

BUDDHISM & HALLOWEEN: FEAR OF DEATH

By William Toyo

First of all, let me wish those who celebrate Halloween, which is coming up. “Happy Halloween!!” or maybe I should say, “Have a “Scary Halloween !!”

Halloween is my favorite holiday. As a child, I loved wearing a costume on Halloween and going out “trick-or-treating” at night to return home with a heavy bag filled with candy. I still remember how much my stomach hurt and how terrible I felt after gorging myself on all that free candy.

It is reported that we will spend a whopping \$7.4 billion on 600 million pounds of sweet stuff, this Halloween.

One of my favorite movies is ‘Ghosts’, a 1996 short film starring Michael Jackson, co-written by horror novelist Stephen King and directed by special effects guru Stan Winston.

I found it interesting that the dead linked both America’s Halloween and The Hungry Ghost Festival – at least historically. I don’t believe in ghosts, ghouls and goblins. Except for the state of being a “hungry ghost” but they aren’t exactly the kind of ghosts thought about during Halloween. Hungry ghosts are too consumed with their own suffering to go out and “haunt” or “scare” other beings. It is believed by many different Buddhist cultures that during this month, the gates



of hell are opened to let out the hungry ghosts who then want food and most likely some candy also.

Halloween is one of the world’s oldest holidays, dating back to pagan times. But it is celebrated today by more people in more countries than ever before. There’s a simple reason: it is fun and it is good, clean, harmless fun for young and old alike.

Halloween’s origin dates back to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (sow-in). The Celts who lived 2,000 years ago in the area that is now Ireland celebrated their new year on Nov.1st. This day marked the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of the dark, cold winter, a time of year that was often associated with human death. Celts believed that on the night before the New Year, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred.

As a Buddhist, Halloween also reminds me of death and the importance of this human birth in overcoming samsara, which includes death, fear and anxiety, which are all aspects of Halloween.

Contrary to the popular modern view of Buddhism as a gentle philosophy of teachings that peacefully lead one down a path of self-reflection, Buddhist literature has never shied away from the dark, frightening and threatening. Take for example, the preta,(prey-tuh) or “hungry ghosts” realms, described by the historical Buddha. In this realm- one of six in which one can be born due to excessive greed-ghostly beings with mummified skin roam about with tiny necks and large, distended bellies, always hungry but never full.

Zombies, spirits and ghosts are prominent in Buddhist history and Tibetan culture in particular, where they make repeated appearances in both oral and written text.

Indian tantras (tan-truh)
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Autumn Leaf

by Marilyn Chiyo

Our eleven-year old daughter and I walked home from Main Street Bagels the other day after chatting over cookies and root beer. She still likes to hold my hand when we walk, so the scene was very endearing as we made our way home along the tree-lined streets. Although the sun was warm on our backs, the air had a crispness to it that made me feel like winter weather couldn't be far off.

Luci likes to pick up sticks and fallen leaves so she had a fistful by the time we were half way home. Suddenly, the wind picked up and it almost seemed like the trees were snowing leaves. From high above us we could watch them tumble through the branches and scatter in the wind. Luci put down her pile of sticks and started chasing the falling leaves, trying to catch them. Watching her brought an old memory back to my mind.

When I was young, I remember catching falling leaves just like Luci was doing. Except I decided to keep one beautiful leaf I had caught. It occurred to me then, that I had saved the leaf from its "death" on the ground. "This leaf will never, ever in its entire life touch the ground" I thought in my

youthful mind as I tucked it in a drawer. I may as well have announced that, "death will never come."

It is a gift to enjoy the innocence of a child chasing and catching falling leaves, as though you are watching the child within you delighting in nature that special way once again. "It doesn't get much better than this," I thought to myself as we resumed our stroll homeward. All of a sudden a lovely leaf landed on my arm. Its edges hadn't yet browned or curled. Its color was a vibrant yellow, not pale and dry like many others. I smiled as I held it for a moment. Without hesitation, I put it in my pocket.

Luci arrived at our doorstep with an armful of sticks and pretty leaves which we left in a pile on the porch. To my knowledge, she was undaunted by their impending autumn demise. But for me, something wasn't quite right. I felt the waiting leaf in my pocket. Soon, it would dry and crumble. "Where would this leaf want to be when that happens?" I thought. I removed the lovely leaf from my pocket and with feelings of gratitude for my life and the lives around me, I let it fall to the ground... another leaf in the pile.



FREE BOOK!

“Learning the Wisdom of Enlightenment”

The Society for the Promotion of Buddhism has published a new book entitled, “Learning the Wisdom of Enlightenment” which is being made available to the public. The Bright Dawn Center received a copy and can attest that this slim paperback book contains great stories and commentaries on many time-honored teachings of the Buddha. Making this book available to the public will no doubt help bring meaning and insight to life in today’s contemporary world.

Here is some of the great work being done by the Society for the Promotion of Buddhism (Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai America). They have sponsored permanent Visiting Buddhist Scholar positions in several major universities. They organized a group of international scholars to work on an English translation of the Buddhist Tipitika (complete set of over a hundred thousand classical Buddhist sutras); this project would take several decades to complete. A free copy of the book “Teachings of the Buddha” was placed in many hotel rooms (like the Gideon Bible!). Establishment of an international award recognizing Buddhist teachers for their world-wide impact in promoting Buddhism.

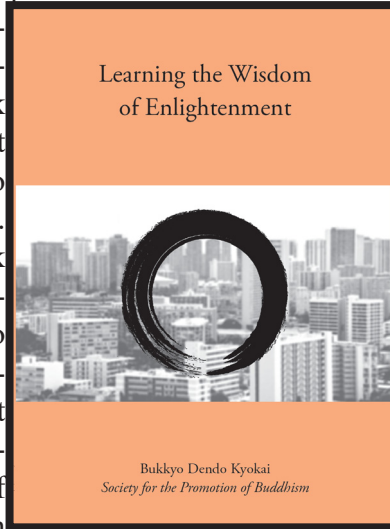
Such activities are funded due to the generosity and vision of one man, Nehan Numata, who founded the non-profit Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai organization. He

built a successful international engineering company in the micro-measuring instrument industry. As a devout Buddhist, Numata pledged ten percent of his company’s profit annually, to fund this organization. Gassho!

The Society for the Promotion of Buddhism is located in Moraga, CA, under the leadership of its Director, the Rev. Brian Nagata.

If you are affiliated with a local Buddhist group and wish more copies, you can make a request directly by emailing: orders@BDKAmerica.org.

Our Rev. Koyo Kubose is a personal friend of Rev. Brian Nagata. Both of their mothers grew up in the town of Fowler which is just south of Fresno, CA. Historically, it is interesting that for some reason, the tiny town of Fowler has an abundance of families that have produced Buddhist ministers, their wives, and other active leaders for the Buddhist Churches of America.




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while our supplies last



Seasonings

SAYINGS TO ADD A LITTLE FLAVOR TO LIFE



“The trees are about to show us how lovely it is to let the dead things go.”

THE SPARK OF LIFE

by Doug Kuyo

Back in March or April, my wife Patti Kayo and I visited one of our local nurseries here on Whidbey Island, Washington. We were quite taken with a plant called the “Profusion Beauty Berry” (*Callicarpa bodinieri*), and after learning it was the last one in the place, we decided to take it home. The plant was covered in splendid violet-colored berries.

We placed it in our backyard, still in its pot, to get acclimated while we decided on a suitable location. But one thing led to another (you know how that goes), and it stayed in its original container where it seemed to be doing okay.

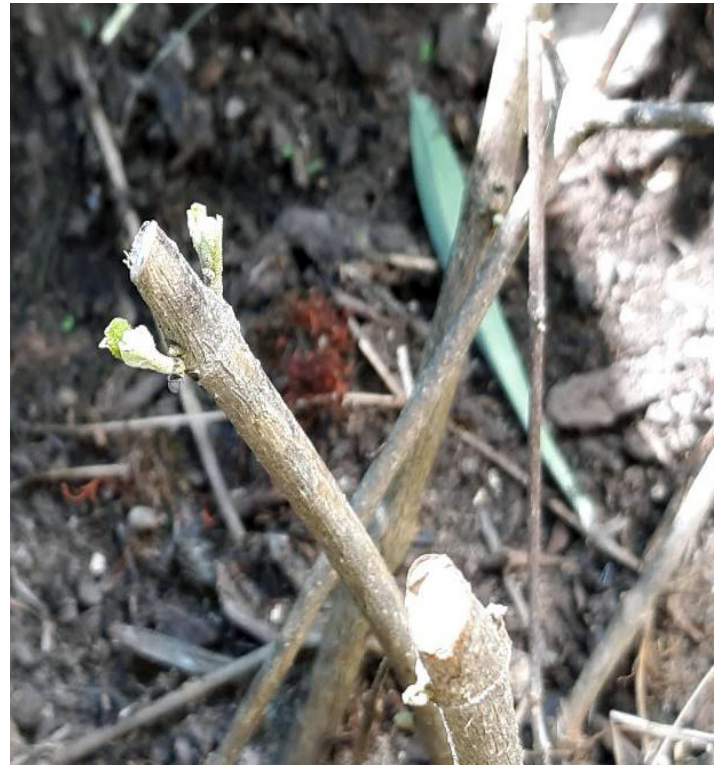
Late in April, we needed to drive to SoCal to sell Patti’s house and bring her daughter, who had been living there, back here to live in our home. That was quite an ordeal what with packing, repairs, termiting, and of course the anxiety-provoking task of listing and selling a house. But eventually it was done, and after two months there we returned to the Pacific Northwest with three adults, three dogs and a 15’ U-Haul truck loaded with household goods (not doing that again, I can tell you!).

When we got back home there was, of course, a lot of unpacking and settling in to do. We were decompressing for a couple of weeks until we started feeling more or less normal. At some point we made the rounds of the property to see how the lawn and landscaping had fared. We had asked our gardener to water during the weeks we were gone when there hadn’t been rain. Everything looked like it had survived pretty well – and then we saw the Beauty Berry -- still in its pot, completely dried out, no leaves, and the branches dry and brittle. We looked at each other feeling like a couple of murderers.

Always ready for the quick fix, I said, “Let’s go back to the nursery and see if they have another one.” Patti, relying on years of nurturing children and plants said, “Well, let’s cut it back, plant it in the ground, and maybe it will come back. You never know when there’s a tiny spark of life at the core.” We took it out of its pot, and saw the root ball, hard and twisted with roots, trying vainly to escape. It hurt to look at. We cut off the bottom of the roots and planted it in a suitable spot with some fertilizer and a good drink of water.

Every morning thereafter when I took the dogs out back I checked on it. Signs of life – zero. I

pronounced it dead, but Patti said just hold on, let’s give it a chance. A week went by, then two. By that point I had given up and suggested again about getting a replacement plant. Then one day Patti said, “Have you looked closely at the Beauty Berry today, there are some little buds.” I went out and sure enough, on a couple of branches were the tiniest beginnings of new growth. A spontaneous feeling of joy came over me. I’ve enjoyed



my share of sunsets, waterfalls, mountains and the like, but this was an appreciation of nature different from anything I had experienced. It felt like a gift.

Since then, the plant has really come back. Almost every branch has leaves, and they are growing very quickly. Bunnies like to come in the yard so we have a wire cage to protect it.

When I look at it, I feel gratitude for what has been given to me so freely, and I am reminded of our interdependence with all living things. In my dictionary of Buddhism, it says that faith (*shraddhā*) consists “in the conviction that grows in students through their own direct experience with the teaching.” This is the real lesson. Even when nothing seems to be happening - keep going. Or as another spiritual program puts it, “Don’t leave 5 minutes before the miracle happens.”



HARVEST TIME

by Dharma Dan

One purpose of the articles I write is to point out the narrow, limited perspective humans often have on life. Hopefully, increased awareness will help promote spiritual growth in you, our newsletter readers. You're welcome!

The topic of this article is the harvest season. A common human view of the harvest season is that it is the culmination or end goal of a process that began with planting seeds in the spring. This common view makes sense as an abstract or conceptual representation of a linear process; that is, as a straight line that has a beginning (one end of the line) and an end (the other end of the line).

How about looking at the seasons from a wider perspective; that is from the point of view of nature? Here, there is no linear process. Instead, there is a continuous cycle that has no beginning or end. Such a cycle is better represented as a circle rather than a straight line. What you humans do is to take one part of the circle and consider it as a straight line. There is nothing wrong in doing this; after all, to do things in life involves the thinking of a start and finish. The problem is when you think that straight lines exist independently and not as a part of a circle.

One easy way to widen the linear perspective of the seed-harvest process is simply to realize that the seeds had to come from somewhere. Somewhere be-

yond the notion of buying seeds from a seed catalog or store. From the perspective of natural laws, seeds are a product of the ripening process in nature. Producing seeds is part of the harvest. When I want to emphasize the wide importance of nature as a force in the world, I like to use the word "Nature." This capitalization signifies universality and not any deity implications. It is probably better to say "in nature" than "of nature." Although there is the expression, "Nature is the Buddhist God," it may be better to say directly, "There is no God in Buddhism; there is only Nature." Nature refers to natural cause-effect; that is, Karma.

Wow, I got carried away! Back to the topic of harvesting. If you are a gardener who saves seeds from a harvest, you are better able to appreciate the broader never-ending cycle of the seasons. This is my Buddhist take on Harvest Time. I think it also reflects the current emphasis on sustainability which is an important aspect of the ecological movement.

Lastly, don't forget that a "Buddhist" harvest refers to an actual crop that is eaten, and not just an abstract concept for discussion. Sometimes we overemphasize analyzing and thinking about food, rather than actually eating food. So, please don't eat the menu! This is Dharma Dan signing off!

Haiku Corner

Canada geese
snow geese
honking, honking, honking
Obon lanterns...
then so suddenly,
it's Halloween

-Ginny Geiyo



ONENESS NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2019

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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

Buddhism and Halloween continued from p2

hark back to various spirits, demons, flesh-eating ghouls, smell eaters described in various scriptures. This all goes along with an extremely strong indigenous Tibetan tradition of belief in horrendous creatures such as flesh demons, hair demons, skin demons, demons that haunt mountain passes and demons that steal children and now you have something that is truly frightful. In some regions of Tibet, doorways are still constructed small and low so that zombies, with their stiff joints and limbs, can't bend down low enough to pass through.

Although abundant stories of ghosts, goblins, ghouls, vampires and various other dark creatures of the night are taken quite literally by many, we should not dismiss them entirely as superstition and naïve. Running alongside all these beliefs is an understanding of the psychology

of fear and perception born from a deep understanding of Buddhist philosophy.

Halloween might also be a time to pay attention to rampant evil as well to remember the blessed dead. It is also an opportunity to reflect on what we have come to believe about good and evil and the important parts that they play in our lives whether we are serious or at play. Halloween is a holy day and a holiday. It is a time to remember others and ourselves. It connects the present to the past, the living to the dead.

I will end with quotes from a Tibetan monk from the 11th century who originated the practice of Chod. Machig Lab-dro-ma (Machik Labdron)

Chod is a practice that combines Buddhist meditation with ancient tibeto-siberian shamanic ritual. Chod practice journeys into

the night world - the dangerous regions of ghosts, spirits and demons. The word "chod" means to cut through, to "chop", and what is chopped off is ultimately the ego.

Here are the two quotes, I will leave you with, along with the ghosts and demons I enjoyed sharing with you today:

"As long as there is an ego, there are demons.

When there is no more ego, There are no more demons either! If there is no ego, there is no more object to cut through. Nor is there any more fear or terror."

"Approach what you find repulsive, help the ones you think you cannot help, and go places that scare you."

Everyone enjoy this wonderful holiday and go out and scare the dharma out of someone! Gassho!!!

Acknowledgements with Gratitude

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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.

When submitting donations, please list your name exactly as you wish it to appear in the Oneness newsletter. Acknowledgments are current as of August 24, 2019. Donations received after this date will be listed in the next issue. If we have missed an acknowledgment, please let us know by email at: info@brightdawn.org

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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

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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.

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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.

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.

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.

5-MINUTE MINDFULNESS JOURNAL by Noah Rasheta. A few minutes is all it takes to transform your day. The 5-Minute Mindfulness Journal helps you live mindfully with quick, thought-provoking practices and writing prompts to bring peace, calm, and happiness to your day. 136 pages.

NO-NONSENSE BUDDHISM FOR BEGINNERS by Noah Rasheta. Presented in a straightforward conversational style, this book provides the groundwork you need to begin - or continue - your exploration of Buddhist ideas. 132 pages.

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| | |
|------------------|---|
| SEPTEMBER | <p>Theme: A plant analogy for spiritual ripening Purpose: More Humility; Less Ego Method: "Heavy-Head Gassho:" When bowing your head while doing Gassho, consider how a rice or wheat stalk stands straight up when young, whereas when the stalk ripens, the head of the stalk gets heavier; the more it ripens, the more its head bows down.</p> |
| OCTOBER | <p>Theme: Autumn Maple Leaf Purpose: Living a Natural Life Method: "Falling-Leaf Gassho:" Start with a one-handed Gassho, then slowly twist your wrist back and forth as you lower your hand to waist level. Liken this movement to how an Autumn Maple leaf falls, showing front, sowing back. Try to live such a natural life, with no artificiality or pretensions!</p> |
| NOVEMBER | <p>Theme: Earth's Ground Purpose: To live a "grounded" life Method: "Grounded-Gassho:" Sit down and do a one-handed Gassho; place your other hand on the ground or floor. Recall how some Buddha statues show the Buddha doing a "Pointing to the Earth" mudra (hand gesture), implying the living of a solid, grounded spiritual life.</p> |

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