
O N E N E S S

Quarterly Newsletter of the Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose Dharma Legacy Vol. 3 No. 3 Autumn 1999

AWARENESS

by Ven. Gyomay Kubose

It is said a Buddhist's life is a life of awareness. One of the finest examples of this life of awareness is in a magazine from Japan called "Taiko" (or "Great Cultivation" in English). The Editor is Sumita Oyama, and in this month's issue he has written of a very beautiful life. I was so inspired by it that I should like to share it with you.

When the Russian Scientists shot the intercontinental ballistic missile and took a picture of the other side of the moon, Mr. Oyama's awareness of this incident was: "Well, the Russians took a picture of the other side of the moon. Really, the moon is round and there is no front side or back side. Things we call front or back are man-made ideas. The moon has no back or front. At any rate, the Russians took a picture of the back of the moon." Then he continues, "I wish Khrushchev himself would take a picture of the other side of his own mind when he speaks to the leaders of the world. Well, it's his business, but how about myself? I think I should clean the back of my house." So he started to clean the back of his house, his backyard.

Man in general has a front and a back. Of course, we want to present a beautiful front and keep all other things in the back. Mr. Oyama quotes a haiku (a 17-syllable Japanese poem) by the great Buddhist poet and monk, Ryokan: "Ura wo

mise, omote wo misette, chiru momiji." Translated, this is;

Showing front,
Showing back,
Maple leaves fall.

We try to put up a nice front; that is why we have problems. There is really no front and back in true life. We should live as the maple leaves, showing both front and back. Front is front and back is back, but there is no superiority to either side. Both are true. But we petty human beings try to show the "better" front and hide the back. If we were able to take pictures of our own minds, front and back, if we were able to live life as the maple leaves, showing the front as front and back as back, there would be no falseness, no pretense, no secrets to hide—show ourselves to the world, live our life. We, most of us, consciously and unconsciously, live a life of front and back duplicity. And that is the trouble today, the very foundation of perplexity in life.

This is what Ryokan was concerned about. He wanted to live life like a maple leaf by showing front and back as they are—with no shamefulness, just straightforward honesty and sincerity in life. As soon as we think, "This side is better to show the public; this should be hidden," then we have problems. A Buddhist life is a life of this honesty. There is no front and no back. A true life is totality. This side of the hand or that side of the hand—is one better or worse? This side is this side;

that side is that side. Both are equal. Nothing to be hidden.

Mr. Oyama, when he read the news about taking a picture of the other side of the moon, became aware of the many sides of our own life. He was living a life of awareness. There are hundreds of such teachings around us every day. But how many of us, when we read this news, would have thought of this front and back of our own mind and our own life? Mr. Oyama, with his idea of front and back, gives a wonderful teaching and wonderful way of awareness in his article.

As I read this article, it struck me how true it is that there is no front and back, but that we are the ones who make front and back, left and right, east and west. It is our mind which creates this front and back, just as we create our own problems. So live a life like a maple leaf, showing the back as well as the front, and do not be bothered by showing only a front or back. There is no front or back; both are good. This kind of awareness is, I think, a Buddhist's life.

I was visiting a friend in a hospital. We talked about acceptance. Acceptance is very important in life. In the English language, however, acceptance has the connotation of a defeated attitude: "Well, it's something I can't help, so I have to accept it." "Well, there is something better than this, but since it came to me, I can't help it. I just have to accept it."

The true attitude in Buddhism is
(continued on page 4)

President's Message

by Rev. Koyo S. Kubose

The Chicago area suffered from a brutal heat wave this past summer. Air conditioners and electric fans can be actual life savers but I am sure the pervasiveness of the heat was still oppressive. One may find relief in cool places (like a movie theater) but no one can completely escape the heat.

During the summer it is difficult to imagine that winter will come with its bitter wind and deep snow. One's perception and mood is dominated by whatever is the current seasonal weather. Conversely, during winter, it is hard to imagine what warm weather is like. Of course we have quite pleasant springs and autumns which we appreciate for awhile but usually take for granted.

My son, who has been living in Los Angeles the past few years, says he misses the seasons. He expressed a theory that people who live in seasonal places can better accept life's ups and downs than those who live where its "nice" all year around. This is because the people who live with seasonal weather have to accept seasonal changes which are not under their direct control; thus enabling them to accept life changes and difficulties that also are rarely under their direct control.

This theory is probably an over simplification. Plus, most things are relative; e.g., even those who live in balmy climates may experience seasonal variations (though granted it

may not be to the extremes of other areas). For example, local people in Hawaii do not go swimming in their winter season, "It's too cold!" Whereas newcomers go swimming all year around for a few years until they too become sensitive to seasonal changes.

For people like farmers, the weather is an extremely crucial factor. For the rest of us, although the weather is a basic thing that affects us every day, it is usually only a backdrop to our daily activities. Under ordinary circumstances, although we take the daily weather into consideration, we do not let it dictate what we need to do. For example, if it's raining when we get up in the morning, we don't say, "Well, I can't go to work today." Instead, we get our umbrellas and go to work. If it's cold, we don't snuggle in bed (okay, except for a few minutes) and we don't say, "Nope, can't do my work today." Instead, we dress appropriately and go do what needs to be done.

In Morita therapy, an approach to living influenced by Japanese Buddhism, it is suggested that one's emotions be considered like the weather. You should not let either the weather or your emotions dictate how you live. Negative feelings do not have to prevent you from doing what needs to be done. Although emotions are important and should not be ignored, you do not have to use your emotions as excuses to justify your behavior.

Oneness Newsletter Autumn 1999

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Please send:
Dharma Glimpses
Poems
Reader Replies
Winter issue deadline: October 15

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Dharma Glimpses

By Tamon Mark Uttech

Instead of focusing on your self-centered emotions as the criteria for living, look at the life circumstances you are in. By seeing clearly life as it is, you can flow with the reality before you and do what needs to be done. Willingly accept and become one with the realities in your life.

In the East, it is said that the center of one's life is in the *hara* or gut— not in the head or heart. The foundation of a spiritual life is not in rational logic or intellectual knowledge, nor is it in one's impulsive and changing emotions. Spirituality is the center of one's gravity. Spiritual stability can be likened to a heavy Dharma weight at the bottom of one's life. With such a low center of spiritual gravity, life's storms will not knock you over.

Rev. Haya Akegarasu has said that we can handle incidents that occur in life (just like we can handle bad weather) but the real question is, "How can we handle life itself?" Such an existential question requires not an external answer but an internal answer. Internal does not mean egotistic self preoccupation but refers to a spirituality deep within oneself, which can be called, "The Center Within."

In similar fashion, the French existential philosopher Albert Camus has said, "In the midst of winter, I discovered within myself an invincible summer." Or as a Buddhist minister reversed it, "In the midst of summer, I discovered within myself an invincible winter." Regardless of whether we are referring to an inner strength we discover due to life's difficulties, or whether in good times we stay in touch with our basic human frailties—there is a spirituality of Oneness that goes beyond such dualities as good–bad. We can live with this kind of "Everyday Suchness" when life's weather is hot and sunny and also when it is cold and dark.

I enjoyed the article in the Spring, 1999 issue about the Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue Retreat held at the Serra Center. You see, I am a Catholic as well as a Buddhist, although I was raised a Lutheran! But that is another story.

I understand the word "Catholic" to mean "universal" so, just as I am a Catholic Buddhist, anyone universal about their Buddhism is also a Catholic Buddhist...

It was the Sunday where the priest sprinkles holy water on the congregation. When I got to Mass I noticed all the reservoirs of holy water for crossing yourself were empty. As it was my habit to make sure I crossed myself with holy water before the service, I headed to the restroom and used the water from the tap.

All thru the service I waited for the traditional sprinkling. All the equipment was up there beside the altar but nothing happened.

"Oh," I thought, "that's it. They're saving it for the main service, for the senior priest to sprinkle it on the elite members of the congregation..." I remembered the tap water with a mischievous glee. After Mass, on the drive home, it started to rain. I entered a realization that since rain comes to wash away the sins of the world, it is holy water, and then I wondered what wasn't holy water...

What can I say to this?

Namu Amida Butsu.



(from page 1)

not such an attitude of defeatedness. Acceptance means understanding of the truth, accepting the fact. Accepting the truth means a true understanding of life—not the feeling of a victim, not a feeling of sacrifice or being defeated—but understanding the true facts about life. Then from here, our true life begins.

Without accepting things as they are, without knowing the truth—what it is, what I am—then true life does not begin.

The acceptance of true life as I am, as you are, or the conditions in which you are, the true realization of the fact, is acceptance. Instead of becoming a victim of the conditions or whatever it is, you become the master of the situation. This is acceptance.

Acceptance has a very positive, active, dynamic meaning in Buddhism, and not the defeated, negative sense as implied in the English language.

Know the fact. The fact is that there is no front and back, so we can be honest to ourselves. There is nothing to hide when we are sincere and honest.

“Maple leaves falling off by showing front and back.” I can see the falling maple leaves, turning in the autumn sun, showing front and back as they come down. It is a natural life. No pretense, no worry, no tension. Just as maple leaf falls, as water falls from higher level, just as moon shines—that kind of life gives us peace and serenity. And this is awareness.

The teachings are around us only when we are aware. Mr. Sumita Oyama surely has great awareness in his living. I greatly admire this man and so wanted to share his life of awareness and introspection with you.



HAWAII TRIP REPORT

From July 23 to August 6, Rev. Koyo and Adrienne Kubose participated in a two-week Summer Session held at the Buddhist Study Center of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii in Honolulu. A group of 45 attendees listened and interacted as Rev. Koyo shared the Dharma teachings every morning. The Summer Session theme was “Way of Oneness: Universal Teachings for Everyday Living.”

The Buddhist Study Center has been holding these two-week Summer Sessions for over 20 years. The offering of a two-week duration program is rare. Most Buddhist conferences or retreats last only a weekend. The Hawaii Summer Session is an intensive program that provides a unique opportunity for learning and spiritual growth. There is time to establish both a depth and a continuity that can lead to lasting life changes.

The Summer Session participants were mature and open minded. As devout Buddhists, many had attended past Summer Session programs. Therefore, Rev. Koyo emphasized self insight over intellectual knowledge, dynamic process over conceptual content, spiritual practice over religious dogma.

Rev. Koyo’s presentations included such topics as:

1. Starting a daily Gassho practice (using reminder notes; wearing a wrist rubber band)
2. Removing obstacles to spiritual growth (creative process; mental sets; paradigm shift)
3. Who am I? (dark-light; trilogy of self concept; attribution theory)
4. Freedom (let go and grow; an idiot’s smile; “horizontal leap” to Big Sky Mind)
5. Samsara is Nirvana (BM = Buddha Movement; crisis is danger and opportunity; enjoy your suffering?)

6. Way of Oneness Formula (the true Nembutsu beyond ‘hakarai’ Nembutsu)

7. Naikan meditation and wise man guided imagery

8. The meaning of Oneness (everything is Okay)

9. Life of Oneness (keep going; don’t forget to laugh)

Each day began with *seiza* quiet sitting and chanting. Rev Koyo then discussed the past day’s Daily Reflections written by the participants. Next was Gassho Feedback, an open sharing by the group about their experiences of implementing various Gassho practices into their daily routines. After a break to sample fresh fruits and other Hawaiian delicacies, the daily lecture presentation was made, followed by small group discussions. Each session ended with the writing of individual Daily Reflections and then quiet sitting.

As evidenced by the oral and written comments of the participants and by the rapport and togetherness of the entire group—the Summer Session was fun and enjoyable, yet a significant learning experience. Rev. Koyo and Adrienne were so impressed and inspired by the group’s openness, warmth, devout dedication, and sincere spirituality. All the instances of thoughtful kindness extended to both Rev. Koyo and Adrienne overwhelmed them. They received the highest compliment of being called “kamaaina” which means “local” as compared to being from the mainland. They indeed felt very much at home and truly experienced the “Aloha” spirit. The 1999 Summer Session was an unforgettable “watershed” event for them that really touched their lives.



FOR WOMEN ONLY

By Bea Onno

*Don't know why
There's no sun up in the sky
Stormy weather
Since my man and I ain't together
Keeps raining all the time*

She sang so sweetly, with such a lovely voice, with such a demur demeanor. Everyone loved her. She was fair, beautiful and talented. She was the hope of her people to break the color barrier. Hollywood molded her into its idea of femininity. She hated those days. She'd run back to New York and commiserate with her friends. She was Lena Horne.

I saw a TV program about Lena Horne. I was drawn to it because I remembered Lena Horne from those days when she was in Hollywood. She was so beautiful, I wanted to be like her.

The civil rights movement followed those days. It raised the consciousness of all of us, not just about Black people's rights but rights for everyone – women's rights, gay rights, etc. It was a time everyone looked closer at exactly who they were. Who am I?

Women of that time were especially effected. Women had been taught to look pretty, express no opinions, be pleasant. They were raised to think getting married was the major goal in life. They went to college to get their MRS degree. They were praised for being good hostesses, good cooks, good seamstresses, keeping a clean home, raising children, keeping a happy husband. They put the needs of their children and husband before their own. Suddenly with the dawning of the Women's Rights Movement these women began to ask "Who am I? Am I fulfilled? What do I really want from my life? "

We're trying to learn who we are and we don't have a clue because we have a lifetime of practice and positive feedback for thinking only about what others think of us, pleasing others and not thinking about ourselves. What now? Are we really happy when we smile? How easy it is to turn it on and give in to the way we were raised. How difficult to peel away the layers, get in touch with who we really are.

Once I participated in a guided imagery session that ended with imagining what object represented ME. Without any prompting, I imagined a bamboo comb in a beautiful brocade case – the kind you find in import stores. You know, those bamboo combs that never get used, that stay in the beautiful case and get thrown in a drawer.

It was quite eye opening for me. I realized that I really was like that comb, something kind of superficial, pleasant to look at and not to be taken seriously — something static, something whose value was in pleasing others.

WHO AM I? It's time to start thinking in earnest about this. It's time to wake up.

Have you heard Lena Horne sing *Stormy Weather* recently? Something happened to her since those early days. When she sings it now, you can feel her guts, you can feel HER. She's REAL. I'm inspired by her personal growth. I want to learn who I really am and be who I really am. Don't you?

*** **

The Horsefly Story

Once there was a seeker who went to visit a wise man in Japan. The seeker talked on and on about the difficulty he was having. While he was talking the wise man seemed not to be listening. He was looking off into the room. The walls of the room were shoji screens open to let in fresh air. A horsefly had inadvertently gotten in. The horsefly was trying desperately to get out. It kept flying against the shoji screen. Bump. Bump. Bump. Although the shoji were open, the horsefly kept bumping its nose against the shoji screen. The wise man was mesmerized by the horsefly. Finally the seeker impatiently said, "You don't seem to be listening to me!" The wise man said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I was watching that horsefly. It's trying so hard to get out but it keeps bumping against the shoji, even though just a bit to the side it's open and he could easily get out.

At that instant, the seeker became enlightened.



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**The Dharma bread
of life is never served
dining room style.
It is served cafeteria style.**

**Move away from greed and anger;
leave no forwarding address**

Reader's Replies

I wish to tell you that a friend of mine had the good fortune of meeting Rev. Gyomay Kubose on an airplane a few years ago. Rev. Kubose was polite and kind to my friend, who was obviously intoxicated at the time. When my friend told me about this encounter and mentioned the name of Rev. Kubose's book, "Everyday Suchness," I hunted the book down and made a gift

of the book to my friend, some years after their meeting.

Since then, your teachings and writings have been very helpful for my friend on his road to recovery and his search for spirituality. We look forward to your newsletter.

I wish to express our appreciation for your guidance and the kindness that Rev. Kubose extended to my troubled friend that day several years ago.

--- PM (CA)

*Each night, one goes to sleep embracing Buddha.
Each morning, one arises together with Buddha
Moving or still, the actions of one mirror the other.
Sitting, sleeping, both abide in the same place.*

*Never apart from one another even by a hair's breadth,
They are as body and shadow, one being just like the other.*

*If you wish to know the whereabouts of this Buddha,
Just say the word, and there the Buddha is, in the
sound of your own voice.*

Poem from the Zenne Fu Daishi goroku

--- WSY, tr. (Japan)

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LEGACY CATALOG

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. This continues the approach of "Everyday Suchness" and speaks directly to the ordinary layperson. The collection of 58 essays reflects Rev. Kubose's unique, down-to-earth presentation of the Dharma teachings which offer 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.

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.

Highly Recommended Books

INVISIBLE EYELASHES by Rev. Nikkyo Niwano. Combines time-honored Buddhist teachings and stories with examples from modern life to show how attitude affects happiness and how flexibility of mind helps us grow spiritually, making us more productive at work and better able to relate to others. 175 pages.

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

RIVER OF FIRE, RIVER OF WATER by Taitetsu Unno. Introduces the Pure Land tradition of Shin Buddhism using personal anecdotes, stories, and poetry. The Pure Land practice is harmonious with daily life, making it easily adaptable for seekers today. With spiritual insight and unparalleled scholarship, this book is an important step forward for Buddhism in America. 244 pages.

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Oneness Newsletter

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SEPT

Theme: Attitude Flexibility

Purpose: Become aware of how we victimize ourselves by stubbornly living a narrow way of life.

Method: "Horsefly Gassho:" Mimic a horsefly blindly hitting a window pane trying to find freedom. Hit the index finger of one hand against the palm of the other hand (as a reminder not to be so stubborn).

OCT

Theme: Facial Expressions

Purpose: Increase awareness of the importance of a smile.

Method: "DryingYour Face Gassho:" After washing up in the morning, while drying your face and rubbing the towel on both sides of it, think how a person is responsible for his facial expression-- remind yourself to smile more.

NOV

Theme: Gratitude

Purpose: To not take for granted the comfort and security of one's own house.

Method: "Door Gassho:" Post a note inside your house door to remind you to gassho when returning home.