IRON CHAIN TO GOLDEN CHAIN

Dharma High School Readings

Tsukasa Matsueda

BCA FDSTL 2017
IRON CHAIN TO GOLDEN CHAIN

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Tsukasa Matsueda, Ed.D
Preface

Words of Appreciation

There is a Buddhist term, okage sama de, that is frequently used by the Japanese to denote a deep appreciation for someone who has helped another, whether that help was small or big. And it is a term that I must use to thank all the people who gave me such tremendous assistance in completing this project.

Words of thanks are extended to the Senior Class of Palo Alto Dharma School, and the teachers, Yae Hirotsuka and Agnes Kuwano for allowing me to try out a few of the lessons in their class. I also value the suggestions and help given by the Federation of Dharma School Teachers League and their Chairpersons at the time of the project, Eiko Masuyama and Miyo Yoshimoto.

I am deeply grateful to Rev. Carol Himaka, the Director of the Department of Buddhist Education, who worked with me from the beginning of the project and offered unfailing support throughout.

I am indebted to the following ministers who contributed so much of their time and energy. They were all gracious and kind in giving so much of themselves, despite the fact that they were severely overworked and had so little time to spare. Their enthusiastic encouragement helped me to sustain my effort. Whether they contributed something materially or not, I would like to thank them all here: Rev. Hiroshi Abiko, Dr. Alfred Bloom, Rev. Don Castro, Rev. Russell Hamada, Rev. Marvin Harada, Rev. Jerry Hirano, Rev. Masao Kodani, Rev. Dean Koyama, Rev. William Masuda, Rev. Ronald Nakasone, Rev. Gerald Sakamoto, Rev. La Verne Sasaki, Rev. Dennis Shinseki, Rev. Kakuyei Tada, Rev. Shoyo Taniguchi, Rev. Kenryu Tsuji, Rev. Kodo Umez, Bishop Seigen Yamaoka, and Rev. Kosho Yukawa.
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I need to acknowledge Lisa Kuramoto Kobayashi, a colleague at Yu-Ai Kai, who did some editing and all of the typing under the most demanding conditions. My debt to her also extends to her suggestions and comments.

It is possible that I failed to mention some people's contribution, but if I did, I want to express my gratitude to them and humbly apologize to them at the same time.

I thank my wife, June, for her unbelievable forbearance. She managed to keep up with her stressful job and somehow make sure I did not stray too far from my medical and dietary regimen. I could not have completed this project without her behind-the-scenes support.

Exuberant support from my children, Julie, Bob and Ranko and the cheerful and vibrant presence of my grandson, Ken, helped lighten many moments of this long project.

I must conclude with the Japanese term, *sumimasen*, which means, "never ending" because that term truly describes my appreciation for all the help rendered by so many generous people.

Tsukasa Matsueda
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Foreword

Compassion in the Beginning, Compassion in the Middle, and Compassion in the End

*Rev. Kenryu Takashi Tsuji, the former Bishop of the Buddhist Church of America and presently, the resident minister of Ekoji Buddhist Temple in Springfield, Virginia.*

(Selected passages from the keynote address delivered at the National Council Meeting of the Buddhist Churches of America held in Phoenix, Arizona.)

The potential of the Nembutsu in America is great. I am not interested in simply increasing the membership. But I am deeply interested in bringing Enlightenment to those who are seriously searching for their true human identity and real meaning in life.

To make the Nembutsu meaningful and thus beneficial to many Americans requires a radical rethinking and a massive effort on the part of the ministers and the lay members alike.

Professor Takamaro Shigaraki, who spent a year with us in an in-depth study makes a penetrating analysis in this thesis, "The Shinshu Kyodan in America".

*The present Shinshu Kyodan in Hawaii and the mainland U.S., insofar as Shinshu Studies is concerned, relies heavily on the Nishi Hongwanji and directly imports its brand of Shinshuology to the United States. Whenever a problem in Shinshu Studies arises, both Kyodan consult Kyoto. Moreover, every year Nishi Hongwanji dispatches a scholar to the U.S. for lectures to both ministers and laymen.*
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Unfortunately, the traditional Shinshuology of Nishi Hongwanji, which was formulated during the feudal Tokugawa period, is being extended into America today. That is why this type of Shinshu does not speak to the issues of modern life. Even in Japan it suffers from a critical time lag and a reformation is vociferously proposed.

It is unthinkable that the conventional Shinshu Studies, which has not seen any reformation whatsoever and has become long outdated, is now being disseminated in its original form and is expected to take root in America.

Without casting off its conventional trappings and without a drastic change, how can it possibly become American Jodo Shinshu? This is a foregone conclusion.

It is true that this is one professor's opinion. Moreover, Professor Shigaraki is a controversial figure in Hongwanji circles. But let us remember, Shinran was also a controversial figure. He created so much controversy that he was banished and exiled to the northern provinces.

Shinran brought a refreshing way of life to the stuffy pomp and pageantry of feudal Buddhism.

To Shinran, the Nembutsu was a deep spiritual experience that occurred at the deepest level of human experience. It was the experience of the finite human being who had touched the Infinite. He called this experience faith in Amida Buddha. He had gained a new insight into reality. The finite would always be finite. Therefore he realized it was not the finite reaching for the Infinite but the Infinite always moving towards the finite. Shinran called this new found experience Amida's compassion surrounding him and never casting him aside.

His life was no longer fragmented and divided: one part searching for the end to his greed, anger, and ignorance, and the other, feeling the uncontrollable grief and frustration over his inability to overcome his human limitations.

But now his life was whole because Amida's Compassion was surrounding him and embracing him, not in spite of his greed, anger, and ignorance, but because of his greed, anger, and ignorance. The Nembutsu of gratitude flowed from his lips.
unceasingly. This Nembutsu was the universal declaration of the authentic person.

We who follow the Nembutsu share this same experience. The fundamental source of our human activity is the cosmic compassion of Amida Buddha.

The Buddhist life in the Nembutsu is compassion in the beginning, compassion in the middle, and compassion in the end. The power of compassion never ceases - even in death. The attainment of the Pure Land Enlightenment is not for individual self-satisfaction. The Pure Land idea is not a static end of eternal rest and slumber.

At the moment of the attainment of Enlightenment, we become one with the boundless energy of Pure Compassion. This compassion powers our movement to wherever there is suffering and works until all suffering is eradicated. Thus the Nembutsu is the experience of Compassion in perpetual motion.

The Nembutsu moves us to work for the good of the community and the world - for social justice, world peace, inter-religious harmony and cooperation - for any cause that brings happiness to humankind.

In the realm of the Nembutsu there is no place for egocentricity and ethnocentricity and no place for racial or religious discrimination.

The ultimate worth of the human being is not in the amount of wealth he has amassed, not in the honors that have been bestowed upon him, not in the accumulation of a vast amount of knowledge, not in the power over others, but in the simple fact of how much good he does for others.

Let the Nembutsu ideal, the Nembutsu experience, the Nembutsu recitation be the guiding force of the Buddhist Churches of America.

Let us remember that the BCA is no more and no less that the sum total of its members. If you and I cannot become whole and authentic human beings in the Nembutsu, the BCA cannot be expected to become whole and authentic.

Shinran's global message - the Nembutsu - was not a formalized, rigid dogma but a way of life for all people wherein
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every man, woman, and child could realize his or her fullest potential.

Although the Nembutsu is rooted in Japanese culture, in the Japanese people, in the obligation of the master-student relationship, in filial duties, in the Hongwanji tradition, it transcends all these temporal matters. The Nembutsu life is free because it grounds each one of us in the Absolute. Truly, it is "Living Amida's Life".
Introduction

In the Shin Buddhist Handbook, it is noted that the goal of the Buddhist is to reflect on the meaning and significance of his existence by establishing a spiritual relationship with Amida Buddha. Once the relationship between the individual and Amida is established, a Buddhist can, out of spirit of appreciation, perform sincere acts of Compassion. The Shin Buddhist Pledge from the Shin Buddhist Handbook summarizes these goals in a concise manner. (1)

*I affirm my Faith in Amida's Infinite Wisdom and Compassion. Reciting his Sacred Name, I shall live with strength and joy.*

*I shall look up to Amida's Guiding Light. As I reflect upon my imperfect self, I live with gratitude for His perfect Compassion which surrounds me at all times.*

*I shall follow Amida's Teachings. I shall understand the Right Path and resolve to spread the true teaching.*

*I rejoice in Amida's Wisdom and Compassion. I shall respect and help my fellow men and work for the good of my community.* (2)

What then are the specific ways Buddhists can help their fellow men and work for the good of the community? Again, the Shin Buddhist Handbook provides us with specific goals, including the following:
A Buddhist deplores inequality, racial and religious prejudices, and injustices in society, and strives to establish equality, understanding, and justice.

A Buddhist dedicates himself/herself to the preservation of freedom and liberty and will sacrifice himself/herself for all this Noble Cause.

A Buddhist practices kindness to all sentient beings.

This handbook focuses on the above quoted goals, but what do they mean to the young Buddhist students? They will confront situations that require them and us to decide what constitutes responsible Buddhist behavior. One of the ways these lessons attempt to help realize their goals is to help the development of more mature thought about value issues by helping the students to learn how to engage in fair and open discussions. Through such process, the individual can become less self centered, less conforming, and more aware of rights and opinions of others and the welfare of society. They can help to increase their ability to identify ethical values and to analyze situations involving them.

The lessons are centered around historical and social issues arranged around the theme that Buddhism can help to establish equality, understanding, justice, and freedom in a world filled with prejudice, injustice, and oppression. Young people of high-school age are primarily concerned with their personality growth. They are consciously and explicitly trying to find and establish their true individuality. This handbook attempts to fulfill this primary need by developing their decision-making skills. The lessons are also designed to encourage students to express their feelings and opinions in a responsible, Buddhist manner.

The lessons begin with a reading, which is followed by questions and activities designed to broaden an individual's understanding of the issues and to develop higher thinking skills, e.g., to distinguish factual and ethical issues and to recognize Buddhist values that apply to the issues.

The final part of the lesson may include articles by Buddhist ministers written from a Buddhist perspective, which is to be used
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as a guide rather than to be accepted as the ultimate Buddhist view. The Buddhist individual's highest goal is to discover the highest ideal in each given reality, rather than to squeeze everything into one ideal, which is an abstraction from reality.

Finally, the handbook encourages the realization of other goals listed in the "Shin Buddhist Handbook" such as helping the individual to devote some time to self study, listen to the teachings of the Buddha, and to strive diligently to put into practice what they have learned about having faith in one's self and teaching others to have faith.

Tsukasa Matsueda

Bibliography

2. Ibid., Inside of the front cover.
3. Ibid., pp. 120 - 122.
4. Ibid., p. 121.
Lesson I

Awakening to Dukkha (Suffering)

Objectives:

After the lesson, the students should be able to:

1. Describe how Gautama Buddha and Shinran Shonin came to understand about suffering in life.

2. Discuss the basic factors that contribute to suffering in our world.

3. Describe Gautama Buddha's and Shinran Shonin's response to suffering.

Concepts:

Self examination.
Dukkha (Suffering).
Two-class system.
Compassion.
Issei.
Nisei.
Sansei.
Yonsei.
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Procedure:

1. Pass out Reading 1, "Gautama Buddha and Shinran Shonin."

2. Discuss the questions that follow the reading.

Summary:

When individuals become aware of conditions that exist beyond the limits of their most immediate world, they usually are moved to think new thoughts or to take new actions. Self awareness serves as a great motivator and sustains individuals over a long period of time in contrast to those who do things without much reflection.

When Gautama Buddha and Shinran Shonin became aware of suffering in this world, they took actions that eventually led to psychological, emotional, and spiritual uplifting of the "common people."

Bibliography:


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Reading 1

Gautama Buddha and Shinran Shonin

Tsukasa Matsueda

Gautama Buddha was born a Prince and many people expected great things of him. One sage said that he had the potential to be a great ruler or the wisest of men. The King expected his son to follow in his footsteps. He provided his son with the most extravagant surroundings where every conceivable knowledge of classical literature and the arts, including training and discipline in martial expertise, was made available to him.

The Prince followed the way of life laid out for him, but he also began to see the many contradictions between what he was taught to accept in his luxurious life compared to the actual conditions that existed for most of the common people. He saw that life was full of suffering and sorrow, particularly experienced during illness, aging, and death. He became intent on finding adequate answers to questions that he had never faced. So great was his determination, he left his wife and children to seek a deeper understanding of this newly found awareness. He struggled for 6 years and finally found the Noble Truths, which he taught to others for the rest of his life.

In another place and time, Shinran Shonin also faced an inner struggle to find the answers of the people's suffering and sorrow that existed at a time when Kyoto was embroiled in a series of political and military upheavals. Shinran Shonin lost his parents at a very early age; although he could have lived with his uncle in modest comfort, he decided to enter a Buddhist monastery. He was 9 years old. It is not clear whether he made this decision because of the loss of his parents or because he was moved by the relentless suffering of the people during this particular time. However, he was disappointed to find elitism, extravagance, and meaningless
ritualism practiced by the very priests and leaders from whom he sought the answers.

At this critical time, Shinran was fortunate in learning about Honen who was gathering a great deal of attention from the public because he strongly attacked the practices of the elitist religious leaders who catered primarily to the rich and the powerful. Honen, in contrast, preached to the suffering political and economic victims of the times. Because of his openly bold criticism of temple leaders and because of his increasing popularity with the common people, Honen was exiled from Kyoto. Shinran and other disciples of Honen who signed the critical statement condemning the temple leaders were also exiled from the capital city of Kyoto.

While in exile, both Honen and Shinran attracted many new converts, mostly common people, but also including warriors and noblemen. Shinran taught that every individual could succeed equally in gaining enlightenment. Wherever he stopped to spread the Buddhist message became his temple. He did not view his followers as unequals, but as fellow beings. This kind of early egalitarian views further separated him from the ruling priests and nobles who headed the most influential temples at that time.

What did these two men, Gautama Buddha and Shinran Shonin, from different places and times have in common? From their experiences and observations, both learned that life was filled with suffering and sorrow. They were aware that there was a struggle for survival, and that the world was divided into the strong and the weak -- that the world was not equal nor fair. Both of them gave hope to the weak. Gautama Buddha said that all could find enlightenment because individual effort could bring about salvation. He said, "Be ye a lamp unto yourself. Be ye a refuge to yourselves. . . . Strive with diligence." Shinran Shonin taught that even when a good person strives to attain enlightenment, how much more must the evil person suffer to attain enlightenment? These teachers did not wait for people to come to them or the temple; rather they went among the people. Both focused on the salvation of the weak by wise and compassionate approach to the individual, particularly the weaker ones. They broke the chain of suffering and sorrow through awareness and involvement. Although they offended the superiors and the strong, they were
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steadfast in their faith in the individual regardless of the degree of their status, learning, or achievement. Thus they were moved to challenge the world of inequality and unfairness.

Note: Questions to Consider

1. How did Gautama Buddha and Shinran Shonin become aware of suffering in the world?

2. Although they lived in ancient times and in different societies, in what way were their societies very much like our own?

3. In what ways were Gautama Buddha and Shinran Shonin alike in their views toward: the nature of the world? suffering? weaker people? superior people? temple?

4. Would you agree that our society today is divided into the haves and have nots? strong and the weak? privileged and unprivileged? Please explain your response.

5. Do you think that Gautama Buddha and Shinran Shonin can be role models for people at present in our society? Why or why not?

6. What kind of people do you think would differ and/or reject their views? Why do you think so?

7. Which of the following responses would you choose as most Buddhistic?

If the world is divided and unfair, we should:

a. Change the political system of the society.
b. Change the economic system of the society.
c. Change both systems if necessary.
d. Help the weak first.
e. Be grateful no matter what situation you may find yourself.
f. Mind your own business and do not cause any problems for others.
g. Do not agree with any of the above statements.

Please support your answers.
Reading 2:

Awakening to Dukkha

Rev. Carol Himaka, Director,
BCA Department of Buddhist Education

The life story of Shakyamuni Buddha characterizes how a sensitive individual raised in the lap of luxury gradually awakened to the harsh realities of human life. Born into a wealthy clan, son of the chief Suddhodana, Prince Siddhartha enjoyed a life few could even imagine in 600 A.D. His birth rank and family privilege provided the best education and excellent training in the martial arts. His personal beauty and athletic skill enabled him to beat all rivals for the hand of his bride, Princess Yashodara. His father built three different palaces to house the Prince and his bride, one for each major season of the year. Servants and entertainers were constantly vying to please the Prince, as his father wanted to keep his son from fulfilling a prophecy that said the Prince had two destinies to choose, either remain at home and become a great leader of the clan, or leave home to become a renowned wandering holy man.

As chief of the clan, Suddhodana naturally wanted his only son to continue on in his place as chief. Legend tells us that extreme measures were taken by Suddhodana to ensure that Siddhartha's mind would not become involved in the trials and tribulations of life that inspire spiritual seekers to pursue such tortuous paths as followed by the wandering holy men of the day. No expense was spared to keep the Prince entertained with the amusements and distractions.

But try as he might, Suddhodana could not keep the reality of impermanence from the Prince's experience. Prince Siddhartha's encounter with impermanence and the resulting suffering it causes human beings is symbolized in the story of the Four Gates. In this
story, Prince Siddhartha is said to have left the palace grounds for a chariot ride on four separate occasions. On the first occasion, he saw an old man by the side of the road. He asked his charioteer what was wrong with the man, as he had never seen any old people before. For the first time the Prince heard about the reality of old age. The second occasion the Prince saw a sick man. Again, he inquired of his charioteer and this time he heard about the reality of illness. On the third occasion, the Prince saw a funeral procession. He asked his driver to explain what was going on and he heard the frightening truth about death. On the fourth occasion, the Prince saw a wandering holy man. Having just learned about the inevitable calamities of old age, illness, and death, the Prince was intrigued by the peaceful countenance of the holy man, for he could not understand how anyone could be peaceful in the face of such horrors as old age, illness, and death. At that moment, the Prince decided that it was necessary for him to leave his home and discover what made the holy man's peace possible.

With great difficulty, Prince Siddhartha left his home, his young wife, and his newly born son. He set out to practice the wandering way of the holy man. This physically demanding lifestyle required living out in the open, usually in the forest. Food was sparse, consisting mainly of what could be begged from day to day. Clothing was minimal, often made up of scraps of cloth made from the dead shrouds of corpses that had been dumped in the forest for the animals to eat. Many holy men practiced yoga meditations that required sustained physical exertions in a variety of ways. Siddhartha took up these practices and describes how he once sat so still that the dust and dirt that fell around him settled in heaps on his body until, of its own weight, it fell off. He tells of eating so infrequently that when he reached to touch his stomach, he felt his back bone. Due to lack of nourishment his hair fell out and his skin became black and patches of skin shriveled up and dropped from his body.

The yogis fulfilled these extreme ascetic practices because they believed that it developed mastery of the mind over the body. This was important because the body was seen as the cause of suffering. Anyone who has experienced hunger, or physical pain due to illness or injury can understand what the yogis meant. Such
sustained meditation practice did open many avenues to deeper insight and even extraordinary physical and psychic powers, but this was not what Siddhartha was after. Siddhartha pursued other activities during this time.

In the 6th century A.D., a number of distinguished philosophy teachers lived and taught. In China, the founder of Taoism, Lao Tzu, was still alive, and Confucius was just born. In Greece the 6th century marks the beginning of Greek classical culture, which eventually led up to philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The ancient world was alive with brilliant men of thought.

Siddhartha studied with two of the most outstanding teachers in India at the time, Arada Kalama, who taught meditation leading to the "attainment of the state of nothing at all," and Udraka Ramaputra, who taught the way to the "attainment of neither conception nor nonconception." But neither way lead to enlightenment or nirvana. In the end Siddhartha had to set off on his own to see the path to nirvana.

Legend tells us of the struggle Siddhartha had with Mara, the Evil One, the night before the enlightenment. This mythical version of Siddhartha's night of temptation was a late addition to the story of Buddha's life. It contains the message of how important good habits are in supporting resolve when one is faced with the challenge of fears and doubts.

Early the next morning, having cast aside all doubts and fears, Siddhartha became Buddha (the Awakened One) and for 45 years afterward he taught his new found Middle Way to others.

The life of Shinran Shonin (1173-1263) also clearly depicts how he was made personally aware of human suffering. Shinran was born into a family of minor aristocratic status during Japan's medieval Kamakura period. He lost his father at an early age and then lost his mother when he was only 9 years old. Although his uncle took him in, the young boy is said to have expressed an interest in entering the monastery at Mt. Hiei. So at the age of nine, young Shinran became ordained into the Buddhist priesthood.

For twenty years, he lived and studied in the monastic community of Mt. Hiei. The only historical record of his status in the monastic community is a reference in a letter written by
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Eshinni, later his wife, saying that he was a doso. This term describes a monk who specialized in practicing a meditative discipline, known as jogyo-zanmai. This particular practice entails circumambulating a statue of Amida Buddha while constantly chanting the name, Namo Amida Butsu.

At the age of 29 Shinran reached a spiritual crisis. He set out to seclude himself, fasting and praying, for 100 days, in the Rokkaku Temple. The temple, originally built by Shotoku Taishi (573-621), considered the first patron of the Buddhaharma in Japan, seems to have had the reputation for miracles. On the 95th day of his seclusion Shinran heard the voice of Shotoku Taishi (other versions say Kannon Bodhisattva) and was directed to seek out Honen. Shinran did get to Honen, and discovered a different meaning to Nembutsu practice. The year was 1201.

Shinran learned from Honen about the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha and that rebirth into the Pure Land is caused by one's awakened faith in the Amida Buddha's Vow. He learned that recitation of the Buddha's name, Namo Amida Buddha, was an expression of gratitude for the Buddha's Compassion and not a practice for enlightenment limited to monks or wealthy aristocrats. But most of all Shinran learned that the Buddhaharma could be followed by those who could not leave their lay lives, ordinary people, common people.

Although he only stayed with Honen for 6 short years, Shinran had become a close disciple of Honen, close enough to be granted the privilege of copying a portrait of the master and also some of his writings. The popularity of Honen's nembutsu teaching resulted in many followers. The rising tide of resentment from other Buddhist traditions began to grow and soon after the passing of Shogun Yoritomo, governmental support of Honen's nembutsu teaching collapsed. Several temples began to submit formal protests against Honen and his nembutsu teaching, citing the nembutsu teaching as heresy and complaining that Honen had started a new religion without official Imperial permission. Because monastic rules regarding behavior were not critical for those who had faith in Amida's Primal Vow, monks who followed the nembutsu began to openly break their precept vows. The established traditions viewed the nembutsu followers and their
teaching to be irresponsible, unruly and ultimately immoral. Honen and his followers countered that although some Nembutsu followers may have misinterpreted the teachings and feel no shame in committing offensive acts, this is not what Honen taught.

In 1207, two of Honen's followers (Anraku and Juren) became involved in a scandal because of their unfortunate success at convincing the ladies of the Imperial Court to become nuns. Honen, now 74 years old, and his followers including 34 year old Shinran, were exiled from Kyoto - Honen to the island of Shikoku and Shinran to the province of Echigo (now Niigata Prefecture).

Life in Echigo was difficult. This area of Japan is subject to severe cold winters. Stripped of his priestly status, Shinran joined the ranks of the lay people and married Eshinni. Although little is known for sure about Eshinni it is clear that she was a cultured woman who knew how to write. It is due to her many letters that we are able to know as much as we do about Shinran the man.

For 6 years Shinran lived the life of an ordinary layman. He raised a family and continued to speak to others about the Nembutsu of Amida's Primal Vow. Later in 1212 he learned that he had been officially pardoned of his "crime," and he was allowed to return to Kyoto if he wished. But having learned of Honen's death earlier, Shinran had little incentive to return to Kyoto. He decided to stay in the country and to dedicate the rest of his life to spreading the Nembutsu teaching.

Within a few years Shinran left the Echigo area and went to the province of Hitachi, in present day Ibaraki Prefecture. He was 41 years old by now and he had a wife and several children to accompany him. After settling in the Hitachi area Shinran began to write. For the next 18 years his writing and his propagational efforts were to be most fruitful. It was also during this time that Shinran began work on the Kyogyoshinsho.

As time passed Shinran's propagational efforts must have yielded many followers. The Nembutsu movement grew so large that by 1235 the Kamakura Shogunate again began efforts to prohibit the practice of Nembutsu. Having experienced the harsh repercussions of such prohibitions before, Shinran decided to moved back to Kyoto. By now he was in his 60's. There are several theories as to why Shinran decided to return to Kyoto at this
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

particular time. Some theorize that Shinran wanted to be in closer proximity to the textual references he may have needed to complete his Kyogyoshinsho. Others theorize that Shinran wanted to avoid any further friction with local authorities regarding his propagational efforts. Still others theorize that he was getting old and nostalgic for his childhood home. No one knows for sure what the real reason was.

Life in Kyoto was not easy. Shinran kept in touch with his followers from the outer areas through letters. His son, Zenran, also helped in propagational efforts. But trouble came when Zenran was accused of heresy by other Nembutsu followers. Apparently Zenran had tried to secure authority over Shinran's followers in the outer countryside by telling them that Shinran had passed on a secret teaching that he alone knew of. This act created such confusion among Shinran's followers that Shinran had to disown his son in order to preserve the true Nembutsu teaching. This incident caused him great pain. It occurred when Shinran was 83 years old.

To the very end of his life Shinran placed his trust in the Nembutsu. His ability to see himself in the naked light of absolute truth enabled him to fully understand the depth of his "evil" karma. At the age of 87, just 2 years before his death, he wrote verses lamenting the final age of the Dharma, Shozomatsuwasan.

Although I have taken refuge in the true teaching, The mind of truth hardly exists in me; Moreover, I am so false-hearted and untrue That there cannot be any mind of purity.

Each shows an outward appearance Of being wise, good, and diligent, Possessing so much greed, anger, and wrong view, We are filled with all kinds of deceit.

Shinran Shonin died in 1263. His youngest daughter Kakushinni had his body cremated at Ennin Temple and his ashes buried at Otani. The position of guardian for Shinran's gravesite, rusushiki, was held first by Shinran's daughter, Kakushinni. The present position of Monshu can be traced to this position.
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Shinran realized, through his faith in Amida Buddha's Primal Vow, that the suffering one encounters throughout one's life can be turned into the rare opportunity of encountering the Wisdom and Compassion of the Amida Buddha. For this reason, our very lives become the practice through which we discover the sustaining and transforming power of the Nembutsu.
UNIT ONE

IRON CHAIN

Lessons II - VI
Lesson II

The Chain that Binds a Society

Objectives:

After the lesson, the students should be able to:

1. Describe the two-class system theory.
2. Discuss the criteria that defines the two-class system.
3. Relate the two-class system to the "chain of suffering."

Concepts:

American Dream.

Chain of Suffering.

Cultural Bias.

Ethnicity (race, religion, national origin, citizenship).

Stratified System.

Three Poisons (greed, anger, and ignorance).

Interdependence (inter-relatedness).
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Procedure:

1. Discuss the suggested questions before passing out Reading 2 "The Two-Class Theory."

2. Answer and further discuss the suggested questions after the article has been read.

Summary:

A closer look at our society reveals that we are in a stratified society dominated by the Anglos (White People) and their values. The lower class is generally occupied by the people of color, i.e. the Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, etc. The democratic society remains as an ideal and a goal yet to be achieved completely. However, this two-class system continues to breed the Three Poisons: greed, anger, and ignorance.

Bibliography:


Note: Activities to Consider

1. Draw a diagram showing the kind of class system we have had in the U.S. up to present time.
**Iron Chain to Golden Chain**

If you do not think we have a class system, draw a diagram to indicate the type of system that you think we have.

2. Explain your diagram. For example, if you think we do have a class system, what factors decide who goes into what class?
Reading 3

Two-Class Theory

Tsukasa Matsueda

One of the most important and basic part of our history is the history of the immigrants. Although almost all Americans are immigrants or descendants of immigrants, their history is the least understood or the most misunderstood part of our country's history. American Indians or the Native Americans were, of course, the first ones here, and when newcomers came from Europe, they welcomed the newcomers and helped them to settle in their land. However, the newcomers from Europe began to seize a bulk of the land and established themselves as the dominant force and rulers.

The most dominant of the Europeans were the British who established a new society based on their own cultural prejudices. They divided the society into two classes and set the standards which determined who belonged to the upper privileged class and who made up the lower class. The first criteria that separated the people was the color of the skin, and under this standard, the whites were considered superior and the colored were deemed inferior. The darker the skin color was, the lower the individuals position in society. Thus the American Indians, the Africans and the Mexicans were put into the lower class despite the fact that many of them were here as long as the whites and some even longer.

Another standard that applied in this "New Israel", was the religion of the people, and according to the British, the Protestant Christians were considered superior to the White Catholics, Greek and Eastern Orthodox and the Jews were considered less than the white Protestant. The people who believed in Confucianism, Shintoism, Buddhism, or the Islamic faiths, for example, were considered superstitious and dangerous.
Another way of judging people was by the country from where the individual came from. Generally speaking, the Western Europeans were considered higher than those who came later from Southern and Eastern Europe. One exception were the Irish, who, although from Western Europe, were considered dangerous and undesirable because they were Catholics.

Values by which the people conducted themselves was another way of judging people. The superior culture was, in essence, the British attitudes and values. Thus the official language for the new society was English and the political, legal, and economic systems were based on the British system with some modifications. The social customs and values centered around the Puritan standards, so even the whites who lived by different standards and values were considered inferior whites. E.g. the women and those who differed in their sexual preference were looked down upon as inferior and even dangerous. The colored people, i.e. the blacks, Native Americans, Hispanics, Asians, were considered the most inferior and unassimilable.

The new land was large enough and rich enough for all the settlers to share the wealth equally, but the dominant whites designed a system that would ensure the unequal bulk of wealth for themselves and kept most of the power, privilege, and status that came with controlling the wealth.

This Anglo chain still binds our society despite the proclamation of the American ideas of freedom and equality. The inferiors continue to share very little of the American Dream, however, more serious is that the chain has resulted in the Three Poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance. The powerful and the privileged class generally takes selfish actions to guard their status by denying others to share in their power or privileges. The powerless people have reacted with anger and frustration. Greed and anger are generally counterproductive and the Three Poisons create conditions that continue to bind people in suffering.

Historically, people all over the world are still divided by unfairly stratified societies. In the U.S., even after we started a system of equality and freedom, people continue to be divided into a society dominated by an elite of powerful people over a large number of powerless and unprivileged people.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Note: Suggested Questions and Exercises Following the Reading.

1. Assuming that the two-class system exists in our country, where would you place the people of the following lineage in the diagram below?

   Upper Class
   1. Italian 1.
   2. German 2.
   3. French 3.
   5. Filipino 5.
   7. Pole 7.
  11. "mixed white and Asian" 11.
  12. Mexican 12.
  15. Kenyan 15.

   Lower Class

2. How do you feel about the last paragraph in the reading selection?

3. If you were in the upper class, how would you feel about:
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

a. the reason why people are in the upper class?

b. the reason why people are in the lower class?

c. about people in the lower class?

d. about people in the upper class?

4. As a Buddhist, how do you feel about each of the above in question 3?

5. Defend the two-class system.

6. Give reasons for breaking the chain of the two class system.

7. Describe how the Three Poisons are bred in the upper class? The lower class?

8. Is there any kind of stratification in your family? In your temple?

9. How does the Buddhist concept of interdependence apply in this lesson?

10. Do you think that religion can be effective in eliminating the class system to bring about equality? Can you give some examples to support your answer?
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Reading 4

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar
and the Buddhist Revival in India

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(Reprinted with the permission of Rev. Dr. Ronald Y. Nakasone)

On October 14, 1956, on the 2500th anniversary of Buddha's Enlightenment according to the Sinhalese calendar, the Venerable U Chandramani Mahasthavira, (1) administered the Three Refugees and the Five Precepts to initiate Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), a leader of the Untouchables (2), into the Buddhist fold. His wife, Srimati Savitabai, was also initiated. Twenty minutes later Dr. Ambedkar administered the Three Refugees and Five Precepts to nearly 400,000 of his Untouchable followers. The modern revival of Buddhism in the land of its birth was launched.

Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism was the culmination of a decision he had made 36 years earlier. In a well publicized speech Dr. Ambedkar declared his disenchantment with Hinduism and the caste system which it sanctioned. He stated,

It is an unfortunate fact that I have been born a Hindu. It was not in my hands to oppose or prevent that. But I can say this with the utmost sincerity and gravity: I will not die a Hindu. (3)

Even at this early date, Ambedkar, it is apparent, concluded that it would not be possible to reform Hinduism and the attitude of its devotees toward untouchability. He believed that it was the
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Hindu teachings that subjected him and his people to unspeakable indignities. The teachings placed them in the lowest rungs of Hindu society. In contrast, Ambedkar believed the teachings of the Buddha championed the absolute worth of the individual and social equality. Conversion to Buddhism would be the only way for him and his people to escape the stigma of untouchability.

In this short article, we shall focus on Ambedkar's dissatisfaction of the caste system and the Hindu religion which supports it. We shall also examine why he believed the Buddha and his teachings offered the best alternative for the Untouchables to gain a sense of self worth and social justice.

Ambedkar's Opposition to Hinduism

In a report to the Indian Franchise Committee on the Depressed Classes, Dr. Ambedkar reiterates his objection to the Hindu underpinning of the caste system and untouchability. In the report, he also states that the Buddha to be among the great personalities in the history of India. The Buddha sought to uproot the practice of untouchability.

...the system of caste and the system of untouchability form really the steel frame of Hindu society. This division cannot easily be wiped out for the simple reason that it is not based upon rational, economic or racial grounds. On the other hand, the chances are that untouchability will endure far longer into the future than the optimist reformer is likely to admit on account of the fact that it is based on religious dogma. What makes it so difficult to break the system of untouchability is the religious sanction which it has behind it. At any rate the ordinary Hindu looks upon it as part of his religion and there is no doubt that in adopting towards untouchables in what is deemed to be inhuman way of behavior he does so more from the sense of observing his religion than from any motive of deliberate cruelty. Based on religion the ordinary Hindu only relaxes the rules of untouchability where he cannot observe them. He never abandons them. For abandonment of the basic
religious tenants of Hinduism as understood by him and the mass of Hindus. Based on religion, untouchability will persist as all religious notions have done. Indian history records the attempts of many a Mahatma to uproot untouchability from the Indian soil. They include such great men as Buddha, Ramanuja and the Vaishnava saints of modern times. (4)

In this passage, Ambedkar links the caste system with Hinduism and to religious custom. Caste is sanctioned by Hindu religious dogma. Caste will persist so long as it is linked with Hinduism. Further, the ordinary Hindu's behaviors toward Untouchables is shaped observing Hindu social custom.

The steel frame of Hindu society is made up of four social classes: brahmin or priests, kshatriya or warriors, vaisha or merchants, and sudra, servants and providers of the other three castes. This hierarchical four-tier social system was crystallized during the period of the Rd Veda (1500-1000 B.C.). It evolved from very early Aryan class divisions. Toward the end of the Rd Vedic period this fourfold division was believed to be divinely ordained. (5) They have continued to the present.

This hierarchical scheme discriminated against the lower rungs of the social pecking order. The brahmins occupied the apex of the Hindu society. With prestige came privileges. A criminal brahmin offender, for example, bore a lighter punishment for the same offense committed by some from one of the lower castes. In addition to these four castes there is in reality one more class, the Untouchables. According to the Hindu notion of caste, Untouchables do not belong to Hindu society.

Sanctioned by religious dogma and ostracized by Hindu society, an Untouchable is "one whose touch, shadow and even voice pollutes, who is completely debarred from the society and treated as subhuman, less than men and worse than beasts." (6) A caste Hindu who comes into contact with an Untouchable is polluted. Fearful of pollution, Hindu society has prevented Untouchables from entering their temples, using their wells, and living within the village compound. Caste Hindu have been known
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

to refuse medical treatment to ailing Untouchables, even though prompt medical care would have probably saved the patient. (7)

The Untouchables perform tasks that high caste Hindus consider to be defiled. The removal of animal carcasses, attending of funeral pyres, leather working, and garbage disposal have been the traditional occupations of the Untouchables. Even today, the garbage pickers, butchers, and scavengers come from the Untouchable class. Members of this outcast and the sudras, the lowest castes, are prohibited from studying the Vedas and performing Vedic rituals. Since knowledge of sacred scriptures and rites are essential for spiritual release, the Untouchables are denied any avenue of religious fulfillment. Untouchables are not permitted to participate in the religious life of the community. They are barred from entering Hindu Temples. (8)

According to the philosophy of caste, one is born an Untouchable because of the deeds that were performed in a previous life. The present despicable social, economic, and spiritual condition of the Untouchables is the karmic fruition of past acts. One has reaped what one sowed. Consequently an Untouchable must endure his/her status and perform his/her tasks without complaint in the hope that through obedience and faith, untouchability will be overcome in the next life. No amount of education or wealth or heroic deeds could ever free an individual from the stigma of untouchability in this life.

Buddhist Opposition to Caste

The Buddha did not place any importance on place of birth or lineage, but on spiritual attainment. The Buddha believed that the quality of our lives is linked to observing the precepts of abstaining from not killing, lying, stealing, taking intoxicating liquors, and sexual misconduct. The Buddha reinterpreted the law of karma to be a law of personal causal morality. Good actions lead to spiritual purity. On the other hand, evil conducts result in a depressed humanity.

While the actions of the past help determine our present condition, the Buddha believed that it is possible to alter our present condition. The ultimate responsibility of an individual's
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

destiny lay with oneself. Even the most humble has the opportunity to shape his or her future. Dignity and self worth are determined by humane and moral conduct. (9) The mark of nobility is measured by moral quality of thought, deed, and speech. The effort to ease the pain and right wrongs are the marks of a Buddhist brahmin. We read the Buddha's works in the Dharmapada,

_Brahmin does not arise because of caste
Because of knots of hair or lineage
Those who posses truth and Dharma
The clean ones
They are Brahmins

_Brahmin does not arise because of caste
Because of knots of hair or lineage
Because they eliminate all wrongs
All people who eliminate
Each and every wrong, great and small
Should be known as brahmins (10)

Clearly, the message in the Dharmapada rejects the idea of caste. The nobility of an individual is based on his or her spiritual attainment and service to others. The idea that birth and class is irrelevant to an individual's self worth had great appeal to the Ambedkar. He believed that the difference between the Buddha and ordinary beings is a matter of degree. The Buddha is an ordinary person, in the sense that anyone can become a Buddha. Buddhahood or spiritual nobility is measured by spiritual attainment. (11)

The Buddha also demonstrates his opposition to the caste by admitting Untouchables into the sangha (the Buddhist community). The early Buddhist sangha drew its membership from all segments of society. Many, like Sariputta and Moggallana, chief disciples of the Buddha, were brahmans. Others disciples such as Subhuti probably came from the vaisha or merchant caste. Still others came from occupations associated with the Untouchables. Purna, for example, was the daughter of a slave. Campa was a hunter's daughter, Thera Svati, a fisherman.
The fundamental principles of Buddhism is equality. Of all the Bhikkus (monks) who joined the Order in the time of the Lord Buddha, about 75% of the Bhikkus belonged to the Brahmin caste and the remaining 25% were the Shudras (Untouchables). ...(the Buddha) raised his voice against separatism and untouchability. ...Buddhism is the only religion- which does not recognize caste and affords full scope for progress. (12)

Ambedkar, an untouchable by birth, suffered the prejudice and scorn of caste Hindus. His studies of parliamentary democracy in England and the Constitution of the United States, while a student at Columbia University, convinced Ambedkar that the Untouchables would need legal guarantees to assure them social equality. He was especially impressed by the Fourteenth Amendment which guaranteed the American Negroes political freedom and civil rights. Constitutional safeguards would be an important tool in freeing the Untouchables from the prejudice of caste.

While serving as Minister of Law (1947-51) in the Jawaharlal Nehru cabinet, he drafted a constitution which provided the Untouchables special representation in the Indian Parliament. Ambedkar fought for and established constitutional guarantees that not only recognized the rights of the Untouchables, but promoted them. Quotas, for example, reserved seats of the Untouchables in educational and governmental institutions.

Ambedkar believed that human society required a religious foundation. (13) Buddhism, he felt, provided the framework for a society in which he and his people would be respected. "I prefer Buddhism, because it gives three principles in combination which no other religion does. Buddhism teaches Prajna (understanding against superstition and supernaturalism), Karuna (love), and
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Samata (equality)." (14) These three principles, understanding, love and equality, he believed were necessary in establishing a just society, a society free from social and religious discrimination.

Conversion to Buddhism has not appreciably changed the perception of the caste Hindu toward the Untouchables. Nor has the conversion appreciably altered the social standing of the Untouchables. However, becoming a Buddhist restored a sense of self worth to at least one man who said, "I am a Buddhist now. I am not a Mahar nor an untouchable, not even a Hindu; I have become a human being." (15)

Concluding Remarks

Dr. Ambedkar did much to instill a sense of dignity to the Untouchables and to instigate social transformation by appealing to the Buddha and his Dharma. U Nu, Prime Minister of Burma, in a talk delivered to the Maha Badhi Society in Calcutta eulogized Dr. Ambedkar's accomplishments on the first anniversary of his death. U Nu writes,

He was one of those who helped to accelerate the process of social change in his country, a process in the course of which hundreds of thousands and even millions, have been enabled to look forward to a better lot and a happier life. (16)

Indeed, millions of Untouchables, inspired by Dr. Ambedkar's example and conversion have also embraced Buddhism. According to the 1951 Indian census there were 2,487 Buddhists in the Maharashtra state. The 1961 census recorded 3,250,227 Buddhists in India. Ambedkar predicated a ground swell of converts to Buddhism. The 1971 census, however, reports Buddhist to comprise only 0.71% or roughly 4.3 million out of a population of nearly 600 million. Ten years later, the Buddhist population has not appreciably changed. The 1981 census reported the Buddhist population to be a bit more than 4.7 million which still represented 0.71% of the Indian population. Unofficial estimates have placed the number of converts to be 20 million. (17)
Two months after his conversion to Buddhism, on December 6, 1956, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar died. He was 65. Had Ambedkar lived longer, perhaps the Buddhist revival which he instigated may have prospered even more.

Notes

1. The Venerable U Chandramani was a Burmese monk living and working in India.

2. The expression "Untouchable" was declared illegal by the Indian Constituent Assembly in 1949. Many terms have been used for India's Untouchables. "Suppressed Classes", "Depressed Classes", "Scheduled Classes", and "Harijan" (meaning people of God and used by Gandhi and his followers) are some of the more popular names. These names, however, were given to the Untouchables by others and reveal contempt. Recently, the Untouchables have referred to themselves to be "Dalit," the oppressed. "Dalit" carries a positive and assertive expression of pride.


5. A. L. Basham. The Wonder that was India (New York: Grove Press, 1959) pp. 35 & 139.


7. Instances of maltreatment by the caste Hindus against the Untouchables were included in "Statement concerning the


Lesson III

The Chain that Binds Generations

Objectives:

After the lesson, the students should be able to:

1. Describe the stratified societies in which the Issei found themselves.

2. Compare and contrast the two-class system in Japan and the U.S.

3. Analyze the effects of the two-class systems on their lives.

4. Describe the interrelating factors in our ancestors' lives.

Concepts:

Issei.

Cultural values.

Oppression.

Traditional Japan.

Western World.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Procedure:

1. Review the main themes in Lessons I and II.

2. Pass out Reading 3 "Class System of the Issei."

3. Discuss the suggested questions after the reading.

Summary:

Throughout history, societies have been divided into two classes made up of the powerful and privileged on the top and the powerless victims on the bottom. Those on the top have claimed their superior position because of their inherent wisdom, or their overwhelming strength, or because they were appointed by God to assume the role of leadership, etc.

The Issei were in a unique situation of living under two different kinds of two class systems.

Bibliography:


Traditionally, Japan had a sharply stratified society. The ruling class was made up of the people who supported the Emperor system although the system actually was held by powerful military lords who nominally supported the Emperor system.

The lower class was made up of farmers, merchants, craftsmen, etc. Many of the religious people generally supported the ruling class. Simply put, Japanese had a two-class system.

From the latter half of the 19th century, Japanese society underwent rapid and vast changes. This period is described loosely as the beginning of the "modern" period in Japanese history. It is referred to as the "Meiji Period" by the Japanese people. During this period Japan transformed itself from an agricultural feudalistic society to one much like Western society, characterized by a strong industrial system, a constitutional government, modern military forces, and western-styled legal and educational systems. For the Japanese, this meant radical changes in their attitudes and behavior patterns. Although many people suffered individual shocks, the Japanese generally adjusted to the many bewildering changes. For example, the people of the warrior class lost many of their privileges, and much of their training and education became useless. However, their background enabled them to become key people in the new society and to keep their place as members of the upper class.

Life for the farmers changed the least in that they continued to bear the main burden of supporting the economy, with very little increase in privileges or status. The lack of any apparent change for the better in their life of hardship and toil encouraged many farmers to look to America as a place where they might find
greater opportunity. In the 1890's, the government lifted the ban that had previously prevented the Japanese from leaving the country. Thousands emigrated to America; although most of the emigrants (imin) were of farming background; nonfarming Japanese moved to the new world as well.

Another major change for Japan was its involvement in a series of wars; first with China, then with Russia, and then against the Central Powers in World War I, all of which had significant influence in how other nations viewed Japan. In the initial stages of Japan's modernization effort, the Japanese made impressive progress, the Americans looked upon them very favorably and described them as hardworking and intelligent. When Japan's military power increased, America's view of the Japanese changed sharply. They began to think of them in extremely negative terms. It was in these years that the greatest number of Japanese immigrants arrived in the U. S. Thereafter, the immigrants were looked upon with jaundiced eyes.

The immigrants were treated hospitably and kindly by some, but there were others who were hostile toward them. In 1906, for instance, many people, including the mayor of San Francisco, tried and succeeded temporarily to segregate the schools by excluding Japanese children. Job opportunities for the Japanese were relegated to menial work (although the people persevered in their efforts to improve their economic status and established a viable community among themselves). Eventually, laws were passed to deny entrance of Japanese immigrants into this country, even though European immigrants were not; intermarriage with people of Asian blood and the whites was forbidden.

When war broke out between Japan and the U.S. in 1941, powerful anti-Japanese groups moved to control the successes achieved by the Japanese immigrants. The Army, influenced by these groups, ordered the incarceration of all people of Japanese ancestry on the Pacific Coast. This was justified in the guise of protection of these people and also on the assumption that espionage might be committed, of which no proof existed according to the FBI. The incarceration was clearly unconstitutional. Very few people of German and Italian ancestry
were detained similarly even though the U.S. was also at war with Germany and Italy.

In short, the Issei were born and reared in a two class society in Japan, and when they came to the U. S., they found themselves again in a two-class society. The chain that bound them in Japan was replaced by a different chain of discrimination and suffering. How they responded to the two-class chain will be examined in later lessons.

Note: Suggested Questions and Exercises for Discussion

1. List the factors that made living in Japan more difficult for the Issei.
2. List those factors that made living in America more difficult for the Issei.
3. List the possible advantages for the Issei by staying in Japan.
4. List the possible advantages for the Issei by living in America.
5. List some of the ways that the Buddhist temples and the Buddhists in America seem to be supporting the upper class.
6. List some of the ways the Buddhist temples and Buddhists in America seem to be supporting the powerless group.
7. How do you see the Buddhist temples and Buddhists in America reacting to the two-class system? Do you think they are helping to break the chain or are they perpetuating the chain?
8. Can you see any evidence of the Three Poisons in the lives of the Issei?
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9. In which society do you think the Issei felt more free?

10. From your own experience, what are the contributions the Issei made toward "breaking the chain"?

11. List the way in which you think the Issei were kept in the chain.
During the 1890's immigrants from Japan joined others before them from other parts of the world in their struggle to settle in America. They came with a hope of making their life better, but found the new environment unreceptive and unkind. Suffering from physical pain, emotional unrest, and mental agony, the immigrants who chose to settle in America encountered what seemed like insurmountable obstacles in the new world. Some did not survive the process, but many succeeded in adapting themselves to the new country. Those who endured and prevailed began to rebuild a legacy of pride that was equal to many others in America's history. The strength of America is found to be in the diversity of its citizens, and the capacity to attract, uproot, and resettle people from all over the world, which continues to this day.

The first generation of immigrants from Japan are called Issei, and like the pioneering immigrants from other parts of the world, the Issei shared a tumultuous existence. Beginning in 1890, thousands of young men left Japan to work on the farms, the railroad, the fishing industries, and the lumber mills of the Pacific Coast. Many came with the hope of making a quick fortune that they had been promised. Working under the lowest paying wages, many were not able to marry nor to send for their family left in Japan. Unable to own any land, Issei worked as sharecroppers of someone else's farm, and those who worked in the cities, too, worked for others for minimal rewards. But what was most detrimental to the early Issei was the denial of U.S. citizenship that was granted to immigrants from other countries. Unable to protect themselves against waves of racial prejudice and discrimination, the suffering of the Issei pioneers deepened. The oppression by
anti-Japanese people and politicians passed such laws as California Alien Land Law of 1913, preventing Japanese immigrants from owning land, and Immigration Quota Act of 1924, which stopped all immigration of Japanese and other Asians to America.

The mental, emotional, and physical afflictions of Issei immigrants were caused by profound and ineradicable self centeredness. Despite the great teachers of the East and the West who taught that as long as self centeredness played the main role in all aspects of human endeavors, the result would be a recycling of delusion and suffering. It was most apparent in the experiences of the Issei as they tried to establish a home in America.

As seen in many human relationships, greed of the privileged ignites the flame of anguish when they feel the intrusion of a different breed of men. The reaction of discrimination and oppression sets in. The cycle of greed, anger, and stupidity was no different in America at the time of Issei immigration than any other time of human suffering. The profound ignorance of humanity, deeply rooted in blind self centeredness made impossible the true and lasting freedom of joyful living promised to all Americans regardless of race, color, or creed. Until the vicious circle created by afflictions of greed, anger, and stupidity stop, lasting peace cannot be found. It is only when the truth is awakened and the afflicted condition be realized, that one can begin to achieve peace.

The chain that bound the Issei is apparent in each and every immigrant who came from all parts of the world to seek a better life in America. Furthermore, the conditions of experiencing hardship and suffering did not begin in America, but existed in the countries they left behind. Suffering is the human history, universal to all race, color, and creed.

The country where the Issei came from is small in comparison to the vastness of America, but it is rich in culture and traditions. Having received the easterly flow of the entire Asian culture, Japan is the repository of all Asian culture and traditions, and with that mixture of imported traditions, the Japanese culture is complex and needs to be studied with careful attention. It is from such an environment that the Issei came to America.

Japan attaches to the rules of propriety based upon human and social relationships that take precedence over the individual. The
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overstressing of propeties may be connected to the assimilation of Chinese thoughts and Confucianism, which the ruling class adopted enthusiastically. That tendency is most apparent in the language they speak and forms of politeness observed among every class of people. In compliance with Shintoism, social life in Japan requires close alliance to the family and the blood lineage. It was the family name which was most highly prized and protected in Japanese society. The family system is based on patriarchy and after the fathers demise, the eldest patrilineal member of the family assumes the head of the family, and the youngest female member in the lowest position. To preserve the family name, the eldest patrilineal member is not allowed to leave his home and only those in the lower position are allowed to leave. This, however, takes place only when direction or approval is given by the family head. Individualism has remained, in most part, a denial or social disgrace if pursued.

Even after the introduction of Buddhism in the 6th century, Japan's social nexus did not change. Buddhahood was identified with filial devotion, and the compassion and wisdom of universal and eternal Buddhas was identified with ancestors while the followers' periodic worshipping served as their moral and ethical justification. A Japanese Zen Master Bankei states,

*There is nothing more gracious than the kindness of parents. They have brought us up, who are completely ignorant, till we become intelligent and hear Buddhist sermons. It is solely due to the benevolence of parents. You should respect them. This is filial piety. To follow the way of filial piety is Buddhahood. Filial piety and Buddhahood are not different.*

Shinran, the founder of Jodo Shinshu (True Meaning of Pure Land Teaching) was radically different from those who accepted the social customs of ancestor worship, finding the individual trusting in the teachings of universal compassion and wisdom as true reality. Shinran teaches:
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When I ponder on the compassionate vow of Amida, established through five kalpas of profound thought, it was for myself, Shinran, alone. Because I am a being burdened so heavily with karma, I feel even more deeply grateful to the Primal Vow which is decisively made to save me. (Tannisho, Epilogue)

He also said:

I, Shinran, have never even once uttered the nembutsu for the sake of my father and mother. The reason is that all beings have been fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, in the timeless process of birth-and-death. When I attain Buddhahood in the next birth, each and everyone will be saved. (Tannisho, Chapter 5)

Shinran's teaching of the universality spread widely among productive peasantry of Japan. Even through decades of national upheaval and civil wars when such feudal lords such as Nobunaga crushed Buddhist temples and organizations and forced Confucianism as the guiding principle of Japan, Shinran's teachings as well as those who found peace of mind through his teachings prevailed. To this day, Jodo Shinshu continues to address very basic issues that confront each and every living being, questioning the fundamental self-centered nature of human beings that causes human suffering.

Issei immigrants came from an intricately woven society to a simple society where the basic unit is the individual and the groups of individuals make up the state. While the ancestors and the family made the decisions for them in Japan, Issei found freedom to make their own decisions in America. The immigrants, while being abused physically and mentally strived to establish a home in America. Those who chose to take refuge in the universal teaching were able to face and understand the situation clearly. If the new life in America is seen through the habits formed in the old country, the perspective is illusory and unbearable. However, those who venture to gain reliance on an absolute are able to not only
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endure the waves of suffering, but also find profound meaning and peace of mind.

For many Issei, to be freed from human suffering was not to break through the chain that bound them, but rather to see that situation clearly without any reproach. They were able to accept the fundamental human ignorance as nothing more than what is truly is, freeing themselves for delusion, leaving them mentally and spiritually healthy.

The Issei and all other ancestors have left a worthy and enlightened contribution to our world by their strength and tenacity in overcoming human frailties and sufferings. Can we heighten our own capabilities through the teachings of Shinran Shonin to further build on what our predecessors began? If so, how?
Lesson IV
The Chain of Stereotypes

Objectives:

After the lesson, the students should be able to:

1. Recognize and evaluate the stereotypes attached to Japanese Americans.

2. Understand the origin and the reasons for the continuation of stereotypes.

3. List the mental and emotional sufferings caused by stereotypes.

4. Describe the Three Poisons emanating from stereotypes.

Concepts:

Eightfold Noble Paths.

Stereotype.

Positive and negative stereotypes.
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Suggested procedure:

1. Discuss the concept of stereotypes before assigning the reading.

2. Pass out Reading 7, What Are We Really Like? After the reading, review the concept of stereotypes and then pass out Reading 8, Japanese Americans: Model Minority.


4. Discuss the questions and activities after reading the articles.

Summary:

In a multiethnic society such as ours, stereotypes serve as a short cut way to learn about the different people in our society. Unfortunately, learning about any people through stereotypes lead to misinformation and cause great deal of problems for the people who have been stereotyped.

There are positive and negative images, but both of them serve to reinforce the existing prejudices and most importantly, they impede the development of individual's identity and self esteem.

Bibliography:


Reading 7

What Are We Really Like?

Tsukasa Matsueda

We all know what stereotypes are, and that
- people use or rely on them because they are "shortcuts" to know other people.
- they last a long time because they have elements of truth to them.
- they are bad, whether the images are positive or negative.

Because we all know that stereotypes are bad
- we tend to believe that it is always the other person, usually ignorant, who uses or is affected by them
- we do not pay enough attention to cope with them. Many of us tend to feel that as long as we ignore them we would not be hurt by them.

In order to become aware of our own attitudes about stereotypes, the following exercise may have revealing results.

1. List the positive and negative stereotypes that describe the Japanese Americans in the following categories.

   a. Physical and sexual qualities
   b. Intellectual qualities
   c. Occupational tendencies
   d. Diet/Food
   e. Language
f. Religion

g. Attitudes toward:
   marriage
   white people
   other minority people
   self
   being American

2. Discuss each of the stereotypes that you have listed in terms of their origin and effect on you and the Japanese American community at large.
Two decades ago, the Japanese Americans were deemed the "Model Minority" by white Americans. Many Japanese Americans felt that the title was due recognition of their hard work and outstanding achievement in America. At the present time, they are better educated than any other ethnic group in America and more likely to become professionals. Economically, they earn more than any other ethnic group and live in better non-Japanese neighborhoods and are more often accepted into non-Japanese social organizations. Their families are stable; crime rates are the lowest among all ethnic groups; and they live longer than any other group. In essence, many of the Japanese Americans feel that they have "outwhited the whites."

However, there were others who felt that the term "Model Minority" was misleading. It blinded and discouraged many Japanese Americans to recognize problems that still existed in the communities. Some objected to the fact that Whites were telling other minorities, "Why can't you be like the Japanese?" causing resentment against the Japanese Americans. Others were offended by the term because it limited Japanese Americans as "model minority" and not "model Americans" implying that the Japanese Americans were the "best" of the "lesser Americans." Others objected to the Japanese Americans being viewed as "models" because Whites perceived them as "most white-like." Sociologists, such as Harry Kitano, have said, "Scratch a Japanese American and you find a WASP," to indicate that the Japanese Americans had succeeded by conforming to the values and standards of the whites.

However, sociologist Darrel Montero found the most negative aspect of this conformity was the possibility that Japanese
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Americans would lose the traditional values that played an important part in their unique success. He has said that the younger generations are losing their ties with their past. Very few speak Japanese and more live in non-Japanese neighborhoods, never read Japanese American newspapers, and most of them have more non-Japanese friends than Japanese American friends. There are more intermarriages leading to greater loss of their ties to the past. Montero believes that the new generations of Japanese Americans "will not have the same kind of remarkable achievement because they will have assimilated into a culture that is not as tenacious, hasn't the exactitude of achievement motivation that their grandparents' did."

The future concerns of American Buddhists includes two questions: "Is assimilation of future Japanese Americans a legitimate concern of Buddhism?" and "What kind of guidance can Buddhism provide in the assimilation process of Japanese Americans?" While the focus is on Japanese Americans, these questions also have enormous implications to all Americans.
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Reading 9

Japanese American History Given Away

Tsukasa Matsueda

(In the 1970's many Japanese Americans, following the Black movement to enhance their image, started to define a more positive image of the Japanese Americans. One of the first such efforts was led by a group of Japanese American educators who produced an educational television show called "Japanese Americans." The following article was an evaluation of that show.)

In one of the more memorable television programs titled "Black History, Lost, Strayed or Stolen," the narrator, Bill Cosby, traced briefly the process of how Black people and their position in American history were stereotyped through various media. It was one of the more brilliantly effective and heart-rending documentaries shown on television in many years.

Recently a television program, titled "The Japanese Americans," was shown in the San Francisco Bay Area by educational channel, KQED. The film was much less elaborate, and its audience was a great deal more modest in size than the aforementioned Black History film, but it was as significant and poignant as a reminder of the pervasive power of socialization.

This film about the Japanese Americans was written by a concerned group of Japanese Americans, made up mostly of elementary school teachers, for usage in classrooms. Their intended purpose, apparently, was to break the stereotypical image of the Japanese Americans and to contribute teaching material that would help to develop a better understanding of the Japanese Americans. Their purpose was made very clear in the opening shots of the film which showed the Japanese Americans, engaged in various occupations including a doctor, a school teacher, an office worker, a postman; however, conspicuously missing were
Japanese American gardeners, farmers and nurserymen. The narrator then contrasted these people with "traditional" Japanese with "traditional" Japanese music playing in the background.

After this brief introduction there was a capsule review of American and Japanese relations starting with Commodore Perry's arrival in Japan. The film then traced the migration of the Japanese to the U.S., the discrimination they were subjected to and ultimately led to their imprisonment during the Second World War. This segment also pointed out the great injustice done to their children who, though they were American citizens by birth, were also imprisoned without due process of law. They also acknowledged the great record established by the Japanese Americans in the U.S. Armed Forces and the contributions made by individuals in the fields of education, politics, science, fine arts, and sports.

Nisei and Sansei Views

The film concluded with a panel of five Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans) and Sansei (third generation) being interviewed by a group of elementary school students. The answers given by the panel members revealed that (1) all spoke little or no Japanese, (2) all of them knew little or nothing of their parents' cultural heritage, (3) none of them were Buddhists, and (4) all of them were proud to be Japanese Americans. One, a sansei girl, was specific about the reason for her pride: she looked like a Japanese, physically, which made her "unique" among her friends.

It should not come as a great surprise to anyone, if viewers of this film concluded that the Japanese Americans have been accepted by the majority of the Americans because they forgot their heritage, worked hard patiently and perhaps quietly, despite the discrimination and the injustices heaped upon them, until finally, remarkably impressive numbers of them became successful white-collar workers. In short, the Japanese Americans earned the respect of the majority by conforming to middle-class values and forgetting their Japanese heritage. Ironically, the film makers failed to accomplish their purpose of destroying the stereotype, but instead reinforced some of the more commonly held ones by the
vast majority of Americans, which are used by them to judge the Japanese Americans. Therefore, it becomes crucial to identify, some of the most accepted stereotypes and examine the effects upon the Japanese Americans.

Inaccuracy of American Images of Japanese

Images are formed when people from different cultures meet for the first time, usually these images are accepted by succeeding generations without much thought as to how accurate they are.

Probably the strongest image many Americans have of the Japanese is that they are the "student" and the Americans are the "teachers," i.e., the people who introduced and taught "modern" civilization to the Japanese. This image was probably formed from the first instance of Americans meeting Japanese. In America, Commodore Perry's visit to Japan is usually characterized as the opening of Japan's door and opened the feudalistic Japanese eyes to modern and progressive civilization. But relatively few Americans know that long before the Perry visit, the Japanese had studied Western developments in technology and politics. They were keenly interested in such events as the American Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Before 1800, they were already becoming uneasy about the attempt of Westerners to come to Japan and force resumption of contact. Thus, it is not surprising that we find the Japanese engaged in a serious debate on resumption of foreign contact for over half a century before the Perry expedition.

Another commonly held picture, relative to the American-Japanese relationship is that the Americans have always been "friends" as well as "benefactors" and "noble givers" to the Japanese, while the Japanese have always been perceived as "takers" of American instruction and kindness. Historically, many Americans tend to remember (1) the aid they gave to the Japanese during the Russo-Japanese War, and also the fact that President Theodore Roosevelt served as a mediator to help bring about the end of that affair. Some, more sophisticated, might also point out that the Japanese were also very close to economic exhaustion and on the verge of losing the war had it not been for the fortuitous intervention of the United States; (2) many Americans also might
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point out that Japanese immigrants were allowed to come to this country and share in its abundance, (3) and finally, large numbers of present-day Americans may be vaguely aware that the Americans helped the Japanese after the Second World War despite the fact that Japan was an enemy, and that the U. S. was directly responsible for the economic recovery of Japan.

Mixed American Motives

With reference to the Russo-Japanese War, however, very few American acknowledge that the policy followed was not motivated by "friendship" with Japan, but because we felt that our policy in 1904-05 would preserve American interests in China and indirectly prevent Russian dominance. Furthermore, even before the war, many American observers were already uneasy about the emergence of westernized Japan, and as early as 1890 there was deep concern that Western supremacy would be overcome, and indeed the West stood in danger of being submerged by the Japanese horde. Theodore Roosevelt himself was fully aware of Japan's potential menace, for the Russo-Japanese War had revealed to him that the Japanese military was strong and that it was as dangerous as any in the world.

As for the idea that Americans generously allowed the Japanese immigrants to share in America's abundance, the fact is that there were few instances when the immigrants were treated graciously. As early as 1887, when there were less than 500 Japanese immigrants, there were cries of "Japs must go!" Even before the Russo-Japanese War, in 1901, the governor of California asked for the restriction of the Japanese because the Japanese were considered a menace to American labor from which Americans had to be protected.

After the Russo-Japanese War the crudest form of anti-Japanese "yellow peril" reached new heights. Much less than graciously sharing in America's abundance, whatever lands the Japanese immigrants were allowed to acquire, were marginal lands that American farmers had rejected as impossible or too costly to develop. Later, when the Japanese farmers did salvage thousands
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of acres, Americans sought to take these lands away by legislating restrictive alien land laws.

What Caused the Miracle?

One of the economic "miracles" of the postwar period or in any other period in history, is Japan's astonishing economic recovery and growth. Many Americans feel that their remarkable economic resurgence was due to generous and noble aid from Americans. There is no question that American aid was a major factor, but whether motivated by high and noble purpose or nationalistic gain may be influenced by observing the generosity to Japan in the Korean war when American aid to Japan increased many times. It was in the greatest national interest to take advantage of Japanese industrial potential. Furthermore, monetary and technical aid alone does not assure economic growth, as can be attested by the fact that scores of countries who received aid have not been able to develop a viable economy.

There is a "corollary" to the image of the Japanese as a "recipient" of American help. Japanese are also viewed generally as "ungrateful takers." More and more in the media, there seem to be news about our unfavorable trade balance with regard to our trade with Japan. There are references to the fact that although we allow Japanese products to enter America, the Japanese do not reciprocate and allow American foods to enter Japan. That there are quotas and protected items in both countries is little known by the public. That the Japanese impose a great number of voluntary quotas on her exports is also little known.

What the public is led to believe is that the Japanese are selfish "economic animals" who would not even trade fairly with Americans who "made" the Japanese such an economic power. Even worse, the Japanese trade with America's "greatest menace," the Russians and the Chinese, and enjoy the protection of an American "umbrella" that allows them to spend even greater amounts of money on investment and research.

Whether the Japanese are more of an economic animal than the Americans is not so much the point that needs to be labored here. It is, however, important to point out that Japan does depend on the
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U.S. umbrella because it was the U.S. who made certain that Japan would not have an armed force by imposing the "no armed force" (Article 19) provision in the postwar Japanese constitution. Further, the U.S. authorities emphasized pacifistic education so that the Japanese would be a model of peaceful democratic nation and never again become a military power.

The Great Borrowers Theme

The third common view of the Japanese is that they are "great borrowers" who learn well from "superior" civilizations. Historically, many Americans point to Japanese culture observing that it is made up of borrowing from China, Europe, and from the U.S.

Not only do Japanese borrow ideas, it is charged that when the ideas are adapted to Japanese culture, they are distorted, perhaps even prostituted, to something far removed from the original model. For instance, in Japanese politics, although nominally democratic, it seems to be characterized by violence, use of force, mass demonstrations, ad infinitum. The American public remembers the demonstrations against the projected trip of President Eisenhower to Japan in 1960 and the continuing demonstrations by radical students and accepts the stereotype as true.

All Societies Borrow

It is not within the purview of this paper to describe the process of how one society learns from another, but it is surprising that large numbers of Americans do not know that most societies imitate many features from other societies and that usually the fundamental features are adapted to suit their own particular needs. That Japan followed this process is no more unique than Americans borrowing ideas and principles from Greeks, Jews, Romans, British, American Indians, and others. Whether the borrowed ideas are distorted depends on too many complex factors to be examined here. It is true, for example, that the Japanese did borrow Buddhism from India and China, but the Japanese
Buddhism which evolved from the original is neither distorted nor less viable. The Japanese were successful in expressing Buddhism in many areas of their daily life: flower arranging, tea ceremony, judo; all share common Buddhist principles. However, this aspect of Japanese adaptation is rarely discussed. When the majority of a people use stereotypic images to judge members of any minority group, every effort should be made by members of both dominant and minority groups to delineate images which are valid.

When examining the specific relationships between the dominant American group and the Japanese Americans, we can see the kinds of stereotypes mentioned in operation, for there is strong evidence that the majority of Americans rely on these stereotypical images of the Japanese when they perceive Japanese Americans. Specifically, "good" Japanese Americans are those who display the fewest "Japanese traits or characteristics, and those who learned most of the so called middle-class American values which emphasize working hard to gain high-prestige occupations that signify social status. Thus, the Japanese American who made it earn the respect of the majority because they pulled themselves up by their own boot straps as European immigrants did before them. In short, they were "good students" who obviously learned well. Perhaps emasculating their own culture in the process.

Anger Over Stereotyping

In contrast, many Americans have been genuinely surprised and disappointed that some "unacceptable" or "bad" Japanese Americans have expressed anger at this stereotyping, but many Americans "understand" the reason. The bad Japanese Americans are the way they are because (1) they are, after all, descendants of the kind of people who did not appreciate the generous help of the Americans in the past, so it is no wonder that these Japanese Americans do not appreciate the opportunity given them in America which has made it possible for so many to gain so much in terms of money, prestige, and material abundance. (2) These Japanese Americans are like the native Japanese who are "copycat economic animals" in that they, too, are trying to improve their interests by "copying" others, even to riding the coattails of the
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Black and Chicano movements and ungratefully turning against their benefactors. This selfish aspect of Japanese Americans, once they achieve their places in this society, seem to concentrate on their own world, not permitting themselves to get involved in social or political issues which might upset their status quo. When the public sees the Japanese Americans join in any kind of "movement" they are perceived as following the pattern of violence and unreasonableness displayed by their counterparts in Japan. (Black and Chicano counterparts, too, are also put in this "bag." The "takers" once again biting the generous hands of the "benefactors" that feed them.

The recent television show "Japanese Americans" obviously tried to develop a favorable image of the Japanese Americans, but the makers somehow did not realize that they had failed to dispel the basic kinds of stereotypes that Americans generally hold of them: instead they projected and reinforced the stereotypic image of the Japanese Americans which they themselves were socialized to accept, that is, in order to "make it," accept the American middle-class values and forsake the "Japaneseness" unwittingly or otherwise.

Diversity Enhances Democracy

To prevent the perpetuation of existing stereotypes, it is important to strictly monitor the present middle-class values and historically inaccurate and incomplete educational material. Far-reaching effects manifesting a negative self image can only undermine the confidences of future Japanese Americans in their endeavor to make valuable and essential contributions to further its meaning of a democratic country. The most pressing priority in our society is to realize the idea that diversity does not stand in the way of attaining democracy; rather, that diversity enhances, enlarges, and enriches a democratic society.
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Note: Suggested Activities and Questions

1. List some stereotypes that you know. Classify them into positive (favorable) or negative (unfavorable).
   a. What are the physical images of the Japanese? of Japanese males? of Japanese females?
   b. What are the supposed personality traits of the Japanese females? The males?
   c. What are the stereotypes pertaining to: religion? food? assimilability into the mainstream society?

2. Make a chart of stereotypes that pervades all phases affecting your life.

3. Trace these stereotyped images to television, movies, newspapers, magazines, comic books, etc.

4. List the images that you have used to describe other groups of people. For example, the Blacks, the Hispanics, the Whites, the American Indians (Native Americans), Irish, Italian, and others.

5. List some stereotypes you heard some other people use. For example, your parents, friends, minister, grandparents, teachers (school, Dharma school class), etc.

6. Express your feelings about the following statements:
   a. Japanese are all Buddhists.
   b. Buddhism is like Obon Odori. One step forward, and two steps back.
   c. Buddhism is not a religion because they do not believe in God.
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d. Buddhists are all old fashioned and selfish; i.e. all they do is keep to themselves and do not take part in social and world affairs.

7. Do you think that following the Eightfold Noble Paths would prevent stereotyping?

8. Do you think that "not paying attention" to stereotyping will prevent stereotypes from harming individuals?

9. In what ways can Buddhism combat stereotyping?

10. How does the Buddhist idea of interdependence apply in the matter of stereotyping?

11. Discuss the relationship between the Three Poisons and stereotyping.

12. Who said that the Japanese Americans were the "Model Minority"?

13. What are some reasons for Japanese Americans to be called the "Model Minority"?

14. How do you feel about the term "Model Minority?" How would you like to be called a "Model Minority?" Please explain your answer.

15. Do you think that Buddhists should consider the question of assimilation? Why or why not?

16. What role, do you think, Buddhism can play in this process of assimilation? Please be specific.

17. Do you think that the Nisei really understand the impact of stereotypes on their personality?
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18. In what ways do you think you have been influenced by stereotypes? If you think you have not been influenced by stereotypes, can you explain why you were not?

This concept of assimilation will be discussed in later lessons, but for this question, please use your definition of the term assimilation.
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Reading 10

Reflections on the Nisei Experiences
and Stereotypes

Selected Passages from an Interview with
Reverend La Verne Senyo Sasaki, Buddhist Church
of San Francisco

(From a frank discussion, I have excerpted the passages pertinent
to the topic of Nisei Stereotypes. - - Tsukasa Matsueda)

T.M.: How do you think the stereotypes of Japanese American
affected the personality growth of the Nisei?

Rev. S.: The most common stereotypes of Nisei are that we are
hardworking, quiet, reserved, intelligent, and highly educated.
Such high expectations of Nisei and Sansei put an enormous stress
on certain individuals. Some people may consider these images
positive, but not all will agree that they are indeed positive. Nisei
are thought to be hardworking and smart, but at the same time,
they are not thought to be creative. It is true that many Nisei are
pharmacists, dentists, and engineers, and only a few are in the so-
called creative fields, which may indicate lack of opportunities for
the Nisei to enter into those fields. Now that opportunities have
opened up, you can see many younger Japanese Americans who
are successful in almost any field: including politics, entertainment, and the fine arts. Another significant factor is that
most of the Issei and the Nisei had to concentrate on economic
survival in an extremely hostile and oppressive society.
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T.M.: What do you think of the stereotype that the Japanese American Christians are more positive and active and involved in mainstream activities?

Rev. S.: Yes, my image of the Japanese-American Christians are that they are indeed more positive and actively involved in various society and community matters. Christianity is more evangelical and teaches the Social Gospel, so its followers tend to become more involved. However, this is not to say that Buddhists do not get involved because the Bodhisattva teaching represents the spirit of helping others to gain enlightenment. I may be called a heretic, but I have always encouraged young Buddhists to get out into the mainstream to get involved and to help the unfortunates. Up to now the focus was on the individual gaining faith and enlightenment. In other words, straighten yourself out first before you try to help others. However, I am beginning to see many more people beginning to go beyond themselves. I don't think that we ministers get together and rap about these things, but I hope we can look forward to having a rap session with ministers and the Sangha.

I want to remind you again that in Shinshu, there is a great concern for helping the weak and the unfortunates. For example, Kujo Takeko is a wonderful example of a devout Shinshu believer who got immersed in helping the unfortunates.

T.M.: Do you think that Japanese Americans who have had an opportunity to address the media, e.g., comedians like Pat Morita, try to break the stereotype, or do they play up to the stereotype? What kind of impact do you think they made in terms of changing the existing image of the Japanese American?

Rev. S.: Of course there are those who consciously attempt to break the stereotypical images, but there are those who will play up to existing images. The critical factor here is that the media does not allow meaningful input from the majority of ethnic minorities and because they control who will perform, it is very difficult for comedians or any other performers to change the existing practice. They are really caught in a bind.
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T.M.: In what practical ways can Buddhism help the Nisei and Sansei break the stereotypes?

Rev. S.: Buddhism focuses on the individual to look at reality and help them make changes in their attitudes and values toward self and life. Buddhism teaches the individual to become free from the expectations of others.

T.M.: Do you think that parents have given this message to their children?

Rev. S.: Few of them have. I think that it is up to the ministers to talk about the religious aspect of their children's upbringing. There is an underlying tradition in the Buddhist world that if you want to know the answer, you must make the effort to seek out the minister. The traditional way is beautiful and effective because the individual is seeking out the minister to fulfill his/her needs. More recently, a growing number of Buddhist ministers are reaching out, but they have to be careful that they don't dilute the Buddhist message in trying to reach everybody. I believe that ministers must reach out to individuals and not forget to look at that individual as an individual.

T.M.: Many sociologists say that the Nisei succeeded by retaining much of the Japanese culture. Do you agree? If you do, could you identify some of the Buddhist elements in Japanese culture that may have contributed to the success?

Rev. S.: Sometimes it's very difficult to identify the Buddhist elements, but let's look at some of the features of Japanese culture that might have helped the Japanese Americans to succeed. Gaman, a quality that stresses forbearance, persistence, and hard work definitely reflect Buddhist values. These qualities helped many Japanese Americans to prevail over adversities, but, on the other hand, any values, when carried to the extreme, can become a negative factor. So that anybody who tries to keep certain virtues alive may find that he/she may be resistant to any change and thereby become out of touch with reality.
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Historically, the Japanese were more receptive to changes so that they could transform themselves into a modern, industrial society, but India, which was more resistant to change was less successful in changing their country into a modern power.

Japanese culture also stressed respect for learning, which definitely helped the Japanese and the Nikkei. Buddhists always stressed respect for education and as a matter of fact, Buddhist institutions were responsible for creating great centers of learning. They not only encouraged learning of Buddhism but they extended their learning to many, many fields. In Japan, teragoya (temple schools) were probably the first schools for the common people.

T.M.: In the struggle to gain equality, in what ways has the Japanese culture been a hindrance?

Rev. S.: This is a quick answer, but the Japanese culture somehow does not encourage people to speak and act out. We noted that a quality like gaman may hinder the individual to be more direct and overt so that Whites knew less about the Japanese Americans than some other ethnic group. For example, the Blacks seem more passionate, because they were treated far worse than other minorities. Certainly they feel more rage and anger. But they speak and act out with greater passion and there is no question about what they are thinking and feeling. The differences between the Blacks and the Japanese Americans can also be seen in music and art.

T.M.: How do you think that Jodo Shinshu Buddhists can become more involved in helping others who are less fortunate?

Rev. S.: I think the key is to get the younger people to take the leadership. They are certainly better educated and have broader contacts with different people. Many of them have developed great awareness of other people's problems. Certainly a person like Leanne Yasumoto, who spoke recently at her graduation from U.C. can be an influential leader. Her sensitive involvement with the homeless people has earned her much admiration from a wide circle of people.
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In my own way, I have tried to encourage the younger people in our temple to get involved, which may help the rest of us to learn from them. In other words, we need to carry out in our lives the way of the Wisdom, Compassion, and the Bodhisattva. We need to give more attention to these teachings than we seem to have done in the past. We are all busy and limited and from these limitations, much of the stereotypes may have grown, such as the image that Buddhists are less socially concerned than the Christians. So we all need to take that extra step.

I don't mean to place the bulk of the task to the young people - older members can be as involved. It may be a stereotype to put down older people as incapable of changing their views and their lifestyle. I hate to think that older people only change when they face imminent death. The task is a needed one, a tough one, but I am confident that with each one of us taking many small steps, we can incorporate the teachings into our lives.
Lesson V

The Chain that Binds the Individual

Objectives:

After the lesson the students should be able to:

1. Understand how self concept is formed.

2. List the major factors in the development of one's self image.

3. Describe the economic and socio-cultural influences on the individual's self concept.

4. Recognize the stereotypes attached to Japanese Americans and understand the strong impact they have in the development of the individuals identity and self esteem.

Concepts:

Citizenship.

Class system.

Diversity.

Ethnic identity.

Inter-relatedness.
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Perception.

Self esteem.

Socialization.

Suggested Procedure (See Note following this lesson):

1. Have the students discuss the following questions before starting the reading:

   1. Try to describe yourself as objectively and accurately as you can.

   2. How do you think you formed all the ideas and pictures of yourself?

   3. How do you feel about yourself?

   4. Some people feel good about themselves, others not. How do you think people develop their feelings about themselves?

2. Hand out Reading 11, Why am I So Hard to Understand, and discuss the four questions again.

3. After discussion, have the students do the following exercise. First pass out the diagram of a circle surrounded by other circles with the arrows pointing toward the inner circle. Ask the students to try to fill in the circles with all the people they think have been an influence on they think about themselves.

   If the students have difficulty, suggest the use of the following key:

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S = Self 1 = Parents 2 = Friends 3 = Peers 4 = School (teachers) 5 = Temple (ministers, Dharma school teachers, Sangha members) 6 = Your community 7 = others

4. Pass out the self-concept diagram, and use it as you check to see if the students understood the reading.

5. Discuss the suggested questions that follow the reading.

Summary:

Self concept is a result of socialization that includes the family, community, the ethnic group, and the society.

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Suggested Model

Key

S = Self
1 = Parents
2 = Friends
3 = Peers
4 = School (teachers)
5 = Temple (minister, sangha members)
6 = Your community
7 = Others

Note: The other circles may include the media, mainstream society, etc.

After labeling the circles, ask the students, "Which of these people (factors) do you think has been the most influential on how you feel about yourself? The least influential?"
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Fill in the circles with all the people you think have had an influence on how you think about yourself.
Note: Teachers should read before proceeding with this lesson.

Answers to these questions will vary. The questions are designed only to help the students to start thinking about their self image, how it is formed, etc.

After the students have filled in the worksheet, provide them with the suggested model to emphasize that self concept is a result of socialization that includes the family, the community, the ethnic groups, and the society.

The development of a positive self image of a Buddhist has always been critical, particularly in a society that is basically Judeo-Christian in nature. Thus, especially for the young adolescents, the development of a positive self image is difficult because they are in the midst of a period of learning their society's rules and customs, many of which were established by the adults. Further, they have had very little opportunity to evaluate the ways of the society, especially in the light of their individual needs.

Ethnic identity is defined by some sociologists as including the individual's racial makeup, religious background, the national origin of the individuals ancestors and citizenship. These factors affect the individuals and feelings about being an American.

The term "WASP," coined by sociologists is an acronym for White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. This described the original immigrants from England who became the dominant ethnic group in America. Their Judeo-Christian value system and life style became accepted as the model for our society. Later immigrants had to conform to these pre-established standards.

Ethnic group identities have been heavily influenced by the WASP standards. Many individuals have developed a sense of inferiority when they deviate from these standards. This may be a part of the reason why the number of Buddhists among Japanese Americans has dwindled.
"Why am I so hard to understand?" Most do not define "I" or "self" too accurately. Many will define "self" in terms of one's body and mind, but that is too general. We can all agree that a person's physical attributes can influence how the individual looks at oneself. For example, a healthy, nice looking person might have a better chance to develop a more positive feeling than those who are ugly or physically disabled. We are also aware that being a male or a female can influence the way we look at ourselves because, up to now, we have been brought up to think that somehow, female is inferior to male.

It becomes more difficult to understand other factors in our individual makeup that strongly influence how we feel about ourselves. For example, the racial part of ourselves casts a strong influence on how we feel, or how others feel about us even though many of us want to believe otherwise. Few people can deny that, generally, a white person feels more positive about himself/herself than a person of color. Many white people feel superior to people of color.

Another factor to consider is the individual's religious background. Most of us can agree that in this country the Christians generally feel superior to the Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Shintoists, and others, despite the fact that we have been educated to think that all people, regardless of their race or religion are equal.

The national origin of an individual's ancestors also plays an important part in how that individual feels about one's self. Again, many of us can agree that there is a strong feeling against foreigners, immigrants, or those who may look different. Along
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with the individual's national origin, a person's citizenship plays an important part in that individual's self esteem. If an individual is a U.S. citizen, he/she definitely has a greater sense of security and feeling of belonging than those lacking citizenship. All of these factors of race, religion, national origin, and citizenship have been stratified into American/foreigner or superior/inferior categories resulting in people who are not WASP feeling less American or even a lesser person.

Another factor that influences self esteem is the class system that exists in a society although it aspires to be truly egalitarian. The class system is basically based on the individual's income, education, family background, and race. Thus, an individual in one class (upper, middle, or lower) is brought up in an environment resulting in a different life style and attitude from an individual brought up in another class.

All of these factors come into play when individuals interact. It is important to be aware of them and the impact this has on one's self esteem.

Note: Questions to Consider on Reading 11

1. How do you describe yourself as an American? What do you think makes a person an American?

2. Do you feel Asian? How do you like being called an Asian American?

3. How do you feel about being a descendant of Japanese immigrants?

4. Do you think it is accurate to define Americans by racial categories? Why? Why not?

5. How do you feel about being a Buddhist?

6. Do you think diversity should be emphasized in our society?
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7. Do you think uniformity should be stressed?

8. Do you feel that you are different from other Americans? In what ways? How are you similar to other Americans?

9. Do your non-Japanese friends or classmates have values that are different from yours? Do they have similar values? What are they?

10. Do your non-Buddhist friends and classmates have values different from yours? Do they have similar values? What are they?

11. Have you ever seriously discussed these kinds of questions with anyone else? With whom?

Lesson VI

Ancestors of Japanese Americans
and the Chain

Objectives:

After the lesson, the student should be able to:

1. Understand the three general ways people coped with the two-class system.

2. Recognize the specific ways the Issei immigrants struggled with the chain.

3. Evaluate the results of the Issei struggle against the chain.

Concepts:

Anglo conformity.

Anglo (WASP).

Assimilation.

Cultural pluralism.

Legacy.

Melting pot theory.

Separatism.
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Procedure:

1. Discuss the following question before passing out Reading 12, Results of the Continuing Two-Class System. In a two-class system, what is the best way to escape the inferior status.

2. When you feel the students understand the different ways the "inferior" people have generally responded to the two-class system, pass out Reading 13, Warrior, Peasant, Immigrant, and Reading 14, The Midwife.

3. Discuss the suggested questions after each reading.

Summary:

People in the U.S. who were shunted to an inferior status generally conformed to the Anglo-Saxon standards. Although it helped some to escape or ease the extreme level of oppression, conformity also meant that the two-class system continued.

Bibliography:

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Reading 12
Coping in a Two-class System

Tsukasa Matsueda

The history of the world including the United States is not a story of oppression of the weak and the powerless. While many tried to conform to the chain, there were others who earnestly tried to break the chain.

In general, people can accept, make adjustments, or fight back oppression. Perhaps the most common way of coping with the two-class system is for the "inferior" people to accept the system. They play it safe and do not "rock the boat."

They choose to conform rather than fight openly against prejudice and discrimination mistakenly thinking they were achieving a more desirable status.

Another form of acceptance is to be "110%" like the people in the dominant position. They become "super patriots" and try to prove how "American" or "White" they are.

The ways of acceptance is to bear the reality of a two-class system. It is described as "Anglo-conformity" by scholars.

There were those who felt that the best way to get rid of the two-class system was for all the people to mix with others, i.e. to marry those of different ethnic groups and produce a "new" mixed race of Americans. This idea has been labeled as the "Melting Pot" theory by some experts.

However, not all people believe in being accepted by the superiors. Some openly fight the dominant group. Some of the more direct kinds of aggression that are recorded in our history books are the rebellions and revolutions against the dominant group including racial insurrection carried out by such black people as Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner. Race riots have taken
place as well as strikes and boycotts to fight aggressively for freedom by different groups.

However, most of the people, for many reasons, do not take overtly aggressive actions. Instead they take a more indirect method of fighting back. Some would fight against oppression and discrimination by becoming writers, poets, painters, and musicians sending a message to a large audience. Others fought back through ethnic humor, aimed at the dominant group as well as at themselves to fight against stereotypes and other offending acts of the oppressors.

Probably the most publicized and perhaps more acceptable to the dominant group is the passive or nonviolent resistance as practiced by Mahatma Ghandi or Dr. Martin Luther King.

There are others who would reject the goals of the dominant group and define their own goals and standards. These people may advocate pluralism or separatism to bring about a more diverse society.

Perhaps the most negative kind of aggression is to blame others in one's own group for the prejudice and discrimination existing in the main society. They would blame the people in their own group who would rock the boat and bring unnecessary attention to themselves. They have a sense of self hate of their own group and culture, and describe them as too "old fashioned" or too "clannish."

Finally there are those who would avoid the problems of prejudice and discrimination by trying to pass as whites or by sealing off contacts from those they consider trouble makers and build a fort around themselves. Most tragic are those people who have dropped out because they could not reach their personal goals and have become mental patients, drug addicts, chronic alcoholics, drifters, and the like.

Historically speaking, the Anglo-conformity has been the most dominant response by those in the "inferior" group.

Note: Questions to Consider

1. Which of the three main ways of assimilation do you think your parents and/or grandparents, took?
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2. Which way do you think you are taking?

3. Do you know anyone who has taken a different way from you?

4. Do you know anyone who has been completely beaten by the system?

5. Have you ever discussed the question of what is the best way to assimilate with your friends? Parents? Public school class? Dharma school class?

6. Have you ever invited a non-Japanese to go to the temple with you?

7. Do you know of any non-Japanese who would want to join your temple?
The young and confident Muta Hannojyo was totally oblivious of the seething restlessness boiling beneath the surface of Japanese society in the year 1860. He was concerned only about how to be a good samurai, how he could express his loyalty to his master, and how he could bring credit to his family. The way of becoming a good samurai was no mystery, for it had been known for hundreds of years. In essence, a man studied the classics and the arts and perfected his martial skills. This meant hours upon hours of studying and training year after year, but Hannojyo was not discouraged. He was luckier than most of his friends because everything he tried he did well and easily. He was proud of his ability. The more he read the classics, the more enjoyable it was; the more he mastered one of the martial skills, such as jujutsu, (a form of wrestling), kenjitsu (fencing), or kyujitsu (archery), the easier it was for him to learn and master others. The important thing was that because he did not spend endless hours fretting about the non-progress as many of his friends did, he was able to study the classics with ease of mind, which in turn helped him learn the lessons easily. What was most pleasing to Hannojyo was that with each success there was an immediate reward that stimulated him to try harder. This cycle of hard work, mastery, and reward resulted in Hannojyo mastering different and more difficult skills as well as acquiring greater knowledge with increasing speed and ease. Young Hannojyo indeed felt that he had found the key to success and did not mind the long, arduous hours he had to devote
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to his training. He could not understand why others did not do as well.

For a busy young man, there was little time to take notice of what was happening to the world beyond his own. His life was secure, and he did not have to do anything that he did not want to, not that he really disliked or despised anything. He took little note of other young people who worked in the fields around his home: their clothing, the homes they lived in, or the food they had to eat. They just did not seem to be part of his world, and he never questioned why. The only time he was told of anything that was remotely discomforting was when his teacher talked about the foreigners who were coming into Japan in increasing number and frequency. The total number was not disturbing by itself; what disturbed the teacher was that the foreigners seemed to be so powerful. They were powerful enough to rule over all the lands between India and China. The teacher suspected that Japan would be the next victim. He talked of enormous power, but Hannojyo could not completely understand what the teacher was telling him. Even as he was told of the machines and weapons that were a hundred fold more powerful and effective than those used by the Japanese, he found it hard to believe. The teacher also told him of books written by the foreigners that contained wondrous information about maps, plants, medicine, technology, and other things, far more extensively than anything he had ever read before. Once Hannojyo saw an illustration of the foreigners. All of them seemed to have different colored hair, long and in total disarray. They had the longest noses he had ever seen, and their clothing was strange. What struck him was that the men were wearing pants-like outfits that were frilly and feminine or so it seemed to Hannojyo. No Japanese samurai would wear such an outrageous costume, Hannojyo thought. How could he possibly be afraid of such barbaric and comic-looking people? But he did think of the might of their armies that had defeated so many people, and he resolved to train even harder just in case he had to meet them on the battlefield, though there was no doubt in his mind that an army of trained Japanese samurai could defeat them.

In less than 10 years, Hannojyo's secure world was shattered. Loyalty to his lord was no longer the most important consideration.
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Long dissatisfied with the military ruler (the shogun) whose family had reigned for over 200 years, several powerful leaders joined together to unseat the ruler. Already many of the Japanese were angry with the ruling family because it could not keep out the foreigners and were giving in to their demands. For the first time, the Japanese saw foreigners walk among them proudly and confidently. They lived in the best homes, ate the best food, and went to the best places at the expense of the Japanese. Hannojyo, along with other samurai, could not tolerate the Japanese land being taken over in such a humiliating manner and they resolved to do something about it. However, not all the samurai could agree on the best method. One immediate objective for many of them was to get rid of the weak ruler so that a stronger Japan could be developed to handle the foreigners. Thus, in less than 2 years, the ruler was toppled by the rebels and a new Japan was born.

Because the change seemed necessary, to Hannojyo, he was not shocked by the revolution. What was more shocking to him was how the change was brought about. The rebel army was made up of many farmers who were armed with foreigner's weapons - rifles and cannons far more powerful than the ones the armies of the deposed rulers had. They defeated an army made up largely of the traditional samurai. When Hannojyo found out how helpless the highly trained samurai were and how they were defeated by untrained peasants using modern weapons, he felt as if his whole life had been a waste. The countless hours he had spent in perfecting his martial skill had given him an outdated, useless skill that had almost no meaning in the new world being formed. He was further shocked to see the merchants becoming more influential and respected. They had always been despised and considered low class and had not been respected because they were engaged in the lowliest kind of job - one which provided a means of living by using money rather than producing goods important to the people. He also had to undergo the shock of giving up his two swords, which were to him the very symbol of his being and position. In order to become more modern, he also had to cut off his topknot, and now his hair style was that of a foreigner. Each year, the Japanese were encouraged by the new leaders to wear Western clothing, eat Western food, and copy the foreigners' way
of living as much as possible. The Japanese leaders felt that this was one of the ways to gain the respect and acceptance of the Europeans. Even greater was Japan's efforts to build factories, to make weapons, and to manufacture products to sell to all the people. The leaders encouraged everyone to support the government in order to develop a strong modern nation that would eventually be rich enough to reward all the Japanese with a higher standard of living. But most important, they were reminded over and over again that Japan had to become strong enough to rid the foreigners from their land and to gain respect as a first-rate power.

Hannojyo found new purpose to his life and discovered his place in society once again because the former samurai were asked by the new leaders to help provide the leadership for bringing about the needed changes. Former samurai were sent to foreign countries as students to learn new skills and knowledge because most of them had the discipline and the foundation to learn new things quickly. So hundreds of them were sent to Europe and to America to learn something of the Western ways. Samurai were also needed to fill the many governmental offices at different levels to help the people unite themselves and led a strong support for the new government. Many of them became officers in the new and modern army modeled after the European ones. Many became police officers, their martial skills being put to good use to keep order and stability in Japan. Many more became teachers to prepare the younger generation for the future. Education had always been important in Japan, but it was open to relatively few people and much of it was carried on by the Buddhist temples or other private schools. Under the new government, almost all the young people were encouraged to attend schools. Thus the need for teachers enabled many former samurai to serve in that capacity.

Hannojyo settled down as an administrator close to his home. In his new work, he began to understand the problems of the village and the villagers for the first time. He came to understand and sympathize with the farmers about whom he had known so little and to whom he had paid almost no attention.

In time he became convinced that solving their problems was much more important than trying to carry out the central government's programs and policies. Hannojyo was convinced that
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a strong and prosperous Japan could not be built without the help of the commoners. When the time came for him to get married and start a family of his own, it seemed to be the most natural thing for him to marry a commoner. His parents objected strongly, but Hannojyo convinced them that a man's inherited position was not as important as the kind of position he could establish in the future. This meant, to Hannojyo, that somehow the isolated little worlds he was brought up in had to be unified, and this could happen only when different peoples in separated worlds learned to consider one another with dignity and appreciation.

The years went by quickly and Hannojyo was surprised at the speed with which so many changes were brought about. He found himself accepting many things without even understanding why the changes were taking place or without thinking whether the changes were good or bad. He was determined to teach his children to become useful and happy individuals. He realized that he was more fortunate than most because he always had a good position, which became even more secure with his marriage. His wife came from a very influential, but not particularly wealthy farming family. Thus, Hannojyo's family was economically and socially more secure than that of most of the other people in the village. However, Hannojyo did not want his children to have as narrow an outlook as his had been when he was young. He made up his mind to offer his children as varied an experience as possible and as many opportunities as possible to meet people of diverse backgrounds. Just relying on the schools to prepare his children for their future in the new world was not, he felt, enough.

Katsuzo was the oldest of the three sons of Muta Hannojyo. As the oldest son, he would have inherited his parents' land if he had remained in Japan, assuring him a life of comparative ease. He would have also been the village head, thereby inheriting the prestige and power that went with the position. So why had not he stayed in Japan? It was a question Katsuzo often asked himself.

As a youth, Katsuzo was always reminded that he was the older brother (oniisan), and as the oldest son, he was given some privileges over his two younger brothers and two younger sisters. The most important privilege was that he would inherit everything that went with the position, including responsibility. As far as
Katsuzo was concerned, he could remember the responsibilities that he had had as an older brother more than the privileges he was supposed to have had.

It seemed as if most of his young life had been devoted to getting ready to be the head of the family. "To be ready" was a expression he had heard constantly, but he had not quite understood what it meant. His father had always said that a person would be ready for almost any situation if he became a worthy person. And what was a worthy man? Katsuzo found out that a worthy person had to be an educated person. Through the years, Katsuzo was to find out that an educated person was not someone who just went to school and who made good grades or learned a trade or a profession. He was also expected to put into practice what he learned. Until he did so, learning was not complete. To put into practice (jikko) was a term that was constantly repeated. So it was that Katsuzo found himself working the rice fields. He learned from that experience to respect and admire the farmers. Every man, woman and child outworked him, and while laboring hour after hour bent over in the hot sun, still retained the strength to laugh. Their language was much rougher than Katsuzo had been taught to use, but there was a dignity about them that he had not noticed when he had first seen them. Until he had worked among them, he thought them to be crude and dirty and had assumed it was only proper that they should bow to him first whenever they met. He did not understand why these people worked so hard even though they seemed to receive little reward for all their physical labor. Yet, Katsuzo never heard them seriously complain or utter bitter words about the hard, spare, frugal life they led. It amazed Katsuzo to hear them talk optimistically about the future. Slowly, he began to understand why his father had chosen to live among them and attempted to help them as much as his official position allowed him to.

Although new Japan was less than 40 years old, it had accomplished much in the way of catching up to some of the European countries, the price for modernization was high and the ones bearing the heaviest burden were the farmers. Already there was news of many farmers expressing their discontent with the government, and Katsuzo's father worked hard to minimize the
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effect on the farmers in his district. At home, his father always cautioned his family about becoming too caught up in one's narrow world, and warned them not to take the relative good fortune of the family for granted. He talked about how quickly the world was changing and that he could not begin to understand how these changes came about. From these admonitions, Katsuzo learned another aspect of what an educated man was about. He was to be ready for any kind of change and not be thrown off stride by adversity. The fact that people could not predict the future was no reason to live without hope or plans for the future. One of the most popular sayings at that time was advice given by an American missionary to the young Japanese, "young people, be ambitious!"

With the turn of the new century, Katsuzo had decided to go to the new world of America. For 20 years, many more Japanese had been going to America. Most of them were farmers who saw more hope in trying to make a living in the new and strange land than in the old familiar land, where relief from hardship was not foreseeable. There were other reasons why people decided to go to America. Some men wanted to escape the military draft, while some fled Japan because they had been too critical of the new government. Others simply wanted to study in America. These people were different from the hundreds of young samurai who were sent to study under the sponsorship of the government. Katsuzo had remembered how longingly his father talked about the opportunity he had passed up to study in America. At the age of 19, Katsuzo decided to do what his father had not done. He had been encouraged by stories of Uchimura Kanzo, who had studied in Amherst College. Uchimura wrote about the kindness of the American people there in encouraging him to study. Many other stories about the new land gave Katsuzo the courage to seek new fortune in America.

In America, Katsuzo was truly surprised at the sense of hostility and suspicion that was clearly expressed to him when he enrolled in the sixth grade of Franklin School in Stockton, Calif. Although he wanted to attend college or a university, he was told to brush up on his English; he reluctantly enrolled in the elementary school. Trying to learn English in a classroom where the teachers and students were suspicious and unfriendly was not
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an easy task, and Katsuzo became more and more discouraged. He had heard about how people in San Francisco in 1906 had objected to having Japanese as well as other Oriental students in the public schools. Many of the parents felt that the Oriental students were too old and immoral, and they did not want their children to attend the same schools. Katsuzo thought this kind of thinking had been resolved, so he was surprised and hurt to find such attitudes still prevailed. But he studied hard and worked hard. He earned his room and board by working as a school boy (houseboy) for Mrs. Howe. In the summers, he earned more money by working on the farm of a friend in the San Joaquin Valley. More and more Japanese immigrants were going to the San Joaquin Valley after the spectacular success of several farmers in turning the arid land, which had been considered marginal at best, into one of the most productive agricultural regions in the state. Jobs were plentiful and Katsuzo took full advantage of the situation. He experienced a minor shock when he started to work in the fields because working in the huge, wild land of the San Joaquin Valley was more exhausting than working in the small garden-like farms of Japan. One of the experiences he long remembered was the uncomfortable and irritating feel of the peat soil over all his sweat-stained body and the joy of washing off the dirt and the sweat in a "real" Japanese bath after the day's work. He looked forward to the daily bath period, which was one of the few opportunities to relax and talk with his fellow workers. Dinner was served after the men completed their bath. The food was not particularly good, but it was satisfying because it was Japanese, and there was plenty of rice. While many complained about the food, they also expressed their gratitude to the cook, who was usually the wife of the boss. Being a wife of the boss meant she had to get up before the men to prepare breakfast, lunch, and dinner; clean up after meals; prepare their baths; as well as work in the field. The wives of farmers were never unappreciated by the men, although it was hard to tell that from the way the men referred to them as "old ladies" or "old bags."

Occasionally, Japanese movies were brought around to the various camps. The best treat was to go into Stockton, where there was a large Japanese community. There a person could always eat
Japanese food at one of the two restaurants, go to movies, or even attend church. There were also a number of community activities which seemed to take place at least once a month, but Katsuzo particularly liked to go to Mrs. Matsuoka's home, which many of the people from his native prefecture used as a social meeting place.

Katsuzo's plan to attend an American college was altered when he decided to marry and start his own family. Katsuzo's parents highly recommended this young woman, as they had done with so many others, but what really made up his mind was the picture of her they had sent along. Unlike many of his friends, Katsuzo did not send for his "picture bride," but went back to Japan to meet her personally. When he was certain that Mitsuye would be a good partner in their life together, the wedding ceremony was performed and the two came back to America. They found employment with a laundry and cleaning establishment. When they gained sufficient funds and accumulated enough knowledge about running a business, they decided to start on their own. Mitsuye and Katsuzo borrowed money from their prefectural friends and this, when added to their savings, was enough to allow them to buy a small grocery shop. The years went by quickly as the two became almost totally involved in making a "go" of their shop. But Katsuzo also spent long hours on community matters, because the people in the community felt that he was a good leader who would organize and unite them to meet the growing needs of the rapidly expanding Japanese community. Through united efforts, the community did establish a Japanese language school, as many of the immigrants felt that their communication with their children would improve if the children could learn Japanese. There was also a desire to retain much of the culture of their native land. Many of the immigrants were proud of being "Meiji men" and wanted their children to retain some of the things they were proud of. Various sects of Christian, Buddhist, and Shinto church and temples were also built. An "umbrella" organization of the community was formed to take care of the general needs of the community. The enormous amount of energy, money, and time people sacrificed to accomplish these common goals resulted in the development of a community that
helped many of them survive in a strange land that, though friendly at times, was often cruel and hostile toward them.

The Japanese people had caused no problem for the white people (hakujin). They kept to themselves, but they also made a monumental contribution to America, by making thousands of acres of land more productive. Much of it was unwanted land that the Japanese immigrants turned into rich arable land. All of their efforts and achievements were lauded at first, but as the Japanese farmers succeeded in greater numbers, more and more hakujin farmers began to voice their opposition to the Japanese. Many of Katsuzo's friends in San Francisco were harassed physically and psychologically. Newspapers carried stories describing the Japanese and their communities in terms that bore no resemblance to what Katsuzo knew. They were pictured as dirty, immoral, scabs, sneaky, and dishonest. The abuses increased in intensity with the development of the new Japan. At first Japan's effort to modernize herself was hailed all over the United States, but the climate began to change when the Japanese defeated the Russians in a war no one thought the Japanese could win.

Katsuzo felt helpless, as did the community, under the barrage of criticism, discrimination, and harassment. What could be done to decrease the intensity of the hakujin's resentment and hate? Katsuzo thought about the problem time and time again. He knew that his children, as well as a majority of the Japanese children, did extremely well in school and were learning the ways of the hakujin more successfully than in retaining the ways of their parents. But as successful as they were, they were not given their due rewards. Most of their children did not win any scholarships nor were they given encouragement to go to college even if many of them had the best grades in high school. Even after the parents sacrificed to almost unbelievable lengths, those who graduated from college could not find work that was equal to the kind of education and training they had received. Some managed to make good use of their college education by working within the Japanese community - others went to Japan, the land of their parents.

The Japanese had one of the lowest crime rates of all people, yet they could not shake the image of somehow being gamblers, or of being shadowy inhabitants who lurked on the fringes of law-
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breaking elements. Even though the families had almost no record of divorces, and most of the people were members of some church, they were thought of as heathens without any moral scruples or ethical standards. Even those who were converted to Christianity were not as "Christian" as the hakujin Christians. When their children spoke almost perfect English, but with a Japanese accent, their English was considered to be inferior English and the accents were not as good as Boston or Texas or Southern accents. Even as the Japanese immigrants and their children adopted the white people's way, there were politicians who worked to limit the numbers of Japanese coming in and later managed to stop them completely. Laws were made to prevent Japanese farmers from owning land. It bewildered and hurt Katsuzo to be described as "little Jap" and be considered a very real threat to the Western people.

Katsuzo was also hit with another problem. This problem caused more direct and immediate hurt to Katsuzo because it involved his children. One day he realized that he and Mitsuye could not communicate with their children. In fact, he was speaking less and less to his children, and they were approaching him and his wife less and less for any kind of discussion. He realized that he and Mitsuye, being so involved in trying to lay proper foundations for the family, had not spent enough time with their children. Even the long hours he spent away from his home was a big part of the foundation laying. And yet, his best intentions worked against the very thing that he had been working toward. He also noticed that his children were not attending the Japanese language school regularly. Although all of his three children started Japanese class at the time they started public schools, their attendance at the Japanese school was cut down markedly as they grew older. Katsuzo could not find comfort in the fact that most of his friends were having the same problem.

Many of the young people felt that, because they were Americans, there was little use in learning Japanese. Some felt that speaking Japanese was hurting their efforts to learn English or that it made them speak English with a funny accent. Others felt that it was simply unfair because others in school did not have to go to another school after their "regular" school. Many could not take
part in extracurricular activities at school if they had to go to Japanese school and felt that going to Japanese school and learning Japanese things made them different from other kids. In fact, many were ashamed or embarrassed about having to go to Japanese school, or, for some, having to go to a Buddhist Church. The progress of those who somehow continued their study of the Japanese language disappointed their parents, for there were very few who managed to learn how to read, write, or speak Japanese well enough to carry on a serious conversation. This was especially unfortunate because as the children grew and became more like the *hakujin*, there was more reason to talk and discuss matters with their parents. Katsuzo and Mitsuye tried to express their love and concern for the children by telling them simple things like "work hard," "study hard," or "listen to what we say..." which they knew sounded curt and impersonal to their children. They also tried to understand their children by watching their actions. Even as the gap grew wider and more frustrating, Katsuzo and Mitsuye noted with pride that their children continued to do well in the public schools and that they did not get mixed up with the "wrong kind" of people.

Then suddenly on December 7, 1941, the bombing of Pearl Harbor shattered their life in the United States traumatically. In the succeeding dizzying days that followed, Katsuzo was picked up and investigated by the FBI because he had been so active in the Japanese community. The entire Japanese community was put under curfew, and a few months later the Japanese populace was ordered to evacuate their homes. The people living on the Pacific Coast were moved to one of the many relocation camps that were built in the more remote areas of America. Katsuzo understood why he and his wife had to be evacuated, but he could not understand the reason for the removal of those who were born in the United States and were citizens, like his children. However, Katsuzo was glad that his children were not separated from him. By the end of the summer of 1942, he and his family found themselves in Rohwer, Arkansas.

The hot, sticky heat of Rohwer, Arkansas, reminded Katsuzo of the humid, pressing heat of the Chikugo Plain of Japan, and so the sweat coursing through his body did not bother him much. He
could still remember very vividly the days when he had to work in a knee-deep wet field, soaking in the relentless heat rising out of the warm, murky water that filled the rice field. He could also still feel the hot, dry heat of the San Joaquin Valley, made worse by the soil that filtered into all the pores of his body. And now, here he was working in the hot mess hall, washing dishes and pans in boiling hot water that made the sweltering heat even more oppressive. Katsuzo wondered how he had ended up in this little pocket of the U.S. that he and very few of his friends had ever heard about before. America was certainly not the land of the "rich and plenty" or a "land of ease," as he and may others had thought a long time ago.

For the first time in his life, Katsuzo found time to think about his past and about his future. The most important questions centered on his family. Would his children blame him for being treated like enemy aliens? Would his children lose faith in their country? What would happen if the eldest son were to be drafted into the U.S. Army? How could he and Mitsuye help their children overcome this tragedy? And what about their grocery store? Would they ever get it back? Had his life been a total waste? Was this the result of all the years of struggle and sacrifice? What kind of world is it when a person's entire life's work can be taken away from him without his say? As he thought about these questions, he became aware of the hot humid weather weighing heavily against his drenched body.

Note: Questions to Consider

1. Have you ever asked your grandparents:

   a. What they found disappointing about coming to the U.S.?
   b. What they liked about living in the U.S.?
   c. To compare living in the U.S. and Japan?
   d. How they felt about being forced out of their houses and being put into concentration camps or finding a home outside the Pacific Coast?
2. Do you think that your grandparents wanted you to learn something about themselves? If you answered yes, what kinds of things do you think they wanted you to learn?

3. Check the statements that you think applied to your grandparents.
   - _____ felt equal to the Americans
   - _____ felt inferior to the Americans
   - _____ felt superior to the Americans
   - _____ could learn from the Americans
   - _____ generally satisfied with their Japanese self
   - _____ lived in segregated Japanese community
   - _____ lived in integrated community

4. Which of the three ways of assimilation do you think your ancestors (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents) took?

5. Do you think that ancestors of Japanese Americans relied on Buddhist teachings in their struggles? Please explain your answer as fully as possible.
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Reading 14

The Midwife (Sambasan)

Tsukasa Matsueda

For Mrs. Matsuoka, this was the 203rd baby she had delivered in America. As one of the two midwives in this thriving rural community of Stockton, she was very busy. And although she had delivered hundreds of babies, she felt the same excitement delivering this baby as she did the first one. Even as she cleaned up the room, after she had made sure that the mother was comfortably settled in the front room, Mrs. Matsuoka started to go over some of the names that might be appropriate for the newborn girl. Although most of the parents had a name for their baby already, most of them looked forward to the names suggested by Mrs. Matsuoka because she had a unique ability to come up with the "best" name. It was not just a matter of choosing the right-sounding one, nor the most fashionable one, or the most symbolic. She also thought about which Japanese character would be the most appropriate. Names such as Kimiko or Hisako could be written in different ways depending on how you wanted to describe the child. Kimiko, for instance, could mean the noble one or could mean the exalted and beautiful one. Further, Mrs. Matsuoka would find names from her dreams. Actually these could be called more than dreams because she always had a dream about something she was most concerned with at the time. Some of the best names came from her dreams. Mrs. Matsuoka was proud that so many Japanese people would come to her to have their babies and rely on her to suggest names for the newborn babies.

In turn Mrs. Matsuoka admired the hardy women who came to her. Most of them were farmers, and they worked on their farms until the last possible moment before coming into Stockton to have
Matsuoka had attended had cried out or screamed in pain when giving birth. A city official from the Board of Health was present at one of the deliveries to make sure no public health codes or practices were being violated. When he saw the quiet and courageous way a Japanese woman bore her labor pain and subsequent delivery, he was quite impressed. This was the first time this official had ever been assigned to inspect a home in the ghetto section of the city. The ghetto was only a few blocks away from the city hall, but it was amazing how rarely any officials in the city ever came into this neighborhood. He felt uneasy at first walking though the streets filled with so many different foreigners speaking in their own languages. To him the street was a noisy mess and not at all picturesque, as some of his colleagues had described it. When he came upon the two-storied wooden frame home bearing the sign "Mrs. Matsuoka, Midwife," he wondered why the city had not yet condemned the practice. How could anyone give birth in safety in such a home tucked in between a rundown hotel and a gas station? His preconceived image of ghetto people further added to the discomfort of the official. Gingerly stepping through the unkempt and sorely neglected area, he anticipated with dread what the interior of the house would be like.

As the official entered the house, he was surprised at how quiet and clean the hall was; it was freshly waxed and polished. As he waited for Mrs. Matsuoka to come out, he peered curiously into the closest room and found a Japanese woman lying there groaning almost inaudibly. Upon looking at her more closely, it became obvious that she was having labor pains, yet the only sign of this was her low moan. He almost jumped when he heard a voice say, "Hello. May we help you?" Two women were standing there; one was Mrs. Matsuoka, obviously, and the other her daughter. The official was particularly surprised to hear English spoken so well, with just a trace of accent. "Uh, yes . . . I'm here from the City Board to inspect your place." The two women exchanged something in Japanese. Then the young one answered, "My mother says that she is glad to see you, but she is just getting ready for a delivery. You know, the lady in the front room. My mother asks you to wait. In the meanwhile would you care to inspect the other rooms?" "Oh certainly, I don't want to take up too much of your
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time. Can you show me any other rooms that are not occupied and also where she has all the equipment and supplies?"

The other rooms were as quiet and clean as the first one he had seen, and so was the supply room. He could not believe that an old wooden frame building could be kept so clean. After a brief but thorough inspection he was invited into the living room to wait. He was satisfied that no sanitation codes were being violated, but he wondered a little about the minimum amount of equipment he had found so far. He did not have too much time to think about that, though, because he was too busy examining the living room. There was an almost new upright piano standing in the corner, and he was surprised to see several Japanese swords displayed there. There were two tintype pictures on the wall. One pictured a top-knotted samurai and the other a Japanese man in western clothing standing in front of an airplane. A closer look revealed that the two men were actually one and the same man. Before he could survey the room anymore, the two women were back.

"Now, would you care for some tea?" But the official was thinking of something else. He had not even heard any screams or cries to indicate that the delivery was over. "Uh, no thank you . . . I must go now. You'll hear from our office, and thank you again."

As he stepped out into the noisy street, the young city official was glad that he had had a chance to make this trip, but as he walked toward his office, he suddenly felt uneasy again, and knew that he would not be returning again, that is, on his own.

"What time is it?" Mrs. Matsuoka asked as soon as the young man had gone. "Don't forget your odori (dance) practice, Hiroko. You have only about one week left before the performance next Saturday. . . ."

"Yes, I know. I'm already getting ready." Hiroko was getting ready, but with mixed feelings. Sometimes she wanted to go out to play or do something else, like painting; but none of her friends ever did what they wanted to do either. Most of them were expected to help out with the family. Most stayed home and did chores around the homes or studied. Hiroko did the same except she was one of the several girls who took lessons in Japanese odori, playing the shamisen, and learning the fundamentals of Kabuki plays (classical Japanese theater). She was the best of the
dancers and she played the part of a man, not because she was masculine or ugly but because she was good. She had excellent control of a full spectrum of classical Kabuki expressions and usually she carried the lead part. Hiroko smiled to herself, thinking that at least she did not have to be like Atsuko, who always played the villain. All in all, she and her friends enjoyed their involvement in Japanese theater because not only did they have fun together, but they could also travel all over Northern California. These girls from Stockton had indeed become famous among the Japanese communities throughout Northern California. Most of the time Hiroko was happy to spend her leisure time practicing, but sometimes she wanted more time to paint because her art teacher at school thought she had definite promise.

Mrs. Matsuoka was pleased with Hiroko's progress in Japanese dancing. She wished Hiroko would practice the shamisen more, but understood that her daughter was very busy with school work, family chores, piano lessons, and attending the Japanese Language School. She was proud of her daughter, but she was also proud of her son, Junichi. When she thought of Junichi, Mrs. Matsuoka felt a special glow because he worked much harder than the other young people she knew of. Yet her sense of pride was tinged with guilt that she was not able to pay as much attention to him as to Hiroko. She was especially proud of Junichi for doing extremely well in both the public and the Japanese language school.

Recently, she noticed that Junichi's grades were not as good as they had been in the first 6 years of schooling. It was not that he was not studying as much. He was studying hard, but he seemed less interested in grades or in school than he had been. He read profusely but not always the books assigned to him. Once Mrs. Matsuoka asked her son about school and was disturbed to learn that Junichi was talking back to the teacher. It was not exactly talking back as much as making funny remarks to the teacher or in responding to the teacher's questions - at least that was what Hiroko had told her.

"Junichi, I hear you are making funny remarks to the teacher. Is something wrong? Are you covering up your ignorance? What's the matter?"
"Matter? Nothing as far as I'm concerned. I just tell the teacher what I think, that's all."

"Why do you have to say anything? Do others in class do the same thing? What about the Tanaka boy and the Sato boy? Do they do the same thing?"

"Oh, you mean Jim and Sat. No, they feel the same way as I do about school and teachers in general, but they don't say anything. They keep quiet and get real good grades."

"You know that the teachers need to be obeyed. They are there to help you get ready for life. Why is it that you don't understand that?"

"Oh, I understand that. What I want to know is what does the teacher's past history have to do with our preparation. Take Mrs. Warner, for instance. She's always talking about how hard she had to work, how she obeyed her teachers and her parents. I feel that doesn't have anything to do with us. Seems more like she's bragging or putting us down." So I said, "But in your days slavery was legal."

"Now Junichi, she's trying to show how she studied and how studying and working hard helped her. It's a personal lesson she's teaching you. Try to think of the good things about people and what they do."

"Oh, Mom, you said yourself, 'those who are great are humble.' And if she tells us this stuff to teach us a lesson, I don't see why we have to hear it day after day. She's just wasting our time. She doesn't understand us, either. She thinks we have nothing to do. She's supposed to be interested in us, but she never once asked us about ourselves or about what we do. Is that a good teacher and do we have to accept that quietly? You've always encouraged us to be honest and to find a nice way of saying things. Well, I didn't come out and tell her bluntly. I just tried a little humor, that's all."

There were other things said, but Mrs. Matsuoka could not remember. She just thought how like his father Junichi was. And yet, his father had been dead for over 6 years. Junichi was only 5 at the time. She wished he were here to talk to Junichi. It was so much more difficult to talk to boys, especially when she thought about her oldest son, Sumio. He didn't even want to be called Sumio. About a year before, he started calling himself Frank. Mrs.
Matsuoka had such a hard time pronouncing Frank; it always came out "Furanku." Sumio did everything so well before he started going to elementary school; then he began to change. At first, Mrs. Matsuoka did not notice the change, except she knew he was no longer reading his Japanese books and magazines as often as before. And before long he stopped studying Japanese lessons entirely. Sumio openly refused even to go to language school when he started high school and became involved in the school athletic teams. Actually, when Mrs. Matsuoka thought about her oldest son, there was very little she could complain about. He did extremely well in public school, especially in math and science. And he did help out at home. In fact, he was very helpful in making extra money, which he faithfully gave to his mother. The only matter that worried Mrs. Matsuoka was that he was cutting off his Japanese background. What little time he had for himself, he was playing basketball, baseball, or football. And about once a month, he went out on dates. Even since Sumio started to go to high school, he spent a lot of time with a group that was viewed as the "fast" crowd. People in the fast crowd seemed to have certain things in common. They all stopped going to Japanese School, gave themselves American names, and were participating more in activities at school; they did not go to church, or if they did, they attended the Christian church more often than not. Also they went out on dates. There was nothing wrong with those things; it just saddened Mrs. Matsuoka that the most important tie between her and her son Sumio was being weakened. To almost anything she said, his response was "Oh, Mom, we're in America, so what's wrong with being like Americans? We should learn to like other Americans and try to forget our old-fashioned ways. Other American kids don't worry about learning their parent's language or customs. So don't worry. We all have to be realistic. Isn't that one of the things you've always taught us? - be realistic and be practical... don't depend on others...."

Yes, that is what she believed in and that was what she always tried to teach her children, but the way they said it, it sounded so different from what she was thinking. She could still remember vividly what she had gone through only a few years before. Few years? It was over 10 years ago, closer to 20? An old saying
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popped into her mind, "Time flies like an arrow." She was always conscious of another saying about time, "Time is gold," but in trying to live up to that, time just flew like an arrow.

When she and her husband came to America, he started working in one of the rich farms along the San Joaquin River. The job had already been contracted even before they reached America, so when they landed in San Francisco, they spent only one night there at a hotel owned by a Japanese. Another long day's journey brought them to Stockton, where they stayed in another Japanese hotel, and the next day they were on their way to the Teranishi farm. After a few years of work the two had saved enough money to move to the city and start a business of their own. They had denied themselves almost everything to save money, but they still did not have enough money to start a laundry and dry-cleaning business.

So they went to an association made up of all the people from their prefecture and asked to join them. Part of the association's function was to provide money for those who needed it. It was a simple plan of everyone sharing part of their savings each month and lending it to a person who needed a rather large amount of money. So the Matsuoka's borrowed from the association and returned what they had borrowed on a monthly basis. In the meanwhile, they were able to lease a cleaning establishment. Mr. Matsuoka was well known among the Japanese community for his ironing skill, so when he started his business many people became his customers. In a few years, he did well enough to move "uptown."

Just when he had built up a growing clientele, Mr. Matsuoka passed away without warning. Mrs. Matsuoka was stunned when her husband clutched at his heart and gasped for water . . . for air . . . for help. In a matter of seconds, before Dr. Watanabe could come, her husband died in her arms. Deep in shock, she numbly remembered greeting the people who came as soon as the news of his death reached the Japanese community. The ladies from the Buddhist Church quickly started to prepare food for the mourners who would be coming to pay their respects to the deceased. In the meanwhile, the men from the church, along with the minister, planned the wake and the funeral. All the tedious arrangements
were quickly taken care of, such as keeping records of the flowers and money brought by the mourners to the funeral and preparing more food for those who attended the funeral.

Mrs. Matsuoka was so grateful for the way the community people helped out. But her appreciation didn't end there. Grieved as she was over her husband's death, she had to think of her children and her own survival. She could not depend on the community indefinitely, and she could not run the cleaning business herself. The first thing she decided to do was to pay off the most pressing debts. The insurance money that came from the policy they had bought from Mr. Fujikado just a few months before her husband's death paid off other debts, but now she had very little left for herself and the children. The only way she could possibly make a go of it was to fall back on the midwife's training she had in Japan. Fortunately she found a large house in which to carry on her work, with enough rooms not only for her family but also boarders.

She was indeed fortunate, but that was only a start. She still had to work hard and she did work hard. Besides her work, she tried to supervise her children's activities. She could not help with their public school work, but she managed to help them with their Japanese language school work. As her profession thrived, she found more time to arrange lessons and activities for the children. For her girls, Mrs. Matsuoka was able to arrange dancing and shamisen lessons, Junichi took judo lessons at the Buddhist Church and also played on the basketball and baseball teams sponsored by the church. (One of the most hotly contested games was between teams sponsored by the Buddhist Church and the Japanese Christian Church.) Later on Sumio joined the Boy Scouts, but Junichi did not. The only time Mrs. Matsuoka could call her own were the few precious moments she somehow found to continue her interest in Japanese things, but at the same time, she was not aware that Sumio was almost bitter that his mother would not spend more time with the children.

Sumio would express his dissatisfaction to his friends, openly and often, but he never expressed his feelings to his own family. He could not reveal them to his mother because his neglect of Japanese had eroded his ability to communicate with her. He did not discuss it with his sister Hiroko and brother Junichi because
they seemed to be completely dominated by his mother. Sumio felt that he would get no understanding from the "too" submissive siblings. Besides, there was almost no time that the family got together long enough to discuss family matters. If the family members were occupied with working or studying or taking lessons, there was always some community or church activity that took away more time from the family. Most of all, what Sumio disliked was the weekends when the friends and acquaintances from mother's home prefecture would come by. Almost all of them were bachelors, young people who were farmers and spoke nothing by Japanese, so Sumio had no young people to play with. Sumio could not even begin to understand their Japanese because all of them spoke in their native dialect, which had almost no resemblance to the standard Japanese he had learned for awhile. One thing he liked was that he was able to stay up and eat snacks, which usually amounted to a full-scale Chinese dinner. But the delicious food was not enough to compensate for the lonely weekends he spent at home, especially after his dad had passed away.

When Sumio started high school, he found that the friends he had in the basketball and baseball teams became the closest to him, and he enjoyed being with them. When they went with him to Japanese community picnics and the Obon festival, even these became more enjoyable. He could remember when he and his friends would be on the same team in various events and win many prizes, especially on the "cone breaking" contest. But in his junior year, he began to drift away more and more from these community activities, especially when he started to play on the school teams and attend various social functions tied in with the teams. As his exposure to and involvement with the students increased, Sumio became ashamed and embarrassed about many of the things he had done, in fact about almost everything he had done in the past.

Note: Questions to Consider

1. What was Mrs. Matsuoka's occupation? Where had she trained for the profession?
2. How did Mrs. Matsuoka start her business?

3. Who helped Mrs. Matsuoka when her husband passed away?

4. List some of the activities that her children took part in outside of public schools.

5. In what way was Frank, the oldest son, different from his younger brother, Junichi?

Additional Questions

1. List three things different about the Matsuoka family from yours, aside from the fact that they are Japanese and have different names.

2. What things in the Japanese American community are different from your community?

3. Why was Sumio (Frank) ashamed and embarrassed about the things he had done in the past? What do you think of this attitude? Give a reason for your answer.

4. What activities do you remember having in your community that you no longer have?

5. In what way can the community people help you in times of trouble? For instance, if your family needs a large amount of money, who do they expect to borrow from? If they rely on a bank, that would not be considered a community help.

Note: Suggested Questions for Reading 14, The Midwife

1. Who generally helped the ancestors of Japanese Americans when they were in trouble or having difficulties?
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2. Did they ever ask the Buddhist temple/ministers for help? If they did, what kind of help did the temple provide?

3. Have the Buddhist temple/minister provided help or services to you?

4. In what ways do you think the Buddhist temple or ministers can help you more?

5. Do you live in a "Japantown" or in an area with many Japanese families?

6. Do you feel that you have as much contact with other Japanese and Japanese Americans as your parents had?

7. Do you think that living in a Japanese community could make a difference in your life? Why?

8. If you think that there is a difference, make a list and put the differences under a positive or negative category.
UNIT TWO

GOLDEN CHAIN

Lessons VII - XI
Lesson VII

Breaking the Chain

Objectives:

After the lesson, the students should be able to:

1. Understand that the American Revolution did not break the chain, but lived on as the American Dream.

2. Discuss the valuable contributions the Issei made toward loosening the chain.

3. Consider that through Buddhism an individual can be guided to take the first difficult step toward breaking the chain.

Concepts:

American Revolution/American Dream.

Amida Buddha.

Bill of Rights.

Compassion.

Cultural conservation.

Gratitude.
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Selective adaptation.

Other power (Tariki).

Wisdom.

Primal Vow.

Transfer (Eko).

Naturalness (sono mama).

Procedure:


2. Discuss the suggested questions.


Summary:

Ancestors of all Americans including the Issei, have worked toward achieving equality and freedom and their efforts have loosened the chain, but not broken the chain. Individual freedom can be attained through Amida Buddha's compassion.
Bibliography:


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Reading 15

The American Revolution and the American Dream

Tsukasa Matsueda

It is important for us to remember the American Revolution, which gave hope and inspiration to the rest of the world. Leaders of the new country attempted to establish a government that would ensure freedom and equality for all the people. They included a Bill of Rights in the Constitution which guaranteed specific rights: freedom of the press, freedom to establish and practice religion, and others. Under such rights, the Issei immigrants were able to build Buddhist temples all over the United States to continue Buddhist practices.

However, the American Revolution did not apply to all. The revolution was mainly for the white people. The Blacks and the Native Americans (American Indians) could not have the same rights. Women were not considered equal to men, severely limiting their progress. Through the years, the Bill of Rights was expanded, but by and large, people of color did not secure equal treatment and continued to suffer oppression. At one time, the Supreme Court ruled that democratic society could be separate and still be equal. Under this interpretation, the Blacks continued to live in almost slave-like conditions.

Asians were not allowed to own property. During the Second World War, the Japanese Americans were put into concentration camps without due process of law, which is required whenever an individual's liberty is deprived.

Today people who are different from the majority of the white Americans continue to struggle to be treated as equals. The American Revolution has not been completed and the "American Dream" remains only a dream for many. The chain that binds one society has been loosened, but it still has not been broken. The
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Three Poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance continue to plague our society.

Note: Questions to Consider

1. How does the Bill of Rights bring about equality and freedom?

2. Why has not equality and freedom been available to all people as guaranteed in the Constitution for over 200 years?

3. What is the essential difference between the Western/Christian concept of Human Rights and the Buddhist idea?

4. How do you feel about the difference?

5. Do you feel that understanding of the Buddhist idea of Freedom of Religion makes sense in the present world? Why or why not?
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Reading 16


*Rev. Shoyo Taniguchi,
Buddhist Temple of Alameda*

*(Author's Note: Some people may point out that attaching the term Reverend to Shoyo Taniguchi is incorrect because she is not yet an ordained minister of BCA. However, she does have the title, Tokudo which is defined as (So or Soryo) in the Shinshu Daijiten, (The Great Dictionary of Shinshu). As a lay person, I have chosen to use the term Reverend out of respect and consideration for the position. If there is a misunderstanding about my intention, I can only apologize for my decision.

- Tsukasa Matsueda)*

(Reprinted with the permission of Rev. Shoyo Taniguchi.)

The expression "human rights" in the West is a relatively recent development, its earliest usage being traced back only to the last decades of the 18th century. The Virginia Bill of Rights of 1776 and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1789 are pioneer statements in their modern understanding: they affirm freedom and the equality of each individual as the most basic rights of human beings.

In the 1st century B.C.E. of the Buddha's teaching, the issue of human rights was radically important, though we do not find the technical term as such in Buddhist literature. A large number of the old Buddhist text record the concept and teachings regarding the vital necessity of the affirmation and practice of human rights.
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based on human equality. During the time of the Buddha, in India, there was an entrenched caste system that classified human beings into hierarchical social structures. But the Buddha and his disciples "ignored caste and racial discrimination both within the Sangha and in their relationships with the laity and openly preached and practiced the doctrine of the equality of man(1). The Buddha's teaching of human equality was a revolutionary concept in this historical period(2). The Buddha's arguments for human equality can be summarized into the following seven: 1. biological, 2. anthropological, 3. sociological, 4. legal, 5. moral, 6. ethical, and 7. spiritual(3). In this way, the Buddha strongly emphasized the importance of human equality not only in political, social, or legal realms, but in all possible dimensions. These arguments naturally supported women's rights based on equality of men and women. In both social and spiritual realms, gates were equally open to both women and men.

In the discussion of rights, there is one major difference between the Western/Christian and Buddhist tradition. It derives from the Western/Christian and Buddhist anthropology (of not only humans but also all other life forms). The concept of "rights" in the West can be characterized as powers or privileges to which individuals have just claim such that they can demand that, in order to retain their inherent dignity as a human person, their rights should not be infringed or suspended(4). The Western/Christian concept of rights is based on the concept of human dignity and thus resultantly concerns only humans. In the West, there a primary notion of "human dignity" for validity of human rights, which asserts humans as dignified human beings differentiated from animals, simply by virtue of being human beings. The contemporary claims for human rights can ultimately be deduced from the Christian concept of imago Dei. Especially in the Roman Catholic theology, the imago Dei is strongly emphasized as validity for an inherent human dignity. Though it is fundamentally a biblical concept, it has been profoundly accepted in the West not only as a theological but also as philosophical language and concept.

In the Buddhist idea, though humans are regarded to possess certain faculties which nonhumans may not possess, it does not put
humans in a superior domain compared to other living beings. Living beings are defined as beings which have the mental faculty of consciousness and they all have an equal right to existence and welfare. The Buddhist approach is to share the right to exist with all life forms as joint members of the universe, not as hierarchically dominating beings. Therefore, the Buddhist idea of rights is confined not only to the sphere of humans, but is opened to all life forms. At the same time, in Buddhism, we also find a notion of an awareness of "being a human" differentiated from other life forms. To be born specifically as a human rather than other living life forms is a most difficult and rare thing(5), and all Buddhists consciously express their appreciation and gratitude to be born as a human in this life. Traditionally it has been believed that only humans can attain enlightenment, for they can cognize both happiness and suffering; nonhumans who can cognize only pain and suffering or even heavenly beings who cognize only pleasure and no suffering cannot attain enlightenment. The ability to experience suffering is regarded as a radical element for enlightenment. The fact of being a human is recognized as an "appreciation" for all causes and conditions which made it possible, rather than "dignity." The plain fact of being a human itself does not inherently dignify him/her. If one wants to claim one's "dignity" as a human, one is obliged to realize it in one's way of living.

Instead of the concept of "human dignity" for the claim of human rights, Buddhism uses anthropological and psychological knowledge as its rationalization. According to it, in all life forms there is an aspect of common nature of self-love and self-centeredness. The affirmation of human rights arises from this fact. Awareness to the fact of self-centeredness of all life forms is significant in understanding the reality of nature. According to it, all living beings, human or nonhuman, have craving of self-love(6). the strong self-attachment possessed by all ordinary living beings to one's own self leads each individual to require rights for protection from the common human need of freedom from fear, pain, harm, suffering, unhappiness, hurt, and other problems. The concept of "rights" is, in this regard, a form of expression of craving of self-centeredness of each individual. The basic ordinary
nature of self-centeredness in living beings necessarily requires a right to protect oneself as well as others. If one does not have this reverence toward others, it could mean that one acknowledges that others have the right to retaliate with harm. As long as a certain right is claimed, respective duty necessarily is attached. Rights and duties come in one packet. One cannot interfere in another's life by harming or killing it. The implication here is that one does not have the right to harm anyone, be it oneself or others (7). The bottom line of self-protection as the most basic human right can be expanded to the broader or higher realm of rights, such as, freedom of speech or freedom of religion.

The Buddhist ideal as religion is directed to the cultivation and development of basic craving of self-centeredness to caring for oneself and caring for others. Ethics in Buddhism is programmed to gradually liberate one from the bondage of self-centeredness. According to Buddhist causal psychology, roots of self-centeredness are desire/greed, anger/hatred, and ignorance/delusion, and they are always harmful to oneself first of all and then also to others. Thus physical actions rooted in this mentality are unskillful action, for they are harmful to oneself as well as others, and the result of these actions are always problematic.

The Buddhist ethic can be "normative" only when it is "descriptive." If there were to exist such a thing as a Buddhist ethicist, his/her role would be to provided the knowledge of causality for a given situation as precisely and correctly as possible. Buddhist ethical teaching is based on causality and can be examined, tested, or tried. This principle may be challenged by anyone even in this modern society deeply rooted on individualism whose primary language seems not to bear any ethical principle. It "any theory, whether it be of the subject or of the object or of the moral life, should reflect a maximum of objectivity in order for that theory to be shared by the community (8)," then this is what the Buddhist theory of causality and its resultant causal ethical principle attempt to do by necessary and invariability of causal relationship.

The issue of human rights is in urgent necessity especially in a society where the majority is deeply self-centered. The more
advanced the mentality of each individual of the society becomes, the less urgent the issue of human rights becomes. For an enlightened one, his/her own human rights are not necessary, because he/she does not have a craving for his/her own self and thus is beyond the realm of claiming one's own human rights. In this regard, Buddhist attitude to the issue of human rights is positive and yet critical. For Buddhism aims to build a society where each individual does not have to claim "human rights" as such.

**Freedom of Religion**

The issue of religion is one of the central concepts of human rights. Because of the nature of the Buddhist doctrine of causality, Buddhist attitude to the issue of freedom of religion has been quite different from other monotheistic religious traditions(9). The causal theory demands one to have a continual self-examination and critical attitude to the theory itself as well as to its application in reality. It is as a scientist does not ask a fellow-scientist to accept a theory on faith through his/her preliminary examination of it before he/she thinks of testing it out. In this regard, neither "tolerance" nor "intolerance" is an adequate expression in case of Buddhist attitude to freedom of religion. If one wants to use the term "tolerance," it may be correct to say that Buddhism took rather positive critical tolerance(10).

The Buddha teaches not to be angry, resentful, or upset, or pleased, happy, or elated, neither at the disparagement nor in praise of his teaching(11). On the other hand, to other religious teachings, the Buddha was open-minded. To the rich Upali, a Jain supporter, the Buddha was cautioned to reflect carefully before he became a Buddhist and also encouraged him to continue to support the Jains(12).

The Buddha discouraged accepting anything simply because it is the traditional belief, because it is rumored so, because the majority holds it, because it is found in the scriptures, because it is authoritative, or because of the prestige-value of your teacher(13). It is worth mentioning that the last teaching of the Buddha at the
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age of 80 was "each individual should become an island(14)," not relying or depending on authority.

The concept of the Buddha as one who discovered the truth rather than as one who has a monopoly of the truth is clearly a source of positive tolerance. It leaves open the possibility for others to discover aspects of the truth or even the whole truth for themselves. The Buddhist acceptance of Pacceka-Buddha, who discovered the truth for themselves, is an admission of this fact. One Buddhist text says that the laws, which are physical, biological, psychological, as well as ethical and spiritual laws, said to operate, whether a Buddha comes into existence or not and all that the Buddha does is to discover them and reveal to us those which are of relevance to the moral and spiritual life, which is both possible and desirable in the universe in which we live(15).

However, the assertion of the possibility of salvation or spiritual growth outside Buddhism does not mean that Buddhism values all relations alike and considers them equally true. One disciple, reporting the ideas of the Buddha says that there are four pseudo-religions or false religions in the world and four religions, which are unsatisfactory but not necessarily false. The pseudo religions are: 1. materialism, which asserts the reality of the material world alone and denies survival, 2. a religious philosophy which recommends an amoral ethic, 3. a religious philosophy which denies free will and moral causation and asserts that beings are either miraculously saved or doomed, and 4. deterministic evolutionism, which asserts the inevitability of eventual salvation for all(16). The four unsatisfactory but not necessarily false religions are which in some sense recognize the necessity for a concept of survival, moral values, freedom and responsibility and the noninevitability of salvation. There are: 1. one in which omniscience is claimed for its founder in all his conscious and unconscious periods of existence, 2. a religion based on revelation or tradition, 3. a religion bounded on logical and metaphysical speculation and 4. one which is merely pragmatic and is based on skeptical or agnostic foundations.

Yet Buddhism has held no heresy trials and has carried on no persecution. "Heresy is primarily a Western religious concept: there is no exact Buddhist equivalent(17)." The Buddha himself
took a radically empirical and critical approach even to his own teaching, saying "Just as the experts test gold by burning it, cutting it and applying it on a touchstone, my statements should be accepted only after critical examination and not out of respect for me(18)."

However, Buddhism needs to be committed to theories or views, if it is to function as socially useful teaching. But what is to be avoided is ontological commitment to theories which render them incorruptible and fixed. Avoiding such ontological commitment, one is spared of a lot of frustrations and can achieve a good measure of stable happiness and peace(19). In Buddhism, what is most discouraged is to hold on to one's roots of ignorance. One is encouraged to see the reality as it is, without holding on to views.

The basic notion of freedom of religion in Buddhism is summarized in one of the oldest Buddhist texts: it states that upholding one view of theory as the ultimately or absolutely true one, and condemning all others as being false contributes only to endless conflicts and frustrations(20). From the above contention, the Buddha taught his disciples to positively accept religious tolerance to other teachings and to critically approach his own teaching. Freedom of religion as part of human rights is thus affirmed and practiced by the Buddha.

Notes


2. However, the Buddhist idea of human equality was not accepted by Hinduism and the caste system has continued to dominate the Indian society until this century. After the twenty-five centuries, an "Untouchable" Hindu, found the spirit of human rights based on human equality in the
original teaching of the Buddha and not only himself converted to Buddhism but also led 4,000,000 people to embrace Buddhism, which is called the neo-Buddhist movement. The man, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, became a Law Minister and established the Indian Constitution which prohibits caste system based on the discrimination of human inequality.

3. Majjhima Nikaya, II. 47. 86. 88. 47. 147. 149. Digha Nikaya, II. 2501-251. Sutta Nipata, 601-611.


5. Dharmapada, 182.


7. From this account, even a voluntary action of harming oneself can be regarded as an action against human rights which derives from ignorance or confusion, ignoring the fact of basic self-love. Buddhism does not take the side of Kantian dilemma of self-love and self-destruction in his argument of suicide in the Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals. Self-love and self-destruction can be compatible, for both of them are rooted in craving constructed on ignorance/delusion, anger/hatred, and greed/desire.


10. Ibid., p. 198.


18. Tattvasamgraha: Jnanasamucayasara.


20. Sutta Nipata, 824-834; 895.
Did the Issei break the chain for themselves? Many people would answer "yes" - primarily because of their economic achievements. The Issei contributions to agriculture helped to make California one of the great farming states in the country. They improved and added thousands of acres of land and pioneered the rice and citrus industries in the agricultural world of the state. They were able to compete in the produce markets and played an important part in establishing the present system of marketing fruit and vegetables. The Issei also established a high ratio of small businesses in many fields including gardening, managing apartments, grocery stores, laundry, cleaning, insurance offices, restaurants, and others. Their great economic achievements opened the doors for their children and grandchildren to attend colleges and universities, enabling them to secure positions in teaching, engineering, accounting, and other professional fields.

At first glance, the Issei and the Japanese Americans seemed to have broken the chain. Yet the first glance is deceiving. Even the most optimistic would acknowledge that only a few have penetrated the "glass ceiling" at the present time. Politically and socially, Japanese Americans remain insignificant. Although there has been some uplifting in social and political status, no one can claim that absolute equality with the white people has been achieved. What is important to note is that the Issei accomplished the loosening of the chain in a remarkably short time.

Many people claim that virtues such as restraint (enryo) and perseverance (gaman or shimbo) or it cannot be helped (shikata ga nai) supported the need for the Issei to tolerate racism. They
further point out that loyalty and responsibility to the group provided a source of security and strength for the Japanese immigrants. Probably more important than these personal virtues were the strategies used by the Japanese through the centuries in coping with the unpredictable, changing nature of the world.

The Japanese have always been willing to borrow or learn from other cultures. All people, including the Americans, have borrowed extensively from other cultures, but we generally tend to stress originality and innovative qualities as positive virtues and look down upon borrowing as a negative quality. The Japanese consciously borrowed or imitated other people and have been able to acculturate to Anglo standards in an astoundingly short time.

However, the Japanese have modified and synthesized the foreign ideas and products and incorporated them into their culture. History has shown that the Japanese borrowed religion, writing system, tea ceremony, floral arrangement from the Chinese, but they have modified them so that the Japanese adaptations have become distinctly different from the Chinese models.

Another aspect of their flexibility is the Japanese attitude toward environment and reality. The Americans have always been confident and optimistic people who feel they could solve any problem. They feel that they could control any situation and that they were "masters of their fate." In contrast, the Japanese have never been as confident in their ability to control their environment or their fate. Rather, they seem to accept life as it is, with all its confusion and contradictions. They accepted all of the paradoxes and absurdities as reality and truth. Thus, many historians have concluded that this kind of outlook helped the Japanese to respond so quickly and efficiently to unexpected intrusions and confusions into their lives.

Another important, though little known cultural attitude is that towards the individual. The struggle between the individual rights and welfare of a group such as the family has always been seen as an "either/or" situation in our society. We take it for granted that the welfare of the individual supersedes that of the family. In looking at the Japanese family, it is assumed that the welfare of the individual has been ignored or become totally subordinated to the needs of the group. The Japanese, however, have been able to
integrate and harmonize the needs of the individual for the benefit of the group. Little known to casual observers of Japanese culture is the fact that Shinran Shonin stressed the importance of the individual when he proclaimed that it is not for his father and mother and not for his country and society that he prayed to Amida Buddha, but only for himself. He taught that parents had obligations toward their children, just as the children had toward the parents. One obligation, which he called the Small Filial Piety stressed the children's duty to serve parents well. But a higher level obligation, the Great Filial Piety called for the children to admonish and amend the parents' attitude when they were wrong. By remedying the mistakes of our physical parents, we fulfill our duty of serving the greater parents through our conscious. This history of the Japanese and Japanese Americans is filled with stories of how the family members sacrificed for the benefits of the individuals in the family - they felt that the individuals could not progress without a strong and stable family. The high number of Japanese Americans doing so well in schools and various professions clearly illustrates their ability to bring about harmony between the welfare of the individual and the family. The successes of many of the immigrants was made possible because the Japanese have been highly goal oriented. This goal orientation contrasts with those who stress status orientation. The Japanese social structure allowed individual Japanese to succeed in a variety of ways while those who are status oriented are more limited in their response because they are concerned with options that achieve recognition. Historically, the Japanese were able to respond more directly and successfully to the western challenges than the Chinese during the 18th and 19th centuries. Similarly, when the Japanese immigrants came to the United States, many changed their original goals because of the unfriendly environment and sought a more secure world for their children and developed appropriate resources for realizing their changed goals. Another pertinent aspect of the Japanese approach is their tendency toward conserving or preserving their traditions alongside the new. This tendency explains the Japanese immigrants to retain much of their culture such as religion, floral arrangements, tea ceremony, martial arts, etc. This tendency for preservation of culture has helped them
to enhance their lives and reduce the polarizing tendencies that exist between the old and the new among the many ethnic groups that make up our society. The Japanese immigrants contributed greatly to preserving the diversity in our society.

At the present time many people have recognized the achievements of the Issei, however, some will point out that the Issei, while loosening the chain also helped to perpetrate the chain. Although the Issei were successful in preserving their former culture, which enhanced their lives in the U. S., they also unconsciously stressed the values that had a negative influence on their own lives as well as on their descendants. The Issei passed on an over emphasis on the importance of economic achievement. They did not successfully convey to their descendants that economic gains do not necessarily bring about social equality and acceptance.

In stressing the economic gains, they also encouraged a tendency toward status orientation and many became more concerned with gaining recognition rather than shift their goals, for example, to help others who might be less fortunate then they.

To some Japanese Americans, it is difficult to think of other minorities because, in part, they learned to perpetuate the prejudices of the Issei. The Issei, like their predecessors felt superior to other minority people of color. Many of the Issei could not sympathize with fellow Issei who did not do as well economically. Even today, many look down on the low-income Issei or those who married people of other ethnic groups, in spite of the rising number of mixed unions.

The chances for doing anything for others have been hampered by their attitude of "mind your own business" and not to take steps that would cause "waves." The attitude of always taking the safe way (bunan) would help in keeping status quo rather than reforming the system that would separate the people into the "haves" and the "have nots."

Finally, although the Japanese immigrants spent much time, energy, and money into establishing Japanese language schools, the gulf between the two generations grew. Although no one can criticize their efforts to bridge the communication gap, many Issei themselves neglected learning English. Regardless of whose
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responsibility the gulf between generations was, discussions and research are required by all to promote efforts to break the chain.

Note: Questions to Consider

1. Describe the ways the Issei loosened the chain.

2. How do you feel about their contributions toward loosening the chain?

3. Can you think of other ways the Issei helped to loosen the chain?

4. Do you agree with the negative part of their legacy? Explain.

5. Do you think the Nisei and the younger people have contributed toward loosening the chain or breaking it? Explain your answer.
Reading 18

Preliminary Thoughts on Buddhism and Family

(Excerpts from an Interview with Rev. William Masuda, Buddhist Temple of Marin)

T. M.: People generally agree that the Issei family was influenced by native Japanese thoughts, Confucianism, and Buddhism. Is it possible to identify the Buddhist influence on the traditional Issei family?

Rev. M.: That might be very difficult to do. For example, "Home and Family Life," a chapter of the book, Buddha, Truth and Brotherhood, describes the roles and duties of the family members; the ethics that govern them are very conventional and very similar to those of other major religions. The unique Buddhist contribution is the fact that you affirm your refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and by doing so, you maintain your Buddhist identity.

At the same time, you have to keep in mind that Buddhism in Japan started with the Shukke concept. Shukke refers to those who left their homes to dedicate their lives to Buddhist study. Early Buddhist focus was heavily monastic and as such the Buddhist monks did not concentrate on the functions and roles of families. In the 13th century, Shinran Shonin broke with the monastic tradition when he married, but before he did so, he sought the advice of Honen. Honen answered that if getting married helped him to deepen his awareness and appreciation of the Nembutsu, then he should get married. The emphasis here was still on the individual.

Another factor to consider is that in Japan, Buddhist monks were more concerned with establishing Buddhism in Japan and so they might have gone along with the prevailing thoughts and even
reinforced the ideas on keeping the family lineage, honoring the ancestors, etc.

**T. M.:** Respect for parents seems to be pretty common to traditional families everywhere. At least most ethnic groups seem to emphasize the ideas of respecting one's parents, so when the Issei came to America, maybe they didn't feel any conflict about continuing their family ways.

**Rev. M.:** Yes, that might be true. Japan was also strongly patriarchal, so maintaining that system was the way of filial piety. Also, many articles in the Japanese newspapers at the time carried complaints about how the young people were being influenced by foreigners and not going along with the traditional ways.

**T. M.:** If all the immigrants were complaining about the negative influence of foreigners, does that mean they were criticizing the Anglos? But the Anglos themselves were complaining about the bad influence of all the foreign immigrants. What this all indicates, maybe, is that there was simply a generation gap which might be universal in all families.

**Rev. M.:** Yes, that might be true, but there is a subtle difference in the Japanese families. They believe in the concept of *amae* which is a system of dependence. From that concept, the Japanese parents feel that they must sacrifice for the sake of their children, whereas in the European family, the children might be more explicitly breaking away from their parent's authority and want to succeed more on their own. Whereas the Japanese youngsters who succeeded believed that much of the success was dependent on their parent's sacrifice. In a way, that's what may have allowed the Japanese parents to maintain their authority. However, I don't know whether *amae* is a Buddhist concept or not. *Amae* is a system of dependence, but Buddhism stresses interdependence.

**T. M.:** Do you think that the Issei were aware of some of the social and cultural differences and consciously tried to accommodate some new ideas into their families?
Rev. M.: I think that the Japanese who became Christians may have made adjustments because they came face to face with more non-Japanese people, and they were also influenced by Christian teachings. Probably the Buddhists were slower to make adjustments, but, generally speaking, many of the Issei were more concerned with making a living in a foreign land, and I think only a few Issei consciously thought about this kind of a question. For example, my father lost his parents when he was very young and so from about the age of 15, he had to think about helping the family get by. He often spoke about his "blanket carrying life" (burankanetto katsugi no raifu) indicating that his waking moments were spent on the problems of survival.

T. M.: Now the situation had changed and is quite different for the Japanese American families. Do you think that there is a need to think more concretely about maintaining Buddhist values in our families?

Rev. M.: First, I think that many of the Buddhists have become aware of the changes taking place. In fact, many Nisei from as early as the 1930's started thinking seriously about living as Buddhists in a non-Buddhist society. Many began to inject Buddhism into American life. That dream was translated into the start of Sunday School (Dharma School). The primary focus was finding Buddhist teaching materials in English. This concern continued after the war when everyone returned home and resumed their lives once again. At that time, most of the books on Buddhism written in English were written by non-Japanese scholars who focused on Theravada Buddhism. Most of them were highly moralists in tone. This was the time of Sunday School cards and stories from the Jakarta Tales. But in the 50's the younger Buddhists began to look beyond these materials. Daisetsu Suzuki had a great influence in shifting many people's attention to Mahayana Buddhism. At that time, many Americans became captivated with Zen Buddhism, especially those who were known as the Beat Generation. They began to look into the Mahayana concept of Bodhisattva and tried to apply the concepts to social
issues. People like Gary Snyder were interested in applying Buddhist ideas to ecological concerns, and he and others generated a kind of Buddhist Social Gospel. Among the younger ministers and Sangha members, there was a great effort to distinguish Theravada, Mahayana and Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. The Shin Buddhist Handbook is a great example of this period. In summary, the first conscious change to inject Buddhism into American life had to do with laying the Shinshu foundation in our temples.

Meanwhile, many of the Buddhists continued without consciously thinking about this question in a concrete manner and generally continued their family lives in the usual way, observing Oshogatsu and other traditional celebrations without considering their origin.

T. M.: Now that this question has been brought to their attention, do you think that the Buddhist parents would take some steps to identify and maintain Buddhist values in their family or would they now say, it's now the young people's time, and I'll leave the matter of religion up to them?

Rev. M.: Many Nisei and Sansei have become more flexible and many Nisei parents practice religious laissez-faire. Many of us have become more accepting of interracial and interreligious marriages. So religious differences may not be a big deal. Does that mean we are going to lose Buddhism? There are two levels in which we can consider this question. At the level of ethics, most religions seem to agree on what conventional ethics are, as far as family matters are concerned. In that sense, perhaps it doesn't matter to many people if they change their religion.

At the second level, we need to consider the existential motivation of experiencing the Nembutsu. This experience is not shared in common with other religions. If the individual wants to plumb or explore the depth of faith and religion, and if you are committed to that goal, there will be a better effort to maintain Shin Buddhism.

T. M.: Recently I read that one of the central notions in the makeup of the American family is that of nurturance. Here is how
that particular author defines nurturance. It is a certain kind of relationship which entails affection and love that is based on cooperation as opposed to competition; that is enduring rather than temporary; that is noncontingent rather than contingent upon performance; and that is governed by feeling and morality instead of law and contract. I feel that his definition of nurturance is very close to traditional Japanese American families if not very close to Buddhist virtues stemming from acceptance of the concept of interdependence, for example. How do you feel about this definition?

Rev. M.: In many religions, the individual is accepted or saved if that individual meets certain conditions laid down by their God. In Jodo Shinshu, an individual will acknowledge that an individual is incapable of helping self and must rely on Amida's compassion for salvation. However, in this acknowledgment, the individual can work in empathy with those in suffering. The problem here is that in Japan, the focus toward others was more narrow in scope.

In Jodo Shinshu religion, the individual is accepted just as you are, although as parents, because of our limitations, it may be difficult to accept our children as they really are. However, through Amida's compassion, we can develop more empathy and allow us to work with members of the family and Sangha in a more open-ended process, work toward greater harmony and achieve the highest ideal of our faith.
Lesson VIII
Iron Chain Unbound

Objectives:

After the lesson, the students should be able to:

1. Understand that freedom from the "chain of suffering" involves finding one's true identity.

2. Understand that one's true identity is bound with the acceptance of Amida's Wisdom and Compassion.

3. Describe how the Jodo Shinshu concept of Wisdom and Compassion is bound with their everyday life.

Concepts:

Salvation

Six Aspects of Personal Life Process

_Sono mama_ (just so, Natural).

Wisdom and Compassion

Procedure:

1. Pass out Reading 19, Can I Like Myself, and Reading 20, Flowers Speak for Themselves.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

2. Discuss the suggested questions after the two articles.

3. Pass out Reading 21, What is "Compassion" and What is "Salvation" in Jodo Shinshu.

4. Discuss the Reading in relation to the topic of true identity and freedom.

5. Pass out Reading 22, Personal Life Process.

6. Discuss how the process might fit in specifically with each individual's daily life.

Summary:

The beginning of identifying or discovering one's true identity is to free oneself from the social conventions and pressures which demand conformity of individuals to societal standards or the accepted way of doing things. Jodo Shinshu concepts of Wisdom and Compassion provides meaningful help to individual's salvation from the great Dukkha (Suffering).
"Do people like me?" That is one a question that many of us have asked. Tied closely to that question is, "Do I like myself?" How we think and feel about ourselves very often depends on our performance in school or work, popularity with people, or public recognition. Therefore, it is easy to like ourselves if we do well in school or at work, or know that others like us, or that our family is proud of what we are doing. However, we can and should like ourselves even if none of these hold true.

Another question we have to ask is whether others understand us or, more importantly whether we understand ourselves. How many times have we said, "You don't understand me! No one really understands me!" Many of us have said this innumerable times to our parents, friends, teachers, and others. But have we ever asked ourselves if we understand ourselves? Most of us would have a hard time answering that question.

We know that it is important to understand ourselves, but many of us have a hard time describing how we see ourselves, or express what we are striving to become, or even tell others how we measure up to the standards we set for ourselves. (Indeed, have we ever set up standards for ourselves?) Therefore, we must try to develop more self awareness to be more accepting of ourselves and try not to disown ourselves or become our own enemy. We also need to learn to communicate our feelings, desires, and thoughts to others in order to further understand ourselves and to help develop more positive feelings about ourselves.
Debbie listened to the Buddhist stories and explanations, but she heard very little about how she should feel about herself. Some stories would emphasize that life and all that is in it are not permanent, and therefore one need not be concerned about self identity. Other stories told her that concern about oneself could lead to ego building and that would lead to selfishness, the root of all suffering. Another Buddhist explanation emphasized the acceptance of the Four Noble Truths and the practice of the Eightfold Noble Paths. But she was also told that only very special individuals could truly live up to the rigid standards of Gautama's teachings. Debbie was also told that to find one's true self, the individual must rely on the compassion of Amida Buddha that would define her true self. Further, that this compassion must be absolute, and she need not be concerned, except to act upon her gratitude toward Amida's compassion. These stories and morals seemed too vague to her. It was like a friend who says repeatedly, "You don't have to know what love is like because if it's real love, you will know." The explanation sufficed until she thought of some of her friends who had found real love repeatedly.

Debbie looked forward to talking to Sarah Kimura, her best friend with whom she talked about almost everything; she headed off to Sarah's home. However, Sarah's mother told her that Sarah was not at home and neither were her other children, Tom or Muts. Debbie was disappointed because Sarah had not told her about not being home that day. Surprisingly, Debbie heard herself say, "Mrs. Kimura, may I talk to you for awhile? I've always wanted to ask you something."
Mrs. Kimura continued to work on her flower arrangement as she said, "Sure, but I can't imagine what you might want to ask an old person like me."

"Well, Mrs. Kimura, you have three terrific children. Really, Sarah, Muts, and Tom are super, and what I like about them is that they are all so different from each other. How did you manage that? And they seem to get along well with each other, too. They seem to get along with, well, with just about everybody! I really would like to know what you did for them."

"That's a tough question to ask so early in the day. Maybe I will have time to think about that because I'm not really sure what I did."

"Don't say that, Mrs. Kimura. I really would like to know."

"Seems like I can't convince you, but I'll try. I listened to many of my friends about how to bring up children and even read some books, but I think the best hint that I got was from arranging flowers."

"What?! Your arrangements are so beautiful and you seem to spend so much time doing them, how can you learn from that? And don't tell me the flowers talked to you."

"Well, in a way they did. I just love flowers and no matter what flowers and plants I see, and it doesn't matter where, I find them all so beautiful."

"So do I, but..."

"Let's see if I can tell you what I learned from the flowers. Regardless of the kind of flower, they all seem to be so full of life and so confident, provided, of course, the flowers have had the proper care."

"Confident may not be the right word, but they don't seem to care whether other flowers might be more beautiful. They don't seem to care if they are as beautiful as a rose, a camellia, impatiens, or an expensive orchid. Even the undesirable plants like poison oak or a mid-life dandelion just bloom as if they didn't know they were undesirable. It's as if they know that words like undesirable come from people who always make their prejudices based on their convenience which could be for the wrong reason"
"But, Mrs. Kimura, do you think that poison oak and dandelions should be allowed to spread? What would happen to the lawn?"

"Well Debbie, when I see dandelions growing in the meadow or in the wild, I think they are beautiful - the yellow amidst the green and other colors of nature. Why shouldn't they be beautiful in the lawn? But people say they are weeds and begin to eradicate them. They use poisonous chemicals, and all that poison can't be good for the soil or the people."

"I see what you mean, Mrs. Kimura, but what has all this got to do with bringing up your children?"

"I think children are too much about what others think of them. They want to please them so they spend more time thinking about how others think about them and are trying to please the others. Who knows what is always right for others? That goes for the parent as well. Do you think we are always right? Have you known parents who are more wrong than right? Even the smartest scholars don't know if they are right. In fact, some of the smartest people keep saying how little they know, much less if they are right.

"Debbie, what would happen if someone says you are wrong and they start giving you advice that may be wrong. Isn't that like giving poison to a flower that is beautiful just because the person didn't see the beauty in the flower?"

"Gee Mrs. Kimura, in some ways to live without other people's advice and information seems scary. Besides, flowers and people can't be compared because they're so different. Do you know what I mean?"

"Debbie, don't the flowers and human beings live under the same natural law? The flowers depend on water, sun, and good food from the soil to become beautiful. They trust the fact that it is only natural that happens, and in many ways people should live naturally as possible without worrying about pleasing others or to look better than others. So I have always tried not to interfere with my three children's personalities because each individual is different and being different has nothing to do with good or bad. No more than one kind of flower being better than other flowers."

"Of course, Mrs. Kimura. I'm so confused. I'll just have to think about this much more."
"Of course Debbie. I told you, I only got a hint from the flowers. I don't think I have the answers to all questions so I'm still looking for the answers myself."

As she walked away, after giving thanks to Mrs. Kimura, Debbie thought, "I wonder how dandelions or poppies would look in a floral arrangement?"

Note: Questions to Consider

1. Do you think that people can learn from the flowers? Why or why not? In answering this question, you might ask "Can human beings and flowers be compared?"

2. In what ways does Buddhism promise freedom?

3. Does Buddhism promise equality?

4. Some people say, "If I could do it, anyone can." If one individual gains freedom through Buddhism, does that mean everyone can gain freedom?

5. Are the ideas of equality and freedom only a dream or is it possible to achieve these ideas in this world?
What is Compassion?

Recently, I was confronted with a serious question, to define Compassion and explain who we can communicate it to young people and others. I quickly came to realize how glibly and easily we use the term. It has become a codeword to indicate that Buddhists are good-hearted people or people who think positively.

Of course, these meanings for the term are not entirely wrong, but they come off as pleasantries and platitudes in a world where human and other forms of suffering are inconceivable and all pervasive.

Our question is how can we give existential reality to this term we so easily speak? In this short essay I would like to suggest that Compassion is a perspective on the affairs of life. There are two aspects to Compassion. There is Compassion which we experience and Compassion which we express.

To experience Compassion means to cultivate and recognize that the good things we experience in the course of our lives are not of our own making. The ability of nature to support life, the help we receive from parents, family, friends, and hosts of unknown people can be viewed as Compassion.
Compassion is Other Power which is the deep recognition that we are not self-made or self-sustaining beings, nor can we live apart from the interdependence that binds us all together in nature and society. Compassion is a symbolic, focal term that highlights the true nature of our lives amidst our self-centered competitive way of living in the modern world. If we feel the "Buddha's Compassion in our Lives," it is not because there is a blob of Compassion in the Universe, but because of the concrete actions of others in contributing to the meaningfulness and worthwhileness of our lives.

Understanding Compassion in this ways enables us to face the obvious evils in the world and life without becoming totally disillusioned. The Compassion we experience is not at the expense of someone else as though "God" or Buddha played favorites in dispensing the good in life. It is, rather, the way we perceive our indebtedness to the process of life and human relations in which we all share.

The second aspect of Compassion grows out of the first, through the gratefulness we feel toward all those who contribute to our lives. To express Compassion is a very practical matter. The challenge for us is how we can enable others to experience the worthwhileness of their lives or how we can bring meaning into their lives. Any deed, attitude, or gesture, whatever their extent, may reveal new possibilities and hope in life, even within the midst of great suffering.

Recognizing the interdependence of all beings, we understand that all existence is other power, power through others or power for others. With this perspective, Compassion is not a mere platitude or impractical ideal. Rather, it is the motivation and the perspective for our participation in society on behalf of the well-being and happiness of others. Buddhism charges us with the obligation and responsibility that "all beings be happy." That is, they are to experience Compassion through us. Such an ideal is impossible, if we do not see ourselves as both recipients of Compassion and as expressions of Compassion. If we view Compassion as a relationship we have to others, we may bring it down to earth and into the daily activities of our lives and work.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

What is "Salvation" in Jodo Shinshu?

Jodo Shinshu, as well as other expressions of Pure Land teaching, is frequently viewed as a religion that stresses other worldly salvation through birth into the far distant Western Pure Land. There is a natural concern for afterlife which all religions of "salvation" must respond. However, there is the naive, objective, and literal view, generally taken by people who believe that in some way the next life is somewhat of an extension of this life. We will meet all our loved ones and friends there and perhaps enjoy them as we have done here. There is also a deeper view derived from study of the teachings and reflection on life itself which shows that the focus of true religious concern is on this life. To have encountered the truth of life through the bestowal of endowed trust or shinjin, determines our final fulfillment from that moment. Just as we need have no concern for the last moment before death, according to Shinran, we need not be concerned for what follows in the afterlife. We have been embraced (here), never to be abandoned, here or there.

Consequently, Shinran's teaching has been called a religion of perfect freedom, beyond the limits of moralist thought of good and evil. Shinran's spiritual liberation begins now with our reception of shinjin. I shall just enumerate a few areas where we may see it.

(1) Shinran's understanding of himself and human life enables us to be released from our ego-bondage through realistic self-insight. We are not in ourselves saints, but recognizing deeply how passion-ridden and defiled we are, breaks the hold of the driving forces of impulse and delusion and opens the way of interdependent, mutual human and spiritual relations.

(2) Freed from ego-bondage through the embrace of Amida Buddha, we are released from religious fears, either in this life through beliefs in angry spirits (bachi-atari) or in the afterlife where the six paths of rebirth are believed to take place.

(3) We are also freed by Shinran's teaching from social fears, because the new community he created was based on the principle of equality before Amida Buddha and each person was a dobo-dogyo, a fellow companion in the way of shinjin. Shinran gave
human dignity and respect to the exploited and oppressed peasants who rallied to the cause of Shinshu.

(4) Finally, there is intellectual liberation, because Shinran's teaching frees the mind to inquiry and search. While he was clear on where he stood, he never coerced his followers spiritually. Rather, his perspective was *men men no onhakarai nari* which means: "It is up to you to decide." He was not the owner or possessor of another's shinjin in contrast to many spiritual leaders who demand submission from their disciples.

Shinran's message is like the refreshing rain in the desert of spiritual aridity. It is the soothing lyrical song amidst the babel of the competing and harsh static of contemporary religious propaganda.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Reading 22

Personal Life Process

Bishop Seigen Haruo Yamaoka,
Buddhist Churches of America

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In our daily lives our ENCOUNTERS with others provide within us many experiences. Some ENCOUNTERS may pass unnoticed by us, others may leave deep impressions or unresolved conflicts. Our response to these ENCOUNTERS ultimately enables us to give MEANING to our lives.

Through our ENCOUNTERS we are introduced to new and different experiences. If these ENCOUNTERS create problems in our lives we feel the need to REFLECT on them in order to understand the significance of them. Particular questions may revolve around, Why are we experiencing this particular ENCOUNTER now? or What is the significance of this ENCOUNTER in my life?

Through REFLECTION we are ready to comprehend RELATIONSHIPS both within ourselves and between ourselves and others in the world. Understanding these RELATIONSHIPS make it possible for us to determine what actions will benefit us and what actions will harm us. RELATIONSHIPS provide a frame of reference for us to interpret the world. However, all RELATIONSHIPS begin and end with ourselves as the central reference point.

By recognizing RELATIONSHIPS between ourselves and the world, we are better able to understand the dynamics of our ENCOUNTERS.
These RELATIONSHIPS also provide us with information about what kind of choices will result in favorable results for us, and thus we are able to experience HAPPINESS.

Personal HAPPINESS, in turn, may lead to a sense of THANKFULNESS for all that has helped to make it possible for us to achieve successful life choices.

And so we realize that our ENCOUNTERS leads us to a better understanding of ourselves and other aspects in life. Our resulting personal HAPPINESS and THANKFULNESS then provide a momentary experience of MEANING within our lives.

The aspects of SELF-REFLECTION and GREAT COMPASSION are the most important and the most unique to Jodo Shinshu. They also serve as a clue to the function and purpose of shinjin.

Prompted by the GREAT COMPASSION, Amida Buddha seeks to EXPAND our ordinary minds beyond the boundaries of ordinary limitations.

Expanding is possible through the Buddha's Vow, which should be understood as a call for us to EXPAND our minds within the GREAT COMPASSION.

Seen from the perspective of the personal life process, EXPANDING takes place as we are enveloped with experiences that enlarge our view beyond personal experiences.

Enabled by the GREAT COMPASSION, it becomes possible for us to SELF-REFLECT beyond the limits of our personal concern. SELF-REFLECTION within the GREAT COMPASSION enables us to see the Truth of Interdependence.

It is because we EXPAND and SELF-REFLECT within the GREAT COMPASSION that we are able to break through our ignorance and suffering so that our lives may be opened and transformed by the Immeasurable Life and Infinite Light of the Amida Buddha. It is within the GREAT COMPASSION that the Name NAMU AMIDA BUTSU causes us to EXPAND and be able to SELF-REFLECT upon our true selves. Only in this manner are we able to see ourselves as the Buddha sees us, filled with selfish concerns, absolutely unworthy of enlightenment, yet the central focus of the GREAT COMPASSION.
As householder Buddhists, it is through the GREAT COMPASSION that our interrelationship with Amida Buddha ensures us of our ultimate enlightenment. Realizing the profound interrelationship we have with Amida Buddha through the GREAT COMPASSION and the Vow that promises Birth in the Pure Land (Enlightenment) just as we are, it is possible for us to experience GREAT JOY.

GRATITUDE is experienced as one recognizes the benevolence of the Amida Buddha. Our natural desire is to acknowledge and return our gratitude to the Buddhas.

As the experience of SELF-REFLECTION within the GREAT COMPASSION leads us to GREAT JOY and GRATITUDE, our ordinary life of insecurity and dissatisfaction becomes transformed into a LIFE OF MEANING AND GROWTH. Truly a life transformed through shinjin/nembutsu.
Lesson IX
You're Different, I'm Different

Objectives:

After the lesson, the students should be able to:

1. Define the term racism.

2. Become more aware of the problem of racism by examining their own attitudes.

3. Discuss the topic by using Jodo Shinshu teachings of primal vow, eko, and interrelatedness.

Concepts:

Discrimination.

Diversity.

Ethnocentrism.

Harmony/Diverseness.

Multiethnic.

Racism.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Suggested Procedure:

1. Start by posing simple questions such as the following:

   Define the term racism.

   Why is this problem not taken seriously by the general public?

2. Explain to the students that this problem will be studied from our (Japanese American/Buddhist) perspective.

3. Pass out Reading 23, What's Wrong with Jim?

4. Discuss the above questions on Reading 23. Do not try to finish in one class session. Give enough study time so that all participants are prepared to express new/different perspectives gained on the subject.

Summary:

Racism has been a major part of our society and all people are capable of taking racist actions. Most of the major institutions have condoned or even approved racism at some time in our history.
"Dad, why do you object to my going out with Jim?"

Linda could not remember how many times she had asked that question of her mother and dad. The fact that she had to ask this question so often began to wear her down. It weighed heavily on her that the answers from her parents were so predictable, and was no sign that a satisfactory compromise could ever be reached on this matter. Why was it that she and her parents got along so well most of the time, but when it came to this matter of dating Jim, there was no give and take in their discussion.

"I wonder what my parents find wrong with Jim?" Linda asked herself again as she had done countless times before. She really could not see what her parents' objections were, she knew she was not being unreasonable about Jim.

He was outstanding in school, achieving excellent grades, and he was popular with students. He was on the school's baseball and basketball teams, and although he wasn't the star, he was the kind of steady player that any team needed to have. Jim's parents were pleasant and his sisters and brothers had all attended or finished college. Linda thought of all the qualities that her parents would be concerned about, but she also liked Jim because he was tall and nice to look at—not nice in just a handsome way, but in the warm and sincere way that was uniquely Jim. He was not snobbish at all. Above all, he had been honest in their relationship from the beginning. He had a sense of humor, but he was serious about important things. Most of all, she enjoyed talking with him. Although sometimes she felt stupid because her interests were so narrow. She had not felt inadequate at first, because her grades might have been better than Jim's, but as their relationship
developed, she realized that he knew much more. Everything he said seemed to make "everyday things" more exciting, more new. When Jim would come to her home for a visit or for a dinner, he added sparkle to her father's conversation, whether it consisted of his golf scores, which he was immensely proud of, or about the chances of the Giants or the 49ers in the coming season. He would positively expand when he told Jim what a loyal fan he was: "No sir, I'm not one of those fans who get all excited just because the 49ers (or Giants) start winning. I've been with them even when they were down." Sometimes, Linda was embarrassed for her parents. Her parents were college graduates, but aside from the good jobs they had, there was nothing else to reveal the advantages of receiving a higher education. When Linda saw her father light up a cigar and talk about his hard times, how hard he had worked, and ended up "pretty good," she could see the deep sense of pride that lay beneath the aura of humility he tried to convey. Her mother would smile and not say a word, but the approval of her husband's achievement was plain to see. It was very obvious that her parents enjoyed talking to Jim and were impressed with his good manners as well.

So why did her parents object to her going out with Jim? Even though Linda and her parents never really discussed what kind of person they wanted to see her go out with or eventually marry, Linda was aware of their expectations. Linda knew that the fellow had to be a good and honest person from a "nice" family. He also had to have a good education, which meant a college education. Jim met all of these "qualifications," and yet her parents objected. Linda hated to think about it, but did they object to Jim simply because he was a white person (hakujin)? She did not want to think that her parents would object to Jim on that basis. It was hard to believe that her parents would be prejudiced about Jim.

"Dad, . . . Mom, why do you object every time I go out with Jim?"

"We just think that it would be better for you in the long run if you don't."

"As far as I can tell, I don't think that there is a single thing you can object to about Jim."
"Oh it's not anything special except that he is different from us."

"What do you mean by that? Are you saying that as long as someone is like us, whatever that means, it's all right with you? Even if that person is not as nice as Jim?"

"We didn't say that. You just haven't met too many other persons, especially Japanese American boys. Why don't you give yourself more chances to do so?"

"Well, in the first place, I don't think that I have to go out with different people to find the right person like trying out different dresses to find the dress I like. Anyway, I haven't met too many Japanese American boys who are as nice as Jim."

"What do you mean, as nice as Jim?"

"Well, to begin with, most of the people I know aren't as thoughtful, and they're not as interesting. They seem to have so little to talk about except about how good they are by putting other people down. You know that could be very tiring."

"Now Linda, you're not trying to say that all of the Sansei boys are like that. Aren't you being unfair to describe all of them like that? What you say might have been true for a Nisei like me, but as far as I can see, very few of the Sansei boys or girls are as shy or restrained as we were when we were young. We admit that we used to hold back about many things . . . about going out on dates even when we were going to high school. We held back about even thinking of asking a person who was not a Japanese. We think that the Sanseis are so different . . . much more free. In fact, we see very little difference between the Sansei and the hakujin."

"I think there is a difference. I don't know exactly how to say it clearly, but the Japanese boys I know seem to be copying someone . . . they try to come on like either a black person or a white . . . it doesn't matter which, but they don't seem to be themselves. Either that, or they just thrive on being an Asian. It's not fun to be with a person who is trying to be like someone else or trying to find himself. But Jim is different. He is Jim and he knows it. He is confident and he doesn't have to bluster. And another thing. You said that we Sansei are little different from the hakujin. If that is true, then what is your objection to Jim?"
"Well, maybe the Japanese boys don't look or sound as confident because they are expressing their doubts honestly, freely, and frankly. Sometimes people who express their thoughts smoothly are very superficial people. Anyone can sound good if he doesn't talk about what is really in his heart. After all, there are very few people at that age, or any age, who don't have any serious doubts or fears."

"But don't you see? The Sansei boys may be honest in their expression of their doubts, but they also seem to be hung up on their own problems and use me to solve their problems in some way. That's not being very thoughtful. Jim may have his problems, but he is strong enough not to let his problems affect his relationship with me. He is so considerate, and he makes me feel like an important person, or at least a person he could care about."

"But how serious is he? Does he talk about marriage? Despite our objections, you've been going around with him since high school days. Have you had any serious discussions about the future?"

"There you go with your values. Does every relationship between a boy and a girl have to end up in marriage? As far as we are concerned, we just believe in trusting each other and not hurting each other. We don't have any kind of legal or contractual obligations toward each other except to be kind of loving in the moments we are together."

"What is so wrong with talking about marriage? Although no one can predict the future, wouldn't it be considerate of him to let you know what his intentions are at this moment? Anyway, it's not out of a sense of obligation that people talk about these things as much as it is out of consideration for the person you are having a close and honest relationship. Or are you going to cop out by saying that neither of you is going to chain the other down and that you don't want to hold onto another human being because people need to be independent? Are you going to tell us that convention isn't important but what is more important is what you honestly feel? Do you young people ever go beyond that kind of superficial thing? What do you call discussion?"

"We have discussed these things you're talking about now. We have decided that when everything works out, we will get married,
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

but, to our way of thinking, marriage is not the ultimate goal. We want to be sure that it is much more than what both of our parents have had from their marriage. We're not trying to put you down, but we just don't think that what you have is enough for us. I'm sorry if I made you angry or hurt you with that remark, but you wanted me to be honest."

"Well, we are angry . . . and hurt . . . and very shocked. What do you mean you want more than what we have in our marriage? Do you have any specific complaints or criticism? We tried to provide you with the most important things. Are you saying that we didn't provide enough for you? I don't think you mean that. Our family is close and very stable. I don't think you ever thought of leaving us, or you ever worried that one of us might desert you, or that we might get divorced. You know that we love you, and we are sure you love us. What more is there? By almost any way you can judge a family I think we have had a very close family. I may be wrong, but I think most Japanese American families are like ours, and we feel that much of what makes our families strong and close has something to do with our culture and heritage. This is not to say we are superior to other people. It means that until there is something more definite about what makes for a strong and close family, we feel that people who are similar in ethnicity, behavioral patterns, and style of living is the only assurance of a stable family."

"All that may be true, but that doesn't mean that a stable family is necessarily a happier one. You admitted yourself that you had to hold back a lot. Who do you think put those restraints on you? How many times have I heard you talk about your parents telling you to do something or not to do something because of the family. Weren't you always told that family matters were much more important than individual matters? Even such things as going on dates or getting married were based on whether that person would bring credit or shame to the family. How many times did I hear you complain about your parents?

I think it's real neat that you respect your parents that much and you want to take care of them and all that, but sometimes that kind of relationship can create more unhappiness for everyone involved. What kind of relationship is that? You end up hating each other eventually. And if you don't take care of them you could end up
with a terrible guilty conscience. Is maintaining stability at that price worth it? Is keeping the family together so important that it must be maintained at the possible cost of an individual's happiness? If it is, I can't say that it is a happy family. You and Mom may just think it is a good family because that is the way you were brought up to think, or the way you were told by your parents, and you never questioned them. Well, we're not like that. We think that a happy fulfilled individual can form a basis for a happy family."

"That's quite a mouthful, young lady, but if you think that we care for our ojiichan (grandfather) and obaachan (grandmother) just out of obligation, you don't understand our family as much as I thought you did. Don't you remember how much they cared for you and loved you? Do you think that all the nice things they did for you was out of obligation? Or because they were "supposed to"? They did the same for us. You may not think we have accomplished very much but chances are we would have done much worse if it weren't for their sacrifices and help.

"And about all the complaining your mother and I may do about ojiichan and obaachan, that doesn't mean we don't love them. Nor do they expect us to be happy with them all the time. They are tough and know life and people for what they are. Yes, there might be some who look after their parents because of custom or being told what to do, but most of us feel it is the least we can do to repay the love and care they gave us. It's true, as you say, happy individuals can make for a strong and happy family, but we believe it is also true that a strong and stable family can help individuals become happy. We also think that our way of thinking is still valuable and we are afraid that anybody brought up to think in a different way would erode what we cherish.

"I'm going to change the subject a little, but suppose that you two should decide to get married. Where will you have your wedding ceremony?"

"What do you mean?"

"Which church are you going to get married in?"

"Oh that. If, and mind you I said if, we do decide to get married, it won't matter too much in which church the wedding will be held. I'll be married in whatever church he may want."
"That sounds nice. But what about Jim? Would he be willing to get married in our church?"
"I don't think so, but that's not important because religion is not that important to us."
"You say religion is not that important. Well, let me ask you another question. Suppose you two have children. What church would you send them to?"
"I'm pretty sure that we would allow our children to decide which church they would like to attend. You see, that was another thing you never gave us any choice in. It was simply taken for granted that we would go to the Buddhist Church because you and the parents always went there. Well, we're not going to let that happen to our children."
"You mean to tell me they're not going to church until they grow up?"
"I didn't say that. You two are just impossible. I told you from the beginning we haven't talked about getting married. And here we are talking about things like weddings and raising children. What has all this to do with me going out with Jim?"
"It's important because when two people talk about their relationship you have to be ready to give and take. It seems to me that you shouldn't be afraid to find out whether there is give and take, or whether you're the one that's giving all the time."
"Oh, I told you how considerate Jim is. He is always asking me what I would like to do, where I want to go. He is so considerate of my feelings on everything we do together."
"No, we're not talking about that kind of consideration, although that is important, too. Linda, are you going to give up everything that is part of our customs and tradition and accept the hakujin way in everything? Will Jim consider learning something about our ways and even begin to consider that some of our beliefs and values may have something important for him?"
"But we live in America. We have to be like Americans. All my friends accept me as one of them, and they never make me feel different because of my background or appearance."
"That's because you are like them in every way. What would have happened if you didn't think like them or act like them? Although we all say we should be different and that we should
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

accept people who are different from us, our history shows that we tend to put down or treat unequally those people who are different. We also expect people who are different to learn our ways. For instance, ask your friends if they would like to convert to the Islamic religion or to Shintoism, or ask them if they would like to become Hindus. Suppose that you believed in one of those religions and your friend won't even consider learning anything about your faith, or let's say that your husband-to-be won't even consider getting married in your temple. How would you feel? Suppose that every time there is a difference in the way of thinking or doing things, you had to give in all the time. Would you be happy with that kind of a relationship? Would you call that a good and equitable relationship? That's what I mean by consideration and give and take. Have you two really talked about these things honestly and realistically? Would you be afraid to? If you two haven't discussed such matters it tells me quite a bit about the kind of relationship you are having with him."

Linda didn't answer her parents, but she did say to herself, "I will ask him. Why shouldn't I? Why should I be afraid to ask? If I know Jim, everything will turn out just right. Yes, I will ask him the next time I have the chance."

Note: Questions to Consider

1. List the qualities that Linda thought were nice about Jim.

2. Give three reasons why the parents seem to object to Jim.

3. How did Linda answer each one of the objections.

4. How would you support Linda's position?

5. How would you support the parents' positions?
What do you think?

1. Do you think that this problem could be solved to the satisfaction of both parties? Support your answer.

2. How far would you go to please your parents so that you could continue to have a good relationship with them in the future?

3. Do you think it’s important for marriages to take place on an equal basis?

4. How would you define equal basis?

5. Are there any things that you would not compromise on? For example, would you compromise on religious matters?

6. How many of these uncompromising positions do you have?

Note: Additional Questions to Consider

1. Would you consider a person's religious background an important part of making friends? Going on dates? Getting married?

2. What if your friend is of different racial background and a Buddhist, would it make a difference in your relationship with that person? For example,

   a White person who is a Buddhist?
   a Black person who is a Buddhist?
   a Latino person who is a Buddhist?

3. Have you ever discussed this kind of topic with your parents? friends? minister? Dharma school classmates and/or teachers?
4. Based on your knowledge and experience, in a marriage between a Buddhist and a non-Buddhist, which one is more likely to stop going to his/her own church or temple? Most likely to convert to the other's religion?

5. Who do you think would tend to marry people of another ethnic group, male or female?

6. What generalizations could you make about a marriage between a Buddhist and an non-Buddhist?

7. Do you think that Linda would have entered her friendship with Jim if he had been of:

   Chinese ancestry
   Hispanic ancestry
   Black ancestry

   Why?

8. Do you think that Linda's parents would have reacted differently if Jim had been of:

   Japanese ancestry
   Chinese ancestry
   Hispanic ancestry
   Black ancestry

9. Many young people say "Color doesn't make a difference to me." and "Religion doesn't make a difference to me." Do these statements really mean:

   "Color/religion doesn't make a difference to me as long as 'they' act like me, think like me, etc."

10. What Buddhist teachings, do you think would be most appropriate in bringing about a mutually satisfactory solution?
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Note: Who is prejudiced?

In answering these questions please circle one of the following
Y (Yes), S (Sometimes) N (No)

Y S N 1. Racism is a major problem in the United States.

Y S N 2. Life is harder for minorities in the United States.

Y S N 3. Relations between ethnic groups in the United States have improved in my lifetime.

Y S N 4. Relations between ethnic groups in the United States have worsened in my lifetime.

Y S N 5. I personally have not experienced any prejudice.

Y S N 6. People who study the hardest are always rewarded fairly.

Y S N 7. Best trained people are rewarded fairly.

Y S N 8. Affirmative Actions programs are fair.

Y S N 9. Affirmative action programs favor the ethnic minority people and work against the whites.

Y S N 10. Affirmative action punishes the best students/workers.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Y S N 11. Racism is not a big factor in the field of sports.

Y S N 12. Racism is not a big factor in the field of entertainment/fine arts.

Y S N 13. Racism is not a big factor in the field of education.

Y S N 14. Racism is not a big factor in the business world.

Y S N 15. None of my friends have ever made racist remarks to me.

Y S N 16. None of my friends have ever been prejudiced towards me personally.

Y S N 17. There will always be problems between people of different races.

Y S N 18. Buddhism does apply in the easing or eliminating the problem of racism.

Y S N 19. Our Buddhist Temple has taken action against racism.

Y S N 20. Our temple is multiethnic.

Y S N 21. I know a non-Japanese who would like to join our temple.

Y S N 22. Japanese Americans are also racist.

Y S N 23. More than half of the Japanese American marry outside their group.

Y S N 24. More Japanese American men are apt to marry outside the group than women.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain


Y S N 27. There is a great difference in the attitude toward interracial dating/marriage between young people and their parents.

Note: Questions to Consider

1. Do you agree that college students are more aware of racism than high school students? Why or why not?

2. Do you think that it's true that people in the work force are more aware of racism than college or high school students?

3. When people of different religions marry, do you think that the husband and wife must belong to the same church?

4. Do you think that if one of the married couple converts to the other's religion there can be equality?

5. Do you think religion stands in the way of ethnic harmony?

6. It is said that Caucasians are religious because they want security. Do you think that is the reason why so many people convert to another religion so easily?
"Let us cease from wrath, and refrain from angry looks. Nor let us be resentful when others differ from us. For all men have hearts, and each heart has its own leanings. Their right is our wrong and our right is their wrong. We are not unquestionable sages, nor are they unquestionable fools. Both of us are simple, ordinary men. How can anyone lay down a rule by which to distinguish right from wrong? For we are all, one with another, wise and foolish, like a ring that has no end." Shotoku Taishi (574-621 A.D.)

Thanks to our neighbors and okagesama, our temple went through the Los Angeles Riot in 1992 unscathed, although the surrounding community is in shambles. Now begins the opinions and arguments, most of which centers around pointing the finger at who is the most guilty. Who is responsible for all of this is much like the parable of Malunkyaputra and the Poison Arrow. Malunkyaputra was a disciple of the Buddha who asked the Buddha such things as "is the world eternal or finite, is the like principle the same as the physical body or not, does the Buddha exist after death or not..." The Buddha answered with a question.

Supposing a man were shot with a poison arrow and his friends summoned a physician. Would the wounded man ask the following questions before accepting treatment? What is the name of the clan of the man who shot me? Was the man who shot me tall, medium, or short? What village did he belong to, and was the bow a spring bow or a cross bow? What is the arrow shaft made of and what kind of bird feather was used? To each question Malunkyaputra replied that the wounded man would not ask such questions, but would simply want the arrow removed and his wound treated by
the physician. Whereupon the Buddha replied that in the same way, asking about the nature of the universe, an afterlife, etc. is like the questions about the poisoned arrow and who shot it. The Buddha taught the condition of suffering and the way to end that suffering.

Whether or nor the Korean merchants and other Asians are abrasive in their attitudes toward Blacks; or Blacks are this way or that; or Whites are responsible for this state of affairs; or Latinos are the cause of this or that - such discussions should take place with the people involved, and not separately. But beyond this dialog, the problem of poverty and racism remains, and poverty goes hand in hand with racism and race rioting. Race riots have always been a fact of American life, and it reaches explosive proportions whenever a people or group of people feel that they are denied equal access to jobs, housing, and equal treatment under the law. What one thinks about another ethnic group should have no bearing on how that group is to be treated under the law. Yet we all know that opportunity is graded according to skin color in America, from the lightest at the top to darkest at the bottom. We all know it but not to the degree that we can openly admit it, and therefore unable to change that attitude. Whenever we come close to our own racism, we change the subject by pointing to how bad "they" are. Racism makes everyone behave badly, and when times are bad, racism makes everyone behave savagely. It is unequal treatment that has caused our suffering, and it does little good to talk about the hypocrisy of those who are being treated unequally. It should come as no surprise to us that those of us who are victims of racism can also be racists. To be told that one must think and act like an American (whatever that may mean) in order to be treated as an equal, and then be told that you must also be white in skin color, is a catch-22 situation. It is like being told that the left hand is equal to the right hand as long as it is a right hand. How to stop unequal treatment then is the problem at hand.

"The same, yet different" is still seen as fundamentally contradictory in America, it must ultimately be one or the other, not both at the same time. The great ethnic experiment called Los Angeles has had a temporary relapse. It has been called unity, but is already confusing unity with sameness. Our uneasiness with
unity-diversity has resulted in the replanting of the idea of "being part of the solution or part of the problem," a childish idea at best. For each ethnic community in Los Angeles, there is a different view of what life is about and how to best live that life. Unlike TV, life is not a matter of the good guys vs. the bad guys, each of us is a good-bad guy. America is remarkable in that it is committed to the idea that laws are created to assure that we are free to pursue the good in us as we see that good, and this to a remarkable degree of freedom. This is at least so in theory. What makes it a bittersweet legacy is the equally deep legacy of racism. But racism can be checked, and being checked minimized. This requires that all of us be responsible for protecting our equal opportunity and rights, by seeing to it that city, county, state, and national leaders be accountable to us. Those who are chosen to enforce the law through our judicial system cannot act outside the law or themselves violate the code of conduct.

"I never told my own religion nor scrutinized that of another. I never attempted to make a convert, nor wished to change another's creed. I am satisfied that yours must be an excellent religion to have produce a life of such exemplary virtue and correctness. For it is in our lives, and not from our words, that our religion must be judged."

-Thomas Jefferson to Mrs. Harrison Smith, 1816
Lesson X

Violence, War, and Buddhism

Objectives:

After the lesson, the students should be able to:

1. Be aware of American contradictory attitude toward violence and war.

2. Understand the Buddhist perspective on violence and war.

3. Understand how societal attitudes toward violence influences the individual attitudes concerning violence and war.

Concepts:

Complex and primitive societies.

Conformist.

Cultural attitudes.

Elites.

Justified war.

Pacifism.

Peace.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Secret war.

Tyranny of the majesty.

Universal.

War.

Procedure:

1. Pass out Reading 25, War or Peace?; Reading 26, A Buddhist Against War; and Reading 27, Ghosts and War.

2. Discuss the suggested questions after the reading.

3. Encourage students to engage in the activities suggested for their consideration.

Summary:

1. There is much violence in our society and the world.

2. Americans claim to be peaceful people yet its society seems to tolerate, approve, and even reward violence.

3. People's underlying attitude toward violence influences their attitudes toward war and peace.

Bibliography:

Reading 25

War or Peace?

Tsukasa Matsueda

Everybody hates war; why are there are so many wars? That is a question people have been asking through the ages. No matter how much progress we claim to be making, no matter how civilized we say we are, we always seem to be involved in wars. Most painfully, we seem to get involved in wars with increasing frequency. Looking briefly at past wars that we have fought, see if we can find out whether we can ever stop fighting.

- War of 1812. 1812-1848. A war to defend the rights of American neutrality.
- War with Mexico. 1846-1848. A war to settle boundary disputes.
- Civil War. 1861-1865. A war to save the Union. Indian Wars. We fought against the Indians to expand our country.
- Spanish War. 1898. A war to secure overseas naval bases.
- World War I. 1917-1918. A war to defend the right of American neutrality and to "end all wars."
- World War II. 1941-1945. A war to defend our country and to stop the aggressions of Fascist countries.
- Gulf War. 1991- present time. We are fighting this war to stop Iraqi aggression.
This list does not include our involvement in Grenada and Panama which we fought to maintain stability in the Caribbean. The list also does not include the "secret wars" fought to maintain political stability in various countries.

The reasons given here for the wars are oversimplified, but it is also true that when we became involved, most Americans tended to accept the "simple" explanation of our involvement. (It is also true that most of us really do not always know all the reasons why we have gone to war.)

In looking at war from another perspective:

Anthropologists have given interesting perspectives about wars. Think about some of their theories about warfare.

1. Warfare is not universal, although murder and feuds are known in most societies.
2. Cultural attitudes, that is, how people in a particular society feel and think are responsible for wars.
3. The more complex societies were, the more intense they were in military actions. They were more efficient and won more battles.
4. The more complex societies engaged in wars more often and suffered higher casualty rates.
5. Military preparedness did not appear to deter attack.
6. In all wars between 3600 BC to 1960, a total of 14,531 wars were fought, and 3,640,000,000 people were killed.
7. Societies who participate in warfare stress combative sports.
8. Sports and war do not function as ways of discharging tensions, but instead, they are part of an aggressive society and are behaviors built up by aggressive tensions caused by the society.

War is the most extreme form of violence. Many Americans say that we are a very violent people, and some even say that we are more violent than other people.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Consider the facts. We have participated in more wars than any other country in modern times. We are one of the few societies to tolerate lynchings by the thousands. We prominently display violence in our mass media and literature and often picture the most violent as heroes. We have assassinated our national leaders, and our rate of homicide towers over most of the countries of the world.

Why are we so violent? Many reasons have been given to explain our violent nature, but after reading some of the reasons, would you agree or disagree?

1. The tradition of the American frontier weighs heavily on us. We have fought for our freedom and fight by using violence. A deep strain of racism within us has resulted in carrying out a genocidal war against the American Indians and enslaving the Blacks.

2. We also have a tradition of "taking the law into our own hands." This is encouraged by certain rights given to our people, such as the Right to Bear Arms and the Freedoms of Speech and Assembly, which we have used successfully to expand our freedom.

3. Another cause of violence in America is the dominance of the self righteous and conformist majority. This group, dominated by elites of the affluent, of the organization men, the technocrats, and the bureaucrats; tries to block out and eliminate those who are perceived to be threats to their world. These narrow, reactionary and powerful people use authoritarian methods and cold violence to repress those who they define as dangerous.

4. We also have a history of accepting and recording violence and are reluctant to change our attitudes toward violence or to change the conditions that breed violence. For example, we refuse to control guns regardless of the grave crisis created by guns. We declare ourselves for law and order
and admonish against violence as long as we are not expected to do anything about it.

5. We are taught by our schools and media that we are people who believe in peace. We are also unable to see the society as it really is because we are such a rich nation. We have a distorted view of ourselves and want others to see the world as we see it.

Note: Questions to Consider

1. Which of the American wars do you think were justified?

2. Do you think we are more violent than any other people?

3. Why do we have more homicides, higher crime rates against people than in almost all countries of the world?

4. Why do we enjoy watching violence on our TV's and in the movies? (For example, Home Alone was the most popular movie of 1990. Why?)

5. Why are our video games so full of violence?

6. Why are our most popular sports so violent?

7. Why is it this "kick butt" attitude is so important here?

8. If you wanted to show that we are not violent what evidence would you give?

Note: Additional Questions to Consider

1. What does peace mean to you? Is peace only an absence of war? Is peace some kind of definite condition?
2. Is war ever justified?

3. Can words alone stop war or bring about peace?

4. Do you think education for peace can help to reduce or eliminate wars?

5. Why have we not provided more peace education in our schools?

6. Do you think that if we learn to solve our personal conflicts, we could learn to solve problems that could bring about a war?

7. Violence and war are sometimes acceptable ways of measuring freedom or dealing with problems. Discuss this statement.

8. War is better than surrender. Discuss this statement.

9. What has your temple done toward preserving peace or ending a war.

10. Have you done anything specific toward preserving peace or stopping war?

11. Do you think that in case of war everybody should have to fight? Why? Why not?
    
    E.g. Age limitation?
    Sex limitations?
    Educational factors
    Occupational factors

12. Do you think you should support any war your country is involved in?

13. What is patriotism?
14. Do you think our government should have a Department of Peace as we have a Department of War? (Defense)

**Note: Additional Questions to Consider**

1. Has your minister expressed his view on the Gulf War? Or war in general?

2. Has your Dharma School class discussed the topic of war?

3. Has your temple taken any specific steps toward preserving peace and stopping war?

4. Do you think churches and schools should talk about war and peace?

5. What do you think of institutions such as schools and churches taking or not taking a stand on this war? Or any war?

6. Do you think that the Eightfold Paths apply to this topic?

7. How do you apply the Eightfold Noble Paths to this topic? For example - What is the right view, right effort, etc.?

8. What is your opinion about this topic?

**Suggested Activities**

1. Have students write or draw a slogan about War/Peace.

2. Discuss the issue.

3. Make posters and hold a "demonstration" some place in the temple.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

4. Pass out a worksheet with the following items on it and ask the students to put a check on the one he/she finds interesting.

___ Write a letter to the Temple newsletter about War/Peace.
___ Write or produce a leaflet, pamphlet by the class on this topic.
___ Write a letter to your congressman/senator.
___ Write to someone in the news.
___ Look at the newspapers to see if there are any meetings in which you might be interesting in attending.
___ Ask if the temple could have a special meeting or invite a guest speaker on the subject.
___ Interview an influential person or an official.
___ Create your own Eightfold Noble Paths concerning war/peace which you feel would be consistent with Buddhist teachings.
___ List other activities you think would be interesting.
I do not think there is any Buddhist who would unconditionally condone war. The difficult issue we are confronted with is whether war is ever justifiable.

I do not believe that war can ever be condoned or justified. Although its short term effects may be acceptable to some, the profound and long term effects is ultimately the degradation of our collective humanity.

Military force is most often justified as a means to contain or stop aggression and hostility. In our present war with Iraq, the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and the atrocities committed in Kuwait are cited as basic reasons for our declaration of war. The invasion of Hitler in the Rhineland is often used as a comparison. If forces had been committed earlier, perhaps World War II and the great suffering that followed could have been prevented. In this view, if we stop the expansionist intents of Saddam Hussein now, we will prevent or reduce possible future conflicts and return a balance of power to the region.

The Vietnam War has also been referred to often. President Bush has promised "This will not be another Vietnam." The vote by our Congress to authorize the President to declare war, the swift and massive use of military force, and the vote of our Congress to support the actions of our military are responses to our experience of the past. We have committed ourselves to war, we will commit ourselves totally. The soldiers we send into battle shall not be hampered by political, administrative, or military indecisiveness.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

In many ways we have indeed learned from our past experiences with war. Perhaps the best lesson we have learned is not to blame the soldiers we are responsible for sending to war. Both supporters and protesters of the war agree that the soldiers there must be supported and brought home as soon as possible.

However, even with our best intentions, war is uncontrollable. We can plan and strategize to bring this war to a speedy conclusion, but these are theories and at best, guesses whose accuracy will be determined with lives. Air superiority has yet to be completely established, Iraqi command and control is still intact and Scud missiles continue to threaten stability of the allied coalition.

The current level of our troops is 470,000. These are men and women, all of whom have lives outside the arena of war: farmers who have crops that need to be brought in, mothers and fathers with children waiting at home, doctors from small towns whose patients will need to go elsewhere, husbands and wives whose income are necessary in these difficult economic times, sons and daughters, boyfriends and girlfriends - people, human beings who love and are loved by others. Congress has authorized an increase in the number of troops allowable by law. Under new orders, up to 1,000,000 reservists can be activated and remain on active duty for up to 2 years. If the war continues for several months, it will be necessary to reinstitute the draft.

The economic impact of the war has begun to affect us on several levels. As a direct result of the war, Trans World Airways has laid off nearly 3,000 people. People are not traveling as much now because of the war. In the event of a protracted war, longer than three months, it will be necessary to raise taxes to meet the cost of war. Our current air campaign is costing approximately $750,000,000 a day. The cost of firing one Patriot response to a Scud missile is one million dollars. ($1,000,000). If ground troops are engaged and air activity is not substantially reduced, the increase in costs will rise dramatically. Already trillions of dollars in debt and unable to resolve our national economic crisis, a war of this magnitude will have devastating effect on everyone.

In the wake of this war there are many casualties. Repercussions from this regional war have been felt around the
world. The most tragic effect of war is the deaths and suffering. Casualties of our allied forces have fortunately been limited, well below expectations. This good fortune, however, has kept us somewhat apart from the emotional trauma of war.

I have been listening to reports of the war through National Public Radio, CBS and ABC on the radio with an earphone in my ear. At first I was more apt to be asked what game I was listening to than what news from the Gulf. I do not mean to be critical; it's just that as the news of the war is played out across our TV screens by handsome and beautiful news anchor persons or analyzed in interviews by radio talk show hosts, it is so much like some movie in which the stars and the extras will have coffee and sandwiches after the take. Our war with Iraq has so far been antiseptic. We have, only recently, been bruised lightly by the horrors of war through the voices and beaten faces of allied prisoners of war. Only now do we cry out against the cruelty and injustice as they are used as human shields. I do not agree with the Iraqi actions; I am just as surprised by the absurdity of our desire to abide by rules in the midst of killing each other. The rules of war as prescribed by the Geneva Convention should be superseded by a rule which outlaws acts of aggression and war.

In the 6 days of this war more than 8,000 sorties with a reported 80 percent success rate, have been launched against strategic Iraqi positions. Even if only half of those missions killed one person, over 3,000 human beings are now dead. With the continued success of those missions, our allied attention is now turned towards Iraqi troops to the south. We have begun carpet bombing the entrenched Iraqi troops. In one analyst's opinion, if we could see the results of our carpet bombing action it would turn the stomachs of most Americans. Noses and ears bleed and stomachs rupture as a result of the concussions. Arms and legs torn from the bodies of soldiers hit by the bombs falling from twenty thousand feet above litter the ground. But we do not see the results of our actions. We do not see the torn and broken bodies or hear the cries of pain and fear. We are not there to bear the suffering we inflict on others.

War does not solve anything. What did our presence in Vietnam accomplish? Thirty five years after our police action in
Korea, we are still there. Forty five years after the last world war we are now engaged in a war directly related to territorial divisions made at the end of that war. World War I, was the war to end all wars, yet from its ashes arose the forces which swept the world once again into war. After all the killing has stopped we will still have to come to terms with the issues from which this current war emerged. The causes of this war are economic and political. The causes are found in our inability or unwillingness to comprehend the views and values of another culture. I hope we will all become more active in working for peace.

In the past 10 years our nation spent some three trillion dollars ($3,000,000,000,000) on defense and armaments. We supported Iraq in their war with Iran, at which time we built an unprecedented arsenal to defend ourselves against the Soviets. Now that the Cold War has thawed, we have enough weapons to keep up our present pace in our war with Iraq for one year without the need to resupply.

The outcome of war is death. It is perhaps arguable that our present success in the Persian Gulf is a direct result of our military buildup. I hope we can teach ourselves to see other possibilities. I hope that we can teach ourselves to see that if we had applied the same intensity and depth of resources to the development of education and human resources we may have been able to avert this war with Iraq altogether.

The way of the Buddhist should be clear: We must expand our understanding and work for peaceful solutions.
"There is a difference between the Path of Sages and the Path of Pure Land. The compassion in the Path of Sages is expressed through pity, sympathy, and care for all beings, but truly rare it is that one can help another completely as one desires.

The compassion in the Path of Pure Land is to quickly attain Buddhahood - saying the nembutsu - and with the true heart of compassion and love save all beings as we desire.

In this life no matter how much pity and sympathy we may feel for others, it is impossible to help another as we truly wish; thus our compassion is inconsistent and limited. Only the saying of nembutsu manifests the complete and never-ending compassion that is true, real and sincere." (Tannisho; Chapter IV.)

As I lie awake in my bed, late at night, it feels as though all the World is asleep. I have heard the blower from my inconsistent heater turn on and off, on and off. I can now make out the shadows and outlines of all the furniture in my bedroom, and my eyes have become adjusted to the darkness that seems natural. All types of thoughts have come in and out of my drifting mind. Why can't I sleep, why does my mind seem to shift channels over and over again? Jumping from one thing to another, my mind just won't seem to slow down. I feel fear and anxiety, the darkness that surrounds me, the claustrophobic feeling of the sheets, the dry heat, and the noise created by the furnace all work to keep me awake. My eyes are dry from staring into the darkness.

From the darkness I sense movement and a slight sweeping noise that seems to be coming from the steps leading from the front door to my bedroom. The night seems to have stilled so that I am
aware of the sound of someone walking up the steps, whispering. The darkness has turned very cold. I can see my breath in the darkness as I slide off my bed and reach for the baseball bat that I keep under the bed. Someone or something seems to have entered my room. How can they enter my room without opening the door? I look up and there stands a slightly shimmering image of a man staring at me, crying. I know I should jump up and smack him with my baseball bat. However, I know that it would only pass through him, for he is a ghost.

Yes, I have seen him before. He comes and visits me often, distracting me from the more important business of getting to sleep. He says that he is the result of the suffering in this World. The greed, the anger, and ignorance of all human beings have forced him to wander among us. He will not leave me alone until there is peace for all sentient beings. He is the ghost of war. With his wailing I can hear the cry of countless hungry innocent children. Within his cry I can hear the anger of nations. Within his cold stare, I can see the empty stare of death of thousands men, women and children. What can I do?

I turn on the light in my bedroom, get out of bed and walk down the stairs to the kitchen, the ghost following me as I go. In the kitchen I open the half-empty box of Domino's pizza. I break off a slice of the meatzza special, eating it as I stand at the sink. I offer the ghost a bite, but no reply. Opening the cupboard I take an empty glass, walk to the garage where I keep my water dispenser and drink. I then say, "Namu Amida Butsu, gochiso sama." Then I refill the glass, turn off the lights, walk back up to my bedroom. Place the glass of water next to my bed, turn off the lights and go to sleep.

The passage that I began this article with is from the Tannisho and it is a very important passage, differentiating the Path of the Sages and the Pure Land Path. The Path of the Sages is the Theravada School of Buddhism where one endeavors to gain enlightenment through one's own power. Within this school of Buddhism, the individual is able to perfect themselves to the point of enlightenment. They are able to become perfect human beings through their own power. If they have the power to perfect themselves, maybe they may have the ability to help others. They
may be able to show true compassion for other beings. They may be able to give others selflessly without concern towards oneself. They may be able to help this ghost. To help this ghost, they must be able to perfect themselves and then help all sentient beings, to end the foolishness of war.

At the moment I am suffering from the withdrawal of nicotine from my system. I am having difficulty falling asleep at night. I am having difficulty discussing wedding arrangements with my fiancee because I feel so irritable. I have very little compassion for those that I love. All because I am trying to gain enlightenment on my own. I am having a very difficult time to quit smoking; perfecting myself to the point of enlightenment is out of the question. Truly showing compassion to other beings is also beyond my ability. Yes there is a difference between the Path of the Sages and the Pure Land Path. Please think about what is right for you.

Throughout my sermons and essays I have tried to point out what it means to be Jodo Shinshu Buddhist. There are many members of our temple who do not understand the true beauty and strength within our Jodo Shinshu tradition. War is obviously a tragedy. The suffering created by war is part of the suffering encompassed within the words, "Life is suffering," the first of the Four Noble Truths. However, the question that differentiates our Jodo Shinshu frame of mind from that of followers of the self-powered schools of Buddhism is, "Can I alleviate this suffering on my own?" Jodo Shinshu recognizes the limitations of the human condition. Because of our weaknesses, our inabilities to even take care of ourselves, we must depend on Amida Buddha. We must rely upon a force that is greater than our own. That is why we say, "Just say the Nembutsu." It is not that we wouldn't like to do more. It is just that if we truly recognized the scope of our limitations, then we could realized this is all that we can do.

I would like to help this ghost of war, but I am limited in my ability to do so. Before I can help this ghost of war, I should try to listen to the Dharma so that I may achieve the mind of faith - so that I can understand true and real compassion, rather than my own limited compassion. Before we can help others, we must first strive to understand our own intentions and abilities.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

"I, Shinran, for the sake of filial piety towards my parents, have never, even once, uttered the Nembutsu. The reason is that all sentient beings in some birth or life have been my parents or my brothers. We can save all of them when we become Buddhas in the next life.

"If the Nembutsu were a good, practiced by our own power, then we could transfer it to save our parents. Just throw away self-power then we could transfer it to save our parents. Just throw away self-power and quickly attain Enlightenment, and then we shall be able, with the transcendental powers and the expedient means, to save first those who are closely related to us, in whatever karmic suffering in the six realms and four births they may be sunk. Thus it was said." (Tannisho, Chapter V.)
Lesson XI

Growing Significance of the Golden Chain

Objectives:

After the lesson, the students should be able to:

1. Understand that poisoning of our earth stems from poisons of our mind.

2. Describe the extent of the damage caused by our poisons.

3. Be aware that individual action is the basis for saving our earth.

4. Discuss the topic from various Buddhist concepts such as suffering, interrelatedness, Three poisons.

5. Understand that many young people volunteered to help in the development of the Japanese American communities.

6. Understand that the reward of voluntary work extends to the helpers as well as to the people who were helped.

7. Realize that social ills will always exist.

8. Discuss and clarify Buddhist responsibilities to existing social problems.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Concepts:

Compassion.

Cooperative effort.

Idealism.

Social needs.

Volunteerism.

Suggested procedure:

1. Pass out Reading 28, Dust Can Grow into Mountains (Chirimo Tsumoreba Yama to Naru). Pass out Reading 29, Companies are Courting High-Spending Asians and Reading 30, Buddhist of Pure and Simple Faith. Ask the students for their reactions.

2. Discuss the follow-up questions

3. Discuss possible follow up activities.

Summary:

Our earth is imperiled in many ways including the pollution of our earth by hazardous wastes which is the result of our unthinking actions. Individuals can make a difference in coping with this problem. Limiting our consumption of food and recycling our consumed products are two of the most important steps toward reducing this critical problem.

Social problems in this country are on the rise. Local and federal governments have cut back in spending for social services worsening the problems. Thousands of young people have joined the adults in volunteering for service in community groups and social service organizations to help alleviate the problems.
An old Japanese proverb, chiri mo tsumoreba yama to naru, was often used by teachers and parents to encourage the young people to accumulate pennies which would grow into a large savings. Perhaps the youngster had to stretch his imagination to visualize pennies growing into a mountain of pennies, but the lesson was easily understood.

In the 20th century, we can easily substitute trash for dust or pennies, and anybody could easily visualize the accumulated trash growing into mountains. Unfortunately, we seem to have a hard time understanding the lesson.

The fact is that the mountain of trash and garbage is growing so fast that we are running out of room for it. Everyday, just in the United States, we are pouring out more than 432,000 tons of garbage. However, we have done very little to minimize our recklessly unrestrained outpouring of old tires, plastic bottles, food scraps, old furniture, and appliances, not to mention hazardous chemical matters. Most of us still continue to think that there is no limit on dumping and seem to be unmindful of the fact that we are the largest throwaway society in the world. We buy, use, and throw away articles with little regard, and the mountains of trash continues to grow at a furious pace. In New York, the Staten Island landfill (garbage dump) covers 3,000 acres, and is probably the largest in the world. The dump was started in 1948; today it contains an estimated 100 million tons of garbage and will soon be the tallest "mountain" on the Atlantic coast. Its height and volume challenges the greatest pyramid, Kyufu in Egypt and will soon
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

rival the Great Wall of China as the largest man-made structure in the world.

Our furious consumption of goods has resulted in more than half of the landfills being closed, and each day more are being closed. Californians produce 8.5 pounds of waste per person per day. All of the landfills in populous Los Angeles is expected to lose all of its landfill in this decade.

Another dangerous aspect of landfills is the contamination of nearby drinking water. Toxic chemicals found in the garbage will eventually settle into the aquifers, streams, and lakes. When people try to burn away (incinerate) the garbage to reduce the bulk weight of the garbage, the sulfur and nitrogen oxide, the hydrochloric acid, heavy metals, and dioxin emitted into the air is as dangerous as the leaking landfills they replace.

The deadly effects of the garbage is almost endless, but what are the solutions? Briefly, the best authorities on this grave matter have said that, for one, source reduction must take place first. This means to reduce the amount of waste by putting limits on packaging or restricting the use of disposable products, such as bags and boxes. Already broad recycling programs have been initiated by governments and people in general. Many business people and companies have found profits in recycling and have aided recycling movements. For example, a good deal of money is made from collecting cardboard boxes, which has brought in about $100 a ton, and high-quality paper like computer printouts can bring in twice that amount. In Atlanta, one individual collected about 200 tons a month from 150 firms, buying computer printouts at three cents a pound and reselling it for twelve cents a pound. Elsewhere, a lady cashed her insurance and used the money to set up her own recycling center and has sold collected goods to reprocessors. New York City's largest export is corrugated cardboard boxes sent to countries like Japan and Korea.

There are problems even in recycling efforts, but we need to institute a large-scale garbage-management program. Many countries, including ours, have started garbage-management programs. Japan has set fine examples to follow: they throw away far less waste than any other people in the world, and they have succeeded in recycling 91% of its newspapers, 55% of its steel,
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

65% of its bottles, and 40% of its aluminum. We need to do more to bring about a better economy and a healthier environment by reducing the amount of waste and recycling them. The people can also induce the governments and the businesses to support the waste-management program to a greater degree. This is one area where individuals can truly make a difference.

Note: Questions to Consider

1. Explain the statement, "the poisoning of our earth stems from poisons of the mind."

2. Why does a country such as Japan seem to understand the problem of environmental pollution faster than we do?

3. List the kinds of suffering caused by environmental pollution.

4. Describe the chain effect of suffering caused by environmental pollution.

5. Describe what you have done to minimize this critical problem.

6. List some specific ways you and your classmates can help in easing the garbage problem.

7. List some possible projects to help the recycling program and also raise some money for temple programs.
Buddhism may very well be the only major religion which looks at the world in a truly ecological manner. The very backbone of Buddhism is the teaching of interdependence. This idea is, of course, also the backbone of ecology. Many modern ecologists as well as Buddhists are writing and speaking of the extraordinary similarities between these two fields; one scientific and the other religious. In truth, from a Buddhist point of view, there may not really be an absolute distinction between science and religion. In this lesson, we will investigate how Buddhism with its ecological perspective can enable us to solve the horrendous environmental crisis which threatens human life on this planet and has already caused profound pollution and suffering.

I wonder if names such as "Love Canal", "Minamata Bay", "Chernobyl", or "Hanford" mean anything to my young readers. These happen to be just four instances of horrible pollution which have occurred in recent decades and have brought about cancer, birth defects, death and tremendous clean-up costs affecting the lives of hundreds of millions of people. Since the half life of radioactive material is 25,000 years, the radioactive waste from the Chernobyl reactor explosion and the Hanford Nuclear Waste Depository continue to be a menace. No one is completely sure if the tanks holding various deadly soups of radioactive materials may leak or explode as happened in Russia in the 1950's. In fact, we now know that the old Soviet Union dumped large amounts of radioactive waste directly into the ocean. These are scary thoughts. They are also urgent thoughts which demand our attention and action.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

The Buddhist scriptures state, "Just as a jug fills drop by drop, so a fool becomes filled with his folly." Day by day, our earth becomes more crowded and polluted. Fewer and fewer natural resources are left to go around and those that are left are becoming increasingly expensive. Especially in the past 150 years, mankind has increasingly despoiled the earth.

The Buddhist scriptures continue, "A fool is happy until his mischief turns against him." Living in the wealthiest country in the world, many of us have been living in a fool's paradise. Gradually, however, a deeper awareness is taking root in our society. I use "deeper" in the Buddhist sense of the two levels of reality: superficial and deep. The superficial person is the fool, the one who takes or consumes without any concern for where something has come from or where it is going. This kind of superficial action has led to our present environmental crisis. The actions of our race have turned against us and no one can escape the consequences.

Within the field of ecology, there is an increasingly important movement called "Deep Ecology". What most fascinates me about Deep Ecology is that its outlook is a synthesis of both Buddhism and ecology. As Buddhism enters the Western World today, one of the most important developments in the westernization of Buddhism is this fusion of Buddhism and ecology. Many environmentalists and conservationists are discovering that they are also Buddhists.

Buddhism teaches that selfish desire is the source of pain and suffering. Yet, our materialistic culture teaches us from an early age that desire brings happiness. We are programmed to want, to buy and to consume. The Buddha has taught, "The rain could turn into gold and still they would be thirsty for more." How many of my children's toys I have thrown out because they are so badly made. There is a concept called "planned obsolescence" that drives the wheels of our economy. The idea is to manufacture goods with a short life span so they frequently have to be replaced. A good example of planned obsolescence is light bulbs which could easily be manufactured to last decades. Let's say the average American household replaces ten bulbs a year and there are 100 million households in the United States. This means that we are throwing out one billion light bulbs a year just in this country!
One of the most important concepts in Deep Ecology is deep time. This means we need to examine the consequences of our actions over long stretches of time. If we live only for today, we steal from or even condemn future generations to lives of poverty or sickness through environmental degradation. Let us return to the example of light bulbs in light of the concept of deep time. Calculate how many bulbs will be disposed of in 2,500 years, the time from the Buddha’s life to ours. The answer is staggering - 2.5 trillion!

We have just examined disposal of light bulbs. What about used auto tires, old T.V.’s, discarded furniture, carpets, computers, cassette tapes or even tooth brushes? Think of all the things we use and discard in a lifetime. Now multiply that by 2,500 years of 10,000 years or 100,000 years. Don’t people deserve to live 100,000 years from now. If we go back 100,000 years, it is a pretty short span geologically. Biologically, humans 100,000 years ago were pretty close to what we are today. Yet, at the present pace of waste, pollution and over population, it is doubtful if this earth can sustain human life for many more centuries. And what is happening to the quality of life in the meantime? A growing population is grasping for fewer resources. The result is war, famine and huge refugee populations.

Buddhism teaches us how to be happy through harmony. Inner harmony of the mind is expressed as outer harmony with nature. This is the essence of the traditional Japanese sense of beauty which is characterized by naturalness, simplicity and humanity. Look sometime at a Japanese garden and contrast it with an amusement park. Which brings the deeper sense of pleasure? The amusement park is gaudy and is based on conspicuous consumption. We always want more: more rides, more food, more video games. The Japanese garden causes us to slow down, to pause and look carefully. The garden is subtle rather than gaudy, spiritual rather than materialistic.

Buddhism is the process of seeing the big picture, the universal Truth (Dharma) in everyday life. The contrast between a superficial life and a life of real depth is like a person who only sees the surface of the ocean and mistakes it for the whole ocean. Standing on shore, they talk about how great and wide the ocean is.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

But, to truly see the ocean you need to go down into it. Only by doing so can you see and study the ocean with all its beauties and dangers. We need to plunge into life avoiding its dangers and creating a place of beauty and harmony.
Reading 30

Companies are Courting High-Spending Asian Americans

James Leung, Chronicle Staff Writer

(From the San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco, Calif., Thursday, November 15, 1990)

In these lean times, companies are finding that a little extra effort in attracting Asian American consumers can pay big dividends.

The trend is evident at Macy's California Inc., where a wide selection of petite women's fashions has helped establish its popularity with Asian Americans in the Bay Area.

Nevada casinos now offer Pai Gow, an ancient Chinese game played with dominoes. The fast moving game is a favorite of Asian gamblers, both foreigners and immigrants.

The American Telephone and Telegraph Co. in New York recently sent out bilingual cards announcing a 37 percent reduction in long-distance rates to Hong Kong and Taiwan during the Mid-Autumn Festival, a traditional family gathering time for the Chinese. The glossy cards showed two young children admiring a holiday lantern.

The special attention to Asians reflects their vast buying power. Various retail industry surveys have shown that Asian Americans outspend the average consumer on a wide range of products, including clothing, cars, personal computers, and videocassette recorders.

"Many companies have begun targeting sales to the affluent Asian Americans," said Craig Brennan, a management consultant
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at Deloitte & Touche, a San Francisco marketing consulting firm. Its recent nationwide survey showed that 40 percent of English-speaking Asian Americans had household incomes of more than $40,000 a year, compared with 36 percent of the general public.

In the past decade, the nation's population of Asian Americans jumped 70 percent to more than 6.5 million, including 850,000 in the Bay Area. That growth is expected to continue into the next century, especially in California.

"They are the fastest growing consumer group that everybody should be going after," said Eleanor Yu, president of Adland, a San Francisco advertising agency that specialized in the Asian American market.

With competition intensifying for Asian American consumers, Adland's 1989 billings reached $11 million, a 50 percent gain from the previous year. Its clients include Anheuser-Busch, Bank of America, Ford Motor Co., British-American Tobacco, the Circus Circus Hotel and Casinos of Reno, and Trans World Airlines.

To establish good relations with the Asian communities, many companies have supported cultural celebrations such as the Chinese New Year, August Moon, and the Cherry Blossom Festival.

"To get Asian American businesses, it is important to show that you are part of their ethnic communities," Yu said.

Specific Needs

It is also important to meet the specifications desired by Asian consumers.

For example, Safeway Stores Inc., of Oakland, which has hired specialists in Asian cuisine, stocks many of its Northern California supermarkets with imports such as pickled cabbage, fermented bean paste, and oyster sauce.

In women's fashions, Macy's built its reputation with the Asian community by offering a wide selection of petite fashions. Other department stores have been trying to catch up.

"We have been strengthening our petite section," said Kim Hughes, marketing manager of Emporium Co., a subsidiary of Carter Hawley Hale Stores Inc., of Los Angeles. "We try to put
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more depth into our collection of all categories of petite fashion to entice customers."

The Emporium has enjoyed good cooperations from major designer firms. "Because of strong demands, more and more manufacturers are making clothings in petite sizes." Hughes said.

Another company with a jump on the Asian American market is the Bank of America. Its Grant Avenue branch was the first U.S. bank in San Francisco's Chinatown, and has become one of the company's largest offices.

"It is one of our bank's top priorities to maintain the lead in the fast-growing Chinese American market," said John Chen, manager of the Grant Avenue branch.

To overcome the language barrier at its Chinatown branches, Bank of America has hired tellers who can speak one or more Asian dialects, said Eleanor Chang, Vice President for Asian Marketing.

"We try to streamline our services to meet the needs of the customers who may not be too familiar with the American way of banking," Chang said.

One tip for banks who want to attract Asian American customers is to provide passbooks. At most U.S. banks, passbooks are an endangered species. But many Asian Americans consider passbooks the safest guarantee of their deposits.

"Many Asian immigrants will only open accounts at banks that provide them with passbooks," said Charles Kwan, Vice President for Product Management of United Savings Bank, which is owned by Hong Kong interests.

Advertising in Asian-language media reflects the growing sophistication of the marketing programs, according to Greg Sullivan, President of Asian Television Sales Inc., a Los Angeles based media representative.

Targeted Commercials

In the past, most U.S. companies merely added subtitles to commercials aimed at the general population. But some advertisers--such as MCI Telecommunications Corp., a long
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distance carrier--have begun to produce spots specifically for Asian-language television stations.

Although there are no industrywide figures for advertising to Asian-language media, many broadcasters and publications report that revenue has increased between 20 percent and 25 percent in each of the past 5 years.

"We expect the uptrend to continue," said Brian Holton, General Manager of KTSF-TV (Channel 26) in San Francisco, which broadcasts programs in several Asian languages, including Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.

One of the reasons single 20- to 30-year-old Asian Americans tend to have more disposable income is that they are more likely to live with their parents, according to marketing surveys.

For example, Marilyn Yee, a 27-year-old accountant, regards clothing as her biggest extravagance. Yee said she loves to shop at Union Street's pricey boutiques.

"Sometimes I go there five times a week," she said.

Another prime target for the marketing companies is Lisa Chau, who lives with her parents in San Francisco and helps manage her father's Chinese restaurant.

"I buy a lot of clothes and cosmetics because I want to look good," she said. "I don't have to worry about other things... My parents can take care of them."
If we were asked to define a model Buddhist, we might begin by describing a group of young people who worked largely out of the public eye to bring about much-needed social services to the residents of San Francisco Japantown. These young people, mostly college and university students caught up in the revolutionary atmosphere of the 60's and 70's, took an active part in trying to help the Japanese American residents who were still trying to put their lives in order after their devastating wartime evacuation.

In the 60's and 70's San Francisco civic leaders were more concerned about rebuilding the city as the leading business and financial center of the West instead of providing meaningful help to the struggling Japanese American residents. The authorities were razing old low-cost homes and in general doing away with the old Japan town (Nihonmachi).

At first, the Japanese Americans were unorganized and could do very little to "fight city hall," but slowly they began to organize themselves to regain some control of their lives and to prevent further loss of their social and cultural heritage. Among the leaders were many college students, many of them Buddhists. They realized that the civic leaders would not provide any kind of help to people who looked too much like the former enemies and launched a program to help themselves.

Nihonmachi Little Friends (NLF) was formed to provide critical day care for the children whose parents had to work. Japanese Community Youth Council (JCYC) was established to meet the needs of those youth from ages 5-20. Senior citizens received help and encouragement from the Kimochi Senior Center. Nihonmachi Legal Outreach (NLO) was organized by law school
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students to provide legal service for those who could not afford to get help for their immigration, housing and other legal problems. Young artists and media people formed the Japantown Art Movement (JAM) to assist in various community projects and to encourage more Japanese Americans into creative and artistic endeavors. Community Against Nihonmachi Eviction (CANE) was organized to help preserve the physical identity of Japantown by taking political actions. The young people in each of these organizations had to struggle to raise the capital to implement their plans. They had to find the offices and the sites to carry out their projects, and they all had to rearrange their personal schedule to work on these projects. They went out to the community to seek help from the people who were focused on their own personal needs, and they had to cope with the antipathy of the institutions and agencies not interested in helping a small number of ethnic minority people lacking political power. Another formidable task was to raise the level of awareness among people who generally lacked the tradition of activism.

At first they were looked upon with suspicion and skepticism, but they won over many friends and impressed others. They also made enemies who accused them of radicalism; some even withdrew their support. But they persisted in their efforts and slowly they received the wholehearted support of the Japantown residents and the glowing respect of the public officials. More importantly, many young people, inspired by the 'saints' joined the various organizations or started other agencies. Today, all of these organizations have moved out of their original sites and many of the young people who started the organizations continue to work at, guide and support the programs. Through their caring effort and sacrifices, their initially modest ventures expanded into a vital, vigorous, and indispensable part of the San Francisco new Japantown.

Similar struggles were also waged by young Japanese Americans in Boston, New York, Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Stockton, and San Jose. But why did these young people, willingly extend their hands to confront the tough problems of the day? Some did it out of altruism; that is, they gave of themselves simply because other people needed help. Some wanted
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to make new friends, or some wanted to gain new and different skills, while others wanted to test themselves. But whatever the reasons, the rewards were rich, and they were shared equally between the helpers and the helped.

Only a few can know the lonely and troubled struggle these young people had to wage to nurture their dreams and make it come true. These young people worked largely out of the public's eyes, but their work will occupy a special place in the hearts of the people who were helped. As one of the volunteers said, "A day hasn't gone by when I haven't thought of all the people in the struggle and the people we struggled for. It's amazing how it can stay with you."

Note: Questions to Consider

1. What does Jodo Shinshu mean to you; for example, what does wisdom and compassion mean to you specifically? Do you try to make it a part of your daily life? In what way?

2. Do you think that the more fortunate people have some kind of a responsibility to those who are less fortunate? Why? Why not?

3. How would you feel if you happened to be one of the more affluent people and known as one of the highest consumer of goods, but contributed the least to worthy causes and did the least amount of volunteer work for worthy causes?

4. Why do you think that there is a greater effort to enlist people into volunteer work?

5. Do you think that our governments are doing enough for the truly unfortunate people of our society? Why?
6. Do you think that your temple is doing enough to help the unfortunates? List some examples of what your temple has done.

7. Do you think that you are doing enough personally to help those people less fortunate than you? Please explain.

8. Currently, some high schools require students to do some voluntary work before they graduate. Do you think that this is a good idea? Do you thank that Dharma Schools should make voluntary work part of the curriculum?

Note: More Questions to Consider

1. I have the time to do some volunteer work. Y N

2. I would like to do some volunteer work but I do not have the time to. Y N

3. I would like to do volunteer work in the following area(s).
   ____ tutor other students
   ____ help the homeless and the hungry
   ____ care for the elderly
   ____ protect the environment
   ____ Other. Please write in. __________________________

4. I am interested in helping by
   ____ serving as a peer counselor
   ____ volunteering at a senior center, hospital, etc.
   ____ doing media type work, (make video tapes, mini-dramas, writing etc.)
   ____ working at an established agency
   ____ organizing my own project
   ____ others________________________
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5. What are some possible rewards for people who do volunteer work?

6. List all the Buddhist ideals which seem to relate to the topic discussed this morning.

Note: For the Teachers

In a recent San Francisco Chronicle article on "Helping Others through Volunteerism," it was noted that of the major ethnic groups, the Asian Americans gave the least in terms of time and money. Further, the breakdown of the Asian American group showed that the Japanese Americans contributed the least amount of time and money per capita.

In other recent newspaper articles, it was reported that more and more companies are making extra effort to attract Asian American consumers because they believe that the Asian Americans have the greatest disposable income.

The second article offered no surprise to us Japanese Americans who have generally worked hard in schools and in jobs and simply followed one of the creeds of the American Dream; i.e., to acquire more and more as part of a just reward for the hard work, or to put it more commonly, "If you got it, flaunt it."

However, when these two articles are examined side by side, they tend to generate negative images for the Asian American in general and Japanese Americans in particular. For example, the Japanese Americans are thought to be self contained and self concerned and generally look only after their own and are least likely to participate in social and community affairs. Within the Japanese American community, the Buddhists are thought to be more conservative, passive and less involved in public matters. While no one has made a study of such matters, most of the community leaders and activists tend to be Christian. While it is perhaps galling to the Buddhists to hear such charges, it seems true that rarely have the Buddhist ministers, for example, taken public stand or expressed opinions within their own temples on overriding social issues that encompass the entire community, e.g. the
problems of the homeless, drug addicts, AIDS victims, etc. While some may argue that the religious institutions should not be involved in social matters and should concentrate on religious and spiritual matters, there is very little clear evidence that we Buddhists are more religious or spiritual than any other religious bodies. It is also true that measuring one's religiosity or spirituality is most difficult, there seems to be universal agreement that such involved religious leaders as Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mother Teresa possessed religious and spiritual qualities.

However, the lay people may find it difficult to measure religiosity and spirituality. It is also clear that they have sociological implications. At the most simplistic level, we, the Jodo Shinshu Buddhists stress highly the development of spirit of compassion which focus on the good will and concern for the suffering of others. Thus, the spirit of helping others should not be a strange one.

A casual look at the American Buddhist activities in the past reveals that whatever compassion that was exhibited were limited to the Buddhist circle. Although this kind of a focus can be understood and justified in the past when the Japanese Americans were struggling for mental, economic, political, religious survival; at the present time, such views no longer apply. Thus the issues of helping others now needs to be discussed in our temple.

If we can accept that proposition, the next important question is how do we engender such a feeling and spirit? Currently, there are two schools of thought on this matter. One side supports the view that helping others is an individual matter and it must be done by the individual on his/her own volition. In other words, an individual must volunteer to help others. On the other side, there are those who argue that the best way to engender this kind of feeling is to require individuals to help others, at first, for a limited time so that he/she can truly understand and appreciate the spirit of giving.

Finally the question "What is a Buddhist" is a critical one in the development of the identity and the self esteem of the Buddhist individual.
Shin Buddhism Engages the World

After reading the articles on Pure Land Buddhism in the winter 1985-86 issue of the Spring Wind, one is left with the impression that the Shin experiment in North America and Hawaii is in total degeneration, has had very few if any successes, and has nothing to look forward to except its eventual demise. In his "Letter from the Publisher," the Venerable Samu Sumin reflects this impression when he writes, "We could still learn from the Shinshu experience and even its failures." (1)

Yet despite their many problems and in spite of the vehement anti-Japanese anti-Buddhist attitude that Shin Buddhist have experienced, they have demonstrated on many occasions the compassionate spirit of Dharmakara. I will first highlight the projects which Shin Buddhists have undertaken on the national level. This will be followed by a brief survey of significant projects undertaken by individual temples which benefit the larger community. The Shin efforts, I submit, have aided the other Buddhist groups which have emerged since the 1960's in being more readily accepted by the larger society.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

A. National Projects

1. One project of particular significance emerged not from the BCA National Headquarters, but from the Young Buddhist Association (YBA). In 1947, the Young Buddhist Association on the continental United States and its Hawaiian counterpart successfully petitioned the War Department to have Buddhism recognized as a legitimate religious category. Since hundreds of Buddhists perished during World War II, the YBA requested that 'B' for Buddhist be imprinted on a soldier's identification tag. Prior to this, the only identification marks authorized by the Armed Forces were "P" for Protestant, "H" for Hebrew and "C" for Catholic. Buddhists had been lumped together and classified under "P." Buddhist servicemen and service-women received Protestant burial rites. (2)

The efforts of the YBA yielded further concessions from the U.S. Government. In 1951 the Quartermaster General in Washington, D.C., notified the Hawaii Federation of the YBA that the Dharmacakra or Dharma Wheel had been accepted by the War Department as an appropriate grave marker for Buddhist war dead. The government also agreed that markers erected prior to 1951 would be inscribed with the Dharmacakra if requested by the next of kin. The U.S. Government agreed to have the Protestant cross removed and the headstone inscribed with the Dharmacakra. (3) Mike Masaoka, former official for the Japanese American Citizen League (JACL), remarked that in his discussions with the military authorities during the War, the Dharmacakra was referred to as the "wheel of righteousness" to make it more acceptable. (4)

At this time the YBA also petitioned the Secretary of Defense, James Forrestal, asking that a Buddhist be awarded a chaplaincy in the U.S. Army. In 1988 after prolonged negotiations, Rev. Hiroshi Abiko of the Palo Alto Buddhist Temple in Palo Alto, Calif. was appointed the first Buddhist chaplain. His responsibilities include the chaplain services to the Veterans Hospital in Menlo Park, Calif. (5)
2. The BCA actively lobbied against the inclusion of the Divine Creation Theory in California public schools. In addition to the letter writing campaign, the BCA dispatched Rev. Hogen Fujimoto, director of the Bureau of Buddhist Education, to testify before the State Board of Education. In his brief to the Board, Rev. Fujimoto explained that Buddhists did not subscribe to the ideas inherent in this theory. In articulating the Buddhist objection to the divine creation theory, Rev. Fujimoto invoked the doctrine of pratityasamutpada or interdependence.

According to Buddhism, human beings and all living things are self created or self creating. The universe is not homocentric, it is a creation of all beings. Buddhism does not believe that all things come from one cause, but holds that everything is inevitably created out of more than two causes. (6)

3. During Rev. Shinsho Hanayama's tenure as Bishop (1959-1968), the BCA failed in its attempt to have a measure passed to open the U.S. Congressional Session with a Buddhist invocation. There were no Buddhists among the members of Congress. (7) However, Bishop Hanayama was able to perform a memorial service in memory of the monks who sacrificed their lives in South Vietnam and also a service in honor of the late President Kennedy when he visited Washington in 1960 (8)

4. Because the major thrust of the BCA has been its youth, the BCA in conjunction with the Boy Scouts of America developed in the mid-50's the Sangha Award. The BCA developed the award in consultation with members of other Buddhist denominations.

The purpose of the Boy Scout Sangha Award is to give the scouts of Buddhist faith a practical guidance in achieving the spiritual pledge made in the Scout Oath and Law, thereby developing a boy whose views and actions in life would stem from the highest Buddhist thoughts. (9)
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

The Padma award for the Girl Scouts and the Karuna Award for the Campfire Girls were developed. For the younger Scouts, the BCA Scouting Committee instituted the Metta Award for Cubs and the Junior and Brownie award for the younger girls. These awards like the Sangha Award are designed to nurture a Buddhist attitude of compassion. These awards are administered by the BCA Headquarters. Any Buddhist youth can earn the award. In 1988, 15 Sangha, 52 Metta, 25 Padma, and 7 Karuna awards were presented.

5. The BCA Social Welfare Fund disburses funds to needy and deserving organizations and individuals throughout the world. Established in response to the African famine in 1982, the Social Welfare Committee has given funds to a number of national and international organizations and to individuals who suffer from the deprivation of basic human needs. Funds have been disbursed to Oxfam America, Mexico Earthquake Relief, Kusinara Buddha Vihara, Maha Bodhi Asoka Mission, Sonoma County Japanese American Senior Center, American Indian Center, and others.

Late in 1986, the Social Welfare Committee forwarded $3000 to the Karma Chokor Dechen Nunnery in East Sikkim, India to fill a request by the refugee Tibetan nuns who were dedicated to serving the aging and the lepers. The fund provided for the installation of a wooden floor for the shrine room and concrete steps leading to the nunnery, where long hours were spent by the nuns, to replace the cold hard concrete flooring; the building of a retaining wall because of the collapse and sliding of a mountain in back of the shrine room; installation of a chimney in the kitchen to eliminate thick smoke while the nuns prepared their meals; and the purchase of beds and bedding for the six nuns who had been sleeping on the floor. (10)

B. Community Projects Sponsored by Individual Temples

Individual temples within the BCA have undertaken a variety of social welfare projects. Noteworthy are low-income
housing projects to assist the elderly. At present, the Tri-State Buddhist Temple in Denver, Colorado, the Seattle Betsuin, in Washington State, the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin and the Watsonville Buddhist Temple, both in California, have sponsored low-income housing for the elderly.

1. With proceeds from the sale of its old temple complex, Watsonville Buddhist Temple built a 10 unit apartment building complex in 1964.

2. The Tri-State Buddhist Temple was the first BCA Temple to build on a large scale, a low-income residence, the Tamai Towers, for the elderly. Named after the Rev. Yoshitaka Tamai, the twenty-story residential facility features 204 moderately priced apartments. The Tamai Towers was constructed under the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Section 236 subsidy program. In addition the facility provides a penthouse recreation area. Minimal-cost catered nutrition program lunches are provided 5 days a week. Free weekly blood-pressure screening, visiting nurse appointments, a Japanese/English Library are also part of the facility. Tamai Towers has been serving the community since October 1972.

3. Following the Tri-State Temple's example, San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, built Fuji Towers. Completed in 1976 with a loan from the FHA, Fuji Towers has 140 units. The residents of Fuji Towers are served by the Yu-Ai Kai (Japanese American Community Senior Service) with a year round schedule of educational, social, and recreational program. Seniors can also participate in a lunch program by walking a block to the Methodist Church.

4. Temples have lent their influence and leaders in community projects. In one instance, the BCA and the Buddhist Church of San Francisco together with other Japanese American churches and the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency constructed a thirteen-story, 272-unit apartment building for low income residents in 1971. The Seattle Betsuin has donated funds and
the use of temple facilities for building a 150-bed nursing home.

5. In addition to securing federal subsidies for two low-income housing for the elderly, the Seattle Betsuin Temple has sponsored a nursery day care center for more than forty years. The San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin established a pre-school in 1986. These preschools provided a much needed service to the community. Both in Seattle and San Jose, Buddhist worship is part of the children's schedule. There are many other projects which individual temples have undertaken. Summer Dharma schools are now offered by four temples. Each temple and its affiliated groups engage in their own social welfare projects. These are too numerous to list.

Evaluation

Although many of the BCA-sponsored projects mentioned were initiated to respond to the needs of Temple members and to the larger Japanese community, these efforts have also benefited others. The death of many Buddhist youths during World War II in service of the U.S. Government prompted the YBA to petition the War Department for official recognition of Buddhism as a legitimate faith. This recognition was accomplished by constant lobbying and in spite of the prejudice of the government and its bureaucracy. After 45 years the need for a Buddhist cleric has finally been acknowledged by the U.S. Government. A Buddhist chaplaincy in the Armed Forces has given Buddhists further official recognition and public acceptance.

Concern for the displacement of the elderly Japanese citizens, many of whom were Buddhists, by a massive urban redevelopment project prompted the Tri-State Buddhist Temple to assume the great financial risk and build the Tamai Towers. Similarly Fuji Towers was "conceived and built with compassion" (11) for the elders in the community. All of these senior citizen housing projects with the exception of Watsonville, serve the entire community as mandated by Federal law.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

The nursery day care center at Seattle, which started as a self help project for the returning evacuees, has become a needed day care center for the community. The present enrollment of 60 children, 2 1/2 to 5 years is primarily composed of minority, nontemple members. (12)

The spirit of Dharmakara is continually impressed upon the Shin Sangha. At San Jose where I served, social welfare projects are encouraged. The Fujinkai or Women's Auxiliary regularly visit convalescent homes. Visits to the seniors at Fuji Towers is a regular part of the Scouting program. The students earning Sangha and Padma Awards make visits to the crippled children home to decorate the Christmas tree. Several years ago our eleventh- and twelfth-grade Dharma class after six months of work turned over more than $1000 to the Quakers for the Ethiopian Famine relief.

It is my belief that the actual participation in social welfare projects is the best means of nurturing and demonstrating especially in our children, the sentiment of compassion. While Jodoshin Buddhism has dispensed with the meditative exercises, which is characterized by other Buddhist traditions and is often criticized for doing so, the Shin devotee is guided by the Myth of Dharmakara. By implementing Dharmakara's Vow, the Shin Buddhist puts into practice the bodhisattva ideal. Through service to others, the Shin devotee deepens his understanding of the Buddhadharma. Service to others is performed with gratitude to the Dharma which sustained the Shin Sangha in North America for nearly 100 years. Shin Buddhism in North America and Hawaii have quietly and without fanfare demonstrated the validity of the Buddhadharma.

Finally I would like to mention that the Shin Sangha has manifested a remarkable resilience considering the fact that all of its temples were closed and its priests interned during the duration of the war. Unknown to most outside the Japanese American community, the temples played a major role in aiding the resettlement of the Japanese American population after the war. Those returning from the internment camps had no place to go. The temples served as hostels. Its kitchens fed the hungry. The temple served as a post office, because most of the returning internees who had lost their homes had no forwarding addresses.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

The temples also served as an employment agency, referring returning internees to jobs. The temple also served as a real estate agency referring people to possible housing. Jimi Yamaichi, a lay leader at San Jose, estimates that more than 3000 people were helped by the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin immediately after the war. (13) At a time when the Japanese American community was considered to be the pariah to American society, the temple was the only institution which had the facilities and organization to help. (14)

The North American Shin temples performed a valuable service. By demonstrating the idealism of the Dharma, the temples and priests offered hope and dispelled despair. The Sangha provided an emotional, social, and psychological support group.

Notes

1. Samu Sumin. Spring Wind, Vol. 5 No. 4, p 220.

2. Yukio Kawamoto of the Ekoji Buddhist Temple in Springfield, Virginia, mentioned during a conversation with me on June 28, 1987 that he was probably one of the very few servicemen who had a "B" stamped on his "dog tag." He had asked the soldier in charge of stamping the dog tags to emboss a "B" over the original "P" on his military identification tag.


5. During the war Buddhist servicemen were denied the services of a Buddhist cleric. A compromise was worked out however. Japanese Christian minister accompanied the 100 Battalion and the 442 Infantry Regiment.

7. Sparky Matsunaga, the U.S. Senator from Hawaii, sponsored a Buddhist memorial service for his father in the Congressional Chapel when his father passed away. To date this is the only instance of a Buddhist service performed in the Nation's capital.


14. With the exception of the Quakers, Mennonites, the Brethen and Fellowship of the Reconciliation the Japanese community received no help. Norman Thomas was the only personage of national stature to oppose the indiscriminate eradication of coastal Japanese American communities. Even the American Civil Liberties Union, the intrepid champion of Civil Rights and of the underdog, took the position that Executive Order 9066 fell within the proper limits of the President's war powers.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Reading 33

84,000 Thoughts

Rev. Kenryu Takashi Tsuji,
Resident Minister of Ekoji Temple, Springfield, Virginia

(Selected passages from Rev. Tsuji's column, "84,000 Thoughts" in the Ekoji Temple Newsletter, Kalavinka)

Upside Down

_Ullambana_ literally means hanging upside down. Being trussed up on a tree limb by our ankles with our heads toward the ground would cause the severest suffering imaginable. The blood would run down to our heads, the pain in our legs would be unbearable and the whole body would shake in agony. No matter how much we flail our arms to catch a nearby branch, it is unreachable. Actually the more we move, the dizzier we get as the body begins to swing and twirl and the twine bites into our ankles. Our natural view of the world would be inverted and we become disoriented.

This was the image the Buddha created for the person living in ignorance. A person with views that are perverted, inverted, unbalanced, dogmatic, and dualistic lives in suffering. Sadly enough, the greatest suffering exists in the person who is totally unaware of his or her own suffering. The Buddha called this state "ignorance". 
A Master Once Said

A master once said,

*The mountain is there and I see it.*
*The rain falls and I hear the raindrops.*
*Spring, summer, autumn, and winter.*
*The morning is good; The evening is good.*

How wonderful to live like this!

In my calculated way of living I see the mountain.
It is beautiful. I want to photograph it.
There is a nice spot to build a cabin.
I wonder how much it would cost to buy land up here.
Ah, there is a gnarled old pine just right for a bonsai; what a waste!
I'm driving over its treacherous pass
and I wish the mountain weren't here.

When it is dry, I wish it would rain.
It is raining; it is good for the lawn but the grass will grow longer.
It is harder to push the lawnmower.

It is spring but it is still chilly.
When is summer coming? It is hot and humid.
It wouldn't be so uncomfortable if it would only be drier.
At last the hot summer is over and the
trees are dressed in their most colorful raiments.
But why do the leaves fall ... raking them is such a chore.
The first snow. Isn't it so pure and clean? But not for long
... I have to drive through the slush, salt and sand.

It was hot and I couldn't sleep so well last night.

I hear on the TV that it's going to be near zero tonight.
It's going to be very cold.
Iron Chain to Golden Chain

Kokoro

*Kokoro* is a Japanese word which means both mind and heart. Usually we assign all intellectual activities to the mind and emotional activities to the heart.

*Kokoro* embraces both these activities and in addition has another deeper dimension as well. It is the center of all spiritual activity that transcends the intellectual and the emotional. Therefore, there are things of the *kokoro* that can never be understood by the intellect nor experienced emotionally. Sometimes we are simply overwhelmed by a great act of dana, love, sacrifice, or compassion. Such an act defies all rational understanding.

It is the *kokoro* that creates the person's life and the world which he lives. When the light of Amida's Compassion shines into his *kokoro*, his whole world changes. He now views the world from this fresh perspective. "Open the eyes of your *kokoro*," the ancient teachers used to say.

When Shinran was banished from Kyoto for teaching the Nembutsu, he did not consider this a tragedy but a golden opportunity to bring the message of Nembutsu to ears that had never heard of Amida Buddha. Shinran did not think of his wife, Eshinni, as just an ordinary woman. His *kokoro* told him she was a manifestation of the Bodhisattva Kannon.

I once knew an old lady who was full of good cheer even in the face of death. Every moment she experienced the joy of living, much more so than when she was healthy. Each sunrise, each sunset was an indescribable joy to behold.

When the *kokoro* is illuminated with Amida's light, drudgery turns into an act of creativity and what seems an unpleasant task becomes a once in a lifetime opportunity.

May Amida's Light shine into your hearts.