



The Buddhist Temple
of Chicago

September
2021

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Most liked photo on Facebook: Michio “Mitch” Iwao celebrating his birthday at the July Asoka meeting



Making It Make Sense by Rev. Patti Nakai

Before World War II, the great majority of Japanese immigrants and their children, the Nisei, identified as Buddhist, but during and after the war many Nisei converted to Christianity. With those Nisei who stayed with the Buddhist temples, most of their children, the Sansei, chose to leave Buddhism and either join other religions or become one of the “nones,” people who have no religious affiliation. The reason I’ve heard people give for this turning away from the religion of their cultural heritage is, “Buddhism doesn’t make much sense.”

I have to agree with them when I see the articles written by Japan-born ministers and non-Japanese minister assistants in the monthly bulletins we receive from temples on the West Coast and Hawaii. Those articles talk about salvation through Amida’s 18th vow, about reciting the Holy Name of nembutsu, and about making all the world’s problems disappear by expressing only gratitude.

But then there are the articles by the ministers of the Higashi Honganji temples of California and Hawaii that really hit me with their pointed challenge to my self-centered delusions while inspiring me with real life examples of people walking the path of awakening by working with others to help their communities. What accounts for the difference in how those articles affect me?

The difference is due to the influence of Manshi Kiyozawa (1863-1903) and his students in the Higashi Honganji denomination. Kiyozawa showed that for us to receive the wisdom from the ancient texts, we need teachers who can translate those words from long ago into the language of our times. If it wasn’t for Kiyozawa, the direct teacher of Haya Akegarasu (1877-1954), there would be no direct teacher to inspire Rev. Gyomay Kubose and Rev. Gyoko Saito, the two ministers who made our temple what it is – a place where Buddhism makes sense to people.

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What is called “common sense” is usually the notion of “I deserve to reap the rewards of the world even if it means making others suffer.” As long as we carry that “sense,” we cannot understand Buddhism. But despite the entrenchment of our self-centeredness, there is a spark deep within us that lights up when touched by the wisdom of Buddhism. Then it makes sense to hear that Amida, the symbol of unbounded compassion, expresses the aspiration in the 18th vow (and the other 47 vows spelled out in the Larger Sutra), there is no such thing as “my” enlightenment but our liberation from the ego comes when we recognize the enlightenment of all beings. Hearing the name “Namu Amida Butsu” is a reminder (nembutsu) to take the focus off satisfying just myself and instead be in the interconnected flow of all life. And the true expression of gratitude is to be actively participating in alleviating the world’s problems instead of exacerbating them with my selfishness.

That’s what makes sense to me and how I came to this temple despite how nonsensical the Jodo Shinshu teachings sounded before I encountered the teachers influenced by Kiyozawa. I know I haven’t succeeded very much in making it make sense for others but I feel encouraged to keep trying by my Dharma friends. 🌍



Scheduled activities – subject to change

Weekly services – Sundays 11am - in-person, Facebook Live only September 5 and 19
Second Sunday Children’s Dharma School service – on Zoom, no in-person classes
Qigong (Chinese exercise) – Tuesdays 11am - online Zoom and in-person
Iaido (martial art) – Mondays 6:30pm – in-person only
Thursday Meditation 7:15pm – on Facebook Live starting September 9th
Sunday Meditation 9:30am – in-person starting September 12th
Aikido (martial art) – Sundays 3-5pm – in-person only
Asoka Society (social gathering) – Saturday September 18 at 1pm
Kokyo Taiko (drums) – Friday evenings, Sunday afternoons
For more information, see our website or contact BTC

Deepest Sympathy

To the family and friends of

Emiko Ishikawa	July 28, 2021
Steven Omachi	August 9, 2021



The Three Princes

By Bill Bohlman, BTC President

Contact Bill at budtempchi@aol.com



The essence of Buddhism is self-examination. The only way to overcome the ignorance that leads to our suffering is to acknowledge our faults. The following story, presented to a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist minister and his reaction to it, exemplifies this understanding of self.

Three princes are on a journey thru the forest when they come upon a tiger and her cubs. Prey being scarce, and the need to attend to her cubs, has brought the tiger to the brink of starvation. Seeing this, the first prince says, "The tiger is weak. We can kill her for her fur and sell her cubs." The second prince replies, "No, we must show compassion. Let us gather all our provisions and give them to the tiger. We shall experience some hunger so that she may survive." Saying this, he gathers their food and gives it to the tiger. She regains some strength, yet her hunger continues.

The third prince remains deeply moved. A greater sacrifice is called for to save the tiger and her cubs. He draws his sword and cuts off his arm. He feeds this to the tiger. The tiger quickly regains her full strength and attacks the three princes. The first two are able to escape, but the third, weakened by his loss of blood is caught by the tiger and devoured.

The storyteller now asked the minister, "Who in this story do you most closely resemble?" The minister thought for a few moments and then replied, "The tiger." Why did he answer this way?

Most followers of the Buddhadharma like to think of themselves as compassionate beings. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that any would think they are like the first prince. The vast majority would say they are like the second prince, willing to make a compassionate sacrifice to aid another sentient being. Very few would say they are like the third prince, and if they did, it probably is their ego talking. The minister, being truthful, said he was like the tiger. Why is he like the tiger?

True self-examination led the minister to the understanding that he too had encountered the three princes. Throughout his life, the interventions of others spared him from suffering. The beneficial results of the actions of others filled his life. He had been the recipient of compassion both large and small, yet he never fully appreciated that which he received. Like the tiger, he consumed the compassion of others, and all which life provided, without expressing an equal measure of gratitude.

The question for us becomes, whom do we resemble? Modern pop-psychology tells us to look for the good things about ourselves. I'm OK, you're OK. If this is actually true, why is there so much suffering in this world? The Buddhadharma tells us that we have the potential to become an awakened being, just like Shakyamuni Buddha. However, until we confront the truth of our ignorance, and face those aspects that keep us in the constant cycle of suffering, we will never move beyond our suffering. We must admit to the tiger in us.



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September 2021 Calendar		Events may be canceled or moved:				
Check www.facebook.com/budtempchi for the most up-to-date changes.						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3 Taiko 7pm	4
5 11am Monthly Memorial 3pm Aikido	6 laido 6:30pm Labor Day	7 11am Qi-Gong	8	9 Facebook Live Meditation 7:15pm	10 Taiko 7pm	11
12 9:30am Meditation 11am Dharma School Service 3pm Aikido	13 laido 6:30pm	14 11am Qi-Gong	15	16 Facebook Live Meditation 7:15pm	17 Taiko 7pm	18 1:00pm Asoka meeting
19 9:30am Meditation 11am Fall O-higan 3pm Aikido	20 laido 6:30pm	21 11am Qi-Gong	22	23 Facebook Live Meditation 7:15pm	24 Taiko 7pm	25
26 9:30am Meditation 11am Regular Service 12:30 Board Meeting 3pm Aikido	27 laido 6:30pm	28 11am Qi-Gong	29	30		