United Kingdom, Enrique Galvan-Alvarez. Prof. Galvan-Alvarez was last in Berkeley in 2015 for the International Buddhist Studies conference.

He is interested in the globalization of Buddhism and the concentration camp and liberation.” IBS will also be co-hosting events with the Center for Buddhist Education and Research piloting the Pacific Seminars and the upcoming symposium on “Religious and Social Consciousness in the United States” at the BCA National Council Meeting in Sacramento on March 30. Please visit the IBS website for more information.

So take refuge in Amida, the true and real light. And every finite living being encounters, receives, as the light of Amida Buddha’s Wisdom Body, the light of wisdom, the light of Namoamidabutsu. It is at this point where practical Buddhism and truth-level Buddhism converge into one.

We are aware of many questions and concerns as we enter this new phase of IBS in the coming year, and we look forward to continuing to grow our school and deepen our studies of the Dharma.

Buddhist Church of Oakland Fujikane (Buddhist Women’s Association) at Totapam Intervention Camp in Uray, 1945.

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お念仏、響流十方大音布のために

フレックス別院
中川嘉慧

念仏することに抵抗しながらお聴聞をしても、何もはじまらないのです。そのことについて、二つ三つ確認しておきます。

「念仏は必ず称えなければならないものなのか」ということを疑問に思うのは、科学教育を受けてなんでもわかったつもりでいるワレワレ現代人として当然のことです。

たしかにブッダの教えを学び、ヒトとして生きることに目覚めた時、敬虔に感謝をするのに「念仏だけ」ということはありません。われわれは合掌しますし礼拝もします。もしも本当にその心があるならば、必ず態度に現われるものです。そしてその態度が自然になればなるほど、心もさらに本当になってゆくのです。心さえあれば行いはどうでもよいということは、現実にはあり得ません。ホトケの教えと生きるというのはまずわが身の姿勢からなのです。浄土真宗の家庭では、子供のころから仏前での礼拝が自然に行われてきました。世界に類がない素晴らしい家庭教

このことに気づくならば、親鸞聖人が、敬虔な心が本当の態度に現れるのが「念仏」の瞬間であり、称名念仏を「大行（=ホトケの教えすべてに通じる生き方）」であることを明らかにされたことにも深く気づくべきです。考えてみれば、お聖人はもの凄いことを言っておられます。称名念仏「大行（=ホトケの教えすべてに通じる生き方）」とは、「南无阿弥陀佛」の発声は「南無佛」「南無三宝」「南無妙法蓮華経」「南無遍照金剛」等々のすべてに通底しているという意味です。すなわち、生きとし生けるものが出会うであろう宗教的な真実の一切が、その音声で表現されていると親鸞聖人は確信されたからこそ「浄土真宗」なのです。このことを納得するために、ちょっと知識が必要です。

声は「心が発する音」だということは誰しも納得していません。たとえ声帯を失い、さらに聴覚を失っていても心が声を出そうとすれば、心は振動し、その振動はカラダ全体、細胞の端々まで伝わる事実は生物学で確認されています。さらにわれわれの住む宇宙に存在する全ての物質の原因は、音を発するのと同じ振動であることを現代科学は知り始めました。驚くべきことに、ブッダの生まれ育った2700年前（ルンビニー発掘in2014年以后）の、古代インドの哲学者たちは、すでにこの事実に気づいていたようです。後にミーマンサー哲学として体系化される基本の言葉に「Nāda-brahmā(世界は音)」との重要な事の重大さに、21世紀になって現代科学はやっと辿り着きました。

もちろん、仏教の土台となっているインド文明の大発見の中で、ブッダの教えはもちろんこの事実に基づいています。遠く宇宙にある一切の存在から、われわれ地球に住む人間もみな例外なく「発声」することによってその存在を顕わし、それ自身を名乗っているのです。「南无阿弥陀佛」は「名号」と言われます。自らの名前「名」を、口を大きく開けて出す大きな声「号」で、名乗っているからです。われわれの「することば」の核心がその音にあるのは疑いありません。音が合わなければ論理も何もありません。音声に乱れていることばでは、どのようにしても真意は伝わりません。ですから「お念仏」はしっかりと発声されなければならないのです。

振り返ってみるとき、善導大師が七世紀の中国で「南無阿弥陀佛」はインドの「ことば」を中国語に写した六字で「な む あ み だ ぶ」と音節ごとに発音することを明確にされ、それが中国、さらには東アジア全体の「お念仏」となりました。600年後、わが親鸞聖人は新たに知り得た古代インドの情報にもとづいて、「南無阿弥陀佛」を「南无阿弥陀佛」と書き換えられ「なもあみだぶ」と発音されました。十念相続の時は「なんまんだぶ」と発音されたようです。以後、浄土真宗では「お念仏」はそうなりました。この書き換えは現在の常識では小さな事のようですが、当時としては、僧侶として歴史上初めての結婚宣言された時と同じように、実際に法律で死刑に処せられてもおかしくほどの危険な決断でした。親鸞聖人は本当に真面目に命懸けでブッダの真意を聞こうとされた方でした。

現在のわれわれが本当に親鸞聖人の精神を受け継いで「お念仏」を称えるのならば、いまここで聖人と同じように新らしい古代インドの情報を活用したいとおもいます。19世紀以降のインドの歴史文化の研究によっておおくの事が明らかになってきています。古代インド語の研究もその成果の一つで、最初に中国人仏教徒の聞いた「南無阿弥陀佛」の原語はシルクロード地方に於けるインド語の方言であり、幸運にもこの原語は歴史的に紀元前までその変化の跡を辿る事ができ、北インドでの最初の表記が‘Namāmitābhaā’で「ナムォミタァヴァ」と発音されていたことが明確になっています（アショーカ碑文・磨崖文）。この原語はサンスクリット語ではなく2000数百年まえの北インド方言ですから、かなりの高い確率でシャカ族の「ことば」すなわち、ブッダが実際にしゃべっておられた可能性があるのです。一度、「ナムォミタァヴァ」と称えてみてください。するとその音が浄土真宗で伝統的に称える「なんまんだぶ ... 去2700年間、アジアの仏教徒たちは後世のわれわれのためにブッダの真意を伝える大音宣布のお念仏を伝えてくださってます。驚くことにほとんどブッダの言葉そのままに。この思いを絶えるほど、文字どおり本当に有り難いのです。

真宗門徒は、すえ通らないお念仏もどきを呪文のよう称えることのないよう心掛けたいものです。どうか、親鸞聖人や七高僧、さらには過去2700年間の先輩仏教徒たちが、時には命がけでこの「ことば」を子々孫孫まで伝えようとされた真意を聴聞してください。南無阿弥陀佛ナムォミタァヴァ なんまんだぶ

意訳:南無不可思議光

“なんとブッダの智慧の尽きることのないことよ!

私には、もはや一切衆生の一人も見捨てる事などできない。

ニ ユ ヨ ク タ イ ムス 紙

昨年十二月四日付けのニューヨークタイムス、オピニオン欄の記事で親鸞聖人の教えや言葉が紹介された。記事は、マサチューセッツ大学哲学科、カーグ・ジョン教授とミズーリ大学哲学科、マーティン・クランシー教授による共著となっており、「In Dark Times, Dirty Hands' Can Still Do Good (暗黒の時代に活躍するのは不浄の者)」の題で掲載されている。二人は経済格差などさまざまな面で不平等な世界において、純粋な行いを為すことは不可能に近い状況にあることを指摘。末法の濁世に阿弥陀如来への信仰によって浄土への道を歩んだ親鸞聖人の教えに学ぶことが現代アメリカ人にとって有意義なのではないかと提示している。文中には「外儀の姿はひとごとに賢善精進現ぜしむ 貪瞋邪偽おほきゆえ 奸詐ももはし身に見てり」の和讃や歎異抄の「善悪のふたつ、総じてもつて存知せざるなり」、「煩悩具足の凡夫、火宅無常の世界は、よくること、みなもつてそらごとたはごと、まことあることなきに、」などの語に加え、聖人が「愚禿」と名のられたことを紹介、自分のどうしようもない不完全さを常に意識することが信心、とも言及している。記事を読んだ開教使は「BCAが頼んだわけではないのに、とてもよい記事を書いてくださってお二人に感謝しています。連絡をさせてゲストピーカーに来ていただきたいと思います。」と浄土真宗の教えが全米に広く知られたことを喜んだ。記事へのリンクは、https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/04/opinion/purity-is-overrated.html「法輪」英語欄二〇一八年一月号にもタイムス紙の記事に関して書かれている。

横山紘一師　

三月二十六日から三〇日の五日間、浄土真宗センターにおいて「唯識三十頌」の講義が行われる。講師は日本で唯識研究の第一人者として知られる横山紘一師。参加条件は日本語を話すことができ、唯識に興味があること。登録費は300ドル。登録は三月一日までで、www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.orgで行える。
一月十九日から二十一日の3日間、浄土真宗センターにおいて門信徒のリーダーのためのセミナーが開催された。BCA所属の60ヶ寺、6サンガグループを2組に分け、昨年よりセミナーを実施。今年は2組目あたる寺院とサンガグループの代表者、約50名が参加した。「仏法を中心としたリーダーシップ」をテーマとし、仏教や浄土真宗の基本的な教え、より効果的な情報発信を行うためのインターネットやソーシャルネットワーク活用法などを学んだ。ディスカッションでは各寺院で共通する問題点についての意見交換が行われた。また各仏教会の現状や取り組みで成功している事例紹介のプレゼンテーションも行われた。参加者は「セミナーに参加し、他の寺院の代表者たちと話すことで、どのお寺も同じような悩みを持っていることを知りました。また、寺院のよりよい将来に向けて試行錯誤していることも同じでした。他寺院の聞信徒の方と協力していくことが大切だと思いました。」

米国仏教団総長 梅津廣道

総長コラム

一月初頭に私のコンピューターがハックされました。というより、差出人不明のメールを開けたのが間違いでした。皆さんも気を付けてください。これから先、このような時代を生きていかないといけないと思うと気が滅入します。世の中はIT、AI、またVRなどと訳のわからない言葉で表される、新しい時代に入ってい...したところ、二名の方がご一緒したいということで、畑中先生を含めて五名で一月十五、六日の二日間の尊いご法縁にあわせていただきました。京都の寒さは有名ですが、特に今年の寒さは厳しく、お堂の中はフリーザーのようでした。しかし、大勢のお参りで温かさを感じさせていただきました。十五日の夜から十六日の朝にかけて通夜布教が行われますが、その会場にも足を運び、夜九時頃までお話しを聞かせていただきました。大広間が二つ会場として用意されていましたが、満堂でした。また、若い人たちも聴聞している姿に感動いたしました。十六日のお参りは座るところを探すのに苦労するほど大勢のお参りでした。お参りの後、大谷本廟へ縁の旅をありがたく終えることができました。谷本会長は「ご本山の報恩講にお参りできて感動しました。お念仏を喜ぶ方々の熱気など写真やビデオでは伝わらないものがあるので、皆にもぜひお参りしてほしいです。」と喜んでくださいました。本願寺では、親鸞聖人の三十三回から毎年報恩講をお勤めしているということでした。どんな時代も、お念仏を喜ぶ人たちが集まり、親鸞聖人に感謝する集いが続けられているのです。そこで感じられるのは、コンピューター時代になっても、人間の苦悩の根源に光を当ててくださる教えが語り継がれているということの驚きと喜びです。私も携帯電話やコンピューターなしで数日過ごすことができ、自由な時間が取り戻された思いがしました。世の中が変わっても変わらないものがあり、それに出会わなければ、本当に生きるということはありえないと感じたこのたびの日本行きでした。できたら、これを来年、再来年につなげていきたいと思います。開教使の先生と一緒に本山の報恩講にお参りする企画を作っていただきたいと思います。