
O N E N E S S

Quarterly Newsletter of BRIGHT DAWN: Institute for American Buddhism

Vol. 11 No. 3 Fall 2007

LOOKING DEEPLY by Rev. Koyo Kubose.

In June of 2007 I received two new eyes. I had cataract surgery. It all started with a routine eye exam with my regular optometrist. He referred me to an ophthalmologist and explained that the latest procedure is to do cataract surgery at the first sign of a developing cataract condition, rather than waiting for the cataract to “ripen” before doing surgery. So, I went and had lens replacement surgery done on my left eye; and two weeks later the same was done for my right eye.

The surgery which takes only 15 minutes is performed through a micro-lesion while the patient is fully awake. A valium-like relaxant is taken orally and the eye is made numb with eye

drops. Typically, the lens replacement restores distance vision but reading glasses are needed for close vision. I chose a new lens that was recently available called a Re-Zoom multi-focal lens that has five focusing zones, concentric circles on the lens that provides good far and near vision in a range of light conditions. As a brochure says, “... the lens not only treats cataracts, but it also turns back the clock to restore your ability to see up close and at a distance. And, for many people who have worn glasses or contacts most of their lives, the lens means independence from glasses for the first time. You can Re-Sume Life with Re-Zoom.”

I was amazed at the fast recovery time. Before, the recovery period used to involve wearing an eye patch immediately after the surgery, with instructions not to bend over with your head down or to lift anything over twenty pounds because these actions would increase unwanted pressure within the eye. I did not have to be concerned with any of these things. All I had to do was use special eye drops for several weeks.

The morning after my second eye surgery, I took our dog to the local dog beach at Lake Michigan in Evanston. The sun had just come up and I was the only person walking on the beach. In

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the quiet morning air, the world was brightly shining, the colors brilliant. I felt like a new-born baby who had just opened his eyes. The waves had delivered or uncovered many small stones on the beach. I began to pick up stones to give to people the next time I went to speak at a seminar or conference. I would then talk about how pebbles could be used as a spiritual mindfulness tool—as gratitude or memorial offerings, or kept in one’s pocket, as a reminder not to be judgmental (that is, don’t cast stones at other people).

As I walked along the beach, it seemed as though the stones were all beaming and shouting out their joy at sharing my new vision. I had a flash of how the Buddha is said to have felt when he was to speak to hundreds of his followers at Vulture Peak. He saw only enlightened beings spread out before him and he was speechless. He descended without saying a word. It is said this was his greatest talk.

I decided then and there that I would use my restored physical vision as an opportunity to see things in a spiritual way. With my new spiritual eyes I would look deeply at all things and other people—with a wider perspective and with as much wisdom and compassion as I could. I knew I would begin to take my new physical eyesight for granted as time went by and I did not want to waste this once-in-lifetime experience of having new eyes. I wanted to consciously try and maximize the spiritual impact. That morning, the sunrise was truly a Bright Dawn.

Recently I read an article by Rev. Akio Miyaji that I want to paraphrase from and relate to the topic of eyesight and seeing. The Buddha is called, “The Enlightened One.” To be enlightened also is called to be awake. When asked, “Are you a god?” Shakyamuni Buddha replied, “No, I am not a god.” “Are you a saint?” “No, I am not a saint.” “Then what are you?” and Shakyamuni said, “I am awake.”

It is as though we ordinary beings go through life asleep. Our eyes are closed and we stumble around in the darkness. If our (spiritual) eyes are opened, we “wake up” and can see everything around us clearly. Actually, we were never really in the dark, it’s just that our eyes were closed. To be spiritually awake, is to see clearly that all things around us support and contribute to our very existence and well being. Everything around us is precious and should be appreciated. This is enlightenment and is the essence of Buddhism.

When we see something, say a flower, we can simply acknowledge its existence and can also go beyond that to realize the flower’s worth or value. Yet, seeing even deeper is to understand the true meaning behind the flower’s

existence. Rev. Miyaji makes this point by sharing a story about a very spiritual Japanese woman named Chiyono. “One day as she was coming home from running errands, Chiyono saw a beautiful chrysanthemum flower growing in her neighbor’s yard. As she stopped to admire the flower, she began to reflect on her difficult life. She had a loving husband and a beautiful son, but both had sadly passed away within a few years of each other. However, everyone around her helped her through her difficult times and with their help she was able to work and simply live her life. The more Chiyono gazed at the flower she realized how similar this flower was to her own life. Spiritually, looking deeply at anything, always involves seeing into one’s own true nature. This simple flower gave Chiyono a deep appreciation for the life she was able to live. In response she was inspired to compose a poem, *Ikutabi ni o temokarashite kiku no hana*. ‘It takes a long time and many people to nurture a beautiful chrysanthemum flower.’ She was able to see the deep meaning behind the flower’s existence.”

In his article, Rev. Miyaji goes on to ask, “How much do you think your eyes are worth? . . . No matter how much we think they are worth, they are priceless gifts that we should be grateful to have.” To illustrate how valuable one’s eyes are, he tells of “a large conference of medical doctors in New York. The keynote speaker at the conference attended by doctors from around the world was none other than Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft. His talk was on computers and medical science. During a panel discussion following the speech, a question was directed to Mr. Gates, ‘If you became blind, and I was the only one that could fix your eyesight, but you had to pay me everything you had, would you do it?’ Without hesitation, he replied, ‘YES!’ Bill Gates, one of the richest men in the world would give up everything he had to save his eyesight.”

Before my cataract surgery, I was given the option of choosing between a regular replacement lens or the new Re-Zoom lens. As I described earlier, the regular lens restores distance vision but reading glasses are necessary for close vision. Whereas the Re-Zoom lens restores both distance and close vision, eliminating the need for even reading glasses. Although a Re-Zoom lens costs \$900 more than a regular lens, I decided to go with the Re-Zoom lens. When discussing this decision with my brother, he said, “It’s hard to put a price on what this is worth. To have full vision and not have to rely on any glasses is. . . well, it’s priceless; you can’t really put a price on it.”

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PIGS CAN FLY!

By Rev. Koyo Kubose

First some background. For the first service at the start of each new year, my Dharma Talk focuses on teachings associated with the animal theme for that year according to the Chinese animal calendar. For example, 2007 is Year of the Pig. I also would go to the local hobby shop and buy animal charms for that year. I would then give these charms as gifts to attendees of the first service of the year.

At the end of last year I went to the hobby shop, but the only pig charm they had was of a tiny flying pig. So I worked my Dharma Talk around the flying pig theme. The usual meaning of a flying pig is that when something is unlikely to occur or to be true, it is said, "I'll believe that when pigs fly!" How might this flying pig theme relate to one's spirituality? For now I'll leave that up to you.

We at the Bright Dawn Institute for American Buddhism have started a Lay Ministry Study Program. We envisioned a two-year long-distance study program using small group audio conferences. This was not an easy venture to start. Some people said things like, "If you do that, this might happen..." "Watch out for..." or "How are you going to handle..."

We initiated the Program with a course on an Overview of Buddhism in America for a class of five persons (from Illinois, Wisconsin, Hawaii and Brazil). The participants proved to be fine students who bonded well together. The course went well and we brought in various guest Sensei's who really added to the weekly audio conference sessions. The curriculum developed nicely with a following course on the Life of the Buddha and his Basic Teachings. In January, 2007 I sent each Program participant one of the flying pig charms. I explained to the students that they were part of an innovative new venture and that the Lay Program was like a flying pig. The Program was up and flying just fine.

Two years is a long time period and many things can happen in people's lives. From the beginning class of five people, one had to drop out after half a year due to a change in her life situation. After a year, another student, Bill, had to stop because of big changes in his life. This past summer he

got a new job and moved from Chicago to Oregon. It was Bill who recently sent us the ceramic flying pig that is pictured with this article. He said there is a store in the Old Town section of the town of Bandon, Oregon called "The Flying Pig." He said that he couldn't resist buying the ceramic pig to send to us. We took a picture of it next to our special conference-calling telephone because our Lay Program courses are done via small group audio conferences.

The flying pig can also symbolize the big changes in Bill's life. Bill is an avid golfer. Even his email address included the phrase "goodgolffissimple" as he used to be a golf instructor. He is conversant with the spiritual aspects of golf too. He has read books like Michael Murphy's "Golf in the Kingdom" and "Doctor Golf" by William Price Fox. Of course he has seen such golfing movies like the "Tin Cup" with Kevin Costner, the one with Will Smith, and there was also one with Matt Damon.

Then in the Spring of 2007, through a friend he got an interview with the President of Kemper Sports, a company that manages golf courses across the country. One of their newer developments is Bandon Dunes, a premier golf resort on the Pacific coast in Southern Oregon. The resort has three golf courses and a fourth is to open in 2010. Bill has started with being a course ranger, who is responsible for

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Oneness Newsletter Fall 2007

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The purpose of the Bright Dawn Institute 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.

BOOK REVIEWS

OCEAN

A re-stocking is now available on our booklist of the book *Ocean* by Kenneth K. Tanaka. This book uses an effective question-answer format to offer a set of guidelines for Jodo-Shinshu Buddhists when responding to commonly asked questions by non-Buddhists.

In the book's Introduction, Tanaka Sensei describes the ocean parable which is the basis of his book's title. A sailor falls overboard and is lost at sea. He starts to swim toward an island he saw before he fell overboard. He has lost all sense of direction and it is dark. He is a good swimmer but after a while he gets tired. He feels lost and totally alone in the middle of the ocean. Despair overcomes him and this could be the end for him. At that instant, he hears a voice from the depths of the ocean, "Let go. Stop your frantic striving! You're fine just as you are!"

The sailor stops his useless striving to swim by his own power. Instead, he turns over on his back with limbs outstretched and is overjoyed to find that the ocean holds him afloat without any effort on his part. Although the ocean has not changed, the sailor's view has changed from seeing the ocean as an enemy ready to drag him under, to a friend that supports him.

He begins to swim as before, but with an important difference. He swims calmly and with confidence because he knows that whenever he gets tired, he can let go and the ocean will support him. He now realizes that it is not his own power but the power of ocean that keeps him afloat. He expresses his gratitude, "Namo Amida Butsu."

This story in a nutshell captures the heart of Jodo-Shinshu spirituality. The drowning sailor symbolizes our human condition which the Buddha expresses as "We all experience suffering." Our usual response is to try and get out of our predicament through our own efforts. When this proves futile, it is at that point that we are presented with an opportunity to let go of stubborn ego striving and open up to be embraced by the world. This spiritual transformation called "Shinjin" is an experience filled with a joyful awareness, deep gratitude and a compassionate desire to help others in their spiritual journeys.

Here are some testimonials by other Buddhist authors excerpted from the book's back cover: "Rousingly dialogic, engagingly American, and buoyantly Buddhist..." "... answers common questions about the Shin Buddhist way of life and thought, its relation to general Buddhism, and its

similarities with and differences from other religious paths." "...easy-to-read resource for any lay person interested in understanding the essence of Shin Buddhism and its historical roots that includes 100 years in North America."

Readers can order a copy of the book *Ocean* using the order form on page 7 of this newsletter.

COFFINMAN

Coffinman by Shinmon Aoki is a most unusual, captivating book, based on the journal of a Buddhist mortician. As expressed in the book's Foreword by Taitetsu Unno, author of *River of Fire, River of Water*, "This little book, a 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."

Some excerpts from the book's back cover:

- "I wondered if, as you approach death and are staring death in the eyes, all things begin to shine on their own."

- "It could be that, when we are fighting one on one with death, at the bitter end we come to a point where Life and Death resolve themselves, and in that moment we encounter that mysterious Light."

- "First, we lose our attachment to Life; at the same time we lose our fear of Death. Finally, we feel peaceful and serene inside. Forgiving of all things, we enter a state where we hold all things in gratitude."

Newly re-stocked with copies of *Coffinman*, the book can be ordered from the booklist on page 7 of this newsletter.

PIGS CAN FLY cont'd from page 3

closing up the course at the end of the day. He has ideas on how to improve the planned new course. He is getting in on the "ground floor" and is being groomed for big things. He has a dream job. His career is up and flying!

So, the ceramic flying pig can symbolize not only the great start of our innovative Lay Program, but the unique job opportunity that opened up for Bill in a sport that he loves. There is a third thing that the flying pig can symbolize. Many sincere truth seekers can get frustrated and feel that genuine peace of mind is just not in the cards for them. For all such seekers, don't sell yourselves short. As you read this article about flying pigs, apply it to your own journey. Your spirituality can also fly. Keep Going! ❁

Reader Replies

The article “Where’s Your Stone” by C. K. of Raleigh, North Carolina reminded me of my connection to stones. For years I’ve carried a Connemara marble Worry Stone from Ireland in my smock pocket. To me it also suggests “This too shall pass” which is a phrase I use often. As a family we always collected stones, from small pebbles to larger rocks, on our family camping trips. Many of them are in our garden and I can tell you where they came from. We had a friend from the Second Unitarian Church who would give you a stone, and when you returned it to him when you saw him again, you received another stone in its place. After each retreat at Bright Dawn Home Spread in Wisconsin, we have a Closing Ceremony and place a glacier rock in the pines. I enjoy this quiet emotional time, as it is a time for me to think of loved ones and place mine in their memory. I keep a small basket on the hall table with small stones and sea shells, for the daycare children to take home. It’s surprising to see their joy in the one they picked. Somehow we are all into stones.

M.B. (Chicago)

LOOKING DEEPLY cont’d from page 2

As Rev. Miyaji writes, “Money is not the most important thing in life. Although we may not have the material wealth of Mr. Gates, we all can be spiritually rich. To have an understanding and appreciation of one’s own life is wealth and riches in and of itself.” Rev. Miyaji concludes that just being alive and being able to appreciate one’s life is priceless. This kind of realization is the basis of true joy and happiness in life. To be awakened is to realize one’s absolute uniqueness and to see that everything around us is precious. Thus, one is filled with deep gratitude. This is what makes for true richness in life. This is the enlightened life.

It has been over a month since my eye surgery and several times every day I am still filled with wonder at the brightly shining world. For some reason, I especially feel this when I am driving around. Maybe this is because when you’re driving, you tend to notice the scenery that is constantly going by around you. In any case, I certainly feel a deep sense of gratitude to my ophthalmologist and want her to know just how much of an impact her work has on the daily quality of life of her patients. No price can be put on this; it is priceless.

Life itself is a precious gift. Please use any and all experiences that come your way as opportunities to enhance your spiritual journey. Be a seeker. Treasure your Beginner’s Mind. Keep Going. The real voyage of discovery is not searching for new landscapes, but in having new eyes. ❀

Thank you for the ’07 Summer edition of “Oneness.” I look forward to each copy and find your articles most interesting. I want to let you know that one article truly struck a cord within me—“Have a Buddha-Full Day.” It’s hard to describe the feeling I got upon reading the article. It took on a tangent and a meaning of itself. I found myself repeating it over and over throughout the day and continue to do so. Thanks to Richard for his wonderful experience and to Adrienne for making it available to all of us. Summer is here and we are enjoying the Buddha-Full days the season holds for us.

M.M. (Chicago)

Thank you so much for continuing to send Oneness to me in Iowa. I grew up listening to your father’s teachings and respecting his adaptability to Western living with his American Buddhism. Your newsletter touches me greatly. Whenever it arrives, it reminds me of my family. Although I do not actively practice Buddhism, it has power in my life. It teaches me to think more clearly about compassion, gratitude and the real meaning of *shikata ga nai*... Thank you for your dedication to reaching people like me, with the foundation of self-awareness and spirituality in everyday life.

Taking “Oneness” to heart, L.C.K. (Iowa)

I am currently in Pennsylvania helping my 97 year old aunt (my mother’s sister) transition to an assisted living facility. My wife, who remained back home in California, sent me your Summer newsletter and I especially appreciated the article “This is So, This is So.” *Shikatagai nai* has always been a wonderful point of focus and the article helped me remember the ideal of acceptance/transcendence. Thank you all for your work.

K.M. (Arroyo Grande, California)

This week one of our Sangha members passed away. She was in her mid forties and had had ovarian cancer for three years. She was married with two teen-aged daughters. She came to Temple every single Sunday during those three years but she never stayed for coffee to talk, so we never knew anything about her life. Just once, she gave a wonderful lay Dharma talk, which her husband said was a big experience for her. On that day she stayed for coffee and told us that she had cancer, but no details. At the funeral reception yesterday, her husband took out his cellphone and showed me your Dial-the-Dharma phone number. He said he and his wife called every day and that every day they asked each other, “Did you listen?” So, Gassho to your Keep Going spirit, and isn’t it a nice question that they shared each day?

In Gassho, S.G. (Chicago, Illinois)

Acknowledgements with Gratitude Supporters from Sales and Donations

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In Honor of Her Family

LAY PROGRAM UPDATE

The class that started in Fall, 2006 is now into the second year of the Program. The first year involved courses on Buddhism in America, followed by a course on the life of the Buddha and his basic teachings. We also went over Rev. Gyomay Kubose's classic books "Everyday Suchness" and "The Center Within." During the Summer the participants did Naikan, which is a self-reflection practice based upon Shin Buddhist teachings. This Fall begins with a course on Buddhism and Christianity, which will be followed by courses on Sutra study.

The first year curriculum has just started for a new group of participants. Accepted into the Lay Program beginning in Fall, 2007 are D.A. (Chicago, Illinois); W.H. (Fairport, New York); C.K. (Raleigh, North Carolina); P.M. (St. Louis, Missouri); D.P. (Brookhaven, Pennsylvania); D.R. (Bremerton, Washington); and K.S. (Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin).

American Buddhist Services

The Heartland Sangha holds 11 A.M. Saturday services on the first and third Saturdays of every month at Lake Street Church, 607 Lake Street, Evanston (use courtyard entrance on Chicago Avenue).

Each service is uniquely planned by a chairperson volunteer from the local Sangha. Music and readings from a variety of sources are used. Gratitude offerings of rice or flowers often replace traditional incense burning and sutra chanting. The Heartland Sangha is to be commended for their "cutting edge" efforts in creating these progressive American Buddhist services. As a regular speaker, Rev. Koyo Kubose's Dharma talks are always lively and thought provoking.

For more information, call Heartland Sangha President Asayo Horibe at (847) 869-5806.



Dial the Dharma at (847) 677-8053
Call to hear a recorded 2-3 minute teaching.
Tapes are changed daily.

Book List

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

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, 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.

OCEAN: AN INTRODUCTION TO JODO-SHINSHU BUDDHISM IN AMERICA by Ken Tanaka. Uses a question and answer format to present Jodo-Shinshu Buddhism and to answer questions frequently asked by non-Buddhists. The book can help Jodo-Shinshu Buddhists understand their own religious tradition and also help in communicating it to others. 270 pages.

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City / State / Zip: _____

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Everyday Suchness	\$12.00		
Center Within	\$12.00		
Center Within Audio Tapes	\$18.00		
American Buddhism	\$5.00		
Tan Butsu Ge	\$7.00		
Heart of the Great Wisdom Sutra	\$6.00		
Buddhist Symbols Brochure	\$0.25		
Buddhism: Path of Enlightenment	\$5.00		
Coffinman	\$14.95		
Ocean	\$14.95		
River of Fire, River of Water	\$19.00		
The Feeling Buddha	\$15.95		

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Payable to: Bright Dawn Institute **TOTAL** \$ _____
8334 Harding Avenue
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For questions regarding quantity discounts and shipping, contact Bright Dawn at 847-677-8211 or brightdawn@kubose.com.

Books and other items may also be purchased
at our on-line Sangha Store

www.brightdawn.org

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 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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Change Service Requested

YES YES <u>Your Everyday Spirituality</u> YES YES	
SEP	Theme: Naturalness Purpose: Be simple and direct; not clever or mysterious Method: “Maple-Leaf Gassho” Reflect on the naturalness of a falling leaf—showing front and back. Flip your hand over, observing both sides. Reflect on any pretension, false pride, and artificiality in your life.
OCT	Theme: Playfulness Purpose: Seeing Dharma teachings in our holiday celebrations Method: When Halloween approaches, privately shout “Boo!” followed by “Da.” Get it? You can turn something scary into something inspirational—and smile about it.
NOV	Theme: Meal-time Gassho Purpose: How to say grace unobtrusively in social/business meal-time settings Method: When your food arrives, rub your hands together and say, “Sure looks good!” Privately, think “Itadakimasu” or “Thank you for the food. I will use my life energy with wisdom and compassion.”

Mailing List Update

If you are already on our mailing list and wish to remain on the list, no action is necessary. We are happy to continue sending our newsletter to all interested persons. If you know someone who would like to be added or removed from our mailing list, please indicate below and send to: Bright Dawn Institute, 8334 Harding, Skokie, IL 60076.

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