



o n e n e s s



EVERYDAY SUCHNESS

by Rev. Koyo Kubose

I want to share with you some teachings I have received from how others have been influenced by reading my father's book *Everyday Suchness*. This is kind of neat because what caught one person's attention and made a big impact may have been completely unnoticed by another person. Say two persons read the same chapter in a book on Buddhist teachings. If one person says that a particular passage was really great, the other person can't help but want to take a closer look at those words. Imagine his surprise if he discovers that he doesn't even remember reading that passage. The point here is not so much that people are different but that one's own learning and insights are never final. This holds true even when, or maybe especially when, the teaching is one that a person feels he is very familiar with, and has put a period on it, so to speak. It is important not to formulate final conclusions about what one has learned, but instead to realize one always has to keep going.

Let me illustrate what I am talking about. My examples come from reports written by students in our Lay Ministry program, which is a two-year, internet-based course of study that emphasizes the Way of Oneness as expressed in books

written by Rev. Gyomay Kubose. Our present group of LM10 students (the 10th group to go through this program) is currently spending nine weeks on the book *Everyday Suchness*. For each week's written report, the study guideline from the course syllabus states: "As you read the assigned pages, be alert for what sentence or idea catches your attention. Reference the page number and then elaborate on how what is expressed can relate to your own spiritual growth."

One of our student's report begins: (Page 39) "**Life is a continuous becoming.**" She comments, "If I were into tattoos, these words would be around my lower arm so it would be there as a reminder to keep going when difficulties seem overwhelming, as things will change. Also to savor the joys of the moment, as they too, will keep going, in who knows which direction. I think of the last line of the Heart Sutra, which has many translations but the one I like is '... going on, and always going on, always becoming Buddha.'"

The student then relates the page 39 quote to death and dying, "It is also a beautiful, clear guidance for the Great Transition..." She says she felt the teaching very strongly and describes in her report what she

experienced when with her Mom during the final days of her Mom's passage. The student then mentions how she hopes she will remember the teaching at her Time.

Her sincere dealing with what I would call 'deep stuff' moved me to give deeper meaning to two other expressions that have helped me: "Immortality is hidden in transiency" and "No death as such; only one eternal change." I was impressed with how this student interacted with the page 39 quote in discovering its personal impact for her. Even more so when I went to page 39 and found that the sentence was not prominently displayed or emphasized but was embedded in the middle of the page. However, because of what this student wrote, I took a fresh look at the sentence and could only nod my head yes... it is a tremendous teaching.

In the next week's reading, the most significant sentence for another LM10 student was:

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(Page 102) **“We have to accept all the changes that come and be ever born anew.”** The student points out, “Over the years I have found it rather odd that I am able to accept major problems in my life without undo agitation while smaller issues of really no significant consequences can make emotions like anger and anxiety swell up.”

He gives recent examples: his back pain flaring up and is not relieved by his usual exercises; the brand new breadmaker starts making loud squeaks; and to top it off, the tablet battery starts losing its charge overnight. He writes, “The cost of having to possibly replace the tablet, plus the time and effort to set it up, and the ensuing potential headache I’ll get from spending a couple of days doing the setup had pretty much put me in a not too pleasant mood.”

He asks himself why the difficulty accepting many of the smaller issues? Perhaps it has to do with control. Major issues often cannot be controlled and nothing can be done about them, while many smaller issues can be handled in some way. He points out that although fixing or modifying a problem situation is not a bad thing in itself but investing the ego in it is what creates the affliction. He nicely ends his report by quoting from Everyday Suchness: (P. 103) **“So it is in our life, if we remain free from selfish ego attachments and live the life of naturalness, we live in the true sense of living.”**

This student’s introspection reminded me of some recent examples in my own life where I let some small things upset me to the point where I really didn’t like being that kind of person. I devised a personal “action plan” that I feel will lead to effective changes for myself. Here’s the interesting thing: I am the “teacher” and I am reading the students’ reports. Yet, in a broader sense, we are all learning together, helping each other. Many of our students mention that although they had read Everyday Suchness before, they get so much more from it now as part of the program structure. It is indeed gratifying that our program is working the way it is supposed to work; that is, not to turn students into teachers but to help all of us perfect our studentship.

In a last example, another LM10 student writes about his tattoos and how he thought they were something permanent. He is coming to realize that

even tattoos reflect the simple but pervasive Doctrine of Impermanence. Physically, the tattoos change; colors fade and lines become less distinct. The significance of tattoos change over time too and may no longer reflect who one is. In fact, this student’s report begins with a two-word sentence: “Everything changes.”

I want to switch gears here because the above quote is so connected to an article I just read in a temple newsletter that we receive. The article by Rev Marvin Harada is titled “Everything Must Change” and is about a song of the same name. Rev. Harada especially likes the George Benson version and considers the song one of the most Buddhist contemporary songs. The opening lyrics:

Everything must change
Nothing stays the same
Everything must change
No one stays the same
The young become the old
And mysteries do unfold
Cause that’s the way of time
Nothing and no one goes unchanged

Rev. Harada comments:

Intellectually, the teaching of impermanence is so simple that a five-year old can understand it, but it is a hard teaching to truly embrace and realize in one’s life. If we reflect a little bit about this teaching, we might find that we do not truly live in oneness with this teaching, no matter how much we think we understand it. Have you ever had an argument with your husband or wife and you said or thought to yourself, “Gee, you never used to be like this!” Isn’t that proof that we don’t live in oneness with impermanence? We expect our spouse to be just like they were when we married them. We cannot accept that they have “changed.”

Buddhism is trying to teach us to embrace this truth of impermanence in our life. Impermanence means that we should not take this life for granted. This teaching of impermanence is not a bleak, negative teaching. It is a most positive teaching. If you are in a state of suffering, impermanence

means you will not stay in that state forever, although it may feel that way. Impermanence makes this one life meaningful, and every phase of our life can be fully lived, enjoyed, and cherished.

We might not like some aspects of impermanence, like growing old, facing health issues, and things of that nature, but impermanence means we can live our life to its fruition, even with the aches and pain it brings. Impermanence means we can look forward to the birth of grandchildren or great grandchildren. Impermanence means we can greet new flowers every spring, and enjoy the radiant foliage of the fall. We live in Oneness with this great flow of life.

It is so appropriate to mention Rev Harada because he tells of when he was just beginning his serious interest in Buddhism over 30 years ago, how he had read and liked the book Everyday Suchness. Then he learned that Rev. Kubose was coming to speak at a nearby temple in California. He went and was surprised to find that hearing him in person was even better than the book. Later, he said he did something so forward that he can't believe he did it, but was glad he did. He called Rev. Kubose in Chicago and asked if he could come study with him. Even though Rev. Kubose didn't know him at all, he said, "Sure, please come." So, Rev. Harada arranged to stay with an uncle in Chicago and studied with Rev Kubose for almost a year. One of the most important things Rev. Harada learned is when Rev. Gyomay Kubose emphasized that one does not need to slavishly follow a particular teacher. Instead, one needs to establish his own core dedication to the Dharma, and Rev. Kubose was a great example of this. Looking back, Rev. Harada describes this period of time as a most wonderful experience.



MATE WANTED



Beautiful Buddhist male peacock looking for mate -- short- or long-term relationship. Contact Dharma Dan at the Bright Dawn Center.

FOUR IMMEASUREABLES

By Rev. Douglas Sanyo

"Rahula, practice loving-kindness to overcome anger. Loving-kindness has the capacity to bring happiness to others without demanding anything in return.

Practice compassion to overcome cruelty. Compassion has the capacity to remove the suffering of others without expecting anything in return.

"Practice sympathetic-joy [a.k.a., empathy] to overcome hatred. Sympathetic-joy arises when one rejoices over the happiness of others and wishes others well-being and success.

Practice non-attachment to overcome prejudice. Non-attachment is the way of looking at all things openly and equally. This is because that is. Myself and others are not separate. Do not reject one thing only to chase after another.

I call these the Four Immeasurables. Practice them and you will become a refreshing source of vitality and happiness for others."



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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

THE DHARMA OF PLANTS

By Dharma Dan



Nature is full of wonderful teachings, and they're all around us... yet, such teachings often go unnoticed. Oh you humans, you humans... I don't like to say it in such a patronizing, condescending manner but I just can't help it. You humans, especially city folks, are locked into a lifestyle of hurrying to get where you want to go. It seems the attitude is, "No time to waste; get out of the way!" You chase your goals of "getting ahead" and get so stressed out when things don't go the way you expect. It's a constant battle of trying to control things you cannot really control... duh!

Fortunately, sometimes nature hits a "pause button" and smacks you in the face with a teaching that's hard to ignore... it's called Spring! One of the teachings is, "Slow down!" Take some time to look around and see all the ways things are waking up after a winter slumber. Nature has its own cycles and timetable; nature is patient.

There is a nice lesson on patience in a story about Frog and Toad, who are the main characters in a series of children's books written and illustrated by Arnold Lobel. The stories chronicle simple life experiences, often humorous, sometimes poignant, that Frog and Toad share together. One spring day, Toad visited Frog and admired the beautiful flowers in the front yard. "Why don't you grow some?" said Frog." "But I don't know the first thing about such things!" said Toad. "It's simple" replied Frog, as he gave Toad some flower seeds, saying "Just plant these seeds in your front yard." Toad excitedly went home and did as instructed. The next morning he checked his front yard but nothing had happened... no flowers! So, Toad went to Frog and complained that the seeds must have been no good. Frog explained to Toad all he had to do was water the ground and just be patient. Well, Toad did so, and after a few days, still nothing happened. He complained to Frog again. Frog smiled and realized that Toad needed some very basic educating about how plants grow.

Now, humans may chuckle at Toad's naïve ignorance but this story can be a useful metaphor for how unrealistic expectations can occur in all kinds of life situations. Consider how the blossoming power of flowers comes mainly from the inside; whereas humans are overly

influenced by outside factors like the opinions and actions of other people. A flower doesn't complain about where it is planted or make comparisons to the "better" places other flowers may have been planted. The flower blossoms 100% with all its might no matter what. A flower lives its unique life absolutely, with no judgment of fairness. The flower doesn't play the victim to any expectations of ideal growing conditions but instead accepts the reality in which it finds itself. The flower also doesn't think things like, "Why should I blossom fully when I am growing in a place where nobody will see and appreciate me?" Of course, flowers do not need nor deserve credit or praise for how they grow because it is just their nature to do so. Nevertheless, how flowers and other plants grow and live is a teaching example available for anyone to emulate.

Let me tell you about our small orchard of about a dozen trees that was started at the Bright Dawn Center. There are only one, at the most three, trees of different kinds of fruit varieties. At the beginning of spring, the buds and blossoms of the different kinds of fruits appear on different time schedules. The plum is the earliest. It is not uncommon for plum blossoms to appear on cold, snow-covered branches. It is for this reason that in Japan, the plum is a symbol of courage. The next

Dharma of Plants continues on page 5



blossoms to appear is on our peach tree; and then, looking carefully, the blueberry bushes are budding out. As of this writing, the race is on between the buds on the cherry and fig trees to see which blossoms out first. The pomegranate and apple-pear (nashi in Japanese) are bringing up the rear. I don't know if this blossoming order is standard but it is the order for us here.

The appearance of blossoms is dramatic and has a particularly powerful impact when one has personally planted and nurtured a tree, and has walked daily past the bare branches during the winter months. Of course when the buds first appear, there is joy that the tree has survived the winter and is still ALIVE. One might think that since the seasonal cycle occurs constantly that the impact of spring to inspire an attitude of renewal might get muted over the years; yet, as one gets older, the opposite happens.

When seeds are planted in the Spring, the roots "know" to spread downward and seek moisture; that is, the roots are hydrotropic. The young shoot breaks the surface of the soil and reaches for the sky; this is called phototropic. Dear Reader, there is something deep inside you that led you to be reading these words; this can be called your Dharmatropic nature.

I, Dharma Dan, am in a unique position to see both the world of nature and the world of humans. What I am talking about is the role of instincts. Animals in nature, do not have to learn how to live because essential patterns of behavior occur naturally; that is, they are instinctive or hard-wired. Although humans are in the animal kingdom too, they do not have the same kind of strong instincts governing important aspects of their lives. Although weaker, spiritual "instincts" like love, caring for others, and living harmoniously in cooperation with others, are still at the core of human nature. Such spiritual values and behavior may have been suppressed or driven underground but it is important to know the potential of the birth right of being human is there, waiting to be tapped into and developed. This is what individual spirituality is all about and is also the basis of a healthy world community.

So I implore you not to take the teachings of spring for granted. Instead, allow such teachings to shake you to your core and cause a revolutionary attitude "shift" in how to live fully no matter what kind of conditions arise. May it be so.



THE ART OF CALLIGRAPHY

The Bright Dawn Center (BDC) of Oneness Buddhism proudly announces a special workshop and Demonstration of the Art of Calligraphy by Dr. Rev. Ronald Nakasone as part of BDC's Lay Ministry Induction Ceremony weekend on May 20-21, 2017. For more information, please email BDC at: brightdawn@kubose.com.



Biography Ronald Y Nakasone

Ronald Y. Nakasone is heir to the age-old East Asian literati tradition that encourages self-cultivation, self-transformation, and self-realization through scholarship, community involvement, and the arts. An academic, he has produced more than 150 scholarly publications on Buddhist doctrine, ethics, aesthetics, aging and spirituality, and Ryūkyūan (Okinawan) Studies. His books include, *Ethics of Enlightenment* (Dharma Cloud Publishers, 1990), *Okinawa Diaspora* (Hawai'i, 2010), *Asian American Religious Cultures* (co-editor, ABC-CLIO, 2015).

He is a member of the Core Doctoral Faculty at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley, and a long-time faculty at the Stanford University Center for Geriatric Education (1990-2012).

Professor Nakasone was born and raised in Hawai'i; studied at University of Hawai'i, Ryūkyū University, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Harvard University. He received special recognition from the Thai Royal family for contributions to Buddhist studies in 2008 and was the recipient of the 2011 Sarlo Excellence in Teaching from the GTU.

He is an ordained Jōdo Shinshū (Pure Land) priest, who served at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin and Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church. A skilled sho- (calligrapher) artist, he is preparing for a 2017 solo exhibit at the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo Museum, Santiago, Chile. A short video, "A Calligrapher's Pilgrimage" can be seen at the following site: vimeo.com/106988457. "Ron Nakasone on the Art of Sho" can be accessed at <http://www.conversations.org/story.php?sid=441>.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Bright Dawn Trailblazers

This January 2017 BDC had its 2017 Officer Installation Ceremony for Bright Dawn Lay Minister Trailblazers. I was installed as President and Wendy Shinyo Haylett Sensei as President Elect for year 2018. The Trailblazers Organization is a group comprised of BDC Lay Ministers, which offers continuous training and study. Our goal should always be to “Keep Going” and to work together to carry on the tradition of Gyomay Kubose Sensei’s vision of a non-sectarian, non-dualistic Way of Oneness. As Lay Ministers we can all play a large part in keeping this tradition alive. I am very grateful to have Rev. Koyo and Adrienne to guide us on this journey. Wendy Sensei and I are very excited to carry the torch forward and to continue this tradition. I am very excited that the Dharma Glimpse book project was completed and is now in print and

available for purchase from this newsletter booklist, www.brightdawn.org, Create Space, and Amazon. I thank everyone who worked very hard to make this happen and look forward to working with everyone on future projects. I would also like to invite all members to join us, once a month for our Trailblazer teleconference call. As always we rotate calls the last Tuesday and Thursday of each month. The times have now been moved up to take place at 5:00PM Pacific and 8:00 PM Eastern. All dates and reminders will be posted on Trailblazers Facebook and brightdawnsangha.ning.com and BrightDawnSangha@gmail.com. Please e-mail or post any suggestions or comments that you might have if you are not able to join in on the call. May we all work together for peace and equality for all!

William Toyo Holland

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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 March 14, 2017. Donations received after this date will be listed in the next issue. If we have missed an acknowledgment, please let us know by email at: brightdawn@kubose.com.

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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YES YES Your Everyday Spirituality YES YES

MAR	Theme: Spring Purpose: Growing Spiritual Seeds Method: Apply garden metaphor to spiritual growth: What is involved in the plant-growing process? Decide on your overall garden design? Prepare the field by turning the soil over and adding amendments. Order the seeds you want and follow the instructions on the seed packet; weed and water. Since you are the gardener in charge of your spiritual “garden,” modify the above process using creative common sense (see below).
APR	Theme: Gardening Purpose: Acquiring Knowledge and Skills Method: Use reference sources and trial and error to see what works to make your particular spiritual seeds grow strong and healthy. Take responsibility for watering regularly. Be diligent in keeping weeds under control. Use organic methods and be on the lookout for pests and diseases.
MAY	Theme: Harvesting Purpose: Maximize effective uses of your harvest Method: Network and experiment to try out various recipes to make good use of your spiritual crop. Learn proper storage, canning and freezing techniques. Share harvest and favorite recipes with others.

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