



【Ancestor Veneration is a bodhisattva practice and will facilitate attainment of peaceful world】

The other day, in the early evening of a very hot day, Manhattan was hit with strong winds accompanied by sudden downpour with lightning and thunder joining the raucous. It lasted only for several minutes. But the evening shower swept noisily through the city streets. Soon, the sky cleared, as if nothing had happened. We did feel gust of cool air, but the full blown summer has definitely arrived.



Maybe towards the end of March, we received a letter from our Boston member, Christine. She wished to have an ancestor veneration service held at her home and requested for me to attend. She even indicated the date she hoped to hold the service. Her objectives were: “At present, I would like to show my appreciation for the life I have been given. Also, there are various problems here in our district, so I would like to pray with hopes that everyone attains happiness...”

She continued with, “The New York Sangha is very important and necessary for me.” It turned out that I was able to attend on the day she requested. The other day, I went up to Boston accompanied by our chapter leader, Yasuko, and Chief of Dharma Center, Yoshi.

Christine’s two elder sisters participated in the ancestor veneration service and we were able to hold a heartfelt sutra recitation for their ancestors. After saying, “We are sisters with different religious faiths, but we have respect for Buddhism, our younger sister’s religion,” her sisters chanted the Kyoten with us. Following the service, Christine shared various joys she experienced as result of her contact with the teachings, expressing that joy with her whole body. We were able to spend a delightful time with them, filled with much joyfulness.

Sutra recitation, in the first place, is an expression of taking refuge in and of our gratitude toward the Buddha. Of course, that we are living here and now is thanks to the baton of life passed down by our parents and our numerous ancestors. When we trace the root of our lives further, we will discover that we are caused to live by the One Great Life Force. Sutra recitation is an opportunity for us to contemplate the value of our own life. And then, we cannot help but seriously look at our own selves and how we are living. That Christine wishes for everyone’s happiness and good spirit must be because her soul realizes how “all of us have mutually been gifted the Buddha’s life.”

August is the Urabon month. “Urabon” is the phonetic adaptation in Japanese for the Sanskrit word “Ullambana” and is generally called “O-bon.”

The origin of “O-bon” is the story of how Venerable Mokuren (Maudgalyāyana), one of the ten great disciples of Shakyamuni known for having the greatest divine power, liberated his mother, Shodainyo. Venerable Mokuren learned the importance of transferring the merits of the sutra recitation and of serving others. He immediately put them into action and thus liberated his mother.

The other day, we held the Urabon Ceremony at the New York Dharma Center. It is a traditional



ritual among the ancestor veneration services, and thus, I wholeheartedly welcomed all the ancestors as I read each and every posthumous name (or given name).

The concluding words for the “Prayers for Transfer of Merits at Ullambana Ceremony 2016,” which I read on behalf of the President, were as follows:

“...will watch over our bodhisattva practice and extend their hands of compassion and guidance for the achievement of peace on our water-rich unique Mother Earth in the midst of this wondrous galaxy. We also pray that the world of all living beings will find peace.”

I read these words with deep appreciation for they left such a strong impression on me.

Through our daily sutra recitation, we are given opportunities to awaken to the value of our life. Our sense of gratitude toward our ancestors deepens and we naturally find ourselves reflecting on the way we live. We eventually remember we were taught that such introspection can connect to a desire to be helpful for others – of putting into practice the bodhisattva way,

This is indeed, the ultimate merit of ancestor veneration – “facilitating attainment of world peace.”

Gassho
New York Dharma Center Minister
Etsuko Fujita

Topic

On July 15, when the Urabon Ceremony was held at the NY Dharma Center, we received an impressive number of requests totaling 268 names from 40 families. The altar was filled with heartfelt offerings and with Rev. Fujita as leader, the certified Dharma Teachers read the posthumous names (or given names) earnestly from the heart.

I would like to share some of Rev. Fujita’s story she told us after the service.

We are fortunate today to have received so many posthumous names, each and every one of which we wholeheartedly read.

It seemed as if each ancestor was acknowledging with a “Yes!” entering the altar room with joy when his or her name was read. Urabon is the phonetic adaptation in Japanese for the Sanskrit word “Ullambana.” The Japanese translation for Ullambana is *touken* which means the “state of being hung upside down.”

In such a state, our heart and mind is distorted or inverted; we see things as unchanging and fixed and/or think from a self-centered point of view. Essentially, in spite of the fact that one cannot always get one’s way, there is still the desire to have one’s way. Such thoughts beget greed and anger, develop a self-centered mind, and as result create conflict with others. Because of such state of things, for one, there is the ancestor veneration for the deceased which was taught in the story of Mokuren Sonjya.

The other point for the tradition of O-bon in Japan is that once a year, our ancestors return to visit our home. Therefore, Rev. said, when we do our ancestor veneration, it would be wonderful for us to do our very best with our offerings to them and to live in a way that can reassure them when they see how we are living.

I would like to take this day as an opportunity to vow to live my daily life in such a way that my ancestors, my parents and all the people who support us, even those I am not aware, will feel reassured.





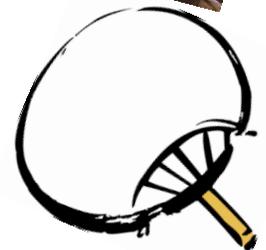
7/15 Urabon-e
Special Memorial Service



7/5 Gohonzon
Enshrinement
Ceremony for the Lynch
Family.



6/29 Ancestor Memorial
Service for the Roderick
Family.
Christine and her two
sisters



SCHEDULE FOR NEW YORK CHAPTER

August 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 9AM First Day of the Month Service President's Dharma Guidance	2 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza 2-4PM Chapter Leaders' Meeting	3 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Reach out day	4 9AM Memorial Service for Founder 10AM Hoza	5 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza	6 Closed: Dharma Practices at home 8/6-8 Chicago
7 1PM Sunday Service President's Dharma Guidance Chicago	8 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza	9 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza	10 9AM Memorial Service for Cofounder 10AM Hoza	11 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Guidance for Leaders	12 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Monthly Memorial Service	13 Closed: Dharma Practices at home
14 1PM Prayer for Peace Study Session	15 9AM The Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni Day 10AM-5PM Steering Committee/ Missionary Mtgs		17 Summer Holiday			20 Closed: Dharma Practices at home
21 1PM Sunday Service Hoza	22 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza	23 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza	24 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Reach out day	25 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Guidance for Leaders	26 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza	27 Closed: Dharma Practices at home
28 Closed	29 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza	30 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Hoza	31 9AM Sutra Recitation 10AM Reach out day	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> Online Buddhism 8/3(Wed)-9/21(Wed) Every Wednesday night 9-11pm </div>		