



O n e n e s s

Quarterly Newsletter of BRIGHT DAWN CENTER of Oneness Buddhism

Vol. 18 No. 4 Winter 2014

Hunting the Great Awakened Elephant

By Wendy Shinyo Haylett
Dharma Glimpse – April 6, 2014

Dedication to a spiritual path is a treacherous activity and dedication to a path as a Dharma teacher is ever more treacherous. The innate hazards of attaching to our egos and our self-power as our refuge is ever-present and proportionate to our desire to attain the "end" we have set our sights on ... whatever that "end" may be: Dedicated practitioner, teacher, Enlightenment, rebirth in the Pure Land ... or whatever.

In the past two months I've been involved in two activities for the Bright Dawn Center, one was researching and writing an article about Rev. Gyomay Kubose, Rev. Koyo Kubose, and the Bright Dawn Center of Oneness Buddhism, which recently published in the Amida Order journal, Running Tide. The other was facilitating a sutra study module for the Lay Ministry 6 Class of 2014, focusing on the Tan Butsu Ge and The Heart Sutra translations and commentaries by Rev. Gyomay Kubose.

I have been immersed in the spiritual, philosophical, and teaching history of our Bright Dawn lineage ... rereading teachings, exploring lineage teachers, listening to Dharma talks, and, well... something wonderful has happened.

I know Rev. Koyo Kubose's saying is "the Dharma is my rock" but what I have recently experienced is more of the feeling of floating. Immersed in our lineage teachings, I found myself suddenly more buoyant in life, in all aspects of my life. Not like a rock anchoring me, but a natural ability to float. Not a drowning in the details of life, but a floating above.

I felt like I had become one with me, for the first time in many years. Like I was naturally me. I began enjoying every part of my life. I was floating through work, through stress, through chores ... even through the endless snow shoveling and cold of the winter of our discontent. I wasn't worried about what I should be doing or how I should be acting. I was just living my life, being with my friends, family, co-workers, and clients, but feeling more authentically myself, connected to a natural flow in everything I did, and at ease.

Everything seemed so natural, so free. It reminded me of a Dharma song that first captivated me some 25 years ago when I was studying and practicing in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. It is called "Free and Easy: A Spontaneous Vajra

Song" by Venerable Lama Gendun Rinpoche. It goes:

*Happiness cannot be found
through great effort and willpower,
but is already present, in open relaxation and
letting go.*

*Don't strain yourself,
there is nothing to do or undo.
Whatever momentarily arises in the body-mind
has no real importance at all,
has little reality whatsoever.
Why identify with, and become attached to it,
passing judgment upon it and ourselves?*

*Far better to simply
let the entire game happen on its own,
springing up and falling back like waves
without changing or manipulating anything
and notice how everything vanishes and
reappears, magically, again and again,
time without end.*

*Only our searching for happiness
prevents us from seeing it.
It's like a vivid rainbow which you pursue
without ever catching,
or a dog chasing its own tail.*

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**HAPPY NEW YEAR
2015**

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*Although peace and happiness do not exist
as an actual thing or place,
it is always available
and accompanies you every instant.*

*Don't believe in the reality
of good and bad experiences;
they are like today's ephemeral weather,
like rainbows in the sky.*

*Wanting to grasp the ungraspable,
you exhaust yourself in vain.
As soon as you open and relax this tight fist of grasping,
infinite space is there—open, inviting and comfortable.*

*Make use of this spaciousness, this freedom and natural ease.
Don't search any further.*

*Don't go into the tangled jungle
looking for the great awakened elephant,
who is already resting quietly at home
in front of your own hearth.*

*Nothing to do or undo,
nothing to force,
nothing to want,
and nothing missing—*

*Emaho! Marvelous!
Everything happens by itself.*

So there it was, a profound and beautiful Dharma song that I didn't really hear. And it was only in my rediscovery of the riches and power of our Bright Dawn lineage teachers and teachings that I felt this freedom and natural ease. One of the books I have been rereading is the essay collection by Dr. Alfred Bloom Sensei, *Living in Amida's Universal Vow*.

Reading that I kept coming back to the first essay by the great reformer in our Bright Dawn Center lineage, Kiyozawa Manshi, "The Great Path of Absolute Other Power and My Faith." In this essay he talks about his quest to find "the meaning of life at all costs." It is this quest that brought him to his belief in the Tathagata.

He describes something I believe many of us can relate to, because we have struggled with the same thing. I know I certainly can. He talks about the journey he took to his faith and his belief that self-power is absolutely useless. He said it had been a trying process and he could only reach that conclusion of the uselessness of self-power when he exhausted the entire resources of his knowledge and devices.

He would reach conclusion after conclusion of what the meaning was, then each one would be invariably undermined. As he wrote: "One can never escape this

calamity so long as one is hopeful of establishing religious faith by way of logic or learning."

My recent Bright Dawn immersion experience has brought me, too, to that place Manshi Sensei hinted at; the place where all your previous conclusions about the meaning of life are undermined. They are undermined because they were formed based on logic or learning alone.

I can't tell you how many times during my life as a spiritual seeker, I have reached that place where I look back and laugh—out of frustration—laugh because I see I have been traveling for miles and miles, months and months, and sometimes years and years, heading in the wrong direction.

Now what? Now what do I have to learn to get myself oriented and walking in the right direction toward Enlightenment or whatever it is I'm seeking?

Each time I reach that place, I come closer and closer to the discovery that it's not what I have to learn or acquire, but what I must unlearn and give up.

But to be a student, one must learn, right? And there is the rub. That is the treacherous territory of being a student of Buddhism or any true spirituality or religion, and the heightened danger of being a teacher on the same path.

It was Shinran who realized in his own life that the path is not so much about Enlightenment or being reborn in the Pure Land, but about the awakening of faith and a naturalness, or "Amida's Sincerity." This awakening of faith is described by Kaneko Daiei, a student of Manshi Sensei, in his essay, "The Meaning of Salvation in the Doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism" also in the book *Living in Amida's Universal Vow*.

He describes it as "breaking through at the root of delusion." When that happens, he writes, we are broken, our self-complacency and our faith in self power, logic, and concepts is shaken. He says "we are emptied through and through" yet "at the same moment we find ourselves taken in by Amida's Sincerity" and "for the first time attain true restfulness, because our deepest root of our existential anxiety or suffering, namely ignorance, is cut through forever."

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Of course this doesn't mean that we won't experience suffering as long as we remain in the world, but he says "they no longer disturb the fundamental restfulness and serenity."

All this circles back to what Rev. Gyomay Kubose teaches in so many of his essays in *Everyday Suchness* and *The Center Within*. Reread for yourself the essays "Naturalness", "Living Life", "Life without Regret", "Buddhism is Everyday Life", "Simplicity". "The Natural Way", "Gateless Gate", and "Transcending Means and Ends", to name a few.

Yes, I have been a student of these teachings ... constantly whispering in my ear ... while I was still trying to be student, trying to be a teacher, hunting that illusive "self" or lack of self I thought I needed to find, and trying to go wherever I thought I needed to go to find it.

I was listening, but I wasn't hearing. I wasn't actually living my life. I was doing what I thought I should to reach the goal of ... of ... what? Hunting the great awakened elephant!

Running away from myself, looking beyond my own life to find it. I hadn't emptied myself through and through. No, instead, I had been loading myself up with elephant-hunting gear and elephant-hunting instructions and books. I was collecting that gear from every teacher and it was weighing me down until I was lost and spinning, not knowing what direction I was heading.

Had I listened deeply—not mouthing the words to be a model student or give the right teachings—but listened in me, for me, I would have heard. I would have heard that Enlightenment is everyday ... that acceptance is transcendence ... that ends = means. And that only in emptying myself, releasing me from the tight grasp of me, that I can truly live as me.

Had I truly listened, I would have heard Rev.

Winter Solstice Telephone Service

A Winter Solstice Telephone Service will be held on Thursday, December 18, 2014 at 6PM Pacific Time; 7 PM Mountain Time, 8PM Central Time, 9PM Eastern Time. During the 20-minute service, Rev. Koyo will chant a short sutra. The theme for self-reflection during the changing is: resting, renewal, and "re-charging one's batteries." Trees lose their leaves and strengthen their root system over the winter. We humans can benefit from letting go of pride and vanity to strengthen one's spiritual foundation of humility and gratitude.

To listen, call (716) 273-1200 and enter Access Code: 5805842#.

Gyomay Kubose saying to me "Only when one lives his life does he know its meaning." I would have heard him say, "Whatever the true inner heart says is the right way. Listen to its voice." I would heard him say the true way "is simply the natural way." I would have heard him say that "the true self is selflessness" ... the teaching of "forget yourself."

And I would have heard the voice of Rev. Akegarasu, as Shuichi Maida wrote in *Heard By Me*. He wrote, "Rev. Akegarasu is always whispering in my ear, 'There is nothing to worry about. You had better do whatever you want to do.' This is the Buddha-Dharma I heard from him."

/ A deep Gassho to our precious teachers.

Thank you very much.



Oneness Newsletter Winter 2014

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The purpose of the Bright Dawn Center is to offer a non-sectarian, non-dualistic approach, the Way of Oneness, to deepen individual spirituality in everyday life for people of all backgrounds

Invisible Cemetery

By Michelle Jouyo

My husband and I love to hike. It is one of our favorite activities, and we enjoy finding new places to explore. Several years ago, we decided to go hiking at a trail called Rock Springs Run inside Wekiwa Springs State Park.

As we were hiking, we came out of a pine hammock into a flat and saw in the distance what looked like a cemetery. As we got closer, we saw there were about 12 very old-looking graves that were surrounded by a wrought-iron fence that had long-since rusted to bits.

I was curious to know how this cemetery had ended up out in the middle of the woods, so I asked a ranger about it when we got back. It turns out the forest land was once privately owned, and before the owner granted what was now part of the forest, he had sold off some parcels of land. One of the parcels had a small cemetery on it, and the buyer did not want dead people on his land. So the owner hired someone to come in and remove the tombstones. That was all they removed; the bodies were still buried on the land. The property now had an “invisible” cemetery. They moved the headstones to the spot we had seen them, and the park service maintains the “cemetery” now, but there are no bodies buried there. To make matters worse, nobody seems to know which parcel the bodies were actually buried on, so there are a dozen bodies in some unsuspecting person’s backyard!

Much like this invisible cemetery, there are people who walk around with calm, peaceful facades that belie the defilements in their mind. We like to put our best face forward when presenting ourselves to others, and there is nothing wrong with that. In fact, we should be cultivating a mind that reflects that best self, rather than one we have to hide from other people. But it is often much easier to just put forth the appearance of tranquility rather than having to dig deeper to actually achieve it.

So we clear away the tombstones, but we leave the bodies moldering below.

I’ve often wondered what would have happened had the man with the invisible cemetery decided to install a pool in that spot. There certainly would have been some trouble for someone! Likewise, we can maintain our own peaceful façade for a short period of time. But

Who Am I: Who is the Self?

by Linda Wisniewski

4/14/2013 Dharma Glimpse

Last week we worked on Koan’s addressing non-attachment. The quote I used was “the strongest attachment of all is the attachment to one’s self”.

In meditation, the following came up addressing this. Initially I called it “Ode to broken Bones” but it really addresses the question- “Who is the Self”.

Aug 1st 2013, I awoke and looked into a mirror and freaked out. Who is that woman staring back at me? It’s not Linda, Linda who prides herself on youth. Who’s that woman whose neck is filled with wrinkles, whose back is stiff, whose wrist and fingers are swollen and in pain? Happy Birthday, you have now reached your 70th year and crossed the bridge from middle to “old age”.

NO! NO! NO! Cried the 20 year old who could stay up all night and drink the boys under the table.

NO! NO! NO! Cried the 35 year old, who as a single mother cradled two beautiful children, marched on picket lines and worked to put food on her babies’ table,

NO! NO! NO! Cried the 40 y.o. Who skied down mountains and camped outside under the moon and stars.

NO! NO! NO! Cried the 52 y.o. Who just celebrated her 10th wedding anniversary with her second husband and body surfed the in the oceans of Mexico.

NO! NO! NO! Cried the 65y.o. Who still was working plopping on the ground playing with 3 year olds and sharing information on growth and development with their parents?

Who then was this wrinkled woman with creaky bones? Whose kitchen, all of a sudden, was filled with powders and pills to silence the achy bones and bunions?

WHO continues on page 5

what happens if something comes along and stirs up the muck that lies beneath that? Our mask begins to crack, and everything that has been lying dormant rises to the surface. Isn’t it better to instead work on our minds? To dig up the bodies and then let them go?

This is why we practice. This is why we sit and train our minds. We all have an invisible cemetery lying within us. It is up to us to do the work to clear it away.



Who is that woman whose children still go skiing and snorkeling? Who tells her children she can't because of her achy bones.

Who is that woman? Who am I?

Am I my bag of bones or am I the song in my heart that can still sing at the top of her lungs in the shower. Am I the canvas, which is painted with wrinkles and crinkles or am I the smile behind the wrinkle that lights up a darkened room.

Am I the achy old bones or am I the bubbly and cuddly woman who can still reach out and embrace you in a warm hug. Who can, with a loving word, dry all your tears?

Who am I?

I am the light, the moon, the stars, the good, the bad, and the ugly; the beauty and the beast; the bag of bones and the barrel of laughs.

I am all those things and none of those things. I am and that is enough.

On page 150 in "Zen Koans" Rev Gyomay states, "growing old and aging are the realities of life and one must face them, regardless...Acceptance is Transcendence."



Suiren

Selected poems
by Miyoko Gyoren Nozawa

*How this miserable day continues,
Just today, one day only,
Misery can be endured
A happy day will surely come
Tomorrow's happiness is budding
In this day of misery.*

*Whether or not to attain
A given objective
Is not the point
Rather - how sincere and
genuine
Was the effort
Is the issue.*

What Do You Say?

By Dharma Dan



Whenever Johnny or Judy receive a gift, a parent often reminds the child, "What do you say?" A good addition to this is when I heard a parent tell the child to also, "Look in the eyes." Expressing thanks should not become an empty ritual. As we get older, the deeper we experience a genuine giving of thanks during Thanksgiving and the winter holiday season. The foundation for not taking thankfulness for granted is laid during childhood. This is important because as Rev. Gyomay Kubose has said, "The life of gratitude *is* the religious life."

Rev. Kubose was once addressing a gathering of Dharma Scholl children from various temples. He asked, "What does *Namu Amida Butsu* mean?" Most of the children's faces showed that they really didn't know. However, one young child from Rev. Kubose's temple shot up his arm and said with a big smile, "Thank you!"

At Shin Buddhist temples, *Namu Amida Butsu* is said so often that there is a tendency for the recitation to become mechanical. To counter such a tendency, here's a story told by E.S., who is a current participant in our Bright Dawn Center's Lay Ministry Program. She had been a Dharma School Superintendent at her local temple in San Jose, California. She relates when she was a young child in Dharma School, the minister led them in the Three Treasures reading, which begins, "I put my faith in Buddha..." Well, most of the young children heard and recited, "I put my face in Buddha."

Our Lay Ministry Study Program emphasizes finding "nuggets" in whatever is read or experienced; that is, one should be an active rather than a passive consumer of the Dharma. For example, E.S.'s story could be considered just a humorous childhood memory. However, she made her recollection into a nugget by giving it a deeper interpretation; namely, "We should go face to face with the Buddha." Shin Buddhist are taught when saying *Namu Amida Butsu* in front of an Amida Buddha statue, to look at the statue; even better is to look Amida in the eyes.

Yes, we need some serious "face time" with our own inner Buddha Nature, which is always reminding us, "What do you say?"



Sierra Sanctuary Update

Our Sierra Sanctuary is almost completed! The metal exterior walls and roof are installed and a rock façade will be added to one outside wall. As seen in the photo, the hanging redwood strips add a nice presence to the front entrance. Metal wind chimes can also be seen hanging from a live oak tree.

Finishing touches to the interior should take another month or so. This will include a full bathroom, kitchen cabinets and appliances. The ceiling will be cedar and the floor will be engineered hardwood.

We are planning to hold a grand opening Dedication Ceremony on March 28, 2015; Saturday, 2:00 PM (Pacific Time). The public is invited to attend; so spread the word!



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Not only is making a memorial donation a way to remember and honor a loved one, it is a karmic action that fosters awareness of the two main teachings of interdependency and impermanence. Acknowledging one's "roots" also nurtures a feeling of gratitude, which is the foundation of a spiritual life. A memorial donation does all this and at the same time helps support the mission of a worthy organization of one's choice.

BOOK LIST

Book by Rev. Koyo Kubose

BRIGHT DAWN: Discovering Your Everyday Spirituality. Describes the author's daily morning ritual and how ordinary things and activities can deepen one's spirituality. 152 pages.

Books by Rev. Gyomay 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. 142 pages.

THE CENTER WITHIN. Continues the approach of "Everyday Suchness." Collection of 58 essays of down-to-earth teachings for a richer, more meaningful life. 134 pages.

AMERICAN BUDDHISM. Covers a brief history of Buddhism in America, problems in terminology and misunderstandings common to Westerners. 29 pages.

ZEN KOANS. Commentary on over 200 classical and modern koans. Insights and life teachings applicable to all Buddhists. 274 pages.

Translations by Rev. Gyomay Kubose

THE FUNDAMENTAL SPIRIT OF BUDDHISM by Haya Akegarasu (Rev. Gyomay Kubose's teacher). Translated by Rev. Kubose. 99 pages.

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

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

Other Recommended Books

BUDDHIST SYMBOLS. Handy brochure explaining common Buddhist symbols. Quad-fold.

BUDDHISM: Path of Enlightenment. Simple, concise introduction to basic Buddhism. Teachings are superimposed on beautiful full-color photographs of nature scenes such as water ponds, rock gardens, a bamboo grove, etc. 20 pages.

COFFINMAN by Shinmon Aoki. This diary of a mortician invites the reader into the fascinating world of Buddhist spirituality which sees the extraordinary in things ordinary, mundane, and even repugnant. 142 pages.

DISCOVERING BUDDHISM IN EVERYDAY LIFE by Marvin Harada 2011. In commemoration of his 25 years of ministry at the Orange County Buddhist Church, over 40 essays by Rev. Harada were selected from past monthly newsletters. 128 pages.

RIVER OF FIRE, RIVER OF WATER by Taitetsu Unno. Introduces the Pure Land tradition of Shin Buddhism using personal anecdotes, stories, and poetry. With spiritual insight and unparalleled scholarship, this book is an important step forward for Buddhism in America. 244 pages.

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DEC	<p>Theme: Karmic influences Purpose: Deepen the Triple AAA of Awareness, Acceptance, and Appreciation Method: "Dharma Snowflakes:" When seeing snow fall, open your fist with your fingers spread out making a "snowflake." Do this several times, each time moving your hand lower and lower, like a snowflake falling to the ground. Contemplate a falling snowflakes journey--- landing in just the "right" spot. Reflect on your own life's journey.</p>
JAN	<p>Theme: Wisdom Purpose: Mental flexibility Method: "Dharma Neck-Stretching:" Whenever sitting still too long leads to a stiff neck; e.g., at a desk or in a car—Turn your neck to left and right as far as you can; feel the stretch! The teaching is to stop looking constantly in only one direction, but to look around to get wider perspectives.</p>
FEB	<p>Theme: Memory Purpose: Remembering "forgotten" things Method: "Focused Auto-Suggestion:" Between New Year and Spring, February can be a forgotten month. Use this as a theme to remember aspects of your life that you should focus more on. Lie back with arms spread out and ask yourself, "what important things or important persons should I remember to focus more on?"</p>

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