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# O N E N E S S

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Quarterly Newsletter of the Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose Dharma Legacy

Vol. 7 No. 1 Spring 2003

## EMPTINESS

Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose

Emptiness is a central teaching in Buddhism. The sutras constantly refer to it in various ways (e.g. “mu,” “ku,” “sunyata”). The term “emptiness” is not meant to negate things, instead it points out the essence of all things. It refers to an absolute state of no things as such. This means that no thing is fixed or static. In other words, everything changes.

Emptiness is a process, a function. Life is also a process; life is always moving on. To be alive is to be in a state of constant change. To flow with this change is to live a life that is creative and full of joy. If we do not flow with this change, life becomes monotonous. When asked, “How are you doing?” we reply, “Nothing new; just the same daily routine.” Work and home life seem dead: no stimulation or inspiration.

Since life is a process, we are always doing something. It is nice when one can find something he wants to do, rather than has to do. However, even with something you have to do, if you accept it and do it, there is satisfaction. I remember a window washer who said that people laughed at him and asked how he could stand such a boring job. His answer was, “I feel a lot of satisfaction when each window is cleaned.” This is a Buddhist attitude. Collecting the garbage or washing windows is no different from any other occupation. If one does the work willingly, there is joy.

Emptiness is process; this means that something is always being finished and something else is always beginning. One feels satisfaction with the completed accomplishment and is excited by the start of something new.

Emptiness is what makes life interesting. If there were no process or change occurring—how dull! No change implies the opposite of life, everything being stagnant and dead. I enjoyed playing cards the other night. With each deal different cards came; every deal was new. Of course, there are set rules to play by, but the cards are different each time. Sometimes the cards are good and sometimes they are not so good. The change is what makes playing cards so much fun.

Changes make life so interesting. This can be applied to our health. To be healthy is good; there is not much good in sickness. However, sickness is good in one sense. If you are always healthy, you do not appreciate being healthy. When you get sick, then you really appreciate good health. How about when the wife gets sick? Then the husband really realizes what it takes to keep things running smoothly in the house. Usually we take routine things for granted and we lack appreciation. So it is with everything else. Consider recession in the economic world. Some people suffer because of recession but from a broader perspective, recession is good in that it

makes people realize the economy is not always perfect; there are ups and downs.

Life is full of both suffering and joy. Change makes a person aware of this reality. Change helps a person realize real values in life. This change is called emptiness. It is also called the Doctrine of Impermanence; that is, nothing is permanent. This is the essence of the whole universe; it is the essence of our lives. Life moves and changes and that is why it is called empty. Emptiness means freshness; it means each moment of life is ever new, ever changing.

*(The Center Within, pages 19-21)*

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**Dial-the-Dharma**  
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# President's Message

By Rev. Koyo Kubose



I was amazed and touched by the responses communicated to us by readers of our previous Oneness newsletter that covered the death of Minnie Kubose. I had previously thought that the coverage was perhaps too personal to be of much general interest and value. Yet, indeed the topics of old age, sickness and death are universal and resonate in all our lives.

I appreciate people taking the time to write and share their experiences. Some of what was sent to us can be seen as Reader Replies in the current issue. I learn a lot from the ways people relate to and use what they have read in our newsletter. Even though what is communicated is in written form, the feelings come through strongly. This kind of person to person sharing is a real richness to me. It is the Dharma in action.

One reader who wrote mentioned that she had recently lost her mother. I sent her a little booklet, "The Avocado Plant and other stories," which I had written some years ago to help people who had lost a loved one. She wrote back thanking me and asked if she could reprint the avocado plant story for the benefit of readers of a newsletter she was associated with. Of course I gave my permission. It also occurred to me that we should print the story in our own Oneness newsletter. Thus you now can read it in this issue and perhaps use it to help others in the future. This is an example of a good idea that happened as a result of interaction with you—our readers.

Another example of a good idea that is included in this issue is about our videotape loan program. A program participant emailed us a nice description of how their small group is benefiting from our Dharma talk videos. It was impressive to read how the Dharma talk was digested and summarized. This is great feedback on our Legacy work and it motivates us to keep expanding our efforts. What we can offer is a result of and a tribute to the spirituality that is being manifested in a lot of individual lives.

Yet another example mentioned in the current newsletter is about a newly published book "Oneness" that honors the late Rev. Gyomay Kubose. The dedicated initiative of the two ladies who put this book together is inspiring. Funding the printing cost and making complimentary copies freely available shows their devoted spirit of selfless giving (dana).

The Kubose Dharma Legacy was not organized as a physical place or center to benefit only local members. Our purpose is to reach out and serve people no matter where they live. Through modern means of communication we can function as a "virtual" temple. We exist nowhere and everywhere. There is a great joy in sharing the Dharma together. We exist because of you and for you. I salute you all!

Editor's note: In the Autumn, 2002 issue, Kristine Kubose Perry (granddaughter of the late Rev. Gyomay and Minnie Kubose) wrote a review of the book "Awakening the Buddha Within." She wrote, "I have always wanted to read a concise book about Buddhism that would help me to understand what "enlightenment" meant and how to live a life of freedom. I have found in this book so many insights and breakthroughs that have impacted my life. It was like a light switch was turned on so that "I got it" about life. My view of life and the importance of the people in my life have forever transformed."

The book's teachings had an especially strong impact on her because she was in a period of transition and growth in her life. To further her training as a physical therapist, she went to study for a year in Australia where a new diagnostic technique was taught. This was a big decision because she took her two young children and was newly divorced. Accompanying her was a good friend, Teresa, a fellow physical therapist with whom she planned to open up a private practice upon their return to California.

In her review article which she wrote while in Australia, she went on to show how the book impacted her life by sharing a letter she wrote to her two daughters, ages five and two. The letter concretely expressed her loving relationship with her daughters. What was also important to her was that she wanted to express her gratitude to other people important in her life. With the book as a stimulus, she had really deepened her awareness and appreciation. Inadvertently, only her letter to her daughters was printed in Oneness but her other acknowledgements of gratitude were omitted. With apologies, we hereby include what she wanted to express.

## Acknowledgements

By Kristine Kubose Perry

As I have gotten older I have gained a greater understanding of my parents' wisdom. I would like to acknowledge their love, support and complete acceptance of me. Thank you Mom and Dad for being in my life. May our friendship continue to grow.

To my brother, Darren, thank you for your constancy. I want to acknowledge you and Tina for the love you give your girls, Kamryn and Emiko. I admire you both for your dedication to them.

To my sister, Shauna, thank you for being in my life and exemplifying the essence of integrity and compassion. You have given me great insights to understanding life. I am happy that you have found your life partner, Richardson. I admire his selflessness and sharing.

I would also like to acknowledge my very good friend, Teresa Rogers. With her complete acceptance, I have been able to grow and strive to be more accepting of myself. She has opened up a clearing in me where I have been able to create possibilities of inner awareness and contentment. Many hours we have spent talking about life... Thank you for being my friend.

## Video Loan Report

Editor's Note: The Kubose Dharma Legacy makes available videotapes of Heartland Sangha American Buddhist services featuring Rev. Koyo Kubose's Dharma talks. A tape can be borrowed on loan and when returned, another tape can be requested. There is no charge for this loan program. To give an example of ways the videotapes can be used, a small group of families in Northern California has shared what they are doing. They report:

*We met Saturday night and decided to meet about every six weeks for a Sangha dinner and Dharma talk. In the future we'll gather, sit or walk for a 10 minute meditation/quiet time, eat then have the Dharma talk. Our kids will be encouraged to sit in on the meditation and the talk. We each can meditate more at home with or at least in the presence of our children. Proposed future gatherings will include Sunset Beach Sangha Camping on Monterey Bay and Annual Solstice Dinner and candle making.*

*At our past gathering we had food, good conversation and watched the videotape of Rev. Koyo Kubose's Dharma talk on the "Dharma Gardener". Our kids sat in for much of the talk, stated in his quite practical and easily understood language. Here are a few highlights, paraphrased from his talk:*

*We often complain about "problems"- money, kids, partners, work, traffic, illness, crime, politics... blaming them for our dissatisfactions. As gardeners we could complain about the quality of seeds or the weather, but we really need to look inward at the quality of our soil. Ask "How rich is my soil?" How prepared are we each to cultivate the "Bodhi seeds" that come our way. We can try to select seeds from the catalogue of life, but often the most important seeds come unexpectedly, even against our own resistance.*

*The lotus blossom grows from a muddy pond. It does not grow in spite of the difficulties of life but rather because of the richness of those muddy nutrients. Pure clear water is rather sterile, even toxic. The difficulties in our own lives are opportunities for growth that nourish our own blossoming. We don't need to get rid of those difficulties. We can look to them as nutrients.*

*Innen- "Causes and conditions". This concept highlights our interdependency. Most of what happens stems from events and forces that precede the present. Our presence, our interest in the Dharma, so much of life arises interdependently in ways that cannot be ever fully understood. There is no dualistic good and bad. What may seem "bad" initially may later lead to unanticipated insights or benefits. What may initially seem good can later lead to painful consequences.*

*The Two Seeds: One seed wanted to grow, to reach toward the sun, to stretch it's leaves and flower. The other was afraid and decided to stay underground, waiting for safer times. The first seed grew. A hen scratched, saw and ate the second seed. Moral: "If you wait to grow you'll get swallowed up by life."*

### A BOOK TRIBUTE TO REV. G.M. KUBOSE

Rev. Gyomay Kubose's life and work has impacted people all over the world, including Japan. A book in Japanese is now available in memory and honor of the late Rev. Gyomay Kubose. The book is titled "Oneness" and was put together by two devoted ladies, Reiko Okamoto and Aiko Watanabe. They have given a large number of complimentary copies to the Kubose Dharma Legacy and we in turn offer them to all interested Japanese-speaking persons. Japanese Buddhist temples are welcome to give copies to their Fujinkai Women's Group, elderly Keiro members, or other Japanese-speaking individuals. Feel free to request any number of copies that you may need.

Send the form below to: Kubose Dharma Legacy, 8334 Harding Ave., Skokie, IL 60076.

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the "Oneness" book in Japanese to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Oneness Newsletter Spring 2003

Editors: Shauna Fleuridor, Adrienne Kubose,  
Rev. Koyo S. Kubose

Please send Dharma Glimpses,  
Poems, Readers Replies to:  
8334 Harding Avenue  
Skokie, Illinois 60076

Phone: (847) 677-8211  
Dial-the-Dharma: (847) 677-8053  
Email: brightdawn@core.com  
www.brightdawn.org

The purpose of the Kubose Dharma Legacy is to offer a non-sectarian, non-dualistic approach, the Way of Oneness, to further individual spiritual growth in everyday life for people of all backgrounds.



## Reader Replies

In the last issue of Oneness I read the President's Message with a great feeling of sympathy. My own father is 88 years old and getting weaker. He had brain surgery recently and during his recuperation, we were doing most of the things described so well in the article—putting in dentures, cleaning commodes and changing diapers, arranging pillows to prevent bedsores, and so on. Yes, this is a special time when the child becomes parent to the mother or father. Life comes full circle. I am glad just before your mother passed away, you and she could have a moment of complete love. There can be no better way to go. Let me tell you my story; it is a little different.

When I was a young boy, I literally hated my father. I thought he was so cruel to my mother whom I loved so much. I remember thinking that it does not matter what I grow up to be, one thing I will not be is like my father. When I got older, I went away to school and led a life that was different from anything my father had done. I eventually became a Buddhist monk which by most people's standards is very unorthodox. But I underestimated my father.

When I returned home on a leave from the monastery, I discovered that my father had become a minister, had a congregation and was building a church. People were thinking, "Like father, like son." Then one day I saw a faint reflection in a store window. The shape of the body, the style of walking, was just like my father's, but it was my reflection.

I can't remember when I stopped fighting my father. Now when I look at him lying in bed, sometimes I recall the things I disliked about him—his short temper, his anger, and so on—and then I realized, yup! I got them all. I now also see that the parts of my personality I like to think of as my good qualities, I got from him and my Mom. I can't take credit for any of that. I don't mind cleaning up around my father's toilet. "What's yours is mine."

The Buddha said that the four sufferings are birth, sickness, old age, and death. It is easy to think that these afflict our lives as human beings. It takes a while to realize that these are the very experiences that make us human.

Thank you for a nice issue of Oneness.

S.H. (Canada)



Quoting from the last issue of Oneness, "losing a loved one is the saddest thing in life."

What was written about Minnie Somi Kubose reminded me of life with my mother who passed away on November 29, 2002. She was 96. My mother and I also said "Banzai!" every time she had a BM and we would gassho. Reading "Oneness" (winter issue) made me feel not so alone. Gassho, H.S. (California)



Thank you so very much for the wonderful biography of Minnie Kubose, and the stories about her, in the Oneness newsletter. The story about her end-of-life care was especially inspirational! I sent it to a friend whose husband is passing on, also from lung disease, to help her and give her encouragement. Gassho, L.O. (Milwaukee)



I have just finished reading about your beloved mom and must tell you how this has touched my heart. I have been sitting here remembering my own dear mother who died 35 years ago. She was young—so in my mind she is always young and vibrant. Thank you for sharing your stories of Minnie Kubose. I am grateful, and I understand. I always felt I had missed something exceeding special because there was no opportunity to care for my mother when she was ill in the hospital. How I wanted to "do" for her. I got my chance to "do" for my dear husband—and you are so right—it is an honor to clean and care for our beloveds.

C.S. (Chicago)



Thanks for giving me the chance to see the videotape of Minnie Kubose's memorial service. I miss your parents. It seems only like yesterday when we attended the church on Dorchester Avenue when the church was first started on the Southside. Time marches on. I hope to meet your parents in *Gokuraku* someday. H.R.A (Chicago)



Please accept my sincere sympathy upon the passing of your dear Mother. My family has known both your parents for many years. Your father presided at my Dad's funeral many years ago, officiated my sister's wedding, and visited our home whenever he came to Minneapolis for a Sangha meeting or when he was just visiting.

The reason why I am writing is how much I appreciated "Oneness" celebrating your Mother and all the write-ups from your siblings. I really enjoyed reading each and every one of them and had tears, and then smiled about the BM. I did that with each of my children when they were very young—"Don't flush the toilet after BM." They would always say, "How gross. Why do you do that, Mom? It stinks so much." My answer was always, "I want to see if it is a good one." They just looked at me in disgust. However, I am sure that now as they are all parents themselves, they appreciate what I did and as they check their child's BM would think of me. (I hope.) I still continue it with my grandchild whenever I babysit and he thinks it's funny and disgusting too.

Thank you again. I really enjoy reading every issue of "Oneness" but will cherish this issue the most.

H.T. (Minnesota)

## Reader Replies, cont'd

## American Buddhist Services

Thank you for sending me the story of The Avocado Plant and other writings dealing with loss of loved ones. They have helped me tremendously and I am deeply grateful to you for sending them to me. I would like to share the story on "The Avocado Plant" with others who have also lost loved ones. May I have your permission to reprint it? I am Editor of a newsletter for ITC (International Training in Communication) and would like to publish it in the next issue.

Credit will be given to Kubose Dharma Legacy. Thank you for your consideration. -- H.S.

The Heartland Sangha holds 11 A.M. Saturday services at Lake Street Church, 607 Lake Street, Evanston (use courtyard entrance on Chicago Avenue). For more information, please call Heartland Sangha at 773-545-9972. Rev. Koyo Kubose's upcoming Dharma Talk titles are:

Mar 15	Spiritual Springtime
Apr 5	The Gift of Birth
Apr 19	A Buddhist Easter
May 3	Always Plant Large Potatoes
May 17	My Avocado Plant
Jun 7	Teaching of the Redwood Trees

### THE AVOCADO PLANT

The avocado seed was the biggest that I had ever seen. In the 1960's it was popular to grow avocado trees from seed so I decided to try and grow one.

I inserted three toothpicks into the seed to keep just the bottom of the seed immersed in a mayonnaise jar filled with water. Every morning I checked the seed... but day after day nothing happened. I waited and waited. Finally, after several weeks, a small white bump appeared on the bottom of the seed.

The bump grew into a long root, with many branch roots. It was encouraging to see all this root growth. I now began to watch for a shoot to emerge from the top of the seed. Again, I had to wait and wait. After several more weeks I thought, "Something is wrong with this avocado seed. Maybe it's defective; it's the kind that grows roots but no shoot." Finally, a tiny shoot began to peek up from the top of the seed.

In a week or so, the shoot grew to a height of about five inches. At the end of the shoot were three tiny, bright green leaves. I was so pleased. I lovingly transplanted my avocado plant into a nice pot of rich soil and left the pot on the kitchen counter ready to put outside the next day.

The next morning I was shocked to find the top of the plant, together with its three leaves, chewed off... the cat! Oh, no... the poor avocado plant now looked like a plain stick stuck into the dirt. I was devastated. I put the pot outside in the back yard and watered it. But I didn't have much hope for it.

A week or so went by. One day my wife asked, "Have you seen your avocado plant lately?" I said, "No, let me take a look." There it was, a ten-inch plant with five large, shiny leaves! The original shoot was still there, its stump still looking like a broken-off chopstick; but from its side another main shoot curved out and up. It wasn't your typical-looking plant but it was growing!

Sometimes things don't go as we want or expect. I realized a teaching from this resilient avocado plant. It had to do with losing loved ones. We all have to lose a loved one at one time or another. This is the saddest thing in life. When a loved one dies, a part of us dies too. It is like a "main stem" in one's life being cut off. Yet, after the shock and numbness begin to ebb, a tiny "shoot" of new life begins to emerge.

Life never goes according to a rigid, definite plan. A plant grows by branching off in different directions; a river meanders down a mountainside. There are no straight, unchanging lines in nature.

Change is the only constant. Death of a loved one is a great change in one's life. You must flow with this change and redirect your life.

Continuing to grow and fulfilling all your potential as a human being are the highest tributes you can give to your loved one. After all, from living life together, you and your loved one share common roots. When your life blooms, your loved one is also blooming.



*("The Avocado Plant" was written by Reverend Sunnan K. Kubose for all who have suffered the loss of a loved one.)*

## *Legacy Resources for Individual Spiritual Practice*

Please send me information on (mark choices):

- Ti Sarana Ceremony
- Home Religious Services
- Video Loan Program
- Words of Wisdom Series

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_



### **HOME RELIGIOUS SERVICES**

Do-It-Yourself Guide for having services in your own home (e.g. pet memorials, appreciation services, etc.)



### **WORDS OF WISDOM SERIES**

One-page essays suitable for framing. Topics include: Lotus Flower, Oneness Meditation.



### **TI SARANA BUDDHIST CONFIRMATION**

Special telephone ceremony to confirm your commitment to following the Buddhist path.



### **AMERICAN BUDDHIST SERVICES WITH DHARMA TALKS ON VIDEO**

Free loan program.

## *Acknowledgements with Gratitude*

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<b>MAR</b>	<p><b>Theme:</b> Growth</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> To reach out toward our goals.</p> <p><b>Method:</b> "Stretch Gassho:" Starting from the traditional position of hands together in front of chest, raise hands above head as high as possible, while inhaling. Think of a plant shoot growing upwards toward the sun.</p>
<b>APR</b>	<p><b>Theme:</b> Openness</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> To be unafraid and receptive rather than closed and defensive.</p> <p><b>Method:</b> "Blossoming Gassho:" Starting from Stretch Gassho position of hands above head, bring each hand down and out to shoulder height, keeping arms straight with palms up. Tilt head back, close eyes, and mentally shout, "Yes!"</p>
<b>MAY</b>	<p><b>Theme:</b> A Grounded Foundation</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> To be firmly "rooted" in the here and now.</p> <p><b>Method:</b> "Centering Gassho:" Starting from Blossoming Gassho position of arms out to the sides, bring arms down in front of body; put one hand over the other and place both over navel. Breathe slowly; relax shoulders but keep back straight.</p>

**Mailing List Update**

Our mailing list has welcomed new additions from many sources and referrals. We are happy to continue sending our newsletter to all interested persons. One reason for staying on the mailing list is to find out when new books come out. Also, you never know when you might want to order a book for a relative or friend in a future time of need. If you know someone who would like to be added or removed from our mailing list, please indicate below and send to:

Oneness Newsletter, Kubose Dharma Legacy, 8334 Harding, Skokie, IL 60076.

Please add to your mailing list

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please remove from your mailing list

Address: \_\_\_\_\_