



Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

Only By Embracing...

Office of Buddhist Education Newsletter

Newsletter for Dharma Schools

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DHARMA SCHOOL THEMES FOR DECEMBER:

REFLECTION OF CLOSE OF YEAR

MAJOR SERVICE: JOYA E (Final Service of the Year)*

The final service of the year is called Joya E. It is a time of reflection and a time of anticipation. It is a time of joy and a time of sadness. It marks an end as well as a new beginning. But most of all it is a time to gather as a Sangha. At the end of the service, the temple bell is tolled 108 times to call in the new year and to rid ourselves symbolically of the “108” imperfections.

We meditate on the countless blessings we have received throughout the year and express our gratitude to our parents, our nation, all beings and Amida Buddha.

HISTORY

On New Year’s Eve, members assemble before the shrine of Amida Buddha to quietly recollect the happenings of the year and to rejoice in the blessing of Amida.

In Japan, New Year’s Eve is quiet and peaceful. Family and friends gather together to play karuta or, in modern Japan, to watch late television programs until the approach of midnight. The lady of the house serves toshikoshi soba for the late hour snack. As the party enjoys the soba together the sound of temple bells is heard in the distance. The low resonance of the bell renders an atmosphere of nostalgic feeling for the year past and of cheerfulness at the anticipation of a better year to come.

In the United States, New Year’s Eve is associated with merry-making, gaiety, and noise-making. Parties are held late into the night. With the approach of midnight, the ending of the old year and the beginning of the new year, brings the eruption of noises—yelling, singing, tooting of horns, blowing of bugles, popping of firecrackers, etc.

In the homes, the family shrine is given a thorough clean-up for the last time of the year and the family gathers around the shrine for the final service of the year. The candle is lit and the incense gives rise to a line of smoke which serves as a reminder to us of the impermanence of all things throughout the universe. True to this symbolic teaching, the year was also a passing thing.

TEACHING

The New Year's Eve bell is stroked 108 times as a symbol of overcoming the 108 passions human beings are said to possess. The 108 passions as explained in the "Story of the Juzu" by Bishop Shinsho Hanayama reads, "Six feelings are recognized in Buddhism, viz., feelings arising from sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and consciousness. Now, each of these 6 sensations is associated with pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent feelings, making a total of 18 feelings. Furthermore, each of the pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent feelings has two classifications: those feelings that are either attached to pleasure or detached from pleasure. When we multiply the 18 kinds of feelings with the 2 classifications, we arrive at the figure of 36. These 36 are the basic passions of man that are manifested in time – past, present and future. Thus, 36 multiplied by past, present and future will give us a total of 108 passions."

In spite of the economic and technological advances in today's world, man continues to experience suffering and frustrations. The 108 passions are still at work in each individual. As the New Year's gong is struck 108 times, we are reminded of our human weaknesses and are reminded to live a life of deep reflection.

The Temple Bell:

Most large temples in Japan have a temple bell for tolling the time of day and night. The bell has its origin in Buddhism. Ananda, a disciple of the Buddha, is said to have struck a bell to call the bhikkus and Upavassathas to the services, while, according to a certain Buddhist sutra, the striking of the bell exorcises evil.

In former days each temple bell boomed 108 times morning and evening in order to cast out evil. But now it only tolls the time, day and night and booms 108 times on New Year's Eve and on certain special occasions.

*Dharma School Teacher's Guide, BCA, 1981

ACTIVITIES

INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

1. **REFLECT AS A DHARMA SCHOOL CLASS OHANA ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE YEAR.** Sit in a circle and talk about the happenings for the year and what was learned from the different experiences. Have a small ball available to pass on from one speaker to the next. The person with the ball gets to speak and all others must listen.
2. **REFLECT AS A FAMILY: A HOMEWORK ACTIVITY.** Ask each student to do a homework assignment with their family to reflect on the year and the importance of the Jodo Shinshu teachings. Also, they could map out a plan for the year 2007 : What we wish to work on as a family; What important teachings will we emphasize; Why are we

a Jodo Shinshu Family and how can we be better; How do we accomplish all that we wish to do; etc.

3. **CREATE A REFLECTION ALBUM:** Bring pictures that signify the important events of the year and place them in the album. Under each picture write a paragraph explaining why that event was significant and what was learned from that event or activity (a dharma lesson). Invite parents and friends to an Album Sharing event with tea and cookies.
4. **INVITE MEMBERS OF THE SANGHA (PARENTS/ADULTS) TO JOIN IN AN ACTIVITY UNDER A TREE:**
 - a. Students will perform for the adults in the outdoor setting by sharing their reflections. It can be in the form of a play, a recitation, a song, a dance, etc.
 - b. The adults will be the audience and can also be invited to share their reflections.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

1. Create a Personal Reflection Book. For the lower grades, it would be a book of drawings. For the upper grades, it could be a book of writings. When completed, students may wrap it up and give it to their parents as a holiday gift.
2. Make a flower pot of Appreciation. Purchase a flower pot from a garden shop. Have the students decorate the outside of the pot with words of appreciation or pictures of appreciation. (Drawn with marking pens, paste magazine pictures with decoupage, paste fabric around the pot, etc.) Place a small plant inside the pot (can be planted with soil or can be a purchased small plant that fits into the pot). Students will give this to their parents or grandparents in appreciation for their love and help throughout the year.
3. Create a Buddhist Card Game to play during the holidays. Cut paper into card size and give each student a stack. Students could write questions or “paste cut out questions” onto one side of the card. On the other side, place the answer. The students will devise their own question and answer game using the cards. See page 4 for some questions and answers.

Give each student a sheet of paper that has the following information:

Name of Game: _____
Name of Players: _____ Dates played: _____ Scores: _____

What was learned:

Students will turn in this sheet to the teacher when they return in January.

4. Use the word ‘REFLECTION’ and create a “Bingo Card” or a card game or other creative games.

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR DHARMA SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. Question: What is Buddhism?
Answer: Buddhism is the Teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha.
2. Question: What is the Teaching of the Buddha?
Answer: The Buddha teaches us to revere our religion, respect our parents and teachers, and to love all forms of life.
3. Question: Why should we love all forms of life?
Answer: Because all life is One.
4. Question: What does the word Buddha mean?
Answer: The word Buddha means The Enlightened One.
5. Question: When did the last Buddha live?
Answer: About two thousand five hundred years ago.
6. Question: Where was the Buddha born?
Answer: He was born in India, in Lumbini Garden.
7. Question: When was the Buddha born?
Answer: 623 B.C.
8. Question: What was the Buddha's name at birth?
Answer: His name was Siddhartha Gautama
9. Question: Who were Siddhartha Gautama's parents?
Answer: King Sudhodana and Queen Maya
10. Question: What happened when Siddhartha Gautama was born?
Answer: Wise men foretold that he would become a great teacher or a great king.
11. Question: What did the wise hermit Asita say about Siddhartha Gautama?
Answer: "Truly this child will become a Buddha and show to all men the path to salvation.
12. Question: Why did Asita weep then he said the prophecy?
Answer: Because he knew that he would not live to see the glory of this child.
13. Question: What did the king do to try and stop the prince from becoming a Buddha?
Answer: He built beautiful palaces and garden for him and tried to keep the knowledge of old age, sickness, and death from him.
14. Question: Was the king successful in keeping the outside world away from the prince?
Answer: No. When the prince passed along the streets of the city, he met an old man, a sick man, and the funeral of a dead man.
15. Question: Why did the prince decide to leave his home?
Answer: To go out in search of the Truth.
16. Question: Was it hard for the prince to leave his home?
Answer: Yes, because he had a wife and a dear little boy.

NEW YEAR'S DAY SERVICE – JANUARY 1ST

From TRADITIONS OF JODOSHINSHU HONGWANJI-HA by Reverend Masao Kodani and Russel Hamada, Pureland Publications, Senshin Buddhist Temple. Hanamatsuri 1995

SHUSHO-E – “observe-new year-gathering”

The observance of Shusho-e originated in the Nara Period and lasted for seven days in all the temples throughout Japan. Homes are cleaned and debts paid before the new year. Oshogatsu or New Years customs vary from prefecture to prefecture but the foods and decorations all have to do with symbols of long life, happiness, prosperity, and fertility. The Shusho-e begins the cycle of those holidays and festivals which root one even deeper in the Buddhadharma. Three special traditions associated with oshogatsu are:

SHOCHIKUBAI – “pine-bamboo-plum”: The traditional floral arrangement of pine, bamboo, and plum branches in homes and as altar offerings is of relatively recent origin. Pine branches were used in New Year's Day ceremonies from the middle of the Heian Period. The pine, being an evergreen, is symbolic of long life. Bamboo was added to the pine branches in the Muromachi Period. The bamboo is the symbol of endurance and resiliency since it bends but never breaks. The plum was added in the Tokugawa Period and the term Shochikubai was coined as the floral symbol of the new year. The plum tree is the first to bloom in late winter and is the symbol of hardiness.

KAGAMI MOCHI – “mirror-mochi”: This offering is also referred to as Kasane Mochi. Mochi, a rice cake made from glutinous rice, has been served on all festive occasions since Heian times. Kagami Mochi is so named because of its resemblance to the traditional metal mirrors. It is also called Kasane Mochi since the Oshogatsu offering of mochi on the altar is made up of two cakes of mochi one piled on top of the other. An orange or tangerine is then placed on top of the piled mochi. The fruit was originally a citrus called bitter Orange or Daidai in Japanese. The Bitter Orange is a tree whose fruit are yellow in winter but turn green again if left on the tree until spring. This seeming return to youth can represent the prosperity of children from age to age. The term “from age to age” is also pronounced daidai in Japanese, hence the use of the bitter Orange. Temple offerings of Kagami Mochi are often Kohaku Mochi – “red-white mochi” – where one of the two cakes is colored red and the other left white.

ZONI – “mixed-boil”: Zoni is a clear soup containing mochi, a green vegetable, and kamaboko. Traditionally it is the first thing eaten on New Year's Day. The eating of mochi on the first day of the new year appears in the earliest records and most probably began in prehistoric times. Zoni is often served after the Shusho-e Service.

DHARMA AND FOOD

By Rev. Irene Nakamoto

As we enjoy this holiday season with friends and family (our sangha, our ohana), may we gratefully taste the food and may we also sincerely appreciate the dharma.

D Digest your food as well as the Buddha-Dharma. Taste and listen with our senses and swallow our food and the dharma with great satisfaction. Spend time and effort to digest the Dharma and eat slowly and purposefully to digest our Food.

H Hannyanto (prajna-water or Enlightenment Water or sake). We add sake to our cooking to give it that special spark and a dash of “enlightenment”. In the same way, we want to listen to the dharma with that spark of joy and gratitude.

A “Aha, that dharma touches me!” The dharma talk that touches us is nourishment to our being as it permeates within us. In the same way, the food that is prepared gives us the pleasure of nourishment for our body. Just as we say, “That food is good or oishii”, we should also rejoice with “That dharma talk is good and oishii.”

R Rejoice as we eat and rejoice as we listen to the dharma. With joy and gratitude, rejoice as we take each bite of food and as we enjoy the dharma. In the *Kyogyoshinsho* (Teaching, Practice, Faith and Attainment), Shinran Shonin used the term “enjoy” in this way: “Ah, hard to encounter, even in many lifetimes, is the decisive cause of birth, Amida’s Universal Vow! Hard to realize, even in myriads of *kalpas*, is pure *shinjin* that is true and real! If you should come to realize this practice and *shinjin*, **rejoice** at the conditions from the distant past that have brought it about.”

M Make each meal enjoyable and appreciate each bite for many hands and beings went into preparing the food before us. Although *Shojin Ryori* (vegetarian cooking) was the food of monks, Shinran Shonin was the first person in Buddhist history to openly eat meat. Make each dharma lesson enjoyable so students will appreciate what they have learned with their total being.

A Attitudes toward food and toward the dharma are important. In the term *shojin ryori*, *ryori* means “cooking” and *shojin* is a Buddhist term that means “effort” or “endeavor:”. This *shojin* or “right effort” is one of the Noble Eight-fold path. In the development of the Mahayana School of Buddha-dharma, *shojin* was made one of the Six Paramitas. Our positive attitude toward learning and appreciating the dharma excites us to listen, to read, and to communicate.

Through the Dharma we are enriched and nourished. Through the Foods we are enriched and nourished. Rejoice in the food and the dharma!

“When you rejoice by yourself alone,
Remember that there are two;
If two of you rejoice together,
Remember that there are three.
And that other is Shinran.”

SIMPLE FLAVORS

Life is seasoned with the flavors of the dharma, always enriching, invigorating, and stimulating. With these flavors, the Buddha-dharma is a lifelong learning process.

Listed below are some simple sauces to flavor your foods during this holiday season and throughout the year. (Shared by Reverend Earl Ikeda)

Goma-jyoyu Ae

2 Tablespoons pan roasted and ground White Sesame Seeds
2 Teaspoons Sugar
2 Tablespoons Shoyu
Dashi as necessary

Goma-zu Ae

4 Tablespoons White Sesame Seeds
1 Tablespoon Sugar
1 Teaspoon Shoyu
2 Tablespoons Rice Vinegar

Su-miso

6 Tablespoons Miso
4 Tablespoons Sugar
4 Tablespoons Rice Vinegar or Lemon
Dashi or water as necessary

Vinegar Sauce

1 cup Rice Vinegar
1 cup Sugar
4 Teaspoons salt

Put all ingredients in a jar and shake well. Keep in refrigerator and use when needed. Note: use to make sushi and namasu. Pour amount as needed.

Dharma Card for December (by Reverend Koju Fujieda)

The palm pressed
onto His Treasure Seat still warm;
Cool breeze

---Tenko (Ven. Zenge)

<December 8 is the day of Shakyamuni' s Enlightenment.>

Here is a brief explanation of the Dharma Card on page 7:

“Namaste,” “Namaste” greeted us into the plane of Air India around this time 33 years ago. I was leaving Japan as an attendant to the previous Chief Abbot Ven. Zenge of the main temple Goshoji on his Nembutsu Journey to the Buddhist remains in India.

“Namaste” is a daily greeting in that country, but I was pleased to learn then that “namas” means “I respect” and “te” means “you.” What a gracious greeting it is! When “I respect you,” there will be no conflict around at all.

This “namas” constitutes “Namu” of “Namuamidabutsu, so “Namuamidabutsu” implies “I respect Amida Buddha.” (Shan’ tao translated “namas” as “Kimyo” or “I entrust myself to you,” though.)

At Buddha Gaya Ven. Zenge placed his palm onto the big rock where Shakyamuni sat in meditation to reach enlightenment, and then remarked he felt as if the warmth of His Body was still there.

By Reverend Koju Fujieda

TASTE

FROM *LIFE THROUGH THE POWER OF THE BUDDHA*, 108 Mini-Essays of Meditation, Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, 2002.

Among the six sense organs which human beings possess, the fourth is the tongue. Its object is taste.

Buddhism analyzes taste and lists two sets of five tastes.

In the first set are the five kinds which we taste in our daily lives, i.e., sour, bitter, sweet, hot, and salty. Our food and drinks have one or several of these tastes.

In the second set are tastes resulting from the five stages in refining milk. In Japanese they are called *Nyumi*, *Rakumi*, *Shosomi*, *Jukusomi*, and *Daigomi*. These terms may be defined thusly:

Nyumi is milk itself;

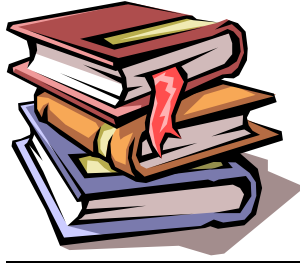
Rakumi is butter;

Shosomi is cheese;

Jukusomi is yogurt; and *Daigomi* is refined yogurt, i.e., the best taste you can get out of milk.

Actually the second set of tastes is said to show metaphorically the depth of the teaching of Buddhism. *Daigomi* is the highest ideal of Buddhism, the state of enlightenment.

Even today, Japanese people describe truly exquisite things with the word *daigomi*.



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