



O n e n e s s

FEELING GOOD

By Rev. Koyo Kubose

Some twenty years or so ago, I remember reading articles and hearing Dharma talks about the topic of what was called “Feel-Good Buddhism.” The point made was that such an approach was a shallow, “watered down” kind of Buddhism. The view expressed was that some teachers cater to the desire of seekers because of their own desire to be popular. Regardless of any supposed “validity” of such criticisms, isn’t it rather “ugly” to be critical of others rather than just go about one’s own good work and let things speak for themselves? Why the need to point a “Buddhist Meter” at others and declare other approaches inadequate? Is it really useful to try and establish a presumed “true” Buddhism?

Speaking of the word “true” or “truth,” I recall a conversation with the late Dr. Leslie Kawamura, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Calgary. One of his pet projects was to eliminate the use of the word “true” in Buddhism. He felt that the concept of “truth” was not appropriate and should not be used when discussing Buddhist teachings because it led to all kinds of unnecessary social/political problems. In the religious sphere, such dualisms as true-false or good-bad need to be transcended. In the

teaching “Every Day is a Good Day” it should be apparent that “good” refers to an absolute context, not a relative one.

Although it may be of scholarly interest to discuss Theravada-Mahayana differences and the merits of an orthodox view of Gautama Buddha’s original teachings versus the skillful means or upaya of later expressions of the Dharma teachings, it seems we need to go beyond words. The important thing is, how does the Dharma work in a person’s life? Opinions and value judgments depend upon Person, Place and Time. Don’t worry about trying to determine whether something is true or false. Simply ask whether it is useful or not useful for me at this place and time in my life; then, keep going.

How does all this relate to the title of this article, Feeling Good? Well, I recently heard a recording of Nina Simone singing the song, “Feeling Good.” It occurred to me that the phrase “feeling good” has two meanings or can be put into two different contexts. The song struck a religious or spiritual chord in me. In fact, I felt the song described how I feel every day as I walk around the property here at the Bright Dawn Center. The lyrics are:

*Birds flying high you know how I feel
Sun in the sky you know how I feel
Breeze drifting on by you know how I feel*

*It’s a new dawn
It’s a new day
It’s a new life for me yeah*

*It’s a new dawn, it’s a new day, it’s a new
life for me*

*Ouh
And I’m feeling good*

*Fish in the sea you know how I feel
River running free you know how I feel
Blossom on the tree you know how I feel*

*It’s a new dawn
It’s a new day
It’s a new life
For me
And I’m feeling good*

*Dragonfly out in the sun you know what
I mean, don’t you know*

*Butterflies all havin’ fun you know what
I mean*

*Sleep in peace when day is done that’s
what I mean*

*And this old world is a new world
And a bold world for me*

*Stars when you shine you know how I
feel*

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RIGHT SPEECH

By Charlie Dickinson

The national trauma often compared to 9/11 is Pearl Harbor. Both were surprise attacks with loss of life numbering in the thousands. On December 7, 1941, we entered World War II, surely a defining moment of the 20th Century.

A few weeks ago, I was going through family papers and came across a resume for my late father, a civil engineer. I noted that from October 1940 to December 1941 he worked in the "Survey Office, Pearl Harbor Navy Yard, T.H." as "Chief of party on surveys for channel soundings, buildings and pipe lines."

The next month he changed jobs. From January 1942 to February 1943, he worked in the "U.S. Engineers' Office, Honolulu, T.H." as "Chief of party on surveys for runway construction and utilities, design and preliminary surveys for highways."

In the decades I knew my dad, he never *once* said he was at Pearl Harbor.

I knew he worked in Honolulu and had a vague idea he'd got a job there on the way back from a year of wanderlust that took him to New Zealand and Australia. Not hearing otherwise, I assumed he was there before or after Pearl Harbor.

Plus, I never heard my dad say one negative thing about the Japanese. In fact, he was an avid gardener and a joy in his life was going to Japanese-American nurseries common in Southern California.

Still the question remains, Why didn't he mention being at Pearl Harbor? Some would say it's his generation: They didn't talk about war.

I think right speech -- in this case, silence -- might explain my dad's letting Pearl Harbor rest in the past. In the *Analects* of Confucius, the Master approaches the subject of war with circumspection and will not mistake the part(s) for the whole. If American involvement in WWII began with Pearl Harbor, it ended with Hiroshima and Nagasaki. If a cold-hearted calculation concluded those who were to perish from two A-bombs were worth less than the contingent loss of life from a land invasion of Japan, then might one not prefer to leave the madness of war to silence?

Yes, I think my father's silence about Pearl Harbor was for the best: To let me grow up in a post-war world without the burden of easy racism. When I travelled to Japan a few years ago, I visited Nagoya-jo, the

reconstructed castle in Nagoya. A plaque reads -- with proper confucian circumspection -- "because of world hostilities, the earlier castle burned down in 1945." No naming names, no assignment of blame. The understated, laconic words would fit right in with my dad's about "surveys for runway construction!"



WALKING BETWEEN THE RAINDROPS

By Dave Teiyo Pangburn

B.J.Thomas once sang "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head." He was not complaining. He knew change was coming. You cannot duck adversity. No matter how hard you try, you cannot walk between the raindrops. I've tried to do that but I always ended up wet. B.J. had it right. Rain, Sunshine ... both the same. "Nothing bothers me, Cause I'm free" is how that song ends.

Walking the middle path allows you to see extremes. It's the grey area that we seek .. compromise. But the truth is that we can never stay in the grey area. Life will occasionally make your path dark, or lead you into light. There are moments of despair and moments of joy. To stay in the grey area you have to accept the dark and the light. In reality darkness, grey, and light are all One. Freedom comes as we are just "so." Neither dark, nor grey, nor light ... just "so."

I'm an observer of life. My life has been up and down. The Dharma gave me oars to steer my ship. I tune in to the flow and I am prepared to float downstream ... smooth sailing, with an occasional crash on the rocks! I know now that the journey is never uneventful. I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha. I am safe.

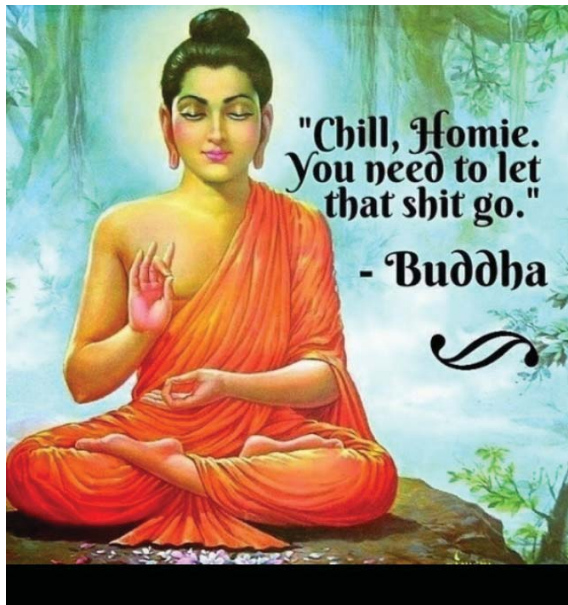
We all try to walk between the raindrops. Embrace the rain! Lift your face to the Sun! They are the same. I have had a year of loss. I have gained. It is no different. I continue to walk the path and observe life. With smiles and tears I keep going. I cannot escape what life brings my way, so I discover Peace. May it be so.



FEELING GOOD continued from page 1

*Scent of the pine you know how I feel
Oh freedom is mine
And I know how I feel
It's a new dawn
It's a new day
It's a new life
For me
And I'm feeling good*

Through Google, you can listen to this song on your computer. When I listened to the song, I thought it might be a nice theme song for our newly dedicated Sierra Sanctuary. Although the lyrics are words, music is one way to go beyond words. Or as it has been stated, "Music heard so deeply, it is not heard at all."



The Buddha was known for effectively adjusting the communication of his teachings to whomever he was talking to. Thank you to K.F. for sending us this picture of the Buddha addressing "bangers in the hood."

AUTUMN EQUINOX TELEPHONE SERVICE

Theme: Ripening/Harvest Time: There is something you have been working on in your life for a long time, some personal change. It is now time to bring it to maturity, for it to ripen, for it to bear fruit.

Steps:

1. Specify exactly what this something is.
2. Make your serious affirmation for it to bear fruit now, no more waiting around; it is time.
3. Visualize the pay-off... the harvest. What is the taste of the ripen fruit? Dedicate the virtues of the harvest to all the conditions that were part of the causal karmic chain involved in the ripening process.

Thursday, September 17, 2015

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MUIR WOODS - 1967 by Beverley Kiyo Manley

*I long to walk through that redwood grove
Where I walked so long ago
A place where sacredness stills my voice
To a whisper
And mist rolls in from the blue Pacific.
A place to tread in holiness so awesome,
In stillness so deep that eternity enfolds me,
Dissolves me into nothingness
Yet expands me into oneness.
Love is all there is
And I am complete.*

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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

AWARE OF THE DAY

By Clarence Ratliff

Do you ever think about all the things you have to be aware of just to make it through the average day? You have to be aware of where the light switch is to avoid stumbling about in the dark when you get out of bed. You have to be aware of the time so you can make it to work when you're supposed to. You have to be aware of your route to get to work. Throughout the day you have to be aware of the needs and expectations of customers and coworkers, the schedules of projects and meetings. On the home front, we need to be aware of the needs and responsibilities of our relationships with family and friends. We exercise awareness when we travel to different places, paying the bills on time, what food and supplies we need to live. Awareness of time and priorities when we engage in hobbies and leisure activities. We all do this every moment of every day -- mostly on autopilot. How often do we really think about the sheer volume of the things we have to keep in our awareness and the decisions we make based upon them just to go through our average daily routine?

Just being alive is a constant exercise of awareness. For example, driving to work. We have to keep track of the time to know when we should leave home. We hopefully notice what the weather conditions are and adapt our driving accordingly. Is there water, snow or ice on the road? Where are the other cars and pedestrians at? What do they seem to be doing that we have to anticipate? Where are the traffic signals and stop signs? Are there obstacles in the road? Where are the intersections in the road we have to turn at? Do I have the time to stop for that cup of coffee? That's a whole lot of awareness going on in just one small sliver of our daily life? Without awareness, we can really mess things up pretty badly. Get into an accident, hurt ourselves or others or just be late and not meet our responsibilities.

With so much at stake, how often do we stop and really think about what's going on with all these decisions and choices we make every moment of every

day? For most of us (myself included) not much. We do things without being aware, or mindful if you will, of what goes on in the daily grind. And if most of us don't bring that level of mindfulness to the everyday awareness of tasks, we really don't bring it to what's going on in our own inner life.

One of the big realizations the Dharma brought to light for me was just how unaware I have been of the workings of my own mind. It's a sobering thought to see how much I was, and still am, unaware of. Why I think the things I do? Where does that come from? Why I do frequently seem to make the same mistakes? What goes into that? Am I truly aware of what goes into my attitudes, feelings and decisions? I know I go through life being aware of so many mundane things to navigate my way through the daily routine, but am frequently unaware of what goes on in myself.

What goes on in my inner self doesn't just affect me alone. My thinking directly causes how I interact with the rest of the world. How you think directly causes how you interact with the rest of the world. We owe it to the interconnected web of everything to really understand what goes on in our heads. To be aware of how and why we do the things we do. I believe it's important for two reasons. Firstly, it reduces the amount of confusion and suffering we experience in our day to day lives. Secondly, because we're not separate from all that is, it helps us be a benefit to help reduce the confusion and suffering of others. In a real way we all create the world by our own thoughts. Our thoughts decide our actions, our actions influences the thoughts of others which decides their actions, who influence others, and on and on. The more I study, learn and practice the more I realize how true that is.

In one of Rev. Gyomays books he wrote that Buddhism is a religion of awareness. I'm starting to see just how true that is and how much awareness affects everything.

If you can't be aware... then beware!



TOO MUCH SPIRITUALITY?

By Dharma Dan



This is a call for a balance between “spirituality” and “practicality” or between a healthy mind and body. It is also a call to challenge certain stereotypes of the physical body representations of enlightenment. For example, consider the statue of a seated Buddha. The image suggests a calm centeredness and of being solidly grounded, which in turn implies that one’s spiritual center of gravity is in the abdomen (hara).

Rev. Koyo touts the benefits of “belly breathing” where taking a deep breath involves a pushing out of the abdomen, rather than raising the shoulders and pushing out the chest. When sitting, or especially while lying down, if you place your hand on your belly as you inhale, you should see your hand rise as your belly expands, and see your hand lower as your belly goes down on the exhale. This movement means that your diaphragm is moving up and down. The diaphragm is the muscle that separates the chest cavity from the abdominal cavity. Diaphragmatic breathing is basic and is the natural way of breathing; e.g. watch how a sleeping baby breathes. Babies have big bellies and have an innocent spirituality in that they respond to their environment with no pretense or artificiality.

I’ve often heard Rev. Koyo tell a story about a man who received a nice teaching from his Jr. High School teacher in Japan. The teacher said when faced with a big decision, you can’t rely on your head (intellect) because rational logic may be too abstract. Moving lower, you can’t rely on your heart (emotions) either because strong feelings often lead one astray. For important decisions, it’s best to rely on one’s belly (intuition) or gut instincts.

Now, here is where things get interesting. In certain contexts, I’ve seen Rev. Koyo pat his ample belly, implying that his spiritual center of gravity is broad and solid. Although he usually chuckles, this is no laughing matter! One of the worst stereotypes in Buddhism is the array of six Chinese deities of good fortune. Aside from the fact that they are not really Buddhas, they are all fat! Quite commonly, a statue of one of these deities is found at the entrance to Chinese restaurants. Rubbing the belly is supposed to bring good luck, presumably because being prosperous and eating well are linked. Well, “eating well” is not

necessarily healthy! I’m getting ahead of myself. Once Rev. Gyomay Kubose was talking about the meaning of Buddha statues to a visiting group of young people at his temple. One young lady asked about the fat Buddha at the restaurants. Rev. Kubose explained that such statues were not of the Buddha but the young lady couldn’t let go of the stereotype. Finally Rev. Kubose stated emphatically, “There are no fat Buddhas!”

I challenge and call out Rev. Koyo to stop joking about the virtues of a big belly. Having a “spare tire” around one’s middle is not healthy, and is correlated with increased risk of heart trouble. A big contributor to the current epidemic of obesity is the modern sedentary lifestyle... too much sitting around! This is why I like Amida Buddha statues; they are always standing. In fact, it is pointed out that the statue is leaning forward slightly, implying that Amida Buddha is proactive and moving toward the people. This is in contrast to a static, seated Buddha that could be considered to be sitting back (like a big shot) waiting for the people to come to him. We need active Buddhas, not passive Buddhas.

It is no coincidence that the enso or circle is important in Buddhism and that the Dharma Wheel is the international symbol of Buddhism. A wheel or circle implies movement and has a dynamic quality, as compared with static, solidly grounded shapes like a square or triangle. There is such a thing as “too much spirituality.” Although being solidly grounded is a good thing, when the analogy is misused, we need to emphasize another context; namely, not a sedentary, over-weight Buddha but a lean, healthy Buddha busily helping others. The Dharma Wheel means the Dharma is rolling along actively in the world. To be active means to be spiritually fit... there are no fat Buddhas!



DEAR SENSEI

I was eating a bagel this morning and this thought came to me. As some of you know I still cook professionally at times and started very young.

Food is meditation, so try to remember to chew slowly, identify the flavors and textures individually and also celebrate their symbiotic relationships.

The food we put into our bodies matters. It doesn't just nourish our physical bodies, it also shapes our attitudes and opinions. When we cook with love in mind, the food will absorb our emotions and intentions, offering us balance for our physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual health.

-- Gassho, William Toyo Holland (CA)

DEAR SENSEI

I was thinking about your Dharma talk you gave at your brother Don's Celebration of Life service, specifically the two "I's" , interdependence and impermanence, the foundation of our religion. Just a thought, the two "eyes" allow you to see (C). "C" stands for Compassion. Compassion is our pathway to Enlightenment.

Robert Ishikawa (CA)

Dear Bob,

Your comments at the service using sports examples were very appropriate and moving -- especially Jim Valvano, basketball coach at NC State, who although dying of cancer, encouraged everyone to live passionately with laughter and tears and to "Never give up!"

Editor

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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.

THE ART OF TAKING ACTION by Gregg Krech. Draws on Eastern philosophy, Buddhism, Japanese psychology, Zen, and martial arts to offer an approach to ACTION that goes beyond productivity and time management. 216 pages.

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SEP	Theme: Attention Purpose: Being present-centered; don't neglect what's around you; take care of immediate needs. Method: "Focused-Gassho:" Put palms about six inches apart and about six inches in front of eyes; as a reminder to pay attention to situational details right in front of you. Inhale as you "take in" the obvious.
OCT	Theme: Creativity Purpose: Open-minded flexibility; don't be closed and stubborn; consider all aspects and angles. Method: "Opening-Gassho:" From above 'focused-gassho' position, slowly widen palms apart just beyond ears while exhaling. As your field of vision expands, widen your mental perspective of how you approach problems.
NOV	Theme: Broaden life perspective Purpose: Develop a spiritual attitude regarding core values and ultimate concerns. Method: "Wide-Gassho:" Continue 'opening-gassho' while exhaling, until arms are wide apart; tilt head back and close eyes. Know that all is Okay, even when things are not going okay. Note that all of the three above gassho's are done in one continuous movement but still incorporate the three different functions for a balanced approach.

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