

# O n e n e s s

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

Vol. 8 No. 1 Spring 2004

## Keeping Dualism in Perspective

by Rev. Koyo S. Kubose

The Way of Oneness is a non-dualistic approach to life. Our usual approach is dualistic. We live according to dualisms such as good-bad; win-lose; self-other; life-death, etc. Our conceptual dichotomizing of the continuum of reality into two discrete categories has value and we should not feel such dualisms are entirely bad or that they should be eliminated. Rather, we need to keep an ever-widening perspective whenever we start becoming victimized by a dualistic approach to life. Such perspective can be called wisdom or Right Understanding in Buddhism. What might be a concrete illustration of keeping dualism in perspective?

In sports, winning and losing are important. We are motivated to excel and we are tested by adversity in many forms. Bill Bradley, a former professional basketball player and U.S. Senator, says in his book, "Values of the Game," that basketball is a laboratory for learning how to handle adversity. "Adversity offers a richness of experience all its own, and even victory itself has pitfalls. Rudyard Kipling told us to 'meet with triumph and disaster and treat those two impostors just the same.' Unfortunately, most of us can't do that. We allow defeat to crush us, or we exult unrealistically in victory."

Good coaches teach their players to keep a perspective on winning and

losing. No matter what, the important thing is to play hard and always give one's complete effort. The human mind is a tricky thing because what could happen next is we create a dualism between playing hard versus being a slacker, and start making judgments of ourselves and others. To get perspective on this dualism might require developing a trust and acceptance of whatever effort a person is putting out. This too may have its pitfalls if later one feels his trust was betrayed. If this were the case, the advice might be that one needs to keep perspective by always being flexible and not holding to an unrealistic, rigid expectation of trust and acceptance. The flexibility-inflexibility dualism could in turn require its own kind of perspective.

The point is that one never stops growing and learning because we keep changing and our circumstances keep changing too. Keeping perspective due to changing circumstances is illustrated by the classic Buddhist story of a father who gave his son a horse. A father celebrated his son's birthday by giving him a horse. The father was happy until the boy broke his leg in an accident while riding the horse. The father said to himself, "I never should have bought that horse." However, later there was a war and the boy, because of his broken leg, did not have to go and possibly be killed. The point of this story can also

be seen in the humorous comment, "The happiest day of my life was the day I bought my boat; and also the day I sold my boat."

Truth expresses itself in a variety of ways because life itself is dynamic and constantly changing. It is a mistake to conclude that one's judgment is final. Nor is it the point that one should expect something good from the bad or vice versa. Rather, we need to keep perspective – which means to be not rigidly attached to either aspect of a dualism to the extent that we victimize ourselves. A non-dualistic perspective is to go beyond an extreme good-bad interpretation. There is no need to feel compelled always to judge in terms of dualistic extremes. By keeping the perspective of Right Understanding, one lives a life of no regret. Live fully in the Suchness of each present moment. This is the Way of Oneness.

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## President's Message

by Rev. Koyo S. Kubose

In the middle of a night near the end of this past January, a sharp stomach pain woke me up. The pain didn't go away, so my wife took me to the hospital. The admitting nurse asked me to rate the pain intensity on a scale of 1 to 10. I immediately answered, "Ten." Where is the pain located? In the middle, high area of my stomach. Any vomiting, nausea? No.

I was given some Dilaudid medication for the pain, and blood was drawn for lab tests. I was taken for a CAT scan, which showed a two cm stone in my gallbladder. There was also a one and a half cm spot on my liver. Follow-up ultra-sound and MRI tests showed that the liver spot was nothing to worry about. I was put on an antibiotic because my gallbladder was inflamed. I stayed in the hospital for one day with no food to let things settle down. A surgeon visited and explained my surgical options of having my gallbladder taken out now or later. From different sources, I got a good layperson's education about what the gallbladder does, about gallstone formation, etc. I found out that my brother had a gallstone attack some 25 years ago. He opted for no surgery and hadn't had an attack since that first one.

After recovering from my gallstone attack, I processed the whole experience and of course it was a "wake-up call" for me to re-assess my eating habits and not to take my health for granted. I said to myself, "Well, I got a visit from the Gallstone Buddha, who is a rough, very direct teacher!" Although it is a rather banal cliché to say that pain of any kind is a learning experience and a character builder, not many of us know how to suffer wisely. Taking a wide view of suffering means to keep going beyond the suffering. It means you can use the suffering, rather than being used by it. You did not choose to have suffering come visit you,

### Oneness Newsletter Spring 2004

Phone: (847) 677-8211  
Dial-the-Dharma: (847) 677-8053  
Email: [brightdawn@core.com](mailto:brightdawn@core.com)  
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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.*

but here it is. It is an unwanted dance partner that you have to dance with for awhile. You are going to learn some new steps whether you like it or not. Sometimes the pain will lead, but sometimes you can do the leading too.

Coincidentally, a few weeks before my gallstone attack, a newsletter reader had written, "Since reading about your 'Bathroom Gassho' it occurred to me there are other, not necessarily pleasant situations, when we could do Gassho. Such as, there could be a 'Pain Gassho' since pain warns us that something is wrong, and causes us to pay attention to our health. If the pain is severe, we could alternate: Gassho, ouch! Gassho, ouch! Gassho ouch!"

Indeed, indeed... so I have included a "Pain Gassho" as one of the monthly aspects of YES (Your Everyday Spirituality) in this newsletter issue. The next time you have a pain or physical affliction, do Gassho and say, "Well, I got a visit from the (insert your affliction) Buddha!" This can have the benefit of widening your perspective and making it easier to do whatever is necessary to shorten the visit of this particular "teacher."

### 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, call (773) 545-9972.

Upcoming Dharma Talks by Rev. Koyo Kubose are:

#### Mar 20 Gallstone Buddha

Learning from our health problems

#### Apr 3 Hotei (The Laughing Buddha)

Ecology theme; not being wasteful; simple abundance; small is beautiful; appreciate every little thing.

#### Apr 17 The Art of Happiness

Attitude is everything; what kind of glasses do you wear?

#### May 1 Buddhism is to Decide Both Ways

Mental flexibility; Buddhist approach is "and" not "either-or."

#### May 15 Ordinary Mind is the Buddha Mind

Assiduity; be diligent in doing ordinary things; Buddha's mind is not some special, extra-ordinary mind.

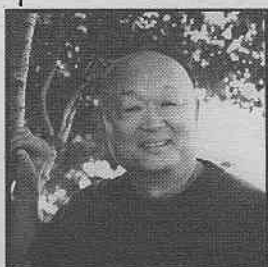
#### Jun 5 Why is the Buddha Smiling?

Suchness; naturalness; contentment.

## Now Available! "BRIGHT DAWN: Discovering Your Everyday Spirituality"

Rev. Koyo Kubose's new book, "BRIGHT DAWN: Discovering Your Everyday Spirituality" can be ordered using the form below. The following is from the back cover of the book:

Accompany Rev. Kubose as he prepares for a morning run along Lake Michigan, before the sun rises. As he runs along the path, he presents ideas of gratitude and perseverance that inspire the reader. By showing us how to see what is around us, we learn to let go of our narrow egocentric view and open up to a broader view of ourselves in the world.



Discover how to:

- Make each day a new day
- Thank your shoes
- Drive mindfully
- Use the bathroom as a sacred space
- Cross bridges
- Deal with death/mortality

As if modestly showing us a jewel of truth, Rev. Kubose shares experiences of illumined consciousness and everyday epiphanies that reveal the perfection of life in the mundane moments of our lives.

— Rev. Robert V. Thompson, Lake Street Church, Evanston, Illinois

Written with insight and joy, the author presents an inspiring jog along the path of mindful awareness, and the sacralization of everyday living in the moment.

— Prof. Sam Shapiro, Univ. of Hawaii, author of The Tao of Photography

As Kubose Sensei runs, walks, and breathes on and off the Path, let him show you how to wake up to the mystery, wonder, and infinite possibilities of your own marvelously illuminating life.

— R. Zenyo Brandon, President, American Buddhist Association

Kubose Sensei has opened the heart of the Dharma for everyone in this delightful account of his daily journeys along the shore of Lake Michigan. We are all in his debt.

— Gordon Bermant, Vice-President, Buddhist Churches of America

### "BRIGHT DAWN" Book Order Form

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# *Buddhism and the Death Penalty*

by David Brazier

I would like to respond to S.O.'s article in *Oneness* (Autumn 2003) in which he or she speaks of promoting an inter-national Buddhist coalition for the abolition of the death penalty. Buddhism certainly teaches us to "move away from killing." "Though others kill, we shall not kill" it says in the *Salekha Sutta*. In the *Dhammapada*: "All people love life, just as we ourselves, therefore do not kill nor cause others to kill." The Buddha is persistent on this point. S.O.'s article about the need for Buddhists to focus opinion and influence with a view to ending the death penalty is very welcome. This is certainly a topic upon which positive change is possible. According to Amnesty International, which is a reliable source, since 1990, more than 35 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or, having previously abolished it for ordinary crimes, have gone on to abolish it for all crimes. By April 2003, 76 countries and territories had abolished the death penalty for all crimes. A further 15 countries had abolished it for all but exceptional crimes such as wartime crimes. Twenty-one countries were abolitionist in practice: i.e. had not carried out any executions for the past ten years and are believed to have a policy or established practice of not carrying out executions. So there are now 112 countries which are abolitionist in law or practice and 83 countries which retain and use the death penalty, whereas only a few years ago the majority of countries were still in principle in favor of capital punishment. The vast majority of judicial killings in the world take place in one of three countries. These countries are China, Iran and the USA, in that order. These three collectively accounted for over 80% of all executions in the world in 2002. Europe is generally abolitionist and all countries in the European Union follow Protocol 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights which commits governments to the permanent abolition of the death penalty. Britain completely abolished it in 1999 having effectively done so some time before. A major factor in influencing opinion in Britain has been the exposure of a long series of miscarriages of justice. Courts cannot be infallible. There have been a number of occasions, for instance, when suspects have been convicted of terrorist offences in the heat of the post-incident public outrage and then later been demonstrated innocent. In the old days it would have been too late. It does little good quashing the conviction of somebody after they have been executed. As a practical proposition, therefore, one should not think it impossible to influence opinion in such a way as to enable China, Iran, and the USA to join the humane trend in the rest of the world. At the same time, for Buddhists, even if every country were in favor of capital punishment, it would

still be wrong, in the sense of being a practice that generates much painful karmic consequence. S.O. is quite right to emphasize the need for people of peace to support one another because it is hard holding to a compassionate position when others are strongly opposed to it. I am sure the Buddha would wish us to avoid giving way to anger and would want us to keep an attitude of loving kindness toward all the other parties involved, including those who favor or even carry out executions. The principle here is that those who do harm are thereby themselves at least as much harmed by it as those who are their victims. The effect upon the mind of doing harm is very powerful and difficult to erase. When people have done acts that carry powerful negative karma, it requires much skillful spiritual help to liberate them again and most never seek such help, though they suffer nonetheless.

Deep faith in karma is basic to all schools of Buddhism, I think, though the implications are not always so clearly understood. In one way, the universe is rather ruthless. It will take its toll. The reason we try to help wrong doers and dissuade them is because the ball they set rolling is very hard to stop. It will roll over them and, all too commonly, it then rolls over others. It is not that those who do harm are bad people. It is just that they don't really see what they are doing. In Christianity too there is the famous saying, "Forgive them for they know not what they do." This was addressed by Jesus to God. Although Buddhists do not address God, the attitude is essentially the same, namely that it is not our place either to condemn or to forgive- the universe will take care of that- what is our job is to have compassion and to do as wisely as we can. Extending compassion to harm-doers involves persuading them to desist. The issue S.O. has raised is of great importance.

## **LEAVES**

By Vernon Shabunia

Of all the lotus blossoms  
In the Western lands,  
Of all the times and places  
In the realm  
of the 108 dharmas,  
Of all the antithetical-unity  
crazy wisdom formations,  
We are:  
Maple leaves in spring  
Fluttering in the wind  
Back and forth.

## Reader Replies

Dear Sensei,

It has been over a year since my telephone TiSarana confirmation ceremony you did for me. I would like to comment on the profound influence it has had in my life. A telephone service should have no less of an impact than an in-person service as long as the practitioner maintains his single pointedness of purpose and his pure heart. I have included some thoughts that you may wish to consider for the newsletter.

J. O. K. Calumet City, IL

1. Does the Buddha have a cucumber nature?

I only hear the sound  
of tongue and teeth and breath.  
When perceiving with Mu-shin  
I see cucumber growing on the vine  
when ripe... we eat!

2. The end of this very long day  
and already I have been reborn countless times.

samsara... samsara... samsara  
My presence is required as mountains are reborn,  
My absence is required to "see" the mountains.  
This moment is truly eternal if not viewed successively;  
rebirth makes for a very long day.

3. If I see the Buddha in my mirror

Can I see him in yours?  
When "I" am present  
"He" is nowhere to be found.  
Can I see confirmation of my Buddha-nature?  
I trust in this,  
I am you  
and I see him in your mirror.



By Seki Bokuo Roshi, Former Chief Abbot of Tenryu-ji.

The calligraphy reads: *Yaka yakedomo tsukizu, shunpu fuite mata shozu.*

Translation by Thomas Kirchner: Meadow grasses are burned but do not perish; Spring winds blow, and again they grow.

In ancient Japan the meadow grasses were burned every autumn, yet with the coming of spring they sprouted again as green as ever. In Zen this traditionally symbolizes the ceaseless arising of human passions and delusions, but may it not also be seen as an expression of the irrepressible force of the awakening of life?

(Reprinted from a calendar produced by the Institute for Zen Studies, Kyoto, Japan).

YES YES Your Everyday Spirituality YES YES	
MAR	<b>Theme:</b> Physical pain/health problems <b>Purpose:</b> To cultivate a wider perspective (than just the negativity) of pain <b>Method:</b> "Pain-Gassho:" (courtesy of Sallea Unger, Phoenix, Arizona) When having pain or other physical symptoms, do Gassho to give thanks for the message. Make the visit of the Pain-Buddha a short one, by taking appropriate measures and action.
APR	<b>Theme:</b> Laughter <b>Purpose:</b> To experience the effects of a good laugh <b>Method:</b> "Laugh-Gassho:" Vigorously slap your hands together in Gassho and laugh out loud several times for no particular reason. Note: Do this only when you are alone.
MAY	<b>Theme:</b> Mother's Day <b>Purpose:</b> To explore dynamics of the relationship with your mother <b>Method:</b> "Mother's Day-Gassho:" Sit quietly doing Gassho in front of your mother's picture; remember something negative you did in your relationship. Say out loud, "Mom, please forgive me for ____." Then nod your head and say several times, "I know you do... I know you do (forgive me)."

## Book Review: "The Promise of Boundless Compassion: Shin Buddhism for Today" by Alfred Bloom

Reviewed by Frank Childs (from Metta, June 2003)

In his latest book, our local Sensei, Dr. Bloom, explores what Jodo Shinshu can offer the modern day spiritual seeker. Smilingly, Dr. Bloom refers to Shin Buddhism as "America's Best Kept Secret" and, I feel, as a *zenchishiki*, challenges both the "born into" and the "by-choice" Shin followers to explore their faith more deeply and to share it wisely and gently with others.

As a newcomer to Jodo Shinshu, Dr. Bloom's book has deepened my understanding and love for this path. A few of the important points I took from this book are: 1) As with everything else that we value, our spirituality needs to constantly be renewed. 2) How to be sensitive to the essentials of a tradition without being a slave to the past for the past's sake. 3) How to encounter Amida's infinite light and love in the immediate moment.

In a very focused, yet personal style, Dr. Bloom encapsulates our Jodo Shinshu teaching: "Amida is a symbol for the Buddha of limitless life and light, spiritually freeing and affirming life as it is (beyond the ego barriers of self-deception)."

No matter what our life situation, like Shinran, we can all find "meaning and consequent spiritual breath and depth in the understanding of the boundless compassion of Amida Buddha."

If we Jodo Shinshu followers wish to grow and transform into the *ondogyo* who can live vibrant and compassion-filled lives, I humbly suggest that Dr. Bloom's "The Promise of Boundless Compassion" would be a most beneficial lantern to illuminate one's path.

In closing, I quote again our beloved Betsuin zenchishiki. "The Nembutsu of Shinran is not just a combination of six syllables. Our whole life is Nembutsu, the way of naturalness. The Nembutsu is a spiritual shrine which can be transported and revered wherever one may be."

My thanks to Dr. Bloom for sharing his insights into the secret that hides a treasure.

Namu

Amida

Butsu.

## Acknowledgements with Gratitude

## Supporters from Donations and Book Sales

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### MEMORIAL DONATIONS

Not only is making a memorial donation a way to remember and honor a loved one, but 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

### New Book by Rev. Koyo Kubose

**BRIGHT DAWN: Discovering Your Everyday Spirituality.** The author's early morning run and sunrise viewing over Lake Michigan are related to simple teachings like "wide view" and "keep going" which deepen one's daily spirituality no matter where one lives. Includes map of actual lakeshore path and over a dozen photographs. 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" and speaks directly to the ordinary layperson. Collection of 58 essays reflects Rev. Kubose's down-to-earth presentation of the Dharma teachings which offers to all people a richer, more meaningful life. 134 pages.

**THE CENTER WITHIN audio cassette;** 3 hours.

**AMERICAN BUDDHISM.** Covers a brief history of Buddhism in America, Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path, problems in terminology and misunderstandings common to Westerners. 29 pages.

### Translations by Rev. Gyomay Kubose

**THE FUNDAMENTAL SPIRIT OF BUDDHISM** by Haya Akegarasu (Rev. Gyomay Kubose's teacher). Translated by Rev. Kubose, this book gives an idea of Rev. Akegarasu's life (1877-1954) and teachings. 87 pages. (Temporarily out of print)

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

**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, bamboo grove, etc. 20 pages.

**PROMISE OF BOUNDLESS COMPASSION: Shin Buddhism for Today** by Alfred Bloom. Calling Shin Buddhism, "America's best kept secret," Dr. Bloom describes how we can find "meaning and consequent spiritual breadth and depth in true understanding of the boundless compassion of Amida Buddha." 380 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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**SHIN BUDDHISM: Bits of Rubble Turn into Gold.** by Taitetsu Unno. Brings to mainstream audiences the first comprehensive overview of one of the world's most popular forms of Buddhism. 270 pages.

**THE FEELING BUDDHA.** by David Brazier. A lucid account of how the Buddha's path of wisdom and loving kindness grew out of the challenges he encountered in life. 207 pages.



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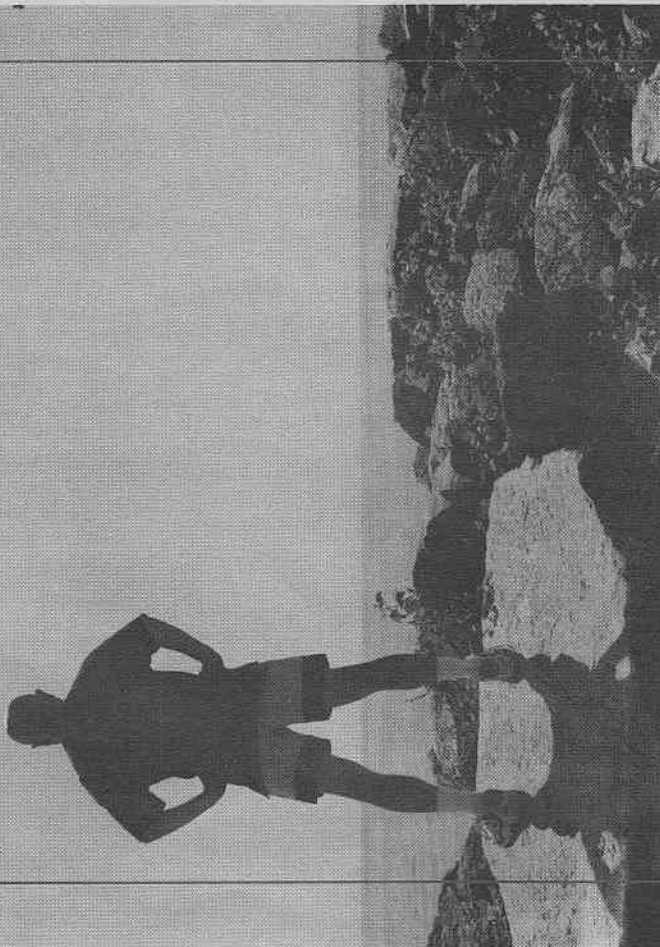
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3

NEW BOOK ! See page 3

# Bright Dawn

Discovering Your Everyday Spirituality



S.K. Kubose