



Spirituality Around the World: Culturally Diverse Approaches to 12-Step

Earlier this year, Rev. Kubose spoke in Palm Beach, Florida, at a conference held for mental health professionals working in the field of addiction. The host organizer was Dr. Michael Weiner who is the program director at the Behavioral Health Center of Palm Beach. After the conference, the four conference speakers, representing Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, were asked to write about their presentations for an article to appear in Counselor Magazine. Here are some excerpts from the article.

Editor of Counselor Magazine (Stephanie Muller)

Many professionals in the addiction and mental health fields and recovering people alike will tell you that spirituality played an important role in their recovery from addictive disease. Many treatment centers and addiction professionals take great care to explain to their clients that spirituality does not have to include a religious component or belief in a higher power – for some, this is the embodiment of spirituality, whereas others have adopted a more secular approach toward spirituality. This article focuses on a unique approach

taken by a treatment center that has trained its staff to embrace spiritual and cultural diversity while using the 12-Step approach toward treatment and recovery. Behavioral Health of the Palm Beaches hosted a one-day conference entitled Spirituality Around the World: A Day of Spirituality and Cultural Diversity, which included a variety of approaches to the 12-Step model, including: Western Judeo-Christian; Buddhism; Judaism; and Islam. The presenters at the conferences have graciously offered to share their thoughts with the readers of Counselor Magazine.

Coming together as one (Dr. Michael Weiner)

Given the state of the world as it exists today, the goal of *Spirituality Around the World: A Day of Spirituality and Cultural Diversity*, was to capture a feeling of “togetherness” and inspire the idea that while people may start off in different places, they have the ability to come together. The world we live in seems quite polarizing, and too many people tend to perceive one another as different and oppositional.

The day reflected how the beliefs, values and decisions that we make are

so much the same, and how these beliefs and values can result in close bonds, thus ending conflict, if we only pay attention. Perhaps, this was best exemplified by having two people from oft-opposing faiths – Rabbi Simon and Iman Jory Kareem – bonding over shared similar ideas.

The 12 steps can unify recovering people around the world. It is noteworthy that Narcotics Anonymous, a 12-Step program of recovery, is growing tremendously in Middle Eastern countries. In spite of conflicts going on, people in Middle East and the West use the 12 steps as a guide for living and spiritual direction. Professionals working in the addiction field should be aware that spirituality can be approached in many different ways, and can be separated

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**HAPPY NEW YEAR
2009!!**

from religion. These professionals, in turn, can help the clients they work with daily. How many people new to recovery have said, “I don’t want religion forced down my throat?”

The first word of the first step is “We.” How many people have started recovery from recognition that “we” can accomplish things that “I” cannot? “We” can lift things and build things that “I” cannot. One of the things that “we” can do, that no person entering a substance abuse treatment center has been able to do, is to put down the drinking and the drug use.

In my work, I’ve had the opportunity to ask many clients: “How are you doing spiritually?” So often the reply is: “I don’t have any.” When I ask the reason for coming to treatment, it often is: “Because I need help.” It is important that these clients know that the first spiritual step may be to reach outside of themselves. When we reach outside the “I” we are recognizing a Higher Power. “We” can do things that “I” can’t do. One of those things is staying clean and sober.

The approach taken with *Spirituality Around the World: A Day of Spirituality and Cultural Diversity* can be replicated around the globe. We encourage treatment centers, professionals and communities to bring people together in a forum such as we were able to do, and offer similar experience to others. This model can be taken even further by including a presenter on the agnostic or atheist approach to the 12 steps. Any religious approach could be incorporated into this type of day. In any case, we consider our presentation a beginning point on which to build.

Christianity and recovery (Rev. Leo Booth)

Three important points I discussed at the *Spirituality Around the World* conference were: the difference between spirituality and religion; the interconnection between the major religions of the world; and my belief that, undeniably, some people are spiritual but not religious.

Working alongside my colleagues, I felt they all embodied two important spiritual components: respect and gentleness. We met together not to convert, but rather, collaborate and integrate historical insights from different religious traditions. We also were mindful of the 12-Step program, and individually, we shared how this spiritual program had impacted our lives.

As a recovering alcoholic, I have a long-held belief that religion and spirituality are not the same; this does not mean that they are necessarily exclusive, but religion is an organi-

zation with a belief system that we are born into. For example, I was born into the Christian tradition, and like many recovering people who are Christian, I began to look at my church in a different and more positive way. Resurrection became more than the concept of a dead body returning to life; now I saw resurrection as part of my recovery. I died in alcoholism; I’m a new man in sobriety.

However, spirituality is an expressed choice that seeks wisdom wherever it can be found; it is less dogmatic or systematic, often embracing art, music and literature. For many years, my definition of being a spiritual person includes creativity and positivity. All the speakers at the conference shared a deep respect for the Christian, Islamic, Jewish and Buddhist traditions that were being represented; we embodied the concept of many paths to God.

As I listened to the other speakers, I felt nourished by the wisdom that was being shared. Rabbi Simon explained clearly the power of tradition within Judaism, revealing the inclusivity that was based on respect. Iman Kareem used the recovery word “surrender” to educate the audience about the dignity of God, the “divine otherness” that the Koran affirms. Rev. Kubose delighted the group with the humor, openness and gentleness that is the foundation of Buddhism. This all seemed to be the “spiritual awakening” that is clearly promised in the last of the 12 steps. Recovery has no religious boundaries!

I feel it is important to note that a spiritual person need not belong to any religious tradition. Of course, most recovering people in America would have a strong religious connection or affiliation; however, a few have no religious connection. I’ve met many spiritual people who are agnostic or atheist. Indeed many people have experienced a form of religious abuse, where the dogma and rigidity created a real and dysfunctional trauma in their lives. The day we shared was not about dogmatic preaching or negativity, rather, it was a celebration of diversity. We affirmed sobriety, the goal of serenity and the joy of journeying into spirituality.

Buddhism – what it gives (Rev. Koyo S. Kubose)

A therapist has counseling techniques, but more fundamentally, the therapist himself is the “best tool” in his therapeutic arsenal. The therapist’s psychological health gained through personal experience is a crucial factor in being able to relate to and help a client. Spirituality also is an important aspect of personal growth.

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Carl Jung says it even more emphatically, “Spirituality underlies all mental health and illness.” A therapist’s own spiritual journey can affect how well he can help others with their life problems. Traditional religions are the usual routes to deepening spirituality, but there is increasing diversity in how people are exploring their own creative paths.

How can Buddhism contribute to a person’s spiritual journey? One famous response to the question, “What is Buddhism?” was: “Buddhism is to study oneself. To study oneself is to forget oneself. To forget oneself is to be enlightened by all things.” I will try to utilize these various aspects, starting with a few comments that may clarify ideas regarding Buddhism as a religion.

Buddhism is more humanistic and less theistic than other religions. This means that the person as a human being is just as important, if not more important, than the theology. Individual diversity and uniqueness are respected over proselytizing dogmatic beliefs. The Buddhist teachings can help people regardless of their religious backgrounds. Buddhist teachings are better considered a call to action than a call to believe. One can benefit from Buddhism without any threat to an existing belief system.

Properly understood, Buddhism always gives, never takes away. Buddhism is a religion that can negate itself; that is, Buddhism is not overly attached to the “ism” or label of Buddhism. It is perfectly fine if by studying Buddhism, one became a better Christian, or a better Jew, or a better Muslim, or even a better atheist. In other words, the Buddhist teachings can help one become a “true” human being. What is meant by a “true” human being? It is one who is full of sincere humility and gratitude. These are the spiritual qualities that enable one to live life with wisdom and compassion, and are the basis of peace within and harmony with others.

It should be emphasized that the historical Gautama Buddha was not a deity, but a human being – a human being who awoke to a spiritual reality that has provided a guiding light (called the Dharma) for countless people (called the Sangha). In sharing what he experienced, the Buddha said, “Do not believe what I teach just because I say it. Try out the teachings in your own life and then decide.”

Words like teaching or studying refer more to transformation than to education or intellectual understanding. One does not have to search for a great teaching, but has to learn how to be a great listener. Being in the dark, one doesn’t have to search for light, but has to open his eyes – to see the light that has been shining around him all the time. Being spiritually asleep, one has to wake up. The word Buddha means the awakened one.

Enlightenment or awakening means that one realizes life’s truths or reality; such understanding is wisdom. There is no sin in Buddhism, only ignorance. The greatest ignorance is ignorance of oneself; namely, thinking that one exists as an independent entity in the world and that everything revolves around oneself. The teachings help break down or free oneself from rigid conceptual categories such as self-other, internal-external, health-sick, good-evil, win-lose, etc. Suffering is caused by being mentally trapped in either extreme of such presumed opposites. We may have to function in a relative world of such dualistic dichotomies but we do not have to allow ourselves to be victimized.

Instead, let’s go beyond nouns and let’s live the verbs. Forget subject-object, and distinctions like singer-song, and dancer-dance. Let there be just singing and dancing! This is to flow or become one with the dynamic nature of reality, and not get attached to the names and labels we put on this reality. Liberation comes from loosening the grip of one’s self-centered and self-created existence. Indeed, “We have met the enemy and he is us.” After all, we rarely see the world the way it is but usually see the world the way we are. We have to go beyond ourselves to a wider perspective and awaken to the infinite. It is only then we are able to fully live each precious moment. Right here, right now, all things are enlightening us.

Note: Space limitations restricted use of articles by Rabbi Simon and Iman Kareem. Any reader interested in the entire article can request it from us (Bright Dawn Institute) or look it up in the early 2009 issue of Counselor Magazine.



Oneness Newsletter Winter 2008

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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.

Dharma Glimpses

“Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha. Gone, Gone, Gone Beyond, Gone Altogether Beyond, O What An Awakening, All Hail!” The great prajnaparamita mantra, from The Heart Sutra, praising enlightenment.

Ah, to have even a glimpse of “gone”—a glimpse of emptiness. Yet, the Heart Sutra tells us that “Whatever is form, that is emptiness; whatever is emptiness that is form.”

I think we all have had glimpses of “gone”, of emptiness. Some people refer to them as peak experiences or moments of insights—a flash of, a glimpse of, everything as perfection already.

I have had them, as I am sure you have. But they have been far too rare and only “glimpses.” I have never experienced those moments by seeking after them, but have merely “found” myself in one. As a child, they came while walking in the woods or just sitting with my back against a tree, watching a squirrel. As an adult, I remember three vivid examples of these divine portals beyond feelings, perceptions, impulses, and words.

One occurred on a late September afternoon, overlooking Canandaigua Lake while standing on the deck of a friend’s condominium built into the side of a steep hill. My hosts and other guests went into the condo, taking with them their happy leaf-peeping party chatter, and I remained, watching a lone tern ride drafts against a dark, cloudy sky. That was all. But time stopped, thoughts stopped, my sense of self stopped—I was exhilarated by an immense joy beyond reason or cause. I wanted to describe it to my companions when I joined them again, but had no words.

Two other experiences happened in far less poetic settings. One day I glanced out the window near my desk, taking a break from my work and computer screen, and noticed my elderly neighbor brushing the snow from his car. I watched for a few minutes that seemed like hours. Nothing happened that I hadn’t seen a million times before, but his slow, attentive, careful—and caring—snow brushing penetrated my heart with a simple yet brilliant love for my neighbor, myself, everyone, and everything.

Another time where I experienced the grace of a peek into the perfection of everything—suchness—was while lying in bed, ill, and in pain. I had been ill for sometime. I was exhausted and depressed by the pain, and the lack of promise for a quick resolution. For some reason, I was able to

truly relax “into” the pain, depression, and fear. I was able to be in it, as an experience alone—not characterized as bad, or pain, suffering. At that precise moment, I wasn’t me. For a moment between the rushing screams of thoughts coming from everywhere, there was no me—but there I was and I knew that I was.

I have thought these moments were as the Bible described in Philippians 4:7: “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

The Indian Poet Rabindranath Tagore was watching the sun rise in a Calcutta street when he wrote, “suddenly, in a moment, a veil seemed to be lifted from my eyes. . . . There was nothing and no one whom I did not love at that moment.”

And to bring it back home to Buddhism, Shunryu Suzuki said “when you do something, you should burn yourself completely, like a good bonfire, leaving no trace of yourself.”

Wendy Haylett (NY)

I seem to have frequent Dharma Glimpse’s just living day to day. Mostly it is just a realization that everything flows with the Dharma, and its going to be that way regardless if I stick my ego into the mix or not. The idea of losing my “self” has been with me for many years. Christian teaching tells us to “die to self” and allow God to live through us. The Buddha tells us that there is no “self”. I have pondered on how that works for years. I have come to my own conclusions and I am content.

The most recent glimpse happened to me while I was working. I am a Social Worker and my focus is clinical, which means I provide therapy for folks who have difficulty functioning in the social arena. All of my “clients” are folks who have a mental health diagnosis. My day job involves people aged 50 to 90 who have chronic mental illness. My evening job is with families who have children with autism or pervasive development disorder. I recently met with a new family with a 17 year old son that is morbidly obese and from what I have seen so far this kid hates the entire world. He has not been receptive to any kind of intervention and already he has flogged me with scathing criticism.

(please go to **Glimpse** on page 5)

YES WE CAN!

By Rev. Koyo Kubose

Wow! What an exciting presidential campaign and election took place recently! This election was especially exciting for many reasons. Consider the kinds of adjectives or themes that were used; such as, history-making; new vision; real changes; peace not war; social justice not exclusiveness; ecology not pollution; unity not divisiveness. This election was a time of clarifying values. It was also a time of re-vitalizing and re-organizing how to put these values into action.

This election captured the attention of so many people because of the ever-increasing scope and depth of media coverage and use of communication technology like the Internet. Youthful voters were awakened out of their usual apathy. The cynical veneer of closet liberals was cracked, chipped, and peeled away to reveal hidden hopes of idealism.

This election watered the seeds of hope and re-kindled the optimism that our nation could become the best that it can be. Within the heart of each seed of hope is the shout, "Yes we can!" Yes, we can grow toward the light. This light of hope shines ever so brightly in contrast to the darkness of the prevailing conditions due to the past administration.

Change is possible because of new leadership. The presidency of the United States is a position that comes

with tremendous power. Great leadership is when power is used to tap into the power of the people. So, now that the election is over and the joy of celebration has crested, it is on to the new joys of meeting challenges, getting to work, and seeing change happen. This is the meaning of, "Yes we can!"

To switch topics, suppose you consider yourself as your "nation" and that you have just been elected "president." You have so many wishes and plans for the well-being of yourself. Can you generate the excitement of "Yes we can!?" Can you translate this spirit of hope into hard work and commitment? Can you stop dwelling on, and making excuses for, past failures? Can you overcome recurring apathy? Can you be skillful in avoiding destructive "wars" with other people?" Can you creatively deal with disappointments? There is so much to be done!

So you see, this recent election was not just about the future health of our nation but could be about your own personal spiritual growth and well-being. You can tap into all the past, present, and future karmic influences that shape your life. With deep humility and gratitude, there is a shout, "Yes we can!"



(Glimpse continued from page 4)

I found myself questioning if I had "bit off more than I could chew" with this case. I have spent roughly 12 hours with him so far and progress is not very speedy. It was after one of our "mental wrestling sessions" that I was driving away from his home and I asked myself "What have I got to give this boy?" Is there anything I can do for him or am I over my head? It was then that I knew what I had to offer him. Buddha-nature. I have Buddha nature. That is what will bring success to this client. I know that I will be able to reach him if I trust my Buddha Nature. This made me very happy. It was a wonderful moment of clarity.

This past week I had a coworker ask me how I seemed to never get ruffled in the course of dealing with so many extreme clients. I was able to explain that it was Buddha Nature. The Four Noble Truths tell us that suffering comes from attachment. If I want to erase suffering in my life I must detach from that which causes the suffering. I have learned how to detach from feelings that cause suffering, such as

anger and urges to enact revenge on those who treat me wrong. It is Buddha Nature that enables me to work with folks that are mentally ill.

I feel that affirmation of rightness every time I face life with the assuredness of my Buddha nature. Shakyamuni was able to reach people by his mere presence. It seems that he radiated a charisma that attracted others. It is that nature in me that will ensure success and make the world a better place.

"The experience of eternity right here and now is the function of life" ... Joseph Campbell

David Pangburn (PA)



American Buddhist Services

Heartland Sangha

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

Each service is uniquely planned by a chairperson volunteer from the local Sangha. Music and readings from a variety of sources are used. Gratitude offerings of rice,

flowers, or other innovative offerings often replace traditional incense burning and sutra chanting. The Heartland Sangha is to be commended for their “cutting edge” efforts in creating these progressive American Buddhist services.

For more information, go to www.heartlandsangha.org or call Asayo Horibe, Heartland Sangha President, at (847) 869-5806.

New Dawn Sangha

meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00pm here in Decatur, IL. If anyone wants more information or directions, they can contact Sensei John Miyo Wylder at 217-429-1883 or bassho@sbcglobal.net.

Acknowledgements with Gratitude

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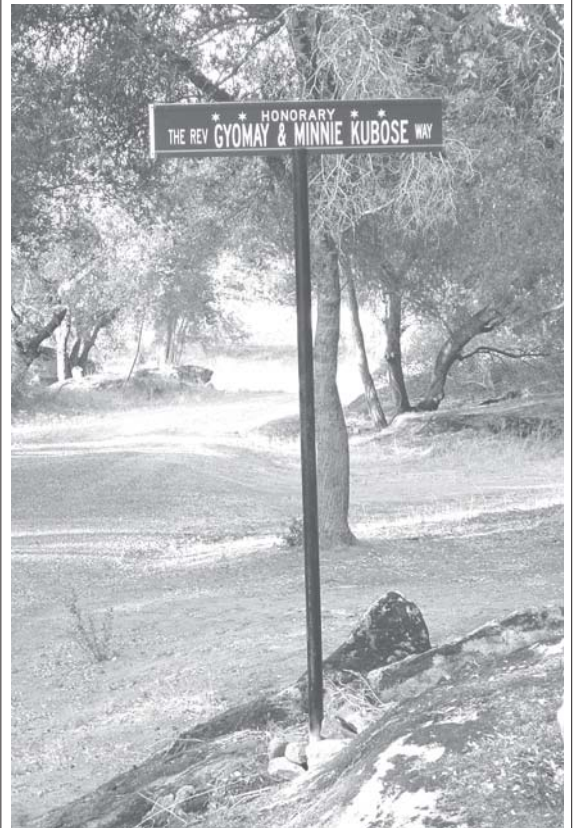
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(Acknowledgments are current as of November 20. Donations received after this date will be listed in the next issue. If we have missed an acknowledgment, please let us know.)

Rev. Gyomay and Minnie Honorary Street Sign

Rev. Gyomay Kubose founded the Buddhist Temple of Chicago in 1944 and the Temple has been located at 1151 N. Leland Avenue for many years. When the City of Chicago designated an honorary street sign, “The Rev. Gyomay and Minnie Kubose Way” to Leland Avenue in front of the Temple, they gave the Buddhist Temple of Chicago (BTC) two extra signs. Thanks to BTC who gave the Kubose family one of these copies and it now names a path to the Bright Dawn outdoor chapel in Coarsegold, California.



Book List

Book by Rev. Koyo Kubose

BRIGHT DAWN: Discovering Your Everyday Spirituality. The author's early morning run and sunrise viewing over Lake Michigan are related to simple teachings like "wide view" and "keep going" which deepen one's daily spirituality no matter where one lives. Includes map of actual lakeshore path and over a dozen photographs. 152 pages.

Books by Rev. Gyomay Kubose

EVERYDAY SUCHNESS. A classic collection of short articles first published in 1967, hailed as one of the most significant books in Buddhism because of its simple explanations and reference to everyday life. 142 pages.

THE CENTER WITHIN. Continues the approach of "Everyday Suchness" and speaks directly to the ordinary layperson. Collection of 58 essays reflects Rev. Kubose's down-to-earth presentation of the Dharma teachings which offers to all people a richer, more meaningful life. 134 pages.

THE CENTER WITHIN audio cassette; 3 hours.

AMERICAN BUDDHISM. Covers a brief history of Buddhism in America, Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path, problems in terminology and misunderstandings common to Westerners. 29 pages.

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, this book gives an idea of Rev. Akegarasu's life (1877-1954) and teachings. 99 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.

Other Recommended Books

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

BUDDHISM: Path of Enlightenment. Simple, concise introduction to basic Buddhism. Teachings are superimposed on beautiful full-color photographs of nature scenes such as water ponds, rock gardens, bamboo grove, etc. 20 pages.

COFFINMAN by Shinmon Aoki. This diary of a mortician invites the reader into the fascinating world of Buddhist Spirituality which sees the extraordinary in things ordinary, mundane, and even repugnant. 142 pages.

OCEAN: AN INTRODUCTION TO JODO-SHINSHU BUDDHISM IN AMERICA by Ken Tanaka. Uses a question and answer format to present Jodo-Shinshu Buddhism and to answer questions frequently asked by non-Buddhists. The book can

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The Feelling Buddha	\$15.95		

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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. 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.



BRIGHT DAWN
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Change Service Requested

YES YES <u>Your Everyday Spirituality</u> <i>YES</i> YES	
DEC	<p>Theme: Perspective in reviewing the past year. Purpose: Taking a balanced view Method: "So-So Gassho:" When you want to express the middle ground in evaluating the past year or anything else, hold your hand out, palm down, and make a rocking motion to indicate things are neither terrific nor terrible, but "so-so." To emphasize that so-so is okay, make the so-so motion with your other hand. Then do Gassho with a smile.</p>
JAN	<p>Theme: Gearing up. Purpose: To motivate oneself when starting a new year or a new task. Method: "Get To Work Gassho:" Give yourself a beginning boost by pretending to spit in each hand. Rub hands vigorously together in Gassho and then get to work!</p>
FEB	<p>Theme: Love. Purpose: Improving your relationships. Method: "Love Gassho:" Raise hands above head, point fingers downward with fingernails touching. While holding this heart-shaped position that your arms make, think of a loved one, and re-affirm that you will act in more loving ways toward that person. Say the person's name and bow.</p>

Mailing List Update

If you are already on our mailing list and wish to remain on the list, no action is necessary. We are happy to continue sending our newsletter to all interested persons. If you know someone who would like to be added or removed from our mailing list, please indicate below and send to: Bright Dawn Institute, 28372 Margaret Road, Coarsegold, CA 93614.

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