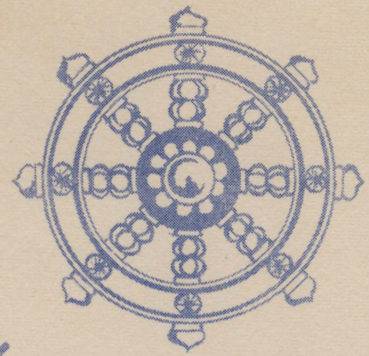


## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 'HOJI'

The Buddhist memorial service is known as 'hoji' or 'hojo' in the Japanese language and this service is held on the date of the passing away of a person. On this day we go to church or stay at home and clean the altar, offer flowers, candies, incense, etc., invite a minister to recite the sutra and deliver a sermon. This is a typical 'hojo' which is being observed by the Buddhists.



What is the significance of such a service?

Firstly, to recite the sutra is to listen to the sacred words of the Buddha which are the expressions of His mercy. No matter how much we strive to use the noble words in our attempt to praise the merits of the Buddha, we cannot possibly hope to approach the level of sacredness of the Buddha's words. Therefore, we recite the sutra in order to express our gratitude and praise the Buddha's merits.

The congregation must listen attentively to the sutra, grasp the true significance of the words, believe in them, and then try to practice them. Thus, the spirit of the Buddha will be passed on to many people and therefore, the observance of 'hojo' becomes an act of gratitude to the Buddha.

Secondly, we remember the deceased by observing these services from time to time. We give our thanks to those persons who have gone before us by holding these services on the dates of their passing into Nirvana.

Thirdly, and perhaps one of the important points about a 'hoji' is that, as a result of our expression of gratitude to the Buddha and the loved ones who passed away, we ourselves become more awakened to the teaching of the Buddha and become more determined to understand and follow the teaching. This awakening is, in itself, the truest of gratitude to both the Buddha and the loved one whom we remember in these services.

When a family is able to get together and observe this service, it is indicative of good health and fortunate circumstances of the family. Also, when a family is congregated at such a service, it is united in the spirit of the Buddha and this becomes a source of great joy to those who have passed on already. It is an act of great merit to bring joy to the deceased.

It is with these thoughts that the Buddhists must observe the 'hoji' for the members of the family or for those who were close to them. It is preferable to hold this service on the 'meinichi' (Japanese term for the date of death), but if for any reason this cannot be done, it is permissible to observe the service a few days prior to the actual date. On these occasions we must strive to reject the evil and to practice the good; this is the meaning of the Buddhist memorial service.

No other religion has this type of memorial service and we must strive to carry on this significant Buddhist custom.

### NEN-KI

(Anniversary Memorial Service)

The nen-ki is calculated from a person's date of death as follows:

- a) Up to the forty-ninth day, the date of death is observed every seventh day. However, in usual practice it is reduced to a single observance and service on the thirty-fifth or forty-ninth day.
- b) The memorial date is then observed with a service on the one-hundredth day and one year. From the following year the customary Japanese way is to designate the actual second anniversary as the "third," the actual sixth as the "seventh," etc.

So after the first year, the anniversaries observed are the third, seventh, thirteenth, seventeenth, twenty-third, twenty-seventh, thirty-third, fiftieth and the one hundredth. Thereafter, it is observed every fifty years. Among Shinshu Buddhists, the twenty-fifth anniversary is observed in place of the twenty-third and the twenty-seventh.









大德院殿通徹法友日幸大居士

野澤朝幸

昭和三十年二月十七日逝

勝涼院殿曉華妙幸日正大姉

野澤まさの

昭和十三年五月二十四日逝