

Oneness

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

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A BUDDHIST BALLOON By Rev. Koyo Kubose

The game was this: protect the balloon tied to the belt loop in the back of your pants, and at the same time, try to pop all other players' balloons with a rolled-up newspaper. The last player remaining with an unbroken balloon was the winning gladiator. I was about ten years old and an eager competitor at this game during our temple's annual summer picnic.

I was skilled. I was clever. I was quick. I struck deadly blows like Brad Pitt in the movie *Troy*. I flew around like the characters in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

All of a sudden, I saw a loose balloon bouncing along the ground. In the blink of an eye, I pounced and smashed it. Wait a minute... something wasn't right. It dawned on me that I didn't have my balloon tied on behind me; it had gotten loose from all my jumping around. Oh no! I had broken my own balloon!

I am reminded of a presumably true account of an experimental jet fighter that flew so fast while firing its guns, that it shot itself down. Hard to believe? It happened like this: The plane was descending at an angle, and fired its guns. Then the plane at supersonic speed went into a steep power dive and when leveling off, was struck by the bullets it had just fired.

These two examples should remind us that sometimes we are too fast for our own good. We try to do more and more in less and less time. Computers are fast but ironically they seem to make us into less patient people. It is easy to get obsessed with efficiency and lose the joy of what we are doing. We can counter this tendency by cultivating a mindfulness practice that will help us keep a perspective about our priorities. In our daily activities we should fully enjoy what we are doing and not make judgments based only on what was accomplished.

We should realize that the "means" are often just as important as the end goal. For example, many a successful person, at the end of his career, realizes that it was not the static end result of what he accomplished that gave him the most satisfaction. Instead, the greatest joy was the struggling and meeting of the challenges; that is, it was the process. Thus, it is said that in life, what is important is the journey, not just reaching a destination. This teaching can be expressed as "not means to an end" but "means equals end."

In talking about being too fast for one's own good, this "too fast" can also refer to being over confident in one's abilities. The cocky rabbit being beat in a race by a turtle is a parable that

illustrates this point. A conceited "know-it-all" is often limited by his own vanity. Having an open, questioning mind is a prerequisite to learning new things and making new discoveries.

I recall an amusing story about high school graduates being honored at a special dinner hosted by scholars and scientists. One young girl happened to be seated next to Albert Einstein. She asked him, "What do you do?" He said, "I study physics." She replied, "Oh, I already took that." It is easy to laugh at this story but I think many of us are in the complacent, conceited category than the earnest, humble category.

Most of us live comfortable lives, and we take for granted the simple but basic things in life. It is so easy to get caught up in trying to make more money or achieving some higher status and recognition. We can get caught up in not only physical and social materialism, but in spiritual materialism, where we hoard and gloat over our superficial

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President's Message

by Rev. Koyo S. Kubose

I've always liked interacting with young children. In fact, when going into graduate school, I decided to specialize in developmental psychology. I enrolled in the Ph.D. program of the Institute of Child Behavior and Development at the University of Iowa. I really enjoyed the practicum courses in which we interacted with young children at the university preschool.

Even at informal social occasions where there's a group of adults and children, I gravitate towards playing with the young children. I like their naturalness and honesty. We adults take life too seriously and tend to suppress our sense of play. As Oscar Wilde put it, "Life is too important to be taken seriously."

It has been pointed out that one of the worst things we adults teach children is that work and play are two different things. A parent and three-year old child can have a great time together washing dishes. However, try this with your older child! Society quite quickly conditions children to become jaded and even cynical about life in general. How soon we lose our spontaneity and enthusiastic attitude. George Bernard Shaw said something like, "Youth is a great thing; too bad it's wasted on the young."

What I've said so far is a preface to a recent experience I had. I was asked by a parent to speak on Buddhism to her child's preschool class at a Montessori school in Chicago. I readily accepted. Over the years, I have given a lot of talks to Sunday school children. I enjoy giving these talks more than the "serious" ones I give to adults. With the children's talks I get to "ham" it up, use prop's, stuffed animals, etc. I guess I'd rather be "superficial" and fun than be "deep" and boring. Giving a talk to children gives me an excuse to be silly, and it's okay because it's "for the children." Of course it gives the parents and other adults listening, an excuse to enjoy themselves too.

Anyway, back to my recent experience with the Montessori preschool class. I arrived at the classroom at 9:00 A.M. A group of about a dozen children, their teacher, and I sat in a circle on a large rug. The parent who invited me was a volunteer at the school. She introduced me as a Buddhist minister who had also officiated her wedding and did the baby blessings for her two children. Then I started talking to the children, who were all alert and attentive. Many were smiling, their eyes alive with excited anticipation. They got even more animated as I shared my own enthusiasm in

talking to them. Most were not shy, but were very eager to share their thoughts and feelings. The teacher did a good job of encouraging the children to express themselves without things getting out of control.

My talk included a "Karma for Kids" message, which is based on my father's talks to Sunday school children. I told the children about cause and effect, that what we do has consequences. I gave examples my father often used: "If you spit straight up in the air, the spit will come down on your face. If you eat too much candy, you'll get a stomach ache."

I brought a Daruma doll, Dharma Dan (an animal hand puppet), and also small bell. When I rang the bell, like magic, the whole class became so quiet; it was amazing. Then we discussed gratitude and all the people we should be thankful to. We also listed all the things we should be thankful for. Of course, I mentioned we should be thankful for our shoes. My father often told children, "Your shoes protected your feet all day, without complaining. When you take your shoes off, line them up neatly. Pat them and say, 'Thank you my little shoes.'"

All in all, we covered quite a bit in 15 minutes time. In closing, I started summarizing, "Remember, don't eat too much chocolate- a little is okay for dessert- but not before dinner, and don't eat too much. And remember, you know what'll happen if you spit straight up..." One girl excitedly blurted out, "Yeah, you'll get a face full of messy chocolate!"

I went to the class to teach the children something, and maybe I did, but as far as I'm concerned, I was the one who received inspiration. I had forgotten the preciousness of a young child's enthusiasm and spontaneity. The stale expert's mind is no match for the fresh, creative beginner's mind.

Oneness Newsletter Summer 2004

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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.

Reader Replies

When I take my evening bath and am relaxing in the water, I often say "Namu Amida Butsu" and think how thankful I am for the day. I used to feel guilty doing this because I thought the bathroom was not the proper place. However, after reading about "Toilet Gassho" in your newsletter, I now feel much better about what I am doing.

From a telephone conversation with S.H. (Chicago)

I would like you to know that I must do a lot of studying on my own of course, but I always have you in mind, Sensei. It's funny how I have never met you face to face, but I have a sense of your compassion. There is a lot written on your father and I know he was a great man. But I don't really know him; to me, you are the man. You are the one that impresses me. I am just a regular person. I'm not someone who blindly follows someone or becomes some sheep-like follower of some cause or belief. I just want to tell you that I appreciate your wisdom, and I want to thank you for the times you have been there for me. I wish you would print this in the newsletter to let others know that you are reaching some of us out here in the wild.

O.T.O. (Ohio)

I wish I was able to participate more but I cannot get around much after my accident; but I will Namu Amida Butsu at home.

M.T. (Chicago)

Editor's comment: Whenever you Namu Amida Butsu at home, please smile, knowing that you and we are one in the Nembutsu. We will do the same. Indeed, we here at the Legacy feel we are like a "virtual" temple for people "out there." This is our purpose. It gives us great satisfaction if people scattered around the country feel we can be a spiritual home for them no matter where they live. Whenever anybody contacts us, we will always reply.

I received your newsletter today. I have no idea how I got on your mailing list but I very much enjoyed your publication and wish to remain on your mailing list. I'd also like to ask a favor that you add my mother to your mailing list.

D.M. (Chicago)

Editor's comment: In checking, here's how you got our newsletter: Every so often (like once in a few years), the person in charge of our Dial-the-Dharma telephone service, takes the Caller ID info from people who've called in to hear a taped message, uses a reverse directory to get addresses, and sends out newsletters. You or someone from your phone called our Dial-the-Dharma in the past, and that's what happened. The person compiling the Caller ID info thought that callers might be interested in the newly published "Bright Dawn" book that was announced in our last newsletter. People get added to our mailing list from different sources; e.g. seminar attendees, our website, from referrals, etc. We feel this is okay since every issue has a Mailing Update form through which people can be removed or added to our mailing list, and we are very good about doing what is requested.

* * * * *

An excerpt from an E-mail received from V.N. titled:
JEWISH ZEN

Those who know do not kibbitz. Those who kibbitz do not know.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single "oy."

Take only what is given. Own nothing but your robes and an alms bowl. Unless, of course, you have the closet space.

Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Forget this, and attaining Enlightenment will be the least of your problems.

Be here now. Be someplace else later. Is that so complicated?

If there is no self, whose arthritis is this?

Drink tea and nourish life. With the first sip, joy. With the second, satisfaction. With the third, Danish.

COMMENTARY RECEIVED ABOUT THE “BRIGHT DAWN” BOOK

Congratulations on the book! I remember your New Year’s resolution to do it, and I was prepared to call you on it! But looks like you trumped me.

T.M.U. (Wisconsin)

On the front of a card: “Those who say it cannot be done, should not interrupt the person doing it.”

Written inside: Thank you for doing it. Slowly savoring each thought, word, and idea; “Bright Dawn” is bright dawn.

N.S. (Chicago)

So happy to hear your book is actually “out there” so that I can read it and take your wisdom “inside me.”

C.B. (North Carolina)

Bright Dawn is about ways one can practice their spirituality every day. The author, a Buddhist minister, is following in the footsteps of his father. He teaches Buddhist lessons in America. I attend many services of the author a year, and I was excited to read a book of his teachings. The author presented his lessons through his daily run by Lake Michigan. He wrote lessons from waking up, to driving, to running along the lake. He wrote about teachings that he is reminded of when he sees many objects along his lake run. The book is the best book that I have ever read. From it, I took in principles that I can use to live a great life. The book contains information that I can use in my everyday life. It inspired me to change my mentality and to become more mature.

From a book report by J.R.E. (13 years old)

Bright Dawn’s great. This is a religious book that makes you feel good after reading it!

J.R. (Illinois)

There is a proverb on the lid of the box from which I chose this card. It reads, “Wherever you go, go with all your heart.” I thought you would like it, so I send it along with my appreciation of the depth and simplicity of your wonderful book.

L.B. (Illinois)

Your book looks and feels very professional- cover, text, format, layout, and photos. Congratulations! Now you know that guys can give birth too! I see you thanked many people for having been contributors in some way to the book. I estimate that given the number of contributors you cite, that you had no part in the book yourself at all. Yes, you are one clever fellow. Zen taught you something after all.

I especially liked the Ginkgo tree photo on p. 97, the Jitterbugging trees on p. 111, and also enjoyed your reaching out even to atheists on p. 146. Not to speak of the master prank you did on the covers—your ass appears on the front cover and your face on the back—very clever indeed! Congratulations on putting your best foot forward. May 100,000 joggers follow your lead.

S.I. S. (Hawaii)

What a great book! You have always been a great speaker, and now you certainly have a way of enlightening people with your writing. Every sentence and thought seems so well thought out. The book flows very nicely. It is a difficult task to get the ideas and teachings of Buddhism and Oneness across to people, but you make it seem so easy. Awesome job! My kids K and E were so amazed that their uncle wrote a book. They looked at your picture on the front and back covers and said, “Hey, that’s Uncle!”

D.T.K. (California)

I’ve read your book and liked the way the chapters were spaced. It made me able to complete the chapters and easily mark it when I put it down. Whereas some books, the chapters are so long that when I stop and mark in the middle of the chapter and later start to read it again, I sometimes forget what has taken place and have to re-read what had happened.

It is a very interesting book that sort of enlightens me on some of the things that I do. Like saying a prayer in the morning before I leave the house and at night, before I go to bed. Apparently though, most of my thinking is still stuck at the bathroom stage. And I know, I need to or must get to, “keep going.”

I’m also glad that I had taken that walk after the book reception, not realizing or knowing what to expect. Also glad to have met your family and Adrienne, who I find is a very warm, sincere and compassionate person.

I am letting my neighbor read the book. Just to clear the notion that Buddhism isn’t about idol worship.

R.K. (Illinois)

You published your manuscript! I remember reading the text with great interest and marveling both at your energy and insight. I appreciate now receiving the final copy, which is very well done and attractive. I hope that you will have a good response to it. I have seen the road marker Amida many times and always think, the light of Amida is always with us, pointing the way. I am glad you put it in the book.

A.B. (Hawaii)

BRIGHT DAWN BOOK COMMENTARIES

continued from page 4

I read your book last night and spent a sleepless night waiting for the sun to rise. Although it only took a couple hours to read your book, it will take me a lifetime to digest. The nembutsu path is especially long for me. Thank you for sharing the Dharma. I will do my best to share your teachings with our Sangha at the Fresno Betsuin.

R.I. (California)

Editor: We found out that he bought 12 copies to give as gifts to friends, with instructions that each of them buy a copy to give to one of their friends, who in turn should continue the process. What a great Dharma "pyramid" chain idea!

The book arrived in the mail yesterday, and it's terrific! Of course I went right to the potty chapter because, as you'll recall, I was uneasy about parts of it. For whatever reasons, I like it a lot now. Chicken shit, bull shit, elephant shit, whatever; there's a pony in there somewhere. I did get a chuckle from the cover—it appears that you are about to conquer all of Lake Michigan, but by what means we don't yet know. In any event, the book is wonderful. Congratulations!

GB. (Virginia)

On the topic of BM...

An excerpt from a column "Horse's Mouth" by George Yoshinaga in a recent issue of the Chicago Shimpo newspaper:

One reader writes, "You wrote about human manure used in the U.S. It has been used for over 50 years, sold as Milorganite made by a Milwaukee, Wisconsin sanitation district."

Another reader contributes, "Did you know that human waste is processed by the L.A. County Sanitation District at their large facility on the East side of the Harbor Freeway between Sepulveda and P.C.H.? Where did you think all the millions of rolls of toilet paper went? It is all processed, dried, and sanitized at this facility and sold to Kellogg's (not the cereal people) who then add the proper amendments and then bag it and sell it as Nitorhumus at your local nursery and home improvement centers. This is recycling at its finest. If it wasn't for this sanitation process we would probably be ankle deep in toilet paper at our beaches."

Editor's Note: "Jesus saves; Buddha recycles!"

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:

Jul 17 Freedom!

The true nature of Buddhist liberation.

Aug 7 O-Bon (A Japanese Mahayana Holiday for remembering past loved ones.)

Time to stir the stew pot; many marvelous flavors as metaphor for all the wonderful influences in one's life.

Aug 21 Secret of the Sacred Lotus

Interesting scientific facts about the lotus plant are related to spirituality.

Sep 4 The Middle Path

An anecdotal illustration of the Buddhist teaching of the complementary nature of apparent opposites.

KILL BILL 2

A Dharma Movie "Review"

Uma Thurman is buried alive in a wooden coffin. After controlling her panic, she uses her martial arts training to bust through the wood to freedom. She does this by repeatedly hitting the board above her head with her fist. Although the board becomes messy with her blood, the wood yields to the strength of bone backed by focused concentration of a power beyond the limitation of beliefs.

Spiritually, this scene can be viewed as a metaphor for the human condition. The lesson is, don't panic when faced with an unbearable situation. Don't resign yourself to a life of quiet desperation either. Commit yourself to your spiritual path; give yourself over to the power of universal life. It has been said that the best teacher is the very heart that desires to enter the way. It has also been said that there are three qualities necessary to successfully walk the Buddhist path. The first is sincerity, the second is sincerity, and the third is sincerity.

Continuing your sincere, whole-hearted earnestness will lead to a spiritual break-through that is the equivalent of breaking through a thick wooden board with a bare fist... to a life of boundless freedom and liberation.

BUDDHIST BALLOON - continued from page 1

insights into life. Ironically, one's self-centeredness prevents the realization that one's conceited attitude is the problem. How comically ridiculous for a single human being to think he can stop the flow of the whole universe and make life go his own selfish way! Yet, it seems that is how most of us live. No wonder we struggle and suffer so much. Yet it is also our struggle and suffering that can make us pause and introspect.

Often, only a tragedy will slow us down, if not stop us in our tracks, and force a questioning of how one is living one's

life. Life never victimizes us; we victimize ourselves. As said in the Pogo comic strip, "We have met the enemy. He is us." Spiritually, this is a great realization.

It is only by busting one's own balloon that we can become true human beings. A big ego is like an inflated balloon; one has to be constantly on guard for all kinds of tiny, sharp needles. Whereas, if one is humble like a deflated balloon, one can be run over by an eighteen-wheel truck and not be hurt.

How big is your balloon?

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Y E S **YES** Your Everyday Spirituality *YES* **Y E S**

JUN	Theme: Nature Purpose: Appreciation of rain Method: “Rain Gassho:” Put hands together in Gassho the next time you’re getting wet in the rain; remember how life on earth needs rain. Smile.
JUL	Theme: Health Purpose: Do not take drinking water for granted Method: “Water Gassho:” Before drinking water, raise glass in respect and gratitude; fully experience the health-giving coolness going down your throat. Smile.
AUG	Theme: Everyday Awareness Purpose: Mindfulness while doing domestic chores Method: “Washing-Dishes Gassho:” Slowly marvel at the neat feeling of water and soap on your hands. And remember the poem: “All the thanks and good wishes; Just can’t beat; Help with the dishes.” 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:
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