

Festival of Wesak – BWZ - Zoom

Story of the Buddha's Birth (Excerpts from the Buddhacarita, a text composed by Aśvaghōṣa (early second century C.E.)

Queen Māyā perceived that the time of delivery was at hand. She lay down on an excellent couch, with numerous ladies waiting upon her.

On the eighth day of the fourth month the moment was serene and the atmosphere harmonious. [Queen Maya] observed [a] fast and developed her pure qualities, and the Bodhisattva was born from her right side. Saving the world with his great compassion, he did not let his mother suffer...

As if he had fallen down from the sky, he did not pass through the portal of birth. Having cultivated virtue for countless eons, he was born fully conscious, without any confusion...

Upright and clear of mind, he walked seven steps with dignity. On the bottom of his feet his level soles were well placed. His brightness was as penetrating as the seven stars.

Stepping like a lion, king of the animals, he observed the four directions. With thorough insight into the meaning of the truth, he thus spoke with the fullest assurance:

“As this birth is a buddha's birth, it is my last birth. Just in this one birth I shall save all!”

At this occasion two pleasant streams came pouring down from the sky. One was warm and the other cool. They poured down on his head, so that he felt physically happy...

Fine powdered incense of sandalwood and a multitude of precious lotus [petals] floated in the sky, blowing in the wind. They fell and scattered in profusion...

The sun and the moon were as usual, but [the Bodhisattva's] radiance doubled their light... A multitude of wonderful fine flowers blossomed out of season.

The various kinds of fierce beings momentarily had friendly thoughts, and diseases in the world disappeared by themselves, without any cure applied.

The birds and animals with their confused cries fell silent, not making any sound.

The ten thousand rivers all stopped flowing and muddy waters all became clear.

In the sky there were no clouds, and celestial drums sounded all by themselves.

All the worldly beings were safe and happy, just as when a country in upheaval suddenly has obtained a wise and able ruler.

The Bodhisattva was born to save the world from suffering.

Three Full Bows: ◆^R

“The Holy Day of Wesak.” *Kokyo announces the song and invites all to join in.*

Buddha Lord we offer
On thy birthday fair
Garlands of the brightest
Blossoms choice and rare.

Holy day of Wesak
Day of Buddha’s birth
When the sun of wisdom
Shone upon the earth.

Incense too we offer
On this festive day
For the things we cherish
All must pass away.

Through this holy symbol
We shall learn to see
Things of priceless value
Hid in transiency.

And the deep gong sounding
Bids us leave the self
And in Buddha’s teaching
Find the truest wealth.

Lights upon the altar
Show to us the way
from the realms of darkness
To Nirvana’s day.

Chant leader alone –

Universal Gateway of Compassion ●

All together, slower than usual –

Bod·hi·sat·tva In·fi·nite Thought

asked a ques·tion in verse:

“World-ho·nored One, of won·drous form,

I in·qui·re ag·ain of that bud·dha-child:

what are the caus·es of her name,

‘Re·gar·ding the Cries of the World?’” [People start processing...]

The Ho·nored One, of won·drous form,

Re·plied in verse to In·fi·nite Thought:

“Lis·ten to the deeds of Kan·ze·on,

who apt·ly re·sponds in ev·ery quar·ter.

With vast pledge as deep as oc·eans,

Through·out kal·pas be·yond reck·on·ing,

she served ma·ny thou·sands of mil·lions of bud·dhas,

bring·ing forth this great pure vow.

For you I ex·plain it brief·ly:

Hear·ing the name or see·ing the form of Kan·ze·on

with mind·ful re·mem·brance is not in vain,

for the woes of ex·is·tence can thus be re·lieved.

When liv·ing be·ings suf·fer hard·ships,

Burd·ened by im·meas·'rab·le woes,

the pow·er of Kan·ze·on's won·dr·ous wis·dom

can re·lieve the suf·'ring of the world.

Ful·ly en·dow·ed with mi·ra·cu·lous pow·ers,
Wide·ly prac·tic·ing wis·dom and skill·ful means,
in eve·ry land and in all di·rec·tions,
in no realm does she not ap·pear.

In all the var·i·ous ev·il des·tin·ies,
of hell be·ings, hun·gry ghosts, and an·i·mals,
the suf·'rings of birth, old age, sick·ness, and death,
are gra·dual·ly re·lieved by Com·pas·sion.

Oh you of the true gaze, of the pure gaze,
of the gaze of broad and great wis·dom,
of the com·pas·sion·ate gaze and the gaze of good will,
ev·er longed for, ev·er re·vered.

Un·blem·ished, ser·ene ra·di·ance,
Be·ne·vo·lent sun, dis·pel·ling all gloom,
Com·pas·sion can sub·due the wind and fi·re of woes,
Clear·ly il·lum·i·na·ting the world.

The pre·cepts of com·pas·sion roar like thun·der,
the kind heart won·drous as great clouds,
pour·ing dhar·ma rain of sweet dew,
quench·ing all flames of troub·ling pas·sion.

The wond·rous voice of Com·pas·sion,
Brah·ma·voice, voice of the roll·ing tides,
Sur·pas·ses ev·ery sound with·in all the world;
There·fore ev·er keep it in mind.

In each thought, with ne·ver a doubt,
Kan·ze·on, the pure sage,
in pain, a·go·ny, or in death's dis·tress,
can pro·vide a sure sup·port.

Ful·ly en·dowed with all vir·tues,
her eye of com·pas·sion be·holds all be·ings,
+ as·sem·bling a bound·less o·cean of hap·pi·ness;
+ thus, with rev·'rence, you should make pros·tra·tions.”

Offertory

Chant leader alone –

From Great Compassion | comes forth the Pure Dharma | Body. ::

Unborn, Uncreated. ||

We pray | that the darkness of our de | lusions ::

May be illuminated by | True Compassion. ||

On this ___ day of April | we are gathered here to offer sweet tea, flowers, candles, water,
and cakes -- to celebrate the birth of our Great Master, -- Shakyamuni | Buddha. ::

Out of gratitude we wish to offer the merits of the recitation of “The Litany of the Great
Compassionate One,” the Wesak Hymn and “Universal Gate- | way of Compassion.” ||

The wonderful Undambara flower bloomed u | pon this day. ::

And the meaning of this | festival is found within its | blossom. ||

Even as its sweet fragrance fills the whole world, - - so does | Buddhism cover the earth.

|||

The birth of Shakyamuni brought the sun of hope to a world of | darkness. ::

And illuminated the whole | Universe. -- He took upon Himself the form of a human
being, -- was born with the 32 marks of a | Buddha, ||

And for immeasurable time pursued works of | Great Compassion. |||

He found and transcended the cause of | suffering. ::

All beings whether saints or laymen praise this magnificent under | standing. -- His 300
sermons are for us as rain is for the | trees and grass. ||

Just as rain causes drooping flowers to flourish - - so his words | touch our heavy hearts.

|||

At this very moment the rain of the | Dharma ::

Pours into the lake of | Kindness. ||

The merit of His life may be likened to the wind which, -- as it bends the grass and fans the leaves, -- blows the good seed of the Dharma to take root in the hearts of people all over the world, -- e | ven after 2,000 years, |||

And | will continue to do so -- not only in this | world but also in the next. |||

We the followers | of our | Great Master :: | Shakyamuni ::

Bow | in gratitude to Him – for His goodness and com | passion ||

As we | celebrate His birthday. |||

We pray | that His halo, -- which is the | light of the Dharma ::

Will illuminate the darkness of the delusion of those | beings of this world -- | who have not heard His name. ||

We pray that all beings may be saved and thus prosper -- | for all eternity. |||

We pray | that the seed -- of | Buddhahood ::

Will bud and blossom into the | flower of enlightenment ||

So that its beauty -- may | fill the universe. |||

All together –

- All buddhas throughout space and time,
- All honored ones, bodhisattvas, mahasattvas,
- Wisdom beyond wisdom, maha prajna paramita.

Three full bows: ◆^R