



O n e n e s s

Quarterly Newsletter of BRIGHT DAWN CENTER of Oneness Buddhism

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TRUE RICHNESS IN LIFE

By Rev. Koyo Kubose

I feel so blessed. As I say these words, I realize that certain phrases have different connotations depending upon the context. In a Christian culture, blessings are seen as coming from God. I use the word simply to mean I feel so fortunate. As a Buddhist, I do not ask for blessings through petitionary prayers to a deity. My focus is to become aware of the many blessings I already have.

In a like fashion, when I think about how grateful I am, I express it as simply being grateful for many things. For a Christian, gratitude means being grateful to God. I had not thought of this difference between “grateful for” versus “grateful to” until I heard a former Christian turned Buddhist mentioned it.

When the word “grace” is used in a Christian context, it refers to the grace or favor coming from God. To me, the word grace simply refers to all the conditions beyond my own efforts that have influenced my life. When a criminal is about to be executed, a familiar expression is, “There but for the grace of God go I.” From a secular or humanistic context, the same sentiment is felt except that the “grace” is seen as coming from simply life itself.

With the above as a preface, I want to mention some recent experiences

that made me realize how much my life is blessed. To say “my life is blessed” means that the blessings come from my life experiences themselves. One source of such experiences comes from students that have gone through our Bright Dawn Center Lay Minister Study Program. Most of our students are scattered around the country but they keep in contact with us through email. One recent email exchange increased my awareness of the different ways our Dharma work can function. Let me provide some background first.

Our Bright Dawn Center is not a temple or church in that there is no congregation that attends weekly religious services. Instead, we are a religious educational organization or school. I suppose technically, as a religious organization, we could be considered a seminary. Our form of educational outreach is to offer a non-residential, internet-based study program. Students write weekly reports on assigned readings and discuss the reports in a small group tele-conference every Sunday night over a two-year period. This requires a serious commitment. There is no formal tuition but a heavy dose of sweat equity is involved. There is a self-selection process that results in high quality students. Each class forms a close

bond, not only among themselves but with Adrienne and me, and also with what the Bright Dawn Center stands for.

This past spring, we dedicated a new building on our property. We commissioned an architect to design an “iconic” sanctuary. The result was a striking, unique structure. Even though our “Sierra Sanctuary” is not used as a place of regularly scheduled services or events, the simple reality of its physical presence creates an identity for our Bright Dawn Center that helps our Dharma work in several ways. One way is that our physical property becomes a kind of pilgrimage site for those who want to learn about or follow our particular approach to the Dharma teachings. Our Sierra Sanctuary also can influence someone’s life even though he or she may not have visited or even seen the sanctuary in

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person. Let me explain how I came to realize how this can happen, since many of our Dharma friends live far away from our center in California and cannot easily come to visit in person. Through our Oneness newsletter and other forms of communication, most people associated with Bright Dawn Center, know about our new Sierra Sanctuary. This simple fact can be a spiritual resource for them. Here is a recent example of this.

One of our Dharma friends, who lives in the Chicago area emailed us. Her partner was seriously injured in a car accident. It was a head-on collision. The airbag probably saved her life but the engine was pushed back and broke both of her ankles. Our friend asked us to light a candle in the sanctuary for her partner. What we did was use a statue of four small monks that held votive-type lights in their laps. This statue was a gift received when our Sierra Sanctuary was dedicated. The lights are battery operated but look like real candles. We took a photo and sent it to our friend. She took it to the hospital and told us that her partner really liked it. Some days later our friend said that her partner had been released from the hospital and was coming home in good spirits to begin her out-patient physical rehab. This incident made me realize that our physical sanctuary can be a psychological sanctuary to people in crisis no matter where they live.



Let me share another experience of the rewarding feedback of the effects of our Dharma work. After Thanksgiving dinner, some of us guys sat down to play Hold ‘Em poker. One player lost a big pot and kept complaining about it as play continued. My cousin said, “Hey, you got to move on.” Then he cited a cartoon quote from our latest Oneness newsletter. I was surprised by this because this cousin is a blue-collar guy and like most of the relatives is a Buddhist but I didn’t think he was particularly interested in the Dharma teachings We had received the cartoon in an email from a friend who said she really got a kick out of it. The cartoon was a drawing of a traditional statue of a Buddha and the caption said, “Chill, homie. You got to let that shit go.” Several times during the card game my cousin would smile, repeat the cartoon’s teaching and tell me how much he liked that message.

The two events I have described are different in their seriousness but reflect a range of examples of how our Bright Dawn work is affecting lives. As I recalled similar examples that occurred over the past year, I was reminded of an iceberg analogy. Only the tiny tip of an iceberg is visible above the surface of the water. The vast bulk of the iceberg’s mass is unseen under the surface of the water. It is said that typically only one tenth of an iceberg is visible, while nine tenths is unseen. The events I can recall are only the tip of the iceberg. Although these recollections produce a warm glow about our rewarding Dharma work, upon deeper reflection, it is apparent that such Dharma work was made possible by a huge mass of unseen causes and conditions. Someone once described the iceberg analogy as the visible tip representing an individual’s life, and the huge, unseen underlying mass as representing Amida’s Other Power.

As I thought about the iceberg analogy, perhaps it is inappropriate since ice is so cold, while there is a warm feeling when thinking about being blessed and living a life of compassion and gratitude. Then I thought about the classic teaching of “the more ice, the more water” where ice refers to one’s hard, cold heart of selfishness which when warmed by Amida’s compassion, results in the soft flowing of gratitude within one’s life. This process of melting is a true richness in life. As Rev. Gyomay Kubose has stated, “The grateful life *is* the spiritual life.” May it be so. Sadhu, Sadhu.



YEAR OF THE MONKEY

2016 is the Year of the Monkey. Creatively use the monkey theme to craft a teaching for yourself. For example, make a resolution to slow down your “monkey mind.” Consider focusing on a saying from the Japanese culture, “Sometimes even monkeys fall from trees.” That is, be humble and don’t take for granted your strengths. Whatever you come up with, it helps to be specific in describing the kinds of situations in which the teaching can be applied.

Happy New Year!

YEAR-END REFLECTION

*May we vow to protect earth, our pale blue dot,
and extend good will to all who live
and will come to live.*

*May we keep our sincere path in the Dharma.
May we associate more and more with the wise,
And have compassion for the fools,
knowing we are one of them.*

*May we never tire of learning,
Humbly sharing what we know,
And respect those worthy of honour.*

*May we avoid harsh words and harmful actions.
Do good with contentment,
And clarify our confused minds.*

*Our deepest gratitude and 108 bows to you,
All who have inspired and nourished us in 2015.*

(Adapted from Ricardo Sasaki; 12/31/2014)

WINTER SOLSTICE TELEPHONE SERVICE

Theme: Darkness of Winter/Human Mortality

Does the darkness of winter get you down? Do ultimate concerns darken your mood? Many of us do suffer from SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder). Also, isn’t it an opportune time to Shift our Attitude about Death? After all, “In a dark time, the eye opens.” As the existential philosopher Albert Camus said, “In the midst of winter, I discovered within myself an Invincible Summer.” The darker it gets, the more stars can be seen. Locating the North Star, gives you all the other directions. Two Buddhist teaching worth reflecting upon: “Die while living, and you’ll never die again.” “Immortality is hidden in transiency.”

The bulk of the service will be Rev. Koyo Kubose chanting the Heart Sutra. The ritual of chanting represents hearing the teachings of the Buddha. Chanting is an oral meditation that sets a mood (attitude) of deep listening. The sound of each syllable chanted can be like a Bodhi (wisdom) seed that is being planted deep within yourself. Consider the above described service theme as the “seeds” that have the potential to blossom into beautiful flowers (teachings). Seeds planted in winter will germinate in spring. Nature will do its thing; nothing is wasted.

The Winter Solstice Service will be on Thursday, December 17th at 6 PM Pacific; 9 PM Eastern. Dial 1-504-353-1009; then the access code 5805842#. All callers will be “on mute” to eliminate distractions. Call in a few minutes early and use the wait time to do some mindful breathing. At the end of the call, don’t forget to do a gratitude bow.

Oneness Newsletter Winter 2015

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The purpose of the Bright Dawn Center 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

MAGIC ERASER

By Renee Phillips

While visiting my neighbor, Georgia, on my walk, I asked her what she was up to with her ladder out. She said she was cleaning the gutters. I mentioned I just did that but could not get the outside stains off. She suggested using Magic Erasers. I had no idea what a Magic Eraser was but she gave me three of them to try saying they remove and clean anything.

When I got home, I wanted to try one right away. There had been a black mark on my living room wall I have continually tried to remove, but could not get rid of. I thought I would eventually have to paint over it. I took one of the Magic Erasers and it easily wiped away the mark! I was amazed. Soon after, I got my ladder out and tried it on the gutters. It was a breeze! The Magic Eraser wiped them clean with ease. I was so thrilled with this product, I bought several boxes so I would always have them on hand.

Soon after, I remember having the thought “wouldn’t it be nice if we all had a Magic Eraser for our mind?” It then occurred to me to try it. Whenever a distracting ego thought entered my mind, I pictured wiping it away with my imaginary Magic Eraser. It really seemed to work. I was immediately left with a clean slate, no thought of the past or future, just a pure untarnished moment. A Holy Instant where nothing was there to disturb my peace of mind, if only for a moment.

I decided to create a mental tool box and the Magic Eraser is one of my mind fixing-tools. A quick fix. A tool that immediately wipes the slate clean. My neighbor, Pat, once told me “you can do just about anything if you have the right tools.” Although she was referring to home and yard tools, I find it essential to have my spiritual tool box on hand to handle anything that comes to mind that needs a mental adjustment.



A POEM BY BROTHER AARON AT CENTINELA STATE PRISON

*He who focuses only on misery and suffering
confines himself to his own hell*

*Release and true happiness lies within
this, I know all too well*

*Searching for Happiness and Truth in all directions
Is no different than a dog chasing it's own tail*

*Supplications of the unseen, or unheard,
this too is bound to fail*

*Acts of Compassion and Kindness done to all without
much thought, manifests the simplicity of
obtaining the true Happiness where so often sought*

*A mind filled with despair, hate, anger, pain and countless
delusions,
keeps one entrenched in his own self created hellish
seclusion*

*All this written by a man, alone in his prison cell, who
discovered the Dharma and realized this is no hell*

WHEN THE HONEYMOON IS OVER

by Sallea Unger

When a person embraces a religion other than the one of his or her birth, in the beginning all is inspiration, energy and light. A new world of endless possibility opens up. But sooner or later -- sometimes years later -- in the course of constantly changing reality, Life steps on a person with its big shoe. It might be a setback, a betrayal, a death. This is the time when stubbornness becomes a virtue. One has to remind oneself that the teaching has not changed, it's one's focus that has changed. The teaching is the same that drew one in the first place. A teaching worth its salt doesn't promise a rose garden; it affords stamina to survive in the wilderness. This is the time to reaffirm dedication to the teaching, to realize that over the centuries it sustained thousands of people in difficult circumstances, who became survivors.

WHY ME?

By Dharma Dan



Many people say, “Why me?” when misfortune befalls them. This is so common that “Why me?” is the chosen name of a breast cancer support group. Women can feel that they didn’t deserve what happened to them but that it seemed to happen just by chance. Indeed, it is hard to understand why “bad things happen to good people.” It is difficult to have a wide perspective. Role models can help. For example, when the famous tennis player Arthur Ashe suffered a terminal case of HIV from a bad blood transfusion, he is quoted as saying, “I never said ‘why me?’ when good things happened to me, so I am not going to say it now.”

However, when the role model is a famous person, it may be difficult to relate in making a comparison. We may feel that such a person is stronger or more capable than we are. This is why animal pets can be very effective role models. Humans usually consider themselves smarter and more capable than their pets. After all, humans are the owners that take care of their pets. Yet, it is because pets lack “advanced” cognitive skills that this becomes an advantage in certain situations. Animal pets are not “smart” enough to think, “Why me?” It is not in their nature to feel sorry for themselves. When a pet suffers a serious illness, the owner cannot help but notice how the pet accepts the situation and goes

forward with a positive attitude. This is the reason animal pets can be such impactful role models. The capable, highly intelligent human is struck with the realization that he can learn from his less “evolved” friends.



I LOVE my ball!
---Raku

Dharma teachings go hand in hand with nature and natural laws. The term “Naturalness” is on par with such terms as “Oneness” and “Suchness.” This is why I, Dharma Dan, take seriously my responsibility to show how humans can learn from the so called “lower” species. Animal pets can be such impressive Bodhisavattas. I recently witnessed this, right here at the Bright Dawn Center when my buddy Raku, a Golden Retriever, suffered a health problem.

It is not commonly known that Golden Retrievers are susceptible to having eye problems; namely, uveites which is inflammation of the eye. Steroid medication such as prednisone can help control the symptom of redness in the white of the eye but the underlying cause is often unknown which is called an idiopathic condition. As the uveites continues, secondary glaucoma can develop and enucleation, surgical removal of the eye, becomes necessary. This is what happened to Raku.

Near the end of October, Raku’s right eye was removed. He had to wear a cone around his neck so that he wouldn’t scratch at the stitches. The area around the eye had to be shaved for the surgery. As of this writing, the hair around Raku’s eye has not grown back. The area will look better after the hair has grown back. Of course, Raku doesn’t care about such things. Throughout the whole ordeal, Koyo and Adrienne were much more stressed out than Raku. After seeing how well Raku took things in stride, they started to relax. Since the surgery took place around Halloween, they joked that Raku could wear a black patch and be a dog pirate. It was also suggested that Raku would be popular with female dogs since he would always be winking at them.

To Koyo and Adrienne, Raku’s adjustment to his new condition was amazing. While Raku had to wear the cone around his neck, he had to do a lot of things differently. Even moving around the house all day was an adventure. His cone kept bumping into things but he merrily went on his way, doing whatever the next moment brought. Raku doesn’t know or care, that he is an inspiration to his owners. He has his priorities down pat—a full belly and an empty bladder and he is just fine. Getting petted and chasing balls are the gravy—life is good! This is Dharma Dan signing off—until next time—have a Buddha-ful day!

Two Cup Dharma Glimpse

By William Seiyo

This week I was at the thrift store and I saw these cups on separate shelves. In looking at them I thought of the two people who once owned them. I imagined them celebrating their 30th anniversary together and them remembering their lives together.

Now jump forward to now. Something happened. We do not know what. Perhaps they became ill and the children had to clean out the house before selling it. Maybe the husband died and the wife got rid of the cups because they were too painful to look at.

It does not matter what happened but somehow the cups ended up in a thrift store. As I put them together I thought about my own wonderful wife and children and

how much I love them. We all know that life is short and that one day we will die and to us this makes each day together special and precious.

This week take a moment to take notice of life and to tell those you love how much you appreciate them before your cups become separated.



Acknowledgements with Gratitude

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

When submitting donations, please list your name exactly as you wish it to appear in the Oneness newsletter. Acknowledgments are current as of December 8, 2015. 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.

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, a 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.

DISCOVERING BUDDHISM IN EVERYDAY LIFE by Marvin Harada 2011. In commemoration of his 25 years of ministry at the Orange County Buddhist Church, over 40 essays by Rev. Harada were selected from past monthly newsletters. 128 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.

THE ART OF TAKING ACTION by Gregg Krech. Draws on Eastern philosophy, Buddhism, Japanese psychology, Zen, and martial arts to offer an approach to ACTION that goes beyond productivity and time management. 216 pages.

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Change Service Requested



YES YES Your Everyday Spirituality YES YES

DEC	<p>Theme: Cultivating Calmness Purpose: To experience the benefits of slowing down. Method: "Slow-Gassho:" After taking a deep inhale, exhale as slowly as you can, while also bringing your hands together as slowly as you can in Gassho. When done three times in a row, you will notice how much slower/longer your Gassho lasts each time. Do Slow-Gassho anytime you feel mentally rushed, like during the hectic holiday season.</p>
JAN	<p>Theme: Creativity Purpose: For more newness/freshness in your everyday activities. Method: Choose a daily activity and do it differently than you routinely do it. For example, use your non-dominant hand when brushing your teeth, eating a meal, etc. Afterwards, do a "New-Gassho" which is to do Gassho differently than you usually do it; like spreading your fingers, cupping your palms, etc. Doing routine things differently promotes mental flexibility.</p>
FEB	<p>Theme: Love Purpose: Closer relationships Method: "Together- Gassho:" Facing a chosen partner, put your right hands together in Gassho; it's okay that your thumbs will not be in a matching position. Look each other in the eye and bow.</p>

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