
O N E N E S S

Quarterly Newsletter of the Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose Dharma Legacy Vol. 1 No. 1 Autumn 1997

*From Rev. Gyomay
and Minnie Kubose*

We are deeply grateful for the founding of the Kubose Dharma Legacy. It has been our lifetime vision to open wide the gates of the Dharma teachings using American terminology so that people from all walks of life could understand and apply the teachings to everyday living.

*From The Buddhist
Temple of Chicago*

We at the Board of Directors were pleased to receive the information concerning the founding and objectives of the Gyomay M. Kubose Dharma Legacy. We wish you the very best in focusing on carrying on the teachings of Rev. Kubose and find the interest of his descendants to do so most appropriate. In a spirit of oneness, we applaud your efforts.

ONENESS

by Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose

The reality of nature, the reality of life is oneness. But we humans have such a strong egotistic nature. We are the ones who create dualism; we are the ones who talk about two sides: front and back, right and wrong, me and you. As soon as life is dichotomized, tension is created. But when life is harmonized, there are no quarrels, no complaints. Each takes his or her part and does the best. There is totality in oneness. A mother and child are one. A mother forgets danger and risks her life for the child. It is not sacrifice. They are two separate beings but they are one. A mother exhibits an immediate, direct action of oneness. It is a natural act - not a sense of duty, or "must," or "ought."

Oneness and individuality coexist. There is no question about the importance and uniqueness of each individual life. However, difference is no difference. The very difference is equality, is one. When colorless light is put through a prism it separates into different colors. This very light is all colors;

all the colors are one light. Our life is like that: various manifestations, various individualities, but the core of life is one. When we become one, it is colorless no self, no ego. But our narrow, self-centeredness prevents us from seeing this oneness. When we learn to transcend this ego activity, we find that our ego as it is becomes the true self. This is enlightenment. Different lives become one life, transcending differences yet maintaining uniqueness. We harmoniously live one life. We say a hand has a front and back. But there is only one hand. Hand is hand. Dichotomizing and labelling are only concepts. We should not conceptualize and divide things into two. Reality is one. Our life is one.

Inside:

Legacy: *Past Present Future*

Activities: *Oneness Workshop
planned for November*

Views of "Oneness" *Book excerpts*

Dear Sensei Letters: *Readers
discuss "God" and reincarnation*

President's Message

WHY LEGACY?

By Rev. Koyo Sunnan Kubose

I would like to describe what motivated me to begin establishing the Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose Dharma Legacy (aka Kubose Dharma Legacy).

THE PAST

During the past 20 years of my ministry, I have had the privilege of experiencing first hand how Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose lived the Buddhist teachings. Being his son, I have seen how his understanding of the teachings are manifested in his daily family life. There is no separation between who he is as a minister and how he lives as an ordinary human being.

I also have seen how other people have been influenced. Monks from different countries, as well as various ministers from across the country, when in Chicago made it a point to visit Rev. Kubose. The word was, as one of them put it, "When in Chicago, visit Kubose."

Whenever I was a guest speaker at various temples in different parts of the country, people would mention meeting Rev. Kubose when he had come to speak at their temple. They would often comment on his book, "Everyday Suchness." I was impressed by how much impact he had on so many people. Once I was a guest speaker at a Buddhist retreat in Washington. During a break in the activities, I went for a walk in the woods. A man from Portland, Oregon, a prominent lay leader of the Buddhist Churches of America, was walking with me. He talked about "Everyday Suchness" and then he summarized by simply but emphatically saying, "It just makes sense!" I also remember a vivacious college student from Hawaii who had adjustment problems during her first year away from home attending a Midwestern university. She wrote, "I didn't know where to turn for help in dealing with my homesickness and being overwhelmed with my new environment. Then I remembered... I had a copy of 'Everyday Suchness!' It helped me tremendously."

Over the years I have met so many people who have told me how they were influenced by Rev. Kubose. I also have seen countless letters from people who wrote Rev. Kubose thanking him for the great influence his teachings had on their lives.

THE PRESENT

Six years have gone by since Rev. Kubose officially retired from the Buddhist Temple of Chicago at the age of 86. This year he is 92 years old. Although he is in good health and has continued to participate in temple functions, he has had to cut back on his activities. He no

longer gives Sunday Dharma talks. He no longer conducts family services for temple members. He does not travel to conferences or go to guest speak at other temples.

As Rev. Kubose's direct influence has gradually waned with the passage of time, questions occurred to me. "Wouldn't it be a shame if the coming generations were not able to receive what he had to offer?" "Would his books continue to be made available?" "Would his emphasis on a non-dualistic, non-sectarian approach to Buddhism endure and flourish?" This led to the thought, "An organization is needed to specifically focus on the perpetuation and continued development of his work." Without such an organization, his influence could gradually become just a warm memory of a past time in history. After a lifetime of promoting Buddhism in America, it would be sad indeed if his contributions did not continue their influence.

I came to deeply realize that my father's work, his teachings, his life is a gift. How fortunate I am to be able to receive this gift. It makes my whole life worthwhile. It puts to rest all questions of purpose or meaning in my life. This gift of the Dharma is available to everyone. All individual spiritual journeys are struggles. Mine was. I hope that when my children, other family members and relatives have to face ultimate questions in life, as each of us must do - may they be as fortunate as I was in being able to be nourished by what Rev. Kubose himself gained and offered to all of us.

THE FUTURE

It is because Rev. Kubose's teachings have influenced my life that I feel they are precious and have so much to offer others. Thus I thought, "Yes, we need an organization dedicated to the legacy of his life." This makes sense, rather than leaving the availability of what he has to offer to the vicissitudes of time and circumstance. Although one never knows how things may turn out, it's the doing and living that is important. So, what can I do to start things off? What is the best way to proceed? It occurred to me that a natural way is for the family to be the nucleus in ensuring the continuity of Rev. Kubose's life's work.

I am inspired by my father's Buddhist Name, Gyomay, which means Bright Dawn. It has been said, "The only real joy in the world is to begin." It is always the beginning of a shining new day. I hope to live up to the Buddhist name given to me by my father, Koyo, which means "face the sun."

Editor of this issue
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Oneness Newsletter Autumn 1997

Please send:
Comical Karma ❖ Poems ❖ Seasonings ❖ Dear Sensei
Winter issue deadline: Nov. 10

We have made every effort to get permission to reprint material. We regret any oversight.

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Comical Karma



Dear Sensei *By Koyo*

Dear Sensei,

I understand that Rev. Kubose is a Jodo Shinshu minister that is independent of BCA. In order to understand where his point comes from, I was wondering if that was the only difference.

K.N. (San Diego, CA)

Dear Sensei *By Koyo*

Dear Sensei,

What is your view on reincarnation?
B. W. (Los Angeles, CA)

Dear B.W.,

The basic teaching of "anatman" denies the existence of a static, unchanging entity called soul or self. Thus, my interpretation is that there can be no reincarnation or transmigration of such a soul substance. Enlightenment is to go beyond the dualism of birth and death.

The Buddha denied both "nihilism" (after death, there is nothing) and "eternalism" (after death, a soul exists forever). Buddhism goes beyond such dualistic logic. Buddhism is a way of "oneness" where what is called self is another name for change itself. It has been said that there is no death as such, only one eternal change.

Perhaps this example may be helpful: When a wave rises and then returns to the ocean, where did it go? The wave (or individual self) does exist, but is not a static unchanging entity. The wave is not a thing but is a dynamic process. The ocean water that makes up what

is called "a wave" is constantly changing. In that sense, the wave and ocean are identical. Thus the Buddhist logic is "One, yet two, yet one." This is the way of Absolute Oneness.



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The Legacy is a non-sectarian American Buddhist organization established to perpetuate and develop Rev. Kubose's non-dualistic approach to Buddhism.

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VIEWS OF ONENESS

Two means the dualistic world. For instance, when you want to swim, there is an ocean and there is you. It is dualistic. Culminating in not two means jump into the ocean. Ocean and you become one. That is the ultimate state of becoming one. In other words, Oneness is not an idea of oneness. The oneness of the ocean and you is something active, something that leaves no trace of form. Activity is constantly moving from moment to moment. We do not realize it, but mind is always picking up activity right at the moment of activity. When you pick activity, immediately it is form or experience. But right in the midst of activity, there is no form. All you have to do is just be there. This is Oneness.

(Returning to Silence; Dainin Katagiri, Shambhala Publications Inc. 1988 pg. 64-65)

Vasubandhu, after describing in his discourse the twenty-nine glorious aspects of the Pure Land, Amitābha and the Bodhisattvas dwelling there, concludes that those manifestations enter into Oneness. He further explains that Oneness refers to the absolute Dharma-body (*asamskrita-dharmakāya*) which is the equivalent of Suchness, True Suchness, Ultimate Reality, Nirvana, and so on.

(The Three Pure Land Sutras; Hisao Inagaki. Nagata Bunshodo Printing Co., LTD 1994 pg. 28)

Although Nirvana, or the "Middle Way," is beyond duality, it is not characterized by a monistic view. Monism is not yet free from duality, for it is still opposed to dualism or pluralism. Being beyond duality, the view of one who has attained Nirvana is not monistic but rather non-dualistic. This is why Buddhism does not proclaim the one God, but speaks of *Sūnyatā* (Emptiness). Emptiness is realized by going beyond the one God and thus is not the relative emptiness of a mere vacuum...The universal and a particular thing are paradoxically one in the realization of Emptiness, which goes beyond the understanding which sees all things as reducible to the one.

Oneeness as a universal principle, if substantial and self-existing, must be overcome; otherwise we as particulars lose our individuality and cannot possibly awaken to Reality. From the Buddhist point of view, this is true even for God, the "only One". On the other hand, if all

particular things are respectively self-identical, there is no equality between them and everything is self-centered. Both Emptiness, the negation of oneness, and egolessness, the negation of everything's self-centeredness, are necessary for Awakening. In the realization of Emptiness which is another term for Nirvana, all particular things are respectively just as they are and yet equal in their suchness. (Zen and Western Thought; Masao Abe, University of Hawaii Press 1989 pg. 208)

Mahayana Buddhism severely criticizes a oneness of everything without discrimination as a false equality or a false sameness. Mere equality as the negation of differentiation cannot then be called true equality. Equality in oneness as the ultimate ground, e.g., *to hen*, God, *esse ipsum*, or whatever it may be named, if it is *substantial*, can never be real equality, because even equality in this sense is still involved with, and thereby limited by, a differentiation, the differentiation between the substantial oneness and the things which participate in that substance. On the contrary, in oneness which is non-substantial things do not *participate* in oneness, but are *thoroughly fulfilled* through dynamic identity with that non-substantial oneness. Therein, without eliminating its particularity and differentiation, everything is realized in itself. Only in this non-substantial oneness can equality take place.

(Zen and Western Thought; Masao Abe, University of Hawaii Press 1989 pg. 177)

In the Mahayana understanding of Buddhahood, the ideal was to attain a sense of oneness with the whole, or emptiness-as in Tendai-the truth of the Middle, where things are Void yet are as they are. The issue here between Shinshu and other traditions is to experience one's Buddha-nature as against becoming a specific Buddha.

(Strategies for Modern Living: A commentary with the Text of the Tannisho; Alfred Bloom, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1992 pg. 128)

There is considerable discussion of the important concept of Voidness and nonduality in traditional Buddhism. However, for Shinran, true nonduality goes beyond all the petty distinctions we use to classify and

judge people, others and ourselves. Only when we have given up this practice of classifying and judging can true unity, oneness of spirit, arise among us, and faith as a liberating reality vitalize our daily lives.

(Strategies for Modern Living: A commentary with the Text of the Tannisho Alfred Bloom Numata Center for buddhist Translation and Research, 1992 pg.47)

Clearly this is the basis for Shinran's statement that he has never once said the Nembutsu for his own parents, he makes real in his own life and teachings the Buddhist universalism that transcends all social, racial, political, and cultural barriers. We are all one. The respect that we owe our immediate parents and kin, we also owe equally to all beings. Major teachings of Buddhist philosophy emphasize this view whether it be the intersecting karmic destinies, the law of interdependence, or the universal Buddha in all beings. There is an essential oneness to which our egoistic delusions blind us. (Strategies for Modern Living: A commentary with the Text of the Tannisho; Alfred Bloom, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1992 pg. 70)

The structure of the religious life that we perceive in Shinran's teaching is significant for its denial of legalism and moralism, and for its attempt to base life on the deep inward awareness of finitude - our own imperfections - and gratitude. Shinran's religious philosophy has been termed the religion beyond good and evil. It is an apt description when we understand that by giving up the conscious, moralistic distinctions of good and evil as the means of comparing ourselves with others (a means whereby the comparison is usually favorable to ourselves), religion becomes an influence to unite people rather than a barrier to separate and judge people. In this way, the single-mindedness of faith will flow into the oneness of the community, inspired by the compassion which embraces and never rejects.

(Strategies for Modern Living: A commentary with the Text of the Tannisho; Alfred Bloom, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1992 pg. 75)



Seasonings

sayings to add a little flavor to life



**my karma just ran over
your dogma**

* experience over beliefs * life over ideas *

Haiku

**blueberry picking
undaunted by darkened skies
family reunion**

by Minnie Kubose

Dear Sensei *By Koyo*

Dear Sensei,

Would you care to comment upon the following quotation from noted astronomer Carl Sagan's novel *Contact*, "Do Buddhists believe in God, or not?" Ellie asked on their way to have dinner with the Abbot of the...Buddhist monastery..." Their position seems to be," Vaygay replied dryly, "that their God is so great he doesn't even have to exist."

G.C. (Chicago, IL)

Dear Readers,

Seeing the movie *Contact* recently, reminded me of the above letter I received over 10 years ago. At that time, I asked people for their comments. Here are some replies:

"The essence of Buddhism is 'sunyata' which refers to a non-dualism that is beyond the dichotomy of God vs. no God. Thus, Buddhism neither affirms nor denies the existence of God."

"God is synonymous with the totality of Life, a dynamic process. God is more a verb than a noun."

"Our human teachers, Mohammed, Jesus, and

Siddhartha were never concerned with the Greatness of God, or of each other, for that matter. But people want to follow the teachings and they want "God" on their side. The irony is that humans only know what God "knows" through our teachers. If Buddhists and believers of our other teachers were to live their teachings daily, God might be so pleased he wouldn't need to exist."

Again, I invite comments from you, the readers. Give it some thought over the dinner table or while talking in the car and drop me a line.

Dear Sensei,

I am enjoying listening to The Center Within audio cassette during my daily driving on the Southern California streets and highways. Ordering more to share these enlightening thoughts with my wife and two sons. I'm glad we found you. Please keep up the good work!

R.T. (Pasadena, CA)

Dear Sensei,

Thank you for "Dial the Dharma." A friend who used to live in Chicago told me about it. My favorite message to date is the one about spiritual poverty. I would like to join you on spiritual Skid Row and have a few laughs.

S.U. (Phoenix, AZ)



Legacy News



AMERICAN BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION PRESENTS:

a life of oneness

This workshop features:

- ✿ 20 minute video on Rev. Gyomay Kubose's life ✿
- ✿ discussion led by Koyo Kubose and Keith Cunningham ✿
- ✿ meditation session led by Richard Brandon ✿
- ✿ Dharma Circle - an open discussion for all participants ✿

For information about location, date, and registration, please contact: Adrienne Kubose @ (847) 677 - 8211

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Books by Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose

EVERYDAY SUCHNESS. A classic collection of short articles first published in 1967, hailed as one of the most significant books in Buddhism because of its simple explanations and reference to everyday life. (Eleventh printing, 1994); 142 pages.

THE CENTER WITHIN. Continues the approach of "Everyday Suchness" and speaks directly to the ordinary layperson. Collection of 58 essays reflects Rev. Kubose's unique, down-to-earth presentation of the Dharma teachings which offers to all people a richer, more meaningful life. 1986; 134 pages.

THE CENTER WITHIN audio cassette; 3 hours.

AMERICAN BUDDHISM. Covers a brief history of Buddhism in America, the Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path, problems in terminology and misunderstandings common to Westerners. 1976; 29 pages.

TAN BUTSU GE. (Translation and commentary). This sutra tells the story of Dharmakara who became Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light. 1976 (Second Printing, 1991); 56 pages.

HEART OF THE GREAT WISDOM SUTRA. (Translation and commentary). This sutra deals with the teachings of non-self and nothingness. 1975 (Second Printing, 1991); 35 pages.

THE FUNDAMENTAL SPIRIT OF BUDDHISM by Haya Akegarasu (Rev. G.M. Kubose's teacher). Translated from Japanese by Rev. Kubose; gives an idea of Rev. Akegarasu's life (1877-1954) and teachings. 1977; 87 pages.

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- Buddhism in America
- Buddhism and Christianity
- Buddhism & Psychology
- Buddhist Symbols & Rituals
- Introduction to Meditation Workshop
- Daily Dharma Workshop
- Buddhist Standup Comedy Video

For further information, please contact the Legacy.

Dial - the - Dharma

(847) 677- 8053

This telephone service began in 1982 with a collection of over 150 recorded talks by Rev. Gyomay Kubose. His wife, Minnie faithfully changed the cassettes in their home until 1995, when due to her health problems, it was moved to Rev. Sunnan's home. Subsequently, over 200 talks by Rev. Sunnan were added to the cassette library and the tapes are currently changed daily as a Legacy service.



Call Dial-the-Dharma everyday to hear a recorded 2-3 minute teaching.



Daily Dharma

The Daily Dharma Program is a personalized "mentor" service that the Legacy offers. It focuses on developing a natural way of expressing Oneness in everyday living.

The program facilitates creating a personal SPOT (Special Place of Tranquility) in your home. Additional enhancement/enrichment activities are provided which build upon the foundation of daily MAGs (Moments of Gratitude). YES (Your Everyday Spirituality) is included in every Oneness newsletter. See next page.

For further information, please contact the Legacy.

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Your Everyday Spritituality

SEPTEMBER

Theme: Right speech

Purpose: heighten awareness of and to monitor/filter critical nonessential talk

Method: "toothbrush gassho"

Before brushing teeth, put toothbrush vertically against closed lips representing shhhhh.

OCTOBER

Theme: Naturalness

Purpose: examine the "masks" we adopt in lieu of authentic interpersonal relationships

Method: "maple leaf hand"

Rotate one's hand like a falling autumn leaf, showing front/back representing our 'good/bad'.

NOVEMBER

Theme: Gratitude

Purpose: Balance self centeredness with realization of interdependency

Method: "mealtime meditation"

Before eating, think about the food compassionately as a reminder to use our energy constructively.