Onenes



Quarterly Newsletter of BRIGHT DAWN Center of Oneness Buddhism

Vol. 16 No. 1 Spring 2012

FIND YOUR TRUE SELF

By Rev. Marvin Harada (In Memory of Rev. Gyomay Kubose)

Once there was a young student who was trying to study Buddhism. He read books, listened to lectures, took classes, but could only find textbook Buddhism, and not real, living Buddhism. Buddhism must be more than history he thought. It must be more than mere academics.

Of the many books that this student read, one book stood out. One book expressed Buddhism in a manner that he could understand. It related Buddhism to everyday life, to our everyday experience. What a wonderful book, this student thought. This began to feel like living Buddhism, not just history and facts.

On one occasion, the author of this wonderful book gave a lecture. The student went to hear the lecture, and to his great surprise, the lecture was even better than the book. He talked about Buddhism and Jodo Shinshu in a manner that he had never heard before. So many puzzling questions that he had about Buddhism were clarified upon hearing this lecture.

The student wanted to hear more, but the teacher lived far away. The student debated on what to do. How he wanted to hear more from this wonderful teacher. He wondered if there was some way to study under the teacher, as a student, as a disciple. He would be willing to carry his teacher's bags, to be a chauffeur, to clean the temple, to do whatever the teacher asked, if only he could listen and learn from the teacher.

The student one day brazenly called the teacher, and asked his permission to study under him. To the student's great surprise, the teacher accepted warmly, saying, "Yes, please come."

The next few months were some of the best month's of the student's life. Almost on a daily basis, the student was with the teacher, following him where he went, doing whatever he was doing that day. Some days they studied Buddhism, some days they worked in the office, some days they planted flowers, or worked in the yard. What a joy it was for the student, just to be with the teacher.

Just as his book, the teacher manifested Buddhism in everyday life. Buddhism was not abstract or conceptual. Buddhism was alive and vibrant. It truly flowed from the life of the teacher. Many, many people came to learn from the teacher. People of all backgrounds and of all ages came to listen to his sermons, to talk with him, to learn from him. The teacher was always kind and gracious, making each person feel welcome, making each person feel special and unique.

The teacher worked tirelessly. He seemed to have an endless source of energy. When studying together, the student would get tired and drowsy, but the teacher seemed more invigorated by the study.

How the student enjoyed those days studying with the teacher. Many times the student would drive home, oblivious to the traffic or inclimate

TRUE SELF continues on page 2

Inside

,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	
New Book: Discovering Buddhism In Everyday Life	p. 2
Dharma Dan	p. 3
Stroke	p. 4
Media Dharma	p. 5
Buddha Said	p. 5
	/

weather, bubbling with joy from what he had learned that day.

For the first time, the sutras came alive for the student. In the San Butsu Ge, Hozo Bodhisattva praises his teacher, Seijizaio Buddha. What did this passage mean, thought the student? To his surprise, he began to understand the meaning. He began to feel as if he were in Hozo Bodhisattva's shoes. Just as Hozo saw his teacher, Seijizaio Buddha, as majestic as a mountain, bright and shining with a light that outshone that of the sun or the moon, so too did the student feel the same about the teacher. In the midst of winter, the teacher's face was shining and radiant, giving light and warmth to others.

Eventually the time came for the student to leave. How he wanted to remain with the teacher. But what he had learned from the teacher would always remain in his heart and mind. What he had learned was to seek and find his own true self. To travel his own path of life. With the guidance of his teacher, he moved boldly on. To his amazement, many wonderful teachers and teachings awaited him. What a wonderful world the teacher had opened up for him. How deeply indebted he felt towards the teacher.

When it came time to leave, the student wanted to express his gratitude to the teacher. He had no money to pay the teacher. There was no gift that he could purchase at a store that seemed appropriate. And so, he wrote a poem, a gatha, like in the sutras. He wrote the gatha in Chinese, like the sutras that they had studied together. The gatha was titled, Honshige" Gatha for the Fundamental Teacher. When the student left, he presented this gatha as a gift to the teacher.

Turning through endless kalpas of samsara,
I drifted aimlessly in the ocean of suffering and sorrow.

Even though I was a follower of the Buddha's Way, I had not met its true essence and spirit.

Through unfathomable causes and conditions,
I was able to meet a true teacher of the Buddha's Way.

This great Master was imparting the true spirit of Buddhism and Nembutsu in a Buddha land thousands of kotis away in the east.

Throughout the ten directions, sentient beings of the six realms called his name in praise.

With wisdom and compassion as deep as the ocean, he guided others to the Pure Land of no suffering.

Upon meeting him, I realized the experience that Hozo and Shinran had when they too sat in the presence of their teachers.

As Hozo wanted to become Seijizaio, I too wanted to become my teacher, Gyomay Kubose.

Revering the virtue of my teacher
I only thought of becoming like him.

I admired his free and joyful life, and vowed to be that type of person.

But he taught that I must <u>not</u> become like him, but must seek my own true self.

To become my teacher was not the point, but to become my own true me was the essence.

Now I have established my own gan, that comes from deep within,

To become one with the universal life, that touches the whole world.

And to share that true life and the teachings of my teacher, with sentient beings everywhere.



NEW BOOK AVAILABLE

"Discovering Buddhism in Everyday Life" by Marvin Harada is a commemoration of his 25 years of ministry at the Orange County Buddhist Church. Over 40 Buddhist essays by Rev. Harada were selected from his past monthly newsletters. "Find Your True Self" was reprinted from this book with his permission. This new publication can be ordered from our Book List on page 7 of this newsletter. Rev. Koyo's mini-review: "I love Rev. Harada's Dharma messages!"

DHARMA WEATHER ROCK

By Dharma Dan



string hangs straight down and a small rock is tied to the bottom of the string. In another picture, I have removed the twig so you can read the sign that is pasted on the flat piece of wood. What it says is:

Hi Everybody! This is the time of year where in the Southern areas it is getting warm, in the 70's or even 80's. While in the Northern areas it may be quite cold, with perhaps even some snow. No matter what, the local weather affects everyday activities. Shall we bring a raincoat or carry an umbrella? Wear a hat? Need boots? A sweater? Hang the laundry? Water the lawn? Drive, walk, or take the bus today? Foggy or stormy... travelers need to know!

Weather forecasting is important. Every news report includes a weather report. In addition to a thermometer and barometer, there are many sophisticated measuring instruments. Their usefulness matches how much precision is necessary for various purposes. For a farmer, he can tell what's coming by looking at the clouds or by how the wind is picking up. Some people can smell the rain coming. The Farmers Almanac says things like it's going to be a cold winter because the caterpillars have thick coats. Back in the day, a pioneer, mountain man, or Native American had their own ways of dealing with weather conditions.

This brings me to tell you about a neat Indian Weather Rock that is pictured here. As you can see, I am pointing to a stick or twig that is stuck into a flat piece of wood. A leather string is tied to the top of the twig. The leather



The moral here is that much of both life and Buddhism involves common sense. In fact, the Indian Weather Rock could be called a Dharma Weather Rock. Dharma teachings involve accepting what the moment brings and dealing with that reality in a straight forward, simple manner. Human tend to make things too complicated. You sit indoors and over think things. Whereas, we outdoor animals don't need a TV weatherman to know which way the wind is blowing. We know the answer to life's problems is usually blowing in the wind.

I recall a visitor asking me, "Dharma Dan, if you were in a boat and a 25 mile an hour wind came up, what

DHARMA WEATHER ROCK continues on page 5

Oneness Newsletter Spring 2012

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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.

STROKE

By John Wylder

One of the Buddhist teachings I have the most trouble with is the idea of "No Essential Self." It's one of the Three Essential Teachings, and frankly, I have trouble coming to terms with it. I know I have an essential self—all the hair dye commercials tell me I have a Real Self and that if I change my hair color, I can express it. I heard a Reality Show contestant once (I just happened to be passing through the living room on my way to the bathroom, alright? I'm not the kind of guy who watches Reality TV) say, "I'm not really like that; I just have to act like that to win." She had an Essential Self, a Real Self, that wouldn't do the things she's doing. All the Disney Channel TV shows my Tween-aged daughter watches seem to have that same theme—Stop trying to be popular and Be Your Real, your essential, Self. And it's not just TV; the whole culture supports the idea of a Real Self. It must be right. But sometimes I wonder.

I'm in charge of the bookmobiles at the library where I work; we have two, and each is staffed with a driver and a library assistant. We get lots of patrons who prefer coming to the bookmobile instead of the downtown library not because the bookmobile's in their neighborhood or is more convenient, but because the bookmobile is smaller and can provide that Mayberry kind of "Come on in, Aunt Bea, I'm holding this book I thought you'd like" service that our bigger, busier main branch can't provide. One of the drawbacks to using the bookmobile, however, is that our checkout computers aren't connected to our main server, we don't have a wireless Internet connection—we need your library card number to check you out; there is no way to look you up by name in the database like they can, but strongly discourage, at the main branch.

One of our regular bookmobile patrons is also a member of the library board, a relatively wealthy, politically connected member of the business community in his sixties. One day this gentleman got on one of the bookmobiles at a local elementary school when there were kids onboard—all our stops are open to the public. We are, after all, the public library. Our staff had already set some books aside for him to look at, and he looked through them, and picked out a stack of ones he wanted to take home. He went up to the

circulation desk, a little built in table behind the driver's seat where the laptop sits, and tried to check out, but he had forgotten his library card.

The staff couldn't check out to him. They knew him, they knew his name, they knew he wasn't trying to pull a fast one, but they didn't know his fourteen-digit library card number. They had no way of getting his information into the database. They offered to hold the books until he could come back with the card, either here or at another stop, or next week when they were back at this stop again. They'd already been holding them for several weeks, one more wouldn't make any difference. They offered to leave the books at the main branch for him to pick up at his convenience. It wasn't good enough. He flew into a rage. He cursed my staff, he slammed books down, he threw books across the bookmobile. Then he stormed off the bookmobile and slammed the door. berating them as he left. Remember, the bookmobile is full of second graders.

When my staff came back for lunch they told me what had happened, and I was not happy. I stormed into the library director's office and told her what had happened. I didn't care if he was a board member; *no one* has the right to treat my staff like that. My director was surprised; she said, "That doesn't sound like him. He was always a big supporter of the bookmobiles. He's a very sweet man." Well, apparently it *does* sound like him.

My director called the man's house and talked to his wife; he wasn't home yet. The wife started to cry. A month ago, he had had a major stroke; he had just been released from the hospital *that morning*, and the first thing he had done was go to the bookmobile. And now this.

We assured her that it was alright, my driver said he'd start keeping the man's library card number in a drawer so we can check him out even if he *doesn't* remember his card, and we just thought she should know so they can tell his doctor in case they needed to adjust his medication. The wife felt better, my staff felt better, my director was relieved that everything worked out. The board member has probably forgotten he even went to the bookmobile. Everybody was happy. I felt like something the cat coughed up.

STROKE continues on page 5

STROKE continued from page 4

Clearly, there are several lessons I could learn from this, not the least being my willingness to leap to negative conclusions about the rich guy. But the one that shook me was seeing that "It doesn't sound like him" doesn't make any sense. He wasn't like that; then a blood vessel in his brain got clogged, and now he is like that. There really is no "him," there is no "Essential Self" or "Real Self" for him to sound like or to not sound like. Who he is depends on conditions. I'm not the kind of guy who cheats on his wife; a few too many beers and a leggy blonde, and I might be. New conditions bring about new things. As Dogen said, "Firewood does not become ashes." New conditions; new things. Some conditions you can control, and some you can't, and even whether or not you can control them depends upon conditions. Saint, sinner, drunkard, thief. There's nothing I can point to, in either them or me, and say, "That is who you are. That is your Real Self."

I guess I am the kind of guy who watches Reality TV.



DHARMA WEATHER ROCK continued from page 3

would you do?" I answered, "I'd throw out a 25 pound anchor." The visitor said, "What if it was a 50 mile an hour wind?" I said, "I'd throw out a 50 pound anchor." He continued, "What if it was a 100 mile an hour wind?" "In that case, I'd throw out a 100 pound anchor." The visitor exclaimed, "Wait a minute, where are you getting all those anchors?" I replied, "The same place you're getting all that wind."

I'd like to end this article with a postscript about the Indian Weather Rock that is pictured here. It was a gift to my wife Adrienne from her boss who had returned from a vacation. In the gift shop where her boss was buying the item, the store owner told him a story about a little old lady. Not to make fun of little old ladies, but the store owner said that once a little old lady came into the gift shop to return an Indian Weather Rock, saying "I want to exchange this for another one; this one doesn't work." The store owner smiled at her but she did not smile back; so the store owner gave her another Indian Weather Rock.

MEDIA DHARMA

By Naiyo

Bon Iver won the 54th Grammy award for Best New Artist. I happen to be watching when Bon Iver's Justin Vernon gave his acceptance speech. It stood out from other acceptance speeches of the evening for me.

He said it was really hard to accept the award because "there is so much talent here, a lot of talent not there tonight, and also hard to accept this because when I started to make songs, I did it for the inherent reward of making songs." He went on to say that he was uncomfortable but with that discomfort he also had a sense of gratitude to all the nominees, all the NON-nominees that have NEVER been there and NEVER will be there (my capitalization). He thanked all the bands he toured with and all the bands that inspired him, all the artists; all the Grammy voters, his band mates old and new, the city of Au Claire, WI, his record label Jagjaguwar for their transparency and friendship, his friends and family, Kity, and most of all his parents.

What impressed me was the breath of his expression of appreciation. It's the first time I've heard an acceptance speech that included more than the people around the artist. Being aware to thank even nonnominees that never had been nominated and never would be. This kind of awareness of ALL the elements that put him where he is made me realize thathe realized Interdependency was part of his life. When we are able to be aware how many elements we depend on to be who we are, we are filled with appreciation and our lives are enriched.

BUDDHA SAID

Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do nont believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumored by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.

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WHY MEMORIAL DONATIONS?

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 Buddhist teachings of Impermanence and Interdependency. Acknowledging one's "roots" 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 and activities of a worthy organization.

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 actiovities can deepen one's spirituality. 152 pages.

Books by Rev. Gyomay Kubose

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

THE CENTER WITHIN. Continues the approach of "Everyday Suchness." Collection of 58 essays of down-to-earth teachings for a richer, more meaningful life.134 pages.

THE CENTER WITHIN audio cassette: 3 hours.

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

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

Translations by Rev. Gyomay Kubose

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

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

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

Other Recommended Books

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

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

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

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.

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

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RIVER OF FIRE, RIVER OF WATER by Taitetsu Unno. Introduces the Pure Land tradition of Shin Buddhism using personal anecdotes, stories, and poetry. With spiritual insight and unparalleled scholarship, this book is an important step forward for Buddhism in America. 244 pages.

THE FEELING BUDDHA. by David Brazier. A lucid account of how the Buddha's path of wisdom and loving kindness grew out of the challenges he encountered in life. 207 pages.



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	YES	S YES Your Everyday Spirituality YES YES	
MAR	Theme: Birds Purpose: Adjusting one's attitude Method: "Whistle-Gassho:" The next time you hear a bird whistle, whistle back. During your day, whistle as much as you can while putting your hands together in Gassho at the same time.		
APR	Theme: Purpose: Method:	Sunshine Healing thoughts promote a healthy body "Vit D-Gassho:" Enjoy a quiet moment in the sun. Face the sun with closed eyes and if circumstances allow, bare as much skin as possible. Think how Vit D is healthy for you. Smile, do Gassho.	
MAY	Theme: Purpose: Method:	Mother's Day Receiving unconditional love "Mother's Day Gassho:" Take a quiet moment to put your hands together in Gassho; close your eyes, and listen very hard to hear your mother whispering to you. What is her nurturing message to you?	

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