

Brief Commentaries On The Sanjo Wasan

by Rev. Lee Rosenthal

KOSO WASAN (57)

Though beings of the Last Dharma, corrupt with the Five Defilements

Perform the practices of the Sacred Path,

Not one can attain Enlightenment:

We may often hear someone say, “These are extremely difficult times in which we live.” More likely than not, this expression refers to the present social, economic or political climate of the day. But how may we relate this assertion to religion?

The second half of the sixth century was an extremely turbulent period in Chinese history. Natural disasters, constant warfare and Buddhist persecution contributed to the turmoil in North China where Tao-ch’o, the fourth great teacher in the Shin Buddhist tradition, lived. Indeed, it was difficult to reconcile these events with one’s religious convictions and practices.

Although a knowledgeable lecturer on the *Nirvana Sutra*, Tao-ch’o became aware of the futility of studying Buddhism through purely academic means, and eventually sought its propagation among the ordinary people through Pure Land teaching, as T’an-luan had indicated before him. The *Nirvana Sutra* emphasized universal Buddha-Nature and thus reinforced the Pure Land concept of universal emancipation, but for Tao-ch’o, it was the *Meditation Sutra* which gave primary import to the liberation of common, human beings.

Tao-ch’o relied on the *Meditation Sutra* because to him, it was specifically designed for the ordinary people of the Final Dharma Period. It was delivered in the time of True Dharma, but intended for us in the ages of later Semblance and Final Dharma. Thus, the Buddha, out of compassion, encourages us to take refuge in the Pure Land path.

Discussing the Pure Land teaching based upon the *Meditation Sutra*, Tao-ch’o wrote his *Anraku Shu*. In it, he emphasizes a connection between the nature of the time, the “human potential”, and the teaching. In Tao-ch’o’s view, there was no harmony between these three elements, primarily due to the defiled time in which he lived. Quoting the *Mahasamnipata Sutra*, Tao-ch’o discussed the nature of his time and viewed the people of that age as absolutely conditioned common, ordinary beings. As such, maintaining traditional practices was extremely difficult. Despite one’s effort to adhere to the Buddhist Way, no one will be able to attain its fruition in the Final Dharma Period — the time is too far removed from that of the Buddha and his teachings are too profound for our weak understanding.

Unlike his predecessor T’an-luan, who included Bodhisattvas and Hinayana followers in his Image

Dharma Theory of deliverance, Tao-ch'o considered the Pure Land as designed mainly for common mortals, who, by his classification, had already accumulated wholesomeness in their past lives by being embraced in the Buddhist path. This past cause determines our encountering a teacher, who leads us to the attainment of birth in the Pure Land through the performance of Nembutsu.

Since we are living in an age characterized by severe corruption, "only through the Pure Land gate can sentient beings enter into the Pure Land." For Tao-ch'o, the Nembutsu was the gate through which one can desire to accomplish this entrance. By constantly invoking the name of Buddha Amitabha, not only did he reflect upon his own accumulated transgressions, but he transcended them as well. For us, Nembutsu is a corollary to having heard the Name (*Namo Amida Butsu*), and is not a precondition for Birth. But like Tao-ch'o, we too are assured of deliverance from the karmic bondage of birth-and-death, even in this last decadent period since Buddha's passing.

President's Message

Contrary to the thinking of a few that Temple is constantly extending its arms out for help, I have decided that for this month's newsletter article I will tone down the message, completely. What does that mean?

Well, what I am going to do is: I will not solicit for donations, I will not plea for your support for causes, and I will not indulge you with "thank you", which I have also done quite often. I will leave it at that and agreeably without need of justification.

What I will do instead, however, is simply wish you a safe and pleasant time during the summer months. Don't work too hard, don't play too hard, don't eat and drink too much and don't think too much. Whatever you do or don't do, just enjoy. ... *Mick*

Dharma School News

The month of June was a busy one for Dharma School. The students did a wonderful job assisting Rev. Rosenthal with the Father's Day Service. **Special thanks to the ladies who helped prepare the delicious Father's Day Lunch.**

The following week the Vista Dharma School hosted the Southern District Dharma School Teachers' League Mini-Workshop 2 on June 24. Dharma School teachers from other temples throughout Southern California spent the day in Vista sharing in the Dharma. **Thank you to Rev. Rosenthal for conducting the**

workshop and to our VBT Dharma school parents/staff for their assistance.

The next day we ended the 2005-2006 Dharma School term at the Temple Picnic. The Dharma School students were presented special certificates for their participation. The students presented Sensei with a special gift of appreciation for his continued guidance.

It is now summer and the 2005-2006 Dharma School year has come to an end. We would like to thank Reverend Rosenthal for sharing the Dharma and for his patience with the children during Sensei's Jr. Ministers Club. A huge thank you to our Dharma School staff. We greatly appreciate your time and efforts. We also thank the parents for bringing their children to Temple.

During the month of July we will be preparing for the annual Obon Festival. Dharma School **Families will be** notified to help out in the Hospitality Booth. Along with the usual hotdogs, chili, lemonade, iced tea, water and hot green tea, we will also sell Somen Salad. **We will have prep on Friday, July 28 from 1:00 p.m.**

We will take our traditional summer break during the month of August. Enjoy your break and we will see you back at Temple on Sunday, September 10.

If you have any questions or would like to assist with any of the upcoming activities please contact Terri.

Upcoming activities:

7/2	Sun	9:30 a.m.	Dharma Gathering
7/8	Sat	7:30 p.m.	Obon Service
7/16	Sun	9:30 a.m.	Dharma Gathering/Class: Bon Odori
7/23	Sun	9:30 a.m.	Dharma Gathering/Class: Bon Odori
7/28	Fri	1:00 p.m.	Hospitality Booth Prep
7/29-30		12 – 8 p.m.	Obon Festival
9/10	Sun	9:30 a.m.	Dharma School Resumes

See you at Temple!!! ...Terri

BWA News

"Live A Life of Awakening"

The Buddhist Women's League Conference in Westlake began with the opening service. While the BWL gathered for a meeting, the other conference attendees were treated to viewing the "Fool's Dance" movie. A story about a Jodo Shinshu Myokonen's perspective of death and dying as shared with a group of seniors.

Participants listened to keynote speakers Rev. Umezu and Rev. Mohri who gave dharma talks on the conference theme "Live a Life of Awakening."

After a wonderful day, we shared a very comfortable ride on a chartered bus with members of the San Diego Buddhist Temple.

OBON is Here Again --How quickly time flies!

It is time to prepare for manju making.

Schedule:

- July 13th Soak 2 lbs large lima beans in large pot overnight.
Remove skins, and wash thoroughly.
- July 14th Cover with water, keeping water level at least 4 inches above the beans. Cook until soft. Test by pinching a bean between your fingers. KEEP THE WATER, Do not discard the water.
- July 15th – 8 am Bring “an” for an making to the Temple kitchen.
- July 22nd - 8am Manju making at Temple

Contact Wanda Shibata and let her know, you plan to prepare the lima beans for an making. See you on the 15th and 22nd at 8am.

LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS FOR OBON.

Gassho ...Merle

VBT Upcoming Events

- Sep 10 Dharma Gathering Resumes
Sep 23 Higan Service
Oct 7 VBT 25th Anniversary Celebration
Oct 15 Lady Eshinni Memorial Service

- Nov 11 Eitaikyo Memorial Service
Nov 18 Southern District Mini-Workshop

Taiko News

The taiko group has been busy! In June, the group performed at the Buddhist Temple of San Diego's Japanese Cultural Bazaar. Practice, practice, practice. Maybe it won't get us to Carnegie Hall, but it will get us prepared for our Obon Festival in July.

In August, Shokenji Taiko will be appearing at the Friendship Garden in Balboa Park for their annual garden event.

To let go the ego
Amida's calling voice resounds from the taiko
"I" is a part of the whole
Kokoro kara the beat begins and grows
Out of the thundering tempo, Dharma flows.
Namo Amida Butsu

...Diane

Obon Odori Dance Practice

July 5, 12, & 19
7 – 8 PM

Come out on Wednesday nights to learn the Obon dances! Mrs. Elaine Marume will be leading the practices on July 5th, 12th and 19th from 7PM to 8PM in the downstairs social hall of the temple. Everyone welcome!

Learn to Dress Yourself for Obon!

Wednesday July 12
6 – 7 PM

Mrs. Megumi Inada has graciously agreed to teach us how to properly put on our *yukata* (summer kimonos) and tie our *obi* (sash.) So bring all the necessities: your *yukata*, *geta* (footwear), *obi*, some hand towels and *himo* (fabric rope) and come prepared to have fun while we learn!

Donations Gladly Accepted For VBT Obon Festival!

Obon is around the corner and our booth chairs are looking for your donations!

Garden Booth: Needs plants, flowers, pots & other garden items.

Silent Auction: We'll take anything!

Raffle: Donations of gift cards to your favorite coffee shop, store or restaurant are accepted!

VBT Poetry ~ Memoirs

It is time to get those beautiful, unfinished poems finished. Please submit them via email to Gail or Edward by the end of July. Thank you to everyone for your generous poetic contributions to our 25th anniversary celebration! ...*Edward*