



O n e n e s s

NAIKAN LAWNMOWER

by Charlie Dickinson

(Editor’s note: The following email was sent to Rev. Koyo Kubose. The email was titled “Naikan,” which can be called the Japanese art of self reflection. Naikan is a way to develop a deep gratitude for what one has received, much of which was taken for granted.)

Reverend Koyo,

I come to the coffee shop, as now, to use their fast Internet connection with my netbook & have enjoyed seeing your YouTube Dharma 4 Kids videos. The one “Plant Large Potatoes” is great!

Anyway, watching these videos I thought of you & thought I’d pass along an experience I had recently. Possibly a “turning point” and certainly what I think of as an experiential manifestation of Naikan and realizing one’s gratitude toward others. In this case, it was my late mom (mothers are *often* the subject of Naikan reflection, as I’m sure you know).

I might have mentioned I lost my mom three years ago (she was 92 and her passing was quite natural). As you mentioned once, death is natural. In the meantime, Nanci also lost her mom, less than a year later. We are both orphans, having lost our dads earlier.

About a year ago, I started to feel the delayed realization of my mortality--the protective wall parents give us was gone. In fact, I would say I had a delayed reaction to my mom’s death and began to manifest anxiety symptoms and such. I won’t bore you with details, except I didn’t miss work and avoided medication.

So last week there’s this push lawnmower that needed sharpening. This involves going to the auto parts store, buying valve grinding compound (abrasive mixed with grease), taking the lawn mower apart, removing wheels, reversing pawls and such. Pretty involved, but I was enjoying it all in a way.

Then something about this quite modest lawnmower hit me. A huge shot of Naikan brought tears to my eyes.

At one time, I didn’t want this lawnmower. I had refused it. Years ago, when my mom was alive I had a much “better” push lawnmower. The best you could buy. Cost \$350 or so. Built like a Mack truck and a bit of a chore to push, but I rationalized: It cost a lot of money and supposedly cut grass really well.

So when my mom left her rental house to move elsewhere, she offered me this modest \$80 push lawnmower that compared to mine was flimsy and light and easy to use. She was mowing the lawn with it into her late 70s! Her neighbor, a heart patient, said it was so easy to push, he could use it.

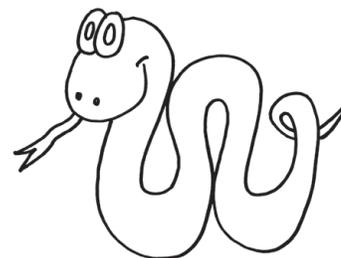
Well, my mom, having come through the Depression, didn’t like to throw stuff away. She offered me that \$80 lawnmower. I said no. I said I had a much better one, one

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HAPPY NEW YEAR 2013!



Year of the Snake

that cost a lot more. Well, she told me that she wanted me to have it. She said those words in a voice I seldom, if ever, heard from her. She was insisting it was important to her. I realized in that moment she never asked me to do much of anything. She was always giving to me. That's the way moms are.

So I took the lawnmower, thinking I had a big basement. I'd put it away and not hurt my mom's feelings. Well, a few seasons went by and I finally realized my expensive lawnmower was nothing more than a lead sled to push around. I think I might have dropped it off at Goodwill. I was happy to be rid of it.

I took to the lawnmower my mom had given me, but didn't give it much attachment. For me, it was like a disposable razor, got the job done, but I didn't *love* it. But as time went on, I realized this humble lawnmower was a work of genius. An elegant minimalist design, it makes the most of human power to get the job done, which was why I was so keen to sharpen the blade last week and get it ready for next season in 2013. (Our curbyards are now appropriately brown and gone to sleep for the year.)

So that's when the Naikan gratitude hit me. What was I doing except channeling my mom? I decided the nameplate needed some sprucing up and got out the metal polish and some soapy water and went at it. This was not obsessiveness. This was my showing my mom's propensity to clean things with total attention. Is not attention a form of love?

Anyway from that Naikan realization moment, I believe my spirit was healed. I didn't really lose my mom three years ago. In a certain sense, her spirit is still



with me. I'll never look at that lawnmower again and not know what it means. All that my mom did for me is somehow bodied forth in that lawnmower, something I at one time refused. I'm so grateful to have it.

As you well know, it's one thing to learn about "oneness" in one's head. It's quite another, and so much more real, to learn it through experience.

Anyway, I see a somewhat modified version of this lawnmower is still sold and for almost \$80 too!



DHARMA IN A BOOK

Paragraphs from a book, "The Art of Racing in the Rain" by Garth Stein opened my eyes to more Dharma. This is a book about a car racer through the eyes of his dog Enso. On pages 345-346 Enso says:

"I know this much about racing in the rain. I know it is about balance. It is about anticipation and patience. I know all of the driving skills that are necessary for one to be successful in the rain. But racing in the rain is also about the mind! It is about owning one's own body. About believing that one's car is merely an extension of one's body. About believing that the track is an extension of the car, and the rain is an extension of the track, and the sky is an extension of the rain. It is about believing that you are not you; you are everything. And everything is you.

"Racers are often called selfish and egotistical. I myself have called race car drivers selfish; I was wrong. To be a champion, you must have no ego at all. You must not exist as a separate entity. You must give yourself over to the race. You are nothing if not for your team, your car, your shoes, your tires. Do not mistake confidence and self-awareness for egotism."

How about that for Oneness!

Happy Dharma reading.

-- Adrienne

DHARMA DAN and Friends



Hi everybody! I want to share a smile and a chuckle with you. And the Lord Buddha knows you humans need more of both of these stress reducers in your modern hectic pace of life. You can learn a lot from my animal friends. Take a look at the two pictures here. Any good captions come to mind? Email them to me at brightdawn@kubose.com.

The Mona Lisa and most Buddha statues show only a slight smile but as you can see in the picture of an enlightened goat, he has a big Ahhh smile. He looks like he just took a sip of hot tea on a cold day or a gulp of frosty beer on a hot summer day. I also call such Ahhh's the Three Treasures' Ahhh's, as in Buddha..., Dharma..., and Sangha... Don't you just love it!



Hey, good things can happen to thirsty cats hanging around a dairy barn. Know what to do when you're thirsty for some Dharma teachings – like when you're sad or mad? Yeah, you can go to a temple or read some Buddhist books, but better yet, take a hike outdoors. Go hang out in the woods. Sit on a log or boulder and soak in the atmosphere. Take it from me, Dharma Dan, interesting things will happen that can provide nourishment for your spiritual journey.



A DHARMA CODE PHRASE

By Doug Kuyo

Probably because I'm ex-Navy, every now and then I remember the phrase "Now hear this!" which often precedes an official announcement. So with a little tweaking of the spelling, I turned it into a reminder to be mindful of the contextual when, where, and what of our actions:

Now – (be mindful of the present moment)

Here – (be reminded of where you are)

This – (be aware of what you are doing)

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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

READER REPLIES

Dear Kubose Sensei,

Greetings from Chicago! I hope this letter finds you well. I enjoy reading your newsletters and also appreciate that they are archived online so that I can access past newsletters.

In the two most recent newsletters (Summer and Autumn), I saw connections between the stories in them and my life. My favorite part of the Summer newsletter was Dharma Dan's reminder that turnips never remark on their own size. I have been growing many vegetables and some fruits in our backyard this spring and summer--broccoli, lettuce, corn, strawberries, green onions, green beans, turnips, peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, watermelon, soybeans (edamame), red beans (azuki), carrots--and for the most part, I enjoy just watching them grow over time and don't worry too much about fruit/vegetable production. Usually, this leads to a good harvest. But when I complain--the watermelon has "failed" to produce fruit, the red beans haven't flowered and it's been months, some of the cucumbers taste like... soap, and so on--I catch myself being greedy. Though these complaints stem from the plants not producing the vegetables as they are technically supposed to, the plants otherwise look healthy: the leaves are green and the stem is strong and sturdy, which all indicate a probably strong root system. I wonder if the plants want to produce fruit but cannot, or if they merely accept their environment and just do their best. I like to think it's the latter. Just as the radish in Dharma Dan's story does not say "Wow!" about its own size, my plants probably do not say "Darn!" when the cucumber tastes bitter to me, or the watermelon flowers do not pollinate, and so on. That's me, exclaiming; not the plants!

In the Autumn newsletter, Rod Moriyama's story, "Climbing to the Top," reminded me of my own recent trip to Japan. This past May, my husband and I went to an island called Yakushima. It is just off of the coast of the southern tip of Kyushu, about a two hour ferry ride away from the city Kagoshima. The island's environment is tropical so it is frequently rainy, warm, and humid. The island is also mountainous, so the rain runs down the mountains and everything smells fresh and lush. The main attraction of our trip was a ten hour hike through an ancient cedar forest, with the goal of seeing a particular 2000-7000 year old giant cedar tree called "Jomonsugi." The forest that surrounds this

tree is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In "Climbing to the Top," Rod Moriyama highlights the idea that "enjoying the journey along the way is just as important as reaching the top." During our ten hour hike, I could not help but think the same thing almost the whole way through. Seeing the Jomonsugi tree itself was great, but every step of the way to and from the tree was just as important. I remember so many of those steps, and all these memories probably add up to more than my memories of seeing the Jomonsugi tree itself (we stood around the tree, taking pictures, for about ten minutes total). Not to make a competition out of the components of the trip. It's just that I expected our Yakushima trip to be great mostly because of the Jomonsugi, but it turned out that the entire trip had such a profound effect on me. The Jomonsugi, like Dharma Dan's radish and my vegetable garden, probably doesn't demand all the attention it receives or doesn't remark how old and big it is; we humans just think it is the "highlight" of Yakushima! We don't even know exactly how old it is (a 5000 year gap in its guessed age is a lot of time!)! The Jomonsugi most certainly deserves its attention, but there is much more to appreciate about Yakushima. I would love to return one day to see other parts of the island, and I encourage others to explore the island if they ever have the opportunity! I just wanted to share these stories with you and thank you for putting together the newsletter every season. I look forward to more articles and stories in the future. And I hope you do not mind if I write more replies!

In Gassho,
Kei Hotoda, Chicago, IL

Dear Kubose Sensei:

Good day! I hope this bright November morning finds you and your family well. I wanted to thank you for today's "Sensei Says" message. [Editor's note: "Sensei Says" is a feature of Dial-the-Dharma, short taped talks available 24/7 by calling (847) 386-8836.]

I am a student and teacher of classical Japanese sword arts. As such, your message concerning the sword as a tool for cutting through our own greed, anger, and ignorance; as a tool for awakening, really resonated with me. While the combative methods of these ancient traditions must be handed down intact, my teachers have always taught that our study of budo

Reader Replies continues on page 5

DHARMA GLIMPSE

by Marilyn Chiyo

After several months of job-hunting as a newcomer to Honolulu in 1975, I landed a position as Counselor/Case Manager for Adult Treatment Program and Emergency Shelter. My clients were primarily prison parolees, returning Viet Nam vets, prostitutes, street people and the chronically mentally ill. I had my own office and a desk with a silent alarm button. I was a good listener, young, earnest and eager to help coordinate local services for my caseload.

Over the course of the next three years, the mass of humanity came through the door, one at a time. The Vietnam vet whose job it had been to murder suspected VC collaborators by sneaking into villages and “ice-picking” them in the head at night calmly told stories of how he used to pop the heads off kittens as a kid. He couldn’t shake his demons and needed a job. Almost all of the abused women who came through for a stay had been molested repeatedly as children and were struggling to get a toehold on life.

For some, recovery was the most fragile time. One depressed, alcoholic woman who recovered so well she moved to the outpatient program as a printer’s apprentice, failed to show up for work for two days. I found her in her small apartment, dead from alcohol and drugs on the 15th anniversary of her teenage son’s suicide.

“Clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk” was the heavy sound of something large falling down the stairs outside the closed door to my office one day. I took a deep breath before opening the door. A resident had slit his own wrists in the men’s dorm upstairs and apparently changing his mind, headed for the stairs. He was splayed out face up, blood spurting like a hydrant from both wrists. I jumped on him, raised his wrists, jammed my feet into his armpits and yelled for help. It was just another day.

Over time, I got to know my fellow staff members pretty well. They were all well-educated, tax-paying professionals. My immediate supervisor was having an affair with a married higher up whose role I will not name. The fragile accountant would begin her day in my office, hands trembling around a cup of coffee, by telling me all the reasons why the budget numbers weren’t done yet. Just about everyone told

me early on, not to enter the staff meetings before the quiet staff psychologist did because he had spent 25 years in a California prison for entering a school board meeting and killing everyone. I made certain that I was always late for meetings, like everyone else.

As my own young marriage privately began to falter, I looked with different eyes on the lives coming in and out of my office – the lives on the other side of the desk. I was experiencing my own emotional disaster and getting burned-out at the same time. When I began the job, I thought that the healthy people were on one side of the desk and the needy and unhealthy were on the other. Now, I could no longer tell which side of the desk was the healthy side. These examples may seem extreme to you, but they are all true. Life’s troubles are all relative.

There’s a kind of koan in all this, I think. It would go “Which side of the desk are you on?” And the answer would be, “there is no desk.”



Reader Replies continued from page 4

is so much deeper than the mere superficial practice of methods of systemized violence.

Rather, the Iaijutsu and Kenjutsu systems that we study are vehicles for awakening and realizing a life of compassion, wisdom and dignity. They are vehicles that can, through our own transformation, help us influence others around us in very positive ways. In fact, my teachers always deeply believed in the deep inherent potential to profoundly affect our communities and our society at large, teaching budo as a bodhisattva way. As you may know, such a view (a Right View!) transforms an art that was once a method for killing one’s enemies to that of Katsu Jin Ken, the Life Giving Sword (Right Action!).

So thank you for today’s teaching of Katsu Jin Ken, the Life giving sword that enables us to cut through our delusions with the keen edge of wisdom and compassion!

In Gassho,
Erik

QUOTES FROM NORA EPHRON

Insane people are always sure that they are fine. It is only the sane people who are willing to admit that they are crazy.

American society has a remarkable ability to resist change or to take whatever change has taken place and attempt to make it go away.

Beware of men who cry. It's true that men who cry are sensitive to and in touch with feelings, but the feelings they tend to be sensitive to and in touch with are their own.

... the amount of maintenance involving hair is genuinely overwhelming. Sometimes I think that not having to worry about your hair anymore is the secret upside of death.

Above all, be the heroine of your life, not the victim.

QUOTES SEEN ON TODO INSTITUTE WEB PAGE

Perhaps the earth can teach us, as when everything seems dead in winter and later proves to be alive.

– Pablo Neruda

Many people are alive but don't touch the miracle of being alive.

-- Thich Nhat Hanh

You are perfect just as you are. And you could use a little improvement.

– Suzuki Roshi

A Newsletter Apology from Rev. Koyo

The mailing list for the previous newsletter (Autumn issue) was an outdated version. So, sorry if you didn't receive the last newsletter. Adrienne, who is the main newsletter editor, had gall bladder surgery so an inexperienced "pinch hitter" (myself) sent the wrong mailing list to the printer by mistake.

Acknowledgements with Gratitude Supporters from Sales and Donations

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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, 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.

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.

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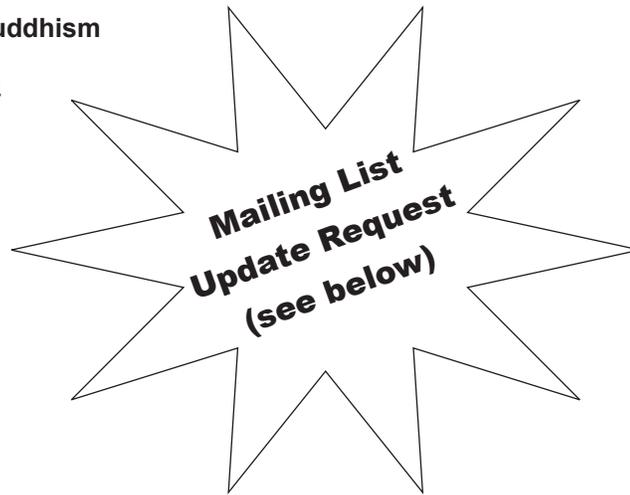
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THE FEELING BUDDHA. by David Brazier. A lucid account of how the Buddha's path of wisdom and loving kindness grew out of the challenges he encountered in life. 207 pages.



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DEC	<p>Theme: Quietness Purpose: Being calm during busy holidays Method: "Ear-Muff Gassho:" When things get hectic, put palms over your ears and listen to your three long exhales. Smile and go back to the party!</p>
JAN	<p>Theme: Welcoming Attitude Purpose: Motivation for fresh plans during the coming year Method: "Open-Arm Gassho:" Starting from Gassho position, slowly move arms out to sides with palms up; tilt head back slightly. Take three breaths and on last exhale, bring hands together in Gassho. Smile and say "Yes!"</p>
FEB	<p>Theme: Loving Empathy Purpose: Feel closer when thinking of significant others Method: "Mental-Hug Gassho:" With arms out to the sides, bring arms forward to form a circular hugging position. Hold position and imagine you are hugging (1) a special deceased teacher-like person, especially on Nirvana Day; and/or (2) a special loved one you can't be with at the moment -- especially on Valentine's Day. End with Gassho -- two hands coming together in Oneness.</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 email us at brightdawn@kubose.com or indicate below and send to: Bright Dawn Center, 28372 Margaret Road, Coarsegold, CA 93614

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