

O N E N E S S

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

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MAPLE LEAF

by Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose

Ryokan was an outstanding calligrapher and Zen monk. During his lifetime he composed many poems. One of them concerns a maple leaf on an autumn afternoon:

*Maple leaf
Showing front
Showing back
Falling down*

In the Japanese language, this is very poetic. It suffers somewhat when translated into English but the meaning can still be understood. When Ryokan saw the maple leaf falling he could not help but talk to that leaf and say, "How wonderful you are. You don't just show the front and try to hide the back. How natural you are. I thought I was a monk with no double life but I realize that there still exists in me a desire to show the front and hide the back. But maple leaf, to you the front and the back are just the same—no pretensions, no ego, no artificiality. How nice. If I live like you, front and back do not make any difference. I am I."

Ryokan was inspired by the maple leaf and bowed in respect to it. The maple leaf is characterized by naturalness, and lives in accord with the "great natural way." Buddhism is this kind of naturalness and can be described as "The Great Natural Way."

Naturalness or living in a natural way is not easily understood. Many people think that the natural way means, "I like



this; I like that." In other words, to be natural means to act according to our ordinary selfish ways. Other people think that the Way is something special. They think that it is to be found outside of everyday thoughts. They think that a special Way, per se, exists. If they are sincere seekers, they want to find and follow this Way.

However, Buddhism teaches that the Way is neither a carefree, selfish way nor is it some other-worldly "special" way. It is simply the *natural* Way. Let me clarify what is meant by this natural way.

Consider the analogy of attending a wedding ceremony. When people go to a wedding, they all wear special clothes—a nice suit or fancy dress and

of course, polished shoes. In the 1960's, the hippies' way was to protest against traditional formality. They said, "Why do we have to wear ties? Why shine our shoes? Why trim our hair so often?" This protest against society's formalities spread so widely that it became a habitual, customary way of dressing. There is nothing wrong with informality.

However, both formality and informality are man-made ways; they are both man-made criteria by which we judge people and set standards. In our society there is usually a front way and a back way. The front way is the formal or public way; the back way is the (continued on page 4)

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Save the Date

September 21-22
Rev. Tetsuo Unno visits Chicago
November 9
*Memorial Tea Open House for
Minnie Kubose*

President's Message

by Rev. Koyo Kubose

From time to time I get requests from prison inmates for books on Buddhism. I know some ministers routinely put such requests in their circular file because they feel it is a waste of their time when there is little chance of any benefit coming back, and perhaps responding might invite future bother and problems. Yet, helping prisoners has become more common among Buddhist ministers.

I started sending books about 15 years ago and apparently the word gets around because others write and say they heard we provide reading material to help incarcerated people in their study of Buddhism. It is always nice to get feedback on this outreach service we provide. Recently I received a letter from a prisoner to whom I had sent books about nine years ago. I was pleasantly surprised that even after nine years he was thoughtful enough to write me. I wrote him that what he expressed might help others be motivated in their spiritual journeys and that if he had no objection, we'd like to reprint his letter in our newsletter. He gave his okay, so here is his letter and my reply to him.

May 29, 2003

Dear Reverend Kubose,

In the summer of 1994 I wrote to you asking for spiritual guidance. You were kind enough to send me, "The Center Within." In September of 1994, you sent me "Everyday Suchness" along with a note inside the cover to "Keep Going."

I am writing this letter to tell you that I have "Kept Going" from the maximum security prison at Pontiac to the minimum security prison at Vienna. I've done my

best to follow the Path and I will be released from prison in 2006. I also want to sincerely thank you for sending me the books that have been of so much help to me during this prison experience. "The Center Within" and "Everyday Suchness" were instrumental in opening my eyes and awakening my spirit.

It is my sincerest hope that this letter finds you in good health and spirit.

Yours in Oneness, T. C.

Dear T. C.,

I appreciate the sentiments you expressed in your letter and I am glad that you have "kept going." I am glad you found the books I sent you of help. Some people turn to religion in general or to Buddhism in particular for a "quick fix" to their problems or are attracted by the glorious promise of fantastic salvation or esoteric enlightenment. Some conditions in your background enabled you to relate to the simple truths in my father's books. You have to be a solidly grounded person with introspective depth. You should salute your good fortune.

The word "fortune" reminds me of one of my father's sayings that "in the spiritual world, misfortune is fortune" meaning that it is often hardships in life that enable one to discover life's richness. In your case, I am sure the prison experience provides the impact of looking at life seriously.

In another sense, all of us are in a prison for life, with a death sentence awaiting us. We cannot escape from this prison that has no walls. The mind can be another kind of prison with invisible bars. Having said that, spiritual liberation is possible through learning how to suffer wisely. So, let's "keep going." In Oneness, Rev. Koyo Kubose

Great Opportunities to Encounter the Dharma Teachings During the Weekend of September 20-21, 2003

Saturday, September 20

- ◆ 11:00 AM -- Heartland Sangha American Buddhist service at Lake Street Church, 607 Lake Street, Evanston
Guest speaker: Rev. Tetsuo Unno (from Los Angeles)
Lunch at a local restaurant with Rev. Unno
- ◆ 1:30 PM to 5:00 PM -- Rev. Tetsuo Unno Seminar "Religious Experience in Shin Buddhism, Zen, Christianity, and Secular Literature." (see attached flyer)
Dinner at a local restaurant with Rev. Unno

Sunday, September 21

- ◆ 5:45 AM -- Legacy Sunrise Walk at the lakefront (see article on next page)
- ◆ 11:00 AM -- Rev. Tetsuo Unno will be the O-Higan guest speaker at the Buddhist Temple of Chicago, 1151 W. Leland, Chicago



Lakefront Sunrise Walk

You and your friends are invited to view the sunrise on Sunday, September 21, 2003. Join Rev. Koyo and Adrienne Kubose and their special guest from Los Angeles, Rev. Tetsuo Unno for a stroll along the lakefront.

The sheer beauty of viewing a sunrise over Lake Michigan is itself worthwhile but in addition, seeing the sunrise can be a spiritual experience. The sun as a giver of life is a universal symbol of the affirmation of life. Watching the sun break over the horizon can inspire us to live 100% with no regret. Even with all our inadequacies, the grace of nature embraces us unconditionally. The sun's resurrection on a clear dawn morning fulfills the promise of hopes to come.

Most of us don't have a chance to watch a sunrise. If we do see one, it might be by accident through a bedroom window or just a glance while driving somewhere. Rarely do we get out of bed for the purpose of seeing a sunrise and quietly reflecting on life. Getting up early is part of what makes the occasion special. Here are some other ways that we hope will enhance the experience for you:

- ◆ Bring a pebble or small stone from around your home (some will be provided if you forget). During the sunrise walk, when we reach Inspiration Point, you can throw your "pebble offering" into the lake as an expression of gratitude for the wonders of nature, to reinforce the release of regrets, to make some kind of affirmation vow, to honor a loved one, etc.
- ◆ Incense sticks will be provided to light and carry during the walk. The burning stick getting shorter and shorter is a reminder of the Doctrine of Impermanence. Life is dynamic and always changing. Be mindful of the preciousness of life.
- ◆ After viewing the sunrise at Inspiration Point, Rev. Unno will give a short Dharma Talk. Before heading back to the starting point, we'll take a short detour to feed some ducks and large carp; it's fun! The total two-mile event will take about 45 minutes.

DATE: Sunday, September 21, 2003

TIME: Please arrive between 5:45 - 5:55 AM. Yawn, stretch, and see if you can locate Jupiter, Mars, Venus in the morning sky. Walk will begin at 6:00 AM.

DIRECTIONS: The starting point is Greenwood and Sheridan Road in Evanston. Greenwood is one block north of Dempster. The best route is to get to the intersection of Greenwood and Chicago Avenue and then proceed east on Greenwood towards the lake. One block past Forest Avenue, turn left on Sheridan Road (which T's into Greenwood) and park. Looking east towards the lake, you should see a restroom building and a Honda mini-van with "BRTDAWN" license plates.

NOTE: If inclement weather, bring an umbrella; the walk will take place rain or shine.

AFTER-WALK OPTION: Breakfast at Clarke's restaurant, 720 Clark St. in Evanston. It is between Orrington and Sherman on Clark St., which is one block north of Church St. Best route is to take Orrington north to Clark and turn left.

Oneness Newsletter Autumn 2003

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Poems, Readers Replies to:
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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.

American Buddhist Services

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. Upcoming Dharma Talks by Rev. Koyo Kubose are:

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Sep 20 | Guest Speaker: Rev. Tetsuo Unno |
| Oct 4 | The Karma of Dharma |
| Oct 18 | Mirror of Vanity |
| Nov 1 | A Dharma Laxative for Mental Constipation |
| Dec 6 | The Darkness of Enlightenment |

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informal or private way. In our social lives we often do things because we feel we should, or must. "I should do it this way. If I do it in another way, people will laugh at me or criticize me." This is artificial. In contrast, Buddhism is a very natural, free way; there is no front and no back. There is no good or bad. The natural Way is not a man-made way. It is the Way that comes from our life itself. Just as a spring gushes up from the earth, there are no set rules. The spring has no particular way it must gush up; water just comes out naturally.

When the earth warms up, the flower blooms. This is natural. We want to control nature too much. For example, we want to have Easter lilies bloom at Easter so we put the lilies in a hot house to force them to bloom earlier. In warm climates, the lilies must be put under refrigeration to slow them down in order to have them bloom on Easter.

Our lives should not have such artificiality. We should be ourselves, just as we are in our everyday lives. However, this everyday or natural self tends to imply a carefree, undisciplined way. To be natural does not mean to be able to do whatever one wants. Most of us think of "self" only in terms of the ego self. In Buddhism, the natural self is not the ego self. The natural self is something beyond one's own feelings, expressions, or wishes. The self that lives the natural Way is never defiled or controlled by the environment.

Expressed in a concrete person, it is the Buddha. The natural Way is the Buddha's Way, your Way. Since we are all unique individuals, expression of this Way is different for each of us; yet, the essence is the same. Explaining the Way is difficult. Words cannot describe it directly but can only point to it. Do not become attached to words or to what has been said. Explanations are only motivators, pointing you in a direction. You yourself have to find the Way.

Legacy Resources for Individual Spiritual Practice

Please send me information on (mark choices):

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

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Book Review

The Feeling Buddha by David Brazier is a lucid account of how the Buddha's path of wisdom and loving kindness grew out of the challenges he encountered in life. Brazier explains the concepts of enlightenment, nirvana and the four Noble Truths, free from mystification. The Buddha emerges as a very human figure whose success lay not in his perfection, but in how he positively utilized the energy which was generated through his suffering. This rare guide illustrates how the Buddha's philosophy of the "middle way" can lead to a balanced, harmonious, and serene existence in the twenty-first century.

(From the back cover of the book)

Back to School Dharma Supplies



Zen Notebook
(Blank, unlined paper)

Nonattachment Glue

Enlightened Lunchbox
(Sangha sandwiches)

Six Paramita Pencils

Bodhi Backpack

Words of Wisdom

Take care not to make the intellect a god; it has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality.

—Albert Einstein

Symbols are just symbols; the thing's the thing.

—Howard Ogden

The map is not the territory.

—Alfred Korzb

Minnie Kubose 1st Year Memorial Tea Open House



The Kubose family together with the Tea students of Joyce Kubose will host an open house tea memorial to commemorate the first year memorial of Minnie Kubose. Minnie Kubose taught and shared chanoyu, the Japanese Way of Tea, for 25 years, inviting all into the tearoom that she and Rev. Kubose built in their apartment next to the Buddhist Temple of Chicago. They named the tearoom *Koso-an*, fragrant grass hut.

Please join the Kubose family for a traditional sweet and a bowl of matcha, green powered tea, in memory of Minnie Kubose. The open house tea memorial will be held on Sunday, November 9, 2003, from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at Minnie Kubose's tearoom located at 4641 N. Racine Avenue, 2nd floor, Chicago, Illinois. Most likely this will be the last public gathering in Minnie's tearoom, as BTC will be needing to use the apartment for other purposes.

Memorial donations are not necessary. For more information, please contact Joyce Kubose at 773-794-1950.

Reader Replies

Dear Readers,

Thank you for what you have sent in. Sometimes it may take a few issues before we can fit things in, but please continue to share your contributions. Here are a few we have received. One titled "Remember Me" can comfort your heart; "Inner Strength" will bring a smile to your lips; and the one on the death penalty can give you food for thought.

Remember Me

*To the living, I am gone.
To the sorrowful, I will never return.
To the angry, I was cheated,
But to the happy, I am at peace.
And to the faithful, I have never left.
I cannot be seen, but I can be heard.*

*So as you stand upon a shore,
Gazing at a beautiful sea,
Remember me.*

*As you look in awe at a mighty forest
And its grand majesty,
Remember me.*

*As you look upon a flower and
Admire its simplicity,
Remember me.*

*Remember me in your heart, your thoughts
And your memories of the times we cried,
The times we fought, the times we laughed.
For if you always think of me,
I will have never gone.*

(author unknown)

Inner Strength

*If you can start the day without caffeine or pep pills,
If you can be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains,
If you can resist complaining and boring people with
your troubles,
If you can eat the same food everyday and be grateful
for it,
If you can understand when loved ones are too busy to
give you time,
If you can overlook when people take things out on you
when, through no fault of yours, something goes wrong,
If you can take criticism and blame without resentment,
If you can face the world without lies and deceit,
If you can conquer tension without medical help,
If you can relax without liquor,
If you can sleep without the aid of drugs,
If you can do all these things,
Then you are probably the family dog or cat.*

(from A.T. and V. N.)

Buddhism and the Death Penalty

"He abused me. He defeated me. He robbed me. Live with such thoughts and you live in hate. Hatred is not overcome by hate; hatred is overcome by love. This is an ancient and inexhaustible law. We too shall pass away. Knowing this, how can we quarrel?"

(from chapter 1 of the Dhammapada)

I feel there is no easier, clearer and more logical statement than this one to show how Buddhism deprives the death penalty of

(continued on next page)

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 any authority. Such a statement is at the base of any Buddhist ethic or doctrine. In the Dhammapada, which has great value for all Buddhist traditions, there are other clear statements but there is no need for further quotation (up to you to find more). I couldn't find any approval of the death penalty, not in the texts, nor in the words of teachers and monks I met during the past 12 years. We don't have to think the Buddha was infallible (personally I'm not a supporter of the roman Pope infallibility, and I don't support any other infallibility) but to me it seems we can be sure that what was just quoted is "a law ancient and inexhaustible."

If it is really an ancient and inexhaustible law, no one in the families of victims will be healed by executions (in fact, psychological reports and personal experiences seem to confirm this). Not only that, but nobody in the whole world will be healed. The Buddha seems to be quite categorical: the only answer is love. As Buddhists (or supposed Buddhists) we have to question ourselves about the death penalty: either we take the side of love, or we take the side of a kind of "justice" which surely isn't nonviolent

and which in my opinion is completely distorted.

Why take the side of love? We have seen how much politicians are conditioned by polls and numbers. They seem to act not on the basis of personal conscience, but just consider the final gain or loss of consensus. In that light, I want to answer those who have asked if "it is not enough to improve ourselves, to change violence in ourselves, or even work silently in society." I would reply that this change, this work, has to be shown, has to become evident. Not because we have to show that Buddhists are engaged too, or for any other propagandistic motivation, but in the name of the social nonviolence we want to promote. It is difficult to produce personal improvement in any unjust and violent situation. Furthermore, I think we need each other's encouragement, support, and experience.

It is sad to say, but evident, that the silent inner work of meditation has created very few sane and really just and democratic societies in Asia. More often, it is a form of passive support to the worst military regimes. So I would say we need to create a front, a barrier, to face the violence generating more violence. It should not be a front generated by the

blind acceptance of any idealistic form of belief, but a coalition generated by the power of compassion and mindful wisdom. A single, isolated person cannot build any barrier. I believe we need to work hand in hand, so that when someone is tired, in despair, or caught by hatred, someone else will soon support him or her.

Finally, I don't believe that in the 75% (or more) of Americans in favor of the death penalty, there is a really persuaded majority. I would say that such a percentage reflects an immediate, confused, and emotional response to a general condition of violence and fear, in a materialistic, spiritually depleted society. If this is so, such a response is not deeply rooted. If it is not deeply rooted, it can be changed more easily than we might think. To uproot it, a good thought, a good motivation, our com-*passion*, must become active, evident. They cannot stay confined in the silence of our meditation rooms, or locked in the depths of our hearts. This is why I want to promote the idea of a form of inter-national Buddhist (this can be omitted!) coalition for the abolition of the death penalty.

I will wait for more suggestions. Thanks for your kind attention.

Love, S.O.

Acknowledgements with Gratitude **Supporters from Books and Donations**

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YES YES Your Everyday Spirituality YES YES	
SEP	Theme: Education Purpose: To motivate oneself to study more Method: When noticing a book or magazine, appreciate the knowledge it represents; promise yourself to read and study more this autumn. Open your hands like you're opening a book; do Gassho.
OCT	Theme: Introspection Purpose: To see ourselves and our social roles clearly Method: "Maple-Leaf Hand:" Rotate both open hands, like falling autumn leaves, showing front and back, symbolizing the social "fronts" we put on while hiding our negative "back." Put your open hands together and Gassho to seal your intent to communicate more honestly and openly.
NOV	Theme: Gratitude Purpose: Mindful Eating Method: After your usual mealtime grace, chew the first three mouthfuls slowly, associating or dedicating them, respectively, to the Three Treasures: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. After each mouthful, take a slow breath, bow your head, and smile.

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.

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