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# O NENESS

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Quarterly Newsletter of the Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose Dharma Legacy

Vol. 2 No. 4

Winter 1998

## IS YOUR SWITCH ON?

By Ven. Gyomay M. Kubose

When the switch is on, current flows; it lights up a room or turns a motor. No matter how good the motor may be and how large a lamp may be, unless the switch is on, the devices are useless. They are lifeless.

Air is filled with sound waves of good lectures, music and pictures, but unless you have a receiving set, you do not receive them. Even though you have a perfect radio and television set, unless you turn on the switch nothing happens. There is no music and no picture. Turning on the switch is very important. So in life, to turn on the switch in one's own life is essential for a worthwhile and truly joyous life.

We want to live and not merely exist. To live means a meaningful, worthwhile and joyous life and not just physically existing. We eat, sleep and work, but unless we turn the switch on in our lives, we will merely be existing and just moving about. Work and moving about are two different things. When one works, he has a purpose or meaning in what he is doing; so he puts his life into it.

Therefore, every work is an accomplishment, a fulfillment, and it is a joy. However, on the contrary, if one works without a purpose or willingness, his work is not work. It is lifeless and it amounts to just moving about.

A wire with current is called a live wire. Many so-called poems are mere words which are beautifully arranged, but some true poems have life in them. They are living and touch the hearts of people. This is true in calligraphy, paintings, and also in meetings and gatherings. Some meetings are said to be dead because nothing interesting is being discussed and there is no vital concern about life.

When one falls in love, life takes on a new meaning. His whole life becomes alive; in fact, the whole world becomes alive. It is the same when one discovers himself; that is to say, when he finds what he really wants to do or discovers something for which he wants to dedicate his life. Then his life has some meaning and becomes very much alive.

When we start to see light, the whole world becomes bright and the light shines upon us. Each day is not mere passing of another day, but is significant and meaningful, a most worthy and reverent day. It is a day of accomplishment and thankfulness.

### *Coming Events*

- ❖ **Annual New Year's Eve party** on December 31. Everyone is invited. See announcement on page 3.
- ❖ **Ti Sarana (Three Treasures) Confirmation Ceremony** is open to all persons who wish to confirm their religious identity as Buddhists and to receive a Buddhist name.  
You can request a brochure that gives further information from the Book Information / Order Form in this issue.
- ❖ **River of Fire / River of Water**, a new book by Taitetsu Unno. A book review and discussion class are planned for Spring, 1999. Details to come in next issue.

# President's Message

by Rev. Koyo S. Kubose

When I was studying in Japan during the 1970's I learned a phrase, "kuruma kotoba." The word "kotoba" means words; "kuruma" currently means automobile but its original meaning had to do with wheel, roundness, or the quality of "turning." In a spiritual context, "kuruma kotoba" refers to "turning words;" i.e. a phrase that could turn one's life around. The phrase summarized or triggered a powerful spiritual experience.

The past few months I made several out-of-town trips to give Dharma talks and/or represent the Legacy. On such trips I always consider myself as going on my own spiritual retreat. I prime myself to be open for new experiences. Through a kind of heightened mental readiness or expectancy, I usually receive some kind of teaching, and it's often from an unexpected source. I call this readiness as a turning on of an inner "switch." A person can "find" his or her switch by practicing self-introspection and awareness in one's present surroundings. The more the switch is "turned on," the longer it stays on by itself— and with continued usage, it develops greater power or sensitivity.

I practiced turning on my switch

while on trips during July to the Steveston Buddhist Temple in British Columbia, Canada; and to the Florin, Fowler, Palo Alto, and Sacramento Buddhist Temples in California. Over the Labor Day week-end I was at the Eastern Buddhist League Convention in Washington, D.C. In September I also joined in celebrating New York Buddhist Temple's 60th Anniversary in New York City. During October I attended a Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue Retreat at Serra Center in Malibu, California; and gave a Oneness Seminar at the Tacoma Buddhist Temple in Tacoma, Washington. I attended Ekoji Buddhist Temple's Dedication Service in Fairfax Station, Virginia in early November.

What a lot of traveling around! Yet, it is always a joy to share the Dharma teachings with others— and I always feel I receive more than whatever I might be able to give. On each of these trips I received/discovered "turning words," which name and describe teachings that I experienced. The experiences caught my attention and "turned my head." I hope to write about these experiences in future issues of this Oneness newsletter.

However, it should be emphasized that "kuruma kotoba" or "turning words" arise only out of direct personal experience; their full impact is reserved for the experiencing individual. Better than vicariously enjoying someone else's turning words, you should turn on your own awareness switch. You should ask yourself every day, "Is my switch on?" If you do this, every day is a spiritual retreat and any given moment can present a glimpse of the Dharma teachings. Such Dharma glimpses will become longer glances, which in turn can lead to turn-your-head stares at unexpected insights.

You should label or describe your "Dharma Glimpse" with a short phrase that summarizes your experience. This phrase will help crystallize your insight and make it easier to integrate that experience with later ones. The phrase can be like a code or handle that makes it easy to access or get hold of what you experienced, For example, "Dead Squirrel" could be the code phrase for the "Dharma Glimpse" written by Adrienne Kubose in this issue (see p. 5).

So, turn your switch on, and share your Dharma Glimpses and Turning Words with us.

✿ Editor of this issue  
✿ Kanon Kubose  
✿ Editor-In-Chief  
✿ Rev. Koyo S. Kubose  
✿ Managing Editor  
✿ Adrienne Kubose

## Oneness Newsletter Winter 1998

Please send:  
Dharma Glimpses ❖ Poems ❖ Reader Replies  
Spring issue deadline: January 31

✿ 8334 Harding Avenue ✿  
✿ Skokie, Illinois 60076 ✿  
✿ Phone (847) 677-8211 ✿  
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✿ www.brightdawn.org ✿



# Reader Replies

Dear Sensei:

Want to hear a joke?

What do Japanese cannibals eat? (answer: ramen)

What kind of pants do Japanese wear? (answer: nihonjin's)

J.K. (OR) (10 years old)

Dear Sensei:

## Glorious Irony

Fertilize ... then cut its growth

Vitamize ... then exercise to slenderize

Educate ... then yield to forgetfulness

Travel ... then discover your home

Accumulate ... then leave empty handed

G.D.I. (IL)

Dear Kubose Gyomay Sensei:

I just finished reading your book, "The Center Within" and was deeply moved. I resonated with your words like grass in the wind. I would like to read more. . . (After ordering more books, the writer concludes:) Once again, I am grateful for your birth and long life.

J.S.G. (PA)



## Seasonings



*sayings to add a little flavor to life*

Worry pulls tomorrow's cloud  
over today's sunshine.

What appears to be the end,  
may really be a new beginning.

There is no such thing as darkness;  
only a failure to see.

# NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY



An open invitation is extended to Oneness newsletter readers to join in our annual New Year's Eve gathering on December 31. One highlight is a hot sake toast at midnight led by the Ven. Gyomay Kubose. Another highlight is everyone takes turns striking a bell for a total of 108 times. This New Year's Eve activity is a traditional Japanese Buddhist ritual that symbolizes getting rid of the 108 "bonno" or human "poisons" such as anger, greed, ignorance, envy, hatred, arrogance, etc.

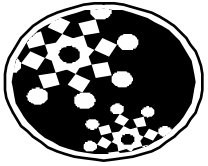
Festivities begin from 8:30 p.m. at Rev. Koyo and Adrienne Kubose's home: 8334 Harding, Skokie, Illinois. Harding Ave. is one block east of Crawford, and 8334 is 1/2 Block south of Main St. In addition to street parking, there's a parking lot on the NW corner of Harding & Main.

Please RSVP by December 28, 1998. Call (847) 677-8211 and let us know what kind of pot-luck dish you'll be bringing.

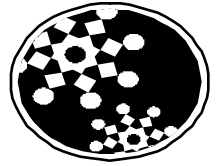
**ATTENTION:** If you wish to attend, we ask that you bring the following two written "admission tickets:"

(1) A written "Dharma Glimpse" that describes one of your learning experiences during 1998 (see the "Dharma Glimpse" article on p. 5 as an example). Write about a teaching you received in 1998. Everyone's Dharma glimpses will be collected and made available for others to read during the evening. Use a code name if you wish to remain anonymous.

(2) On a separate sheet of paper from your Dharma Glimpse, write down one of your bonno's that you want to get rid of for 1999. This could be a bad habit, attitude, grudge, etc. You don't have to make this public if you don't want to. We will have a "Bonno Burning" where you throw your bonno paper into the fireplace as a statement of your wish to get rid of that bonno.



# Views of Winter



Haiku poems and commentary are from "Haiku, Volume 4, Autumn-Winter" by R.H. Blyth; Hokuseido Press, 1952.

*The first frost:  
Fine morning weather,  
How the rice-water tastes!* Chora

The weather has got suddenly colder. This morning, frost lies under a blue sky. The water in which the rice has been boiled, tasteless for a long time, is now delicious to sip. Where is the poetry in this? The poet felt there was something significant in it. The rice-water tastes different from before. Is there some change in himself or in the rice-water? The answer is yes. Scientifically speaking, he has changed. Poetically speaking, what he eats has changed, for this morning he is tasting the blue sky and the white hoar-frost.

*To be rained upon by the winter rain,  
And with no umbrella,  
Well, well!* Basho

The meek shall inherit the earth. God is not a respecter of persons. He maketh his rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust. Man has dignity before men, but none before Nature. To describe the above verse as a religious poem may well seem to some an absurdity, and yet it is such. There is no ecstasy, no lofty flights of the imagination; it is life lived at its common level, the will of God accepted and cheerfully fulfilled.

*Standing in the cold rain,  
For others' sake,  
A Buddha statue!* Issa

It is raining— winter rain— but Issa does not pass the wayside shrine without bowing his head. The

verse expresses his state of mind as he stands there, in this desolate place, with bent head and clasped hands. He feels as one (for one they really are) his own poverty and gratitude, the misery and greatness of man, the suffering and the compassion of Buddha. And we take all this from Issa as we would from no one else, because we know he is fully aware that it is only a bit of stone before which he feels this profound emotion.

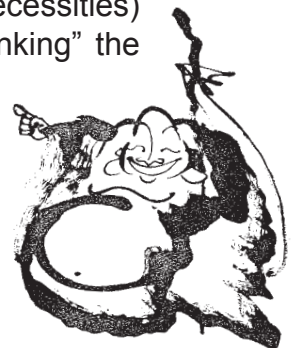
*Should I perish  
On this snowy moor, I also  
Shall become a snow-Buddha.* Chosui

A snow-Buddha is a snowman, in Japan, usually an effigy of Daruma. The poet says that if he freezes to death on this vast plain on which the snow is falling, he will become a Buddha. This verse is partly humorous, but partly serious. He has grasped his fate with a strong hand, and in so far as he does this, he has attained Buddhahood.

*The Buddha on the moor,  
From the end of his nose  
Hangs an icicle.* Issa

We see here the difference between Christianity and Buddhism, or rather, between the English and the Japanese, in their concept of nature, of religion, and of the uses (and necessities) of humor. Issa is not "debunking" the Buddha; he is just telling the whole truth, not the romantic part only. To the icicle, all men are the same.

"Nature, with equal mind,  
sees all her sons at play."



The Rev. Gyomay Kubose Dharma Legacy is an American Buddhist organization established to perpetuate and develop Rev. Gyomay Kubose's non-dualistic approach to Buddhism.

# Dharma Glimpses

I was walking to the garage one morning. It was early, the sun was just coming out. I saw a dead squirrel next to the garage door. Oh no! Our dog must have killed a squirrel. He's been chasing the squirrels for a long time. Poor squirrel.

I approached the squirrel and suddenly realized that it wasn't a dead squirrel at all but just a large dried up leaf. I was so chagrined—blaming the dog for something he didn't do, that didn't even happen!

My eyesight is not what it used to be but I still mistakenly trust it. Do I also mistakenly trust my own interpretations of events or my impressions of others?

Later I was at a bookstore looking at calendars. I was struck by a quote from "The Road Less Traveled" calendar: "To develop a broader vision we must be willing to forsake, to kill, our narrower vision."

In the short run it is more comfortable not to do this — to stay where we are, to keep using the same microcosmic map, to avoid suffering the death of cherished notions. The road of spiritual growth, however, lies in the opposite direction. We begin by distrusting what we already believe, by actively seeking the threatening and unfamiliar, by deliberately challenging the validity of what we have previously been taught and hold dear."

I am filled with gratitude for this glimpse of the Dharma. It is said that the Dharma is all around us— if only we were awake to see it! Sometimes we are awake for an instant and receive glimpses of the Dharma. Almost immediately the impact of the experience is gone— but we note the teaching and go on. Let's try to remember these Dharma glimpses and share them. Doing this can help us be more aware of the Dharma teachings in our everyday lives. To facilitate this awareness, we would like to start "Dharma Glimpses" as a new feature in this Oneness newsletter. We would be glad to receive your Dharma Glimpses for publication.

Adrienne Kubose, Managing Editor

## Two Smiling Monks

At a family gathering in Rev. Koyo and Adrienne Kubose's home this past summer, our matriarch Minnie Kubose saw this picture of the Ven. Gyomay Kubose and Rev. Koyo Kubose and she playfully remarked, "Two smiling monks... what are they smiling about?" Then she added, "Nice picture, why don't you put it in the next Oneness newsletter."

The picture was taken after Sunday Service on June 21, 1998 in the foyer of the Buddhist Temple of Chicago which Ven. Gyomay Kubose founded 54 years ago. He celebrated his 93rd birthday on June 21, 1998. What made it even more memorable was that this was the week-end after the Chicago Bulls had won their 6th NBA Championship— and with no advance



What are they smiling about?

notice, Bulls coach Phil Jackson attended the Temple's service on that Sunday. When Rev. Koyo introduced his father, the Ven. Gyomay Kubose, to Phil Jackson, the coach said, "Is he the author of 'Everyday Suchness?' I have that book."

# Daruma Santa

by Rev. Koyo S. Kubose

Bodhidharma (Bodaidaruma), popularly known as Ta-mo (Daruma), was an Indian monk who brought the discipline of meditation to China and is considered to be the founder of Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism. He was the third son of the king of Koshi, a country in South India. According to tradition, he came to China in 520, when he was more than sixty years of age, and practiced meditation with his face to the wall for nine years at Shao-lin-ssu (Shorin-ji) of Sung-shan (Suzan) mountain.

Legend has it that Bodhidharma sewed his eyelids open so he would not fall asleep while meditating— and that he meditated so long that his arms and legs fell off. This legend is the origin of the Daruma doll in Japanese culture. The Daruma doll is a bright red, pear-shaped doll and the bottom is weighted so that if tipped, it rights itself. There is a Japanese saying, “Seven times down; eight times up.” The Daruma doll is a symbol of resilience telling us that no matter how many times life’s difficulties may knock us over, we can always right ourselves.

In a spiritual context, it could be said that Eastern meditation establishes a heavy Dharma weight in one’s gut (*hara*), making for a stable spiritual life. Whereas in the West, a premium is put on the head or intellect. In effect, the pear-shaped doll is placed

upside down, resulting in an unstable, top-heavy doll. The stability of one’s spiritual life can sometimes be sabotaged by too much thinking.

The Daruma doll is a popular symbol of good fortune that can be seen in Japanese restaurants and gift shops. I would like to make an association of the red, squat Daruma doll with the popular image of Santa Claus. In addition to Santa also being portly and dressed all in red, Santa is always saying, “Ho! Ho! Ho!” Did you know that in Japanese, the Chinese written character for Dharma is pronounced “Ho”? In fact, when Japanese Zen monks do their spiritual practice of begging (*takuhatsu*), they walk the neighborhood streets chanting “Ho...”

So, during the winter holiday season, whenever you see Santa and hear him saying “Ho! Ho! Ho!”— we Buddhists can imagine he is proclaiming the good news of the Dharma! Isn’t this great! Let’s keep our sense of humor. The Dharma is fundamentally very down to earth. Although Buddhists can usually be categorized into either the Hinayana or Mahayana schools, I like to consider Daruma Santa as belonging to the Ha-Ha Yana school. I wish all of you a very Happy Holiday Season!

**Komical Karma**

**Komical Karma**

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I would like to make a contribution ( tax deductible ) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Send me the TiSarana Confirmation Ceremony Brochure  
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I would like to order the books marked below

Title	QTY	Price	Total
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### Books by Rev. Gyomay M. 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 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, the Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path, problems in terminology and misunderstandings common to Westerners. 29 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.

**THE FUNDAMENTAL SPIRIT OF BUDDHISM** by Haya Akegarasu (Rev. G.M. Kubose's teacher). Translated from Japanese by Rev. Kubose; gives an idea of Rev. Akegarasu's life (1877-1954) and teachings. 87 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. 270 pages.

## Acknowledgements with Gratitude Supporters from Books and General Donations

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# Kubose Dharma Legacy

## Oneness Newsletter

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YES YES YES YES YES <b>Your Everyday Spirituality</b>	
<b>DEC</b>	<b>Theme:</b> Daruma Santa (see article on p. 6) <b>Purpose:</b> To increase spirituality during the winter holidays. <b>Method:</b> Whenever hearing holiday music or seeing holiday decorations, tighten your stomach muscles (just for the exercise), rub your belly and say, "Ho, Ho, Ho!" ("Ho" means Dharma in Japanese/Chinese.) Then relax your stomach and smile.
<b>JAN</b>	<b>Theme:</b> New Beginnings <b>Purpose:</b> To cultivate awareness of each day as a new day <b>Method:</b> Do "Morning Gassho" while preparing for your day in the bathroom: face east and greet the day with hands together; recite some sacred words or your own mindfulness phrase; such as, "Respectful to all; grateful for everything."
<b>FEB</b>	<b>Theme:</b> Sangha (group) Unity <b>Purpose:</b> To promote unity at a family or other social gathering. <b>Method:</b> Do "Circle Gassho:" everyone locks arms together in a circle and each individual puts his or her hands together palm to palm. Somebody says something appropriate, and then all bow together.