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# O N E N E S S

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Quarterly Newsletter of BRIGHT DAWN: Institute for American Buddhism

Vol. 15 No. 3 Autumn 2011

## IMPERMANENCE

From "The Center Within" by Gyomay M. Kubose

The first principle of Buddhism is the doctrine of Impermanence. Impermanence means that nothing is stationary, static, unchanging. All things are moving, dynamic, becoming. Life is a continuous becoming. All things in life are constantly becoming. Perhaps it is better to say "changing" since if we say "becoming," then we think, "becoming what?"

Buddhism teaches us to understand that impermanence is the true nature of all things and people. Everything is continuously changing, continuously becoming, continuously new. Through ignorance we become attached to persons, acts, and words. If one thinks he is better than others, he is apt to become upset because others do not live up to his expectations of them. On the other hand, if one feels that others are better than himself he is apt to suffer from an inferiority complex. This kind of behavior represents our ordinary way of life. We always fall into these pits of life. It is hard to adjust ourselves to the changing environment.

If we understand the changing nature of reality, then we will not cling to so many things. Our lives are basically attachment. It is easy to become attached to so many

things: possessions, words, deeds, thoughts and "isms:" communism, capitalism, stoicism, asceticism. As soon as something becomes an ism there is attachment. When it becomes an ism, it is dead, it is stale. While water is constantly flowing, it is pure and fresh. When it stops moving, it becomes stagnant. It is the same with our lives. We living beings must live and to live means to change. Often we do not flow with change. Instead, we become attached to our thoughts. Then our thoughts become isms and the isms begin to compete and conflict with each other.

All our difficulties result from attachment. There are no such things as: this is good and that is bad; this is right and that is wrong. Everything is relative and depends upon situations and conditions. Situations change. Monetary, social, political, individual factors – such conditions change. If one becomes attached to the bad, indeed it becomes worse. Even good things, once attachment is formed, become bad. If we are attached to the fact that we have given, we become greedy and expect thanks or something in return. When we give we should simply give with a sincere heart. When it is done, it is done. Everything should be done like this.

We should do things sincerely and whole-heartedly. The "doing" is the happiness. The essence of life is not exchange. The true life simply moves forward with sincerity coming from within.

Buddhism points to the reality of constant change. One can make his life ever fresh and ever interesting. However, attachment kills this fresh, new life. If one really understands the reality of this universe which includes all things and all lives, then one's life becomes really beautiful and fresh. This is why Impermanence is the first principle of Buddhism.



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# SUNFLOWER: THE BRIGHT DAWN FLOWER

By Dharma Dan

Although the lotus is traditionally considered the Buddhist flower, I nominate the Sunflower as a back up. In addition, the Sunflower is hereby adopted as the official flower of our Bright Dawn organization. The Sunflower is so named because the blossom head follows the sun's path across the sky. The large face of the blossom turns and aligns itself to receive the full benefit of the sun's rays.

In fact, all plants will naturally turn their leaves toward the sun's light. This is called phototropic behavior; it is nature's wisdom. In the same way, a plant's roots are hydrotropic and will naturally grow downwards searching for moisture. I have heard Rev. Koyo coin the term Dharmatropic to describe Buddhist spirituality. He feels that the Bright Dawn Institute can help seekers find the light of the teachings in all aspects of their everyday lives.

Rev. Koyo feels especially close to the Sunflower because his Dharma name, Koyo, means "to face the sun." In Buddhism, the sun represents light and warmth, wisdom and compassion. The sun is a symbol of the Dharma teachings. As Rev. Koyo has written in his book, Bright Dawn,

"Every morning the sun shines on all things without distinction. I want to live like the sun, shining brightly in the vast blue sky. May I live such a life of boundless freedom and oneness. The sun can inspire us all. I recall a poem, 'The Sun Never Says,' by Hafiz, a great Sufi master."

Even  
After  
All this time  
The sun never says to the earth,  
"You owe  
Me."

Look  
What happens  
With a love like that,  
It lights the  
Whole  
Sky.

Coming down to earth, I recall Adrienne saying, "Let's plant some Sunflowers this Spring." So, Rev. Koyo bought some seeds; if memory serves, the seed packet was distributed by a Martha Stewart label. The seeds were planted along a fence that borders the vegetable garden area. By August, the Sunflowers had grown over eight feet tall, with blossom heads 12" across. Adrienne told Rev. Koyo to pose in front of the Sunflowers while she documented the scene. Only several days after the photo was taken, all the blossom heads disappeared overnight! The usual suspects are squirrels that have been known to run along the top of the fence... or it could have been raccoons or some other wild critters that populate the heavily wooded property.

**SUNFLOWER** continues on page 3



# MY DAD: KAORU HENRY KIMURA 1907-2005

By Adrienne Kubose

My family held a 7<sup>th</sup> Year Memorial Service for my father this year. Funerals and Memorial Services make one reflect on the life of the deceased. Dad lived a very simple life. He was born in Hawaii and educated in Japan. As an adult he came back to the United States to escort his sister who married my mother's cousin. He fell in love with my Mom, married her and had three daughters. As long as I knew him, he was a gardener by trade. By society's standard, he wasn't rich, a success or famous.

My Auntie Yo often told me that my Dad was the kindest person she ever knew. Through the years, hearing this has had more and more meaning for me. What a wonderful epitaph.

When I read about the lives of rich, successful, and famous people, I rarely see it written that the person was kind, yet I think kindness may be the most important characteristic a person can have. Society just doesn't emphasize it. When I make kindness the goal in my life, I find life is much better, even freer. Because emphasizing kindness and compassion eliminates a lot of judgmental thought and behavior.

Think about it.

When you're driving on a 2-lane road and someone in front of you is going really slow. Judgmental thinking would be that the driver is a selfish jerk and shouldn't be on the road. You might even react by blowing your horn, flashing your headlights or giving the driver the finger. Emphasizing kindness, you might think the driver is not sure how to get to his destination. Maybe there's something wrong with his/her car (I remember having this problem when the gears of my car stopped working). Thinking of possible reasons the driver is going so slow keeps you calm and peaceful.

SUNFLOWER continued from page 2

What was surprising was that there were no remnants of seeds or petals left on the ground. Whoever did it, carted away the large flower heads home or to some secret larder. The Sunflower stalks are pretty stiff, plus they were tied to the fence; meaning that the stalks couldn't be bent down. To get to the heads required climbing all the way to the top. Inspection of the end of the stalk showed that the heads were chewed off. A few weeks later, Adrienne again took a photo of the scene to document the before and after contrast.

Don, Rev. Koyo's brother, said it'd be neat to put up a video camera to film what happens in the garden. Modern cameras can record at night and be movement activated. If filming were to be done, I'm sure it would lead to exclamations like, "Wow! Look at that!" My animal friends are pretty amazing creatures. They sure make gardening a challenge and provide a lot of teachings too. As Adrienne was working on this issue of the newsletter, I heard her say the major theme would be Impermanence. As can be seen from her photos of the Sunflowers, what a dramatic demonstration of impermanence!

In any case, if Rev. Koyo and Adrienne had consulted me, I'd of told them that my animal friends would be delighted by all the things planted in the garden. On behalf of my animal friends, I thank Rev. Koyo and Adrienne for their generosity in providing such delicious treats. Wink, wink.



I don't remember my Dad ever reacting to drivers. He was the kind of person who found little ways to make those around him happy. He was known by his grandchildren to always have Juicy Fruit gum for them. He always wiped the frost off the windows of my Mom's car before she drove to work. Before I went on a trip, he would give me a little cash. When he was on his death bed, he was still able to reach out and smile for his visiting newest great grandson.

Dad had a wonderful life.



## *Oneness Newsletter Autumn 2011*

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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.



## AIRPORT DHARMA:

*A Glimpse by Sayo Shenphen*

This past May I had the great fortune of attending the induction weekend of Lay Minister Group 4. It was an amazing event which brought together members of Bright Dawn, the Kubose Family, as well as special guests. We also had the opportunity to be a part of a demonstration and workshop of Iaido (samurai sword drawing) by Michele Benzamin-Miki Sensei.

For me, it was a wonderful event filled with many Dharma moments. At one point, I remember telling Rev. Koyo that being at Bright Dawn, especially during this event, was like being in the Pure Land. Literally, almost everything described in the Pure Land Sutras manifested in one way or another. The birds singing lovely sounds of the Dharma. The guests in attendance were the assembly of Bodhisattvas, and of course the Buddha, represented by Rev. Koyo Kubose. You could also say that Manjushri was well represented by Bensamin-Miki Sensei.

Needless to say, I was a little sad to leave Bright Dawn. I highly recommend a pilgrimage to Bright Dawn!! One truly is able to find their "Center Within".

Arriving at LAX felt like getting ready to leave the Pure Land and return to Samsara, or Florida in my case, to help benefit beings in that land.

LAX was undergoing a bit of a facelift and our terminal looked more like a family's basement while it is being remodeled. As I kept walking up to our gate area I saw a sign, that literally hit me. It read; **RE: LAX IT'S ALL GOOD!** And there was an arrow pointing toward this statement. Like it was saying "Look at this!!"

WOW - a Dharma teaching at the airport!! I felt it was a send off message from the Pure Land ... or a quick message from California. **Relax, it's all GOOD!!** I felt like Rev. Gyomay and Rev. Koyo had left this little message for me to take back. To this day I recite it every



## Reader Replies

*Context: The Bright Dawn Lay Ministers have organized a Continuing Education group among themselves to read and discuss books. The book they are currently reading is Rev. Haya Akegarasu's "Fundamental Spirit of Buddhism," translated by Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose. One of the participants shared this email:*

I found this footnote (p.48) of Rev. Gyomay Kubose's helpful in getting a personal way of understanding a little of Shin Buddhism.

"Other Power or Tariki is Shin Buddhism's traditional expression for the world of Buddha, the world of Oneness, or Suchness, the world, in short, that we are already in but cannot see because of ego. In its degraded sense, Tairiki came to be understood as Buddha's power that can save man."

This may not be the orthodox way of understanding but it is useful to me because it reinforces what I have already been able to put into practice, thanks to Bright Dawn Institute. One of the teachings of Reverend Koyo's which I try to keep fresh is to see everything in the light of what I can use, what is helpful. Criticizing, critiquing and ultimately selecting and discarding only reinforces old habits and entrenched ways of thinking.

DKS (CA)

day. I even have a picture of the poster framed in various parts of my house so that I never forget.

I personally felt like this phrase sums up what Kubose Gyomay Sensei was trying to impart on us. It also brings Bob Marley to mind ... **every little thing, is gonna be alright!** So true. When we free the mind of ego, everything works. Whether good or bad, which are just products of dualism, we can see that all things are good, in their own particular way. Nothing is lost. It's all good.

Like Rev. Koyo stated in his poem, **The Dharma is My Rock**, "beyond good and bad, beyond sorrow and joy, the Dharma is whispering everything is Okay, even when things are not going okay."

So, relax ... it's all good!



## Reader Replies - cont'd

Dear Bright Dawn Institute,

I have been receiving the Oneness newsletter for a few years now, and every time I find the newsletter in the mail, it brings a wide smile to my face. I always look forward to the few hours of reading that reminds me to notice the changing of the seasons and recognize the peace that exists within this world.

In the past, I have lived with my parents in Holden, MA. This year though, I will be a freshman at Boston University; I would appreciate it if you could update my address. I appreciate also, that you have provided the newsletter free of charge. As a student, I don't have much money to spare, but I hope the enclosed small donation will help cover the cost of paper, ink, postage, etc. Thank you for being such a great Institute, and for sharing your message!

Best Wishes, J.H.

Note: In the bottom "memo" space of the donation check, J.H. wrote "magic of oneness." How we love the creative expressions of our readers!

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Rev. Koyo & Adrienne-sensei,

I just wanted to share some things that have happened recently. One was my growing of a pineapple. Before leaving the Thai Temple years ago I had the opportunity to sit and enjoy a pineapple, a very little one that was grown by one of my teachers. He took such good care of this pineapple. It was the size of a cantaloupe. After we ate it he wanted me to take the stalk of it and replant it. I did. And for YEARS I cared for the plant. But it was only this year, *about 5yrs later*, that the plant actually developed the fruit. For a while I thought that it would never grow and that I would just have a lovely plant. But it did grow!! I finally planted something that grew and was able to enjoy. It was so sweet and it reminded me of my teacher, but also the Dharma. So I quickly wrote up a glimpse that came to mind. There were so many causes and conditions that were beyond my control. The soil, the rain, and so many more factors. It took Other Power to get this little pineapple to grow. I played my part, but other things helped. But it also taught me that when the right causes and conditions come together, there will be fruit!! Maybe not when we

want it the most, but when the causes come together. I'm just like the plant. Cause and conditions are all taking care of me. When the time is right, the Fruit of Nirvana will arise. I'm 100% sure of that. Maybe this is SHINJIN?


Then I also started to make Sushi rolls, well, rather, veggie California rolls with avocado, carrot, and cucumber. DJ and I LOVE veggie sushi!! We eat it so much that I thought I should try making it myself. I must have been a Sushi chef at some point because they actually came out very professional looking ... and tasting. The thing is, when I start making them, I am completely gone. I understand now what Kubose Gyomay Sensei was telling us about doing things 100%!! I literally was so One with it, that there was no self, no sushi ... It was an amazing experience!! Like I was gone, no rice, no seaweed, no veggies, but still there was a natural flow that is beyond words, but very dynamic ... I only came to realize it after the rolls was done and I had cut it and showed DJ. I gave a big shout, in gratitude, which scared Potter and DJ. I think they thought I had gone crazy, but it was like a "Eureka!" moment.

There is Dharma everywhere .. One just needs to see ...


Thank you Rev. Koyo and Adrienne-sensei ... you gave me back my Dharma Eyes!

*Gassho!*

SSS (FL)



## Seasonings



*to add a little flavor to life*

- Carry an internal Dharma oil can with you to help lubricate difficult situations.
- The road of Life is always under construction. (SKK)
- Viewing life through Oneness glasses transforms what you see.
- When a Buddhist becomes totally absorbed with the computer, he enters Nerdvana (DM)

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When submitting donations, please list your name exactly as you wish it to appear in the Oneness newsletter. Acknowledgments are current as of **August 31, 2011**. Donations received after this date will be listed in the next issue. If we have missed an acknowledgment, please let us know.

## Book List

### **Book by Rev. Koyo Kubose**

**BRIGHT DAWN: Discovering Your Everyday Spirituality.** Describes the author's daily morning ritual and how ordinary things and activities can deepen one's spirituality. 152 pages.

### **Books by Rev. Gyomay Kubose**

**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." Collection of 58 essays of down-to-earth teachings for a richer, more meaningful life. 134 pages.

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

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

**ZEN KOANS.** Commentary on over 200 classical and modern koans. Insights and life teachings applicable to all Buddhists. 274 pages.

### **Translations by Rev. Gyomay Kubose**

**THE FUNDAMENTAL SPIRIT OF BUDDHISM** by Haya Akegarasu (Rev. Gyomay Kubose's teacher). Translated by Rev. Kubose. 99 pages.

**TAN BUTSU GE.** (Translation and commentary). This sutra tells the story of Dharmakara who became Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Life and Light. 56 pages.

**HEART OF THE GREAT WISDOM SUTRA.** (Translation and commentary). This sutra deals with the teachings of non-self and nothingness. 35 pages.

### **Other Recommended Books**

**BUDDHIST SYMBOLS.** Handy brochure explaining common Buddhist symbols. quad-fold.

**BUDDHISM: Path of Enlightenment.** Simple, concise introduction to basic Buddhism. Teachings are superimposed on beautiful full-color photographs of nature scenes such as water ponds, rock gardens, 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.

**ENGAGED PURE LAND BUDDHISM:** Essays in Honor of Professor Alfred Bloom. Challenges Facing Jodo Shinshu in the Contemporary World. Edited by Kenneth K. Tanaka and Eisho Nasu. 360 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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**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

<b>YES YES    <u>Your Everyday Spirituality</u>    YES YES</b>	
<b>SEP</b>	<p><b>Theme:</b> Grounding oneself  <b>Purpose:</b> Staying calm when making stressful decisions  <b>Method:</b> "Gut-Gassho:" Align hands horizontally on lower abdomen, with tips of middle fingers over belly button; take a deep slow breath. Below one's head (thoughts) or heart (feelings), the belly (intuition) is a great monitor of one's base or foundation of spiritual health; truth can usually be found there.</p>
<b>OCT</b>	<p><b>Theme:</b> Masks  <b>Purpose:</b> Becoming more open  <b>Method:</b> "Boo-Gassho:" With fingers pointing up, cover face with both hands; breathe in saying (thinking) BOO or "Bu" and on the exhale, bring hands palm to palm away from face, saying "Da," symbolizing a surprising openness to unmasking one's "face."</p>
<b>NOV</b>	<p><b>Theme:</b> Creative freshness  <b>Purpose:</b> Break a Routine Day  <b>Method:</b> "New Morning Gassho:" Bring fresh awareness to some aspect of your daily morning routine at the bathroom sink. Consciously modify some aspect of your routine and do things more mindfully. Fully realize the day is a unique day, never to be repeated. Do a one-handed Gassho. Smile.</p>

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