

Mottainai

Updated 2020

The information below is from the book – Joy, Remembrance, Death – Obon Music for North America by Wynn Kiyama, Rev. Masao Kodani, and Nobuko Miyamoto; Southern District Dharma School Teachers League, Los Angeles, CA.; 2016

This is one of the Oregon Buddhist Temple favorites. We all sing along while dancing.

Mottainai (2011) “Don’t Be Wasteful”

Nobuko Miyamoto (m/l/c), Rev. Masao Kodani (c)

In 2009, Miyamoto attended the Parliament of the World’s Religions and was inspired by a message to care and work for the environment. The next year, she released “BYO Chopstix,” calling for an end to disposable wooden chopsticks, and developed “Mottainai” (“Don’t Be Wasteful”) in a series of residencies and community workshops. The lyrics describe a baa-chan (grandmother) who reprimands her grandchildren for being wasteful. The choreography follows the text, with dancers gathering material things in sweeping arm movements and throwing them away over each shoulder. Baa-chan is portrayed with a scolding finger and the dance pattern ends with a flowing tenguui representing the celebration of nature. Miyamoto continued her series of songs and videos with environmental messages (“Eco-Vids”), with “Cycles of Change” in 2012, featuring the East Los Angeles Chicano rock group Quetzal.

Teaching Video:

<https://youtu.be/sq30k4-8r-l>

Dance Video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOXPkqkdXSY&list=PLkeYL6A2MrBSVoMr2SShTA4C_sbfqvs_G&index=9

Lyrics: Also from the book – Joy, Remembrance, Death – Obon Music for North America

Oh, mottainai...

Remember what baa-chan used to say?
What a waste, what a shame what you throw away.
Every piece of paper, every grain of rice,
Every drop of water. She would use it twice, saying,
Oh, mottainai...

We laughed, we lost what baa-chan taught.
We ran away and we forgot.
Running to the future, running from the past.
Running on empty and it just can't last.
Oh, mottainai...

It's an ancient wisdom that everyone can use.
Don't waste what nature gives you.
Take the old and make it new.

We take, we use, we throw away...

Remember what baa-chan used to say?
What a waste, what a shame what you throw away
Every piece of paper, every grain of rice
Every drop of water. She would use it twice, saying,
Oh, mottainai...

It's an ancient wisdom that everyone can use.
Don't waste what nature gives you.
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