
O N E N E S S

Quarterly Newsletter of BRIGHT DAWN: Institute for American Buddhism

Vol. 11 No. 2 Summer 2007

THIS IS SO, THIS IS SO

by Rev. Koyo Kubose

One fortunate aspect of being a minister is that I receive teachings when conducting services because family members sometimes share their insights about life. Here is a recent experience I had while conducting a memorial service. As you read about the teaching involved, I hope you can take it to heart and somehow adapt it for use in your own life.

I conducted a memorial service of J.H.'s mother-in-law at the family's home in Oak Park. J.H. is the Director of the Counseling Center at the University of Illinois Circle Campus. After the service we chatted in the living room because there was some time before leaving to have dinner together at a local Japanese restaurant.

J.H. mentioned that he played "speed golf" which is where after you hit the ball, you run to the ball instead of sauntering down the fairway or riding in a cart. In describing speed golf, J.H. emphasized that although one moves quickly, there is no feeling of being rushed. In fact, there is a smooth meditative flow to the whole process. There is a dynamic moving from moment to moment, without a lot of mental deliberation.

The way golf is typically played, one stands and watches the ball after hitting it. Often the ball is watched until it has



stopped rolling, with the usual accompanying thoughts like, "What happened?" "What did I do wrong?!" or "Oh, s__t!" Of course, occasionally one smiles and basks in the glory of a good shot.

After hitting the ball in speed golf, good or bad, you just go! You start moving and go where the ball is going. The shot is what it is; the ball is going where it is going. The ball has been hit. No amount of worrying, complaining or cussing will change what is. Reality. This is so. J.H. said that sometimes as he is running he finds himself saying, "This is so, this is so." This phrase became J.H.'s personal mantra and he has found that it helps him in many different aspects of his life.

J.H. said that because he is in the first year at his new job position, things can get quite stressful; that is, having to learn new things, making important decisions, etc. He has also found his mantra of "This is so" helpful in his work situation. He handles the many difficult decisions he has to make by assessing the pro's and con's, and then making the best decision he can. It is easy to second-guess oneself and to start agonizing over a decision. Instead, J.H. tells himself that once the decision has been made, it's over; it's done. It's "This is so." You don't have to keep analyzing it over and over. You go with the decision that has been made and you move on.

Thank you, J.H., for this teaching of "This is so." It is a good personal example of developing a spiritual life

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attitude. I am reminded of one of Rev. Gyomay Kubose's favorite expressions, "Accept/Transcend." It is not easy to accept things when events don't turn out like one expects or desires. Life is full of set-backs and unforeseen outcomes. An important aspect of spiritual maturity is being able to accept whatever has happened and to move on. In Buddhism one does not get involved in questioning or blaming "God" when unwarranted bad things happen. Neither do we need to resort to any kind of superstitious thinking. Instead, we know that things happen because of causes and conditions. Despite one's best intentions and efforts, we cannot control all of what occurs in life. We may not be able to completely understand why something has happened but that is no reason to get stuck there. It is reality. It is so. By accepting what is, one does not get fixated or attached to what has happened. It is through complete acceptance that one effectively transcends past unfortunate events and is able to function creatively in the present moment.

This kind of acceptance which could be called "spiritual" acceptance, does not involve a passive, resigned or defeated attitude. It is actually a very positive attitude. It is an expression of the great teaching in Buddhism called "Non-Attachment." The phrase "non attachment" does not mean "detachment." It does not mean one does not care about what happens. Of course not! The teaching is life affirming. We are constantly experiencing, learning and moving on. This is the reality of life. The reality of life is a moving, dynamic flow. One's individual life also needs to be dynamically moving. One does not have to become a "victim" by having an attachment type of attitude that seeks to fix judgmental blame in trying to explain what has happened in the past. Instead, one can say "This is so" and move on. Accept/Transcend. There is both wisdom and courage in living this kind of life.

Oneness Newsletter Summer 2007

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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.

Reader Reply

I attended a first year memorial service for an elderly Japanese woman, T.F., held at the local funeral home. Her picture was on a small table in front, and an evergreen sprig decorated the picture frame. In his Dharma talk, Rev. Koyo explained that he put that evergreen sprig there because he felt it represented the way T.F. lived her life—"green" meaning fresh, open. In Buddhism this could be called "Beginner's Mind." Rev. Koyo said he felt that green should be the Buddhist color instead of the traditional yellow. He also went on to mention that living a "*shikata ga nai*" life also reflected Green Buddhism.

Immediately, T.F.'s son who was sitting in the front row said loudly, "*Shikata ga nai* is the beginning of spiritual awakening."

My mind said, "YES." I need to not just understand the meaning but to INTERNALIZE living a *shikata ga nai* life.

I don't think there is an adequate English translation for *shikata ga nai*. It's commonly translated "can't be helped." In our American culture, this translation gives *shikata ga nai* a negative connotation—like giving up. But *shikata ga nai* is wiser than that. It's like understanding when something is out of your hands or you can do no more and then moving on, perhaps find a different way. So YES, when you realize/internalize the teaching of *shikata ga nai*, your life opens up and you can move on.

A.I.K. (Chicago)

American Buddhist Services

The Heartland Sangha holds 11 A.M. services on the first and third Saturdays of every month at Lake Street Church, 607 Lake Street, Evanston (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 or flowers 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. As a regular speaker, Rev. Koyo Kubose's Dharma Talks are always lively and thought provoking. For more information, call Heartland Sangha President Asayo Horibe at (847) 869-5806.

MINDFULNESS BELL

Traditionally, every Japanese home had a home altar or an *obutsudan*. This custom was brought to America by the first generation of Japanese immigrants. By the time of the third generation of Japanese Americans, the custom of having a home altar was not so prevalent. The custom faded even more with the fourth and current fifth generation because of increasing assimilation into American culture and widespread inter-marriage.

There was much to be said for having a home altar. It was a way to bring spirituality into one's home and everyday life. One could light a candle and put fresh flowers at the altar. Typically, photographs of past loved ones also were put at the altar. Family members offered incense, put *ojuzu* beads around their hands and bowed in *Gassho*. Thus, one paid honor to and expressed gratitude for life's interdependency. A small brass bell sitting on a cushion was another staple of home altars. When the bell was struck with a wooden striker, the resulting sound reverberated for a long time. A deep calm and quietness would immediately pervade the room and inside each person.

We at the Bright Dawn Institute for American Buddhism have encouraged the making of a SPOT (Special Place of Tranquility) in every home. One could put whatever religious items one wishes there but one could also have a "generic" SPOT with just a candle, flowers and a bell; perhaps customizing the Spot with items of special personal meaning. Such a SPOT can be used in a variety of ways. One's spirituality is enhanced by the presence of a designated physical space in one's home. Just the simple periodic ritual of sitting quietly and listening to the sound of a bell can foster the development of a needed spiritual attitude in one's life.

Over time, repeated hearing of that special sound of the bell somehow helps to develop a calm center to anchor oneself in the midst of the sometimes hectic pace of modern life. The habitual listening to that special sound also seems to ground oneself with a broad perspective in which to view life's happenings. The sound can acquire the power to provide solace in times of emotional crises too.

Every home should have such a bell. Everyone should develop the habit of listening to the sound of the bell. We encourage everyone to have such a bell. This is why we offer such bells through our Sangha Store. We offer this commercial "pitch" at the risk of the cynical readers smiling with a knowing smirk. Be that as it may, go beyond it and buy a bell anyway.



Here's the "pitch." The brass bell we stock is 2 3/4 inches in diameter, and comes with a cushion and wooden striker. The set sells for \$32.95. The value for the price is better than anything we have seen through exploring on the internet. Here is an added incentive (big smile!) to not put it off but to act promptly: For as long as our limited supply lasts, with each bell we will include a wooden stand with a groove cut on the top that holds a little sign with the words:

*Listening to the bell...
Brings me back to my true self.
Breathing in gently; I exhale a smile.*

The stained and varnished wooden stands are made and donated by a local Sangha member. The wording on the sign is sprayed with a clear fixative sealer.

The total cost for everything is \$37.55 which includes \$4.60 for shipping (new postal rates!). Please make your check out to: **Bright Dawn Institute** and mail to: 8334 Harding Avenue, Skokie, IL 60076.

TREE-PLANTING DHARMA GLIMPSE

Janet Lipner shared a Dharma Glimpse from when she took Tree Care Training. After getting certified, she helped plant trees. She mentioned all the factors that will help a tree grow: depth and circumference of the hole, soil, and water.

Then she mentioned that however you plant the tree, the TREE has to deal with whatever condition it was planted in.

"RIGHT ON!" flashed in my mind. The tree doesn't think, "I should have been planted in a better way; now I can't grow well." The tree does its best with what it gets.

Too often we humans get so focused on how we were dealt a lousy hand in life and use that as an excuse not to grow well. Thinking like this adds that much more to all the difficulties life can put us through. Sometimes we think so much about all the lousy things that happened to us and caused our failures, we can hardly function at all. If we just stop this and just LIVE, our lives may become much lighter.

AKK

HAVE A BUDDHA-FULL DAY!

By Adrienne Kubose

Rev. Koyo and I went for breakfast on the Sunday of this past Memorial Day weekend, making the two-hour drive up to the Bright Dawn Home Spread in Plymouth, Wisconsin, where the Heartland Sangha was having their Spring Retreat. The attendees already had enjoyed a full weekend of meditation, retreat activities, and the shared fellowship of eating, working, and laughing together.

Before breakfast, Richard Zenyo Brandon led a short meditation session. Then he gave a nice Dharma Talk. He told of his experience a few weeks ago, when a group of mothers and their children came into a restaurant where he was having his morning coffee. Everyone in the group was enjoying themselves so much. Each child, each person was beautiful. It was a beautiful scene. Richard began thinking about the meaning of the word “beautiful.” To him, it seemed that an “awakening” spirit had pervaded the atmosphere of the restaurant. He thought “beautiful” could also mean “Buddha-Full.” So, “Have a beautiful day” means “Have a Buddha-Full Day.” That is, have a day full of awakening. “You are beautiful” means “You are Buddha-Full.” That is, you are a Buddha, or a potential Buddha, full of awakening. After all, the word “Buddha” means the “Awakened One.”

In Buddhism, the spirit of awakening is held in the highest esteem. In human affairs, the love relationship between two people, especially between a mother and child, is so beautiful. Thus, as Richard saw the mothers and their young children interacting, he thought of the song, “You are so beautiful to me.” The refrain stuck in his mind all day. Then the phrase transformed itself into “You are so Buddha-Full to me.”

At a recent seminar that Richard led at the Midwest Buddhist Temple, one of the things he did was to have the group sing that phrase as they stood in a circle. Looking at each other, they sang and repeated the line “You are so Buddha-Full to me” louder and louder until it was a shout. Then the line was repeated softer and softer, until it ended as a gentle whisper. Buddha-Full!

So at our retreat in Wisconsin, we stood in a circle and did the same thing — singing Buddha-Fully. Everybody laughed when Richard said that the phrase “Have a Buddha-Full Day” would make a great T-shirt. On that note, we moved to the dining room for breakfast. Sharing a meal, especially at a retreat, is always special because there is such a spirit of cooperation. Everyone is involved in the meal preparation, enjoying the meal-time conversation, and then joyfully helping with the clean-up afterwards.



After breakfast, we had another short period of meditation. We heard the sweet Dharma sounds of the breeze in the trees and the chirping of the birds. Rev. Koyo gave a short Dharma talk on the theme of the retreat, “Spiritual Guides in Disguise.” Then we moved outside and again stood in a circle, each person having a rock in their hands. As is done at every retreat held here, the participants were instructed to find a rock which they would later place in a spiritual rock garden which is located in a small grove of trees outside the meditation room. After each person had placed their rock, we sang the song “Circles” by Harry Chapin. We ended with a Circle Gassho, where each person does Gassho but with their arms intertwined with the arms of the persons standing next to them.

Heartland Sangha also holds an annual Fall retreat at the Bright Dawn Home Spread, which is open from May through October. Please remember that this retreat center is available for group events or for individuals looking just to get away and refresh themselves. Our Lay Ministry Induction Ceremony will be held here next Spring in 2008.

LAY STUDY PROGRAM

Applications are still being accepted for our two-year Lay Ministry Program. This is a long-distance (non-residential) program that can be done from home. There is no tuition fee. However, a serious time commitment is required. The course work consists of writing reports and discussing assigned readings in small group weekly audio conferences. Email access is also necessary.

The Application Deadline is the end of July for the Fall 2007 term which begins this September. An Application Form and more detailed descriptive information about the Program can be provided. Interested persons should apply ASAP. If the application deadline is missed, you’ll have to wait a whole year until the Fall of 2008!

WHERE IS YOUR STONE?

We at the Bright Dawn Institute recently did a telephone Ti-Sarana ceremony for a woman (C.K.) in North Carolina. One of the spiritual resources we offer is a Ti Sarana (Three Treasures) Buddhist Confirmation Ceremony. We offer this ceremony by telephone for out of state people. There are no formal prerequisites required. The ceremony is considered a broad gate for anyone who wishes to confirm his or her religious identity. Our ceremony does not necessarily imply that one becomes a follower of a particular sectarian approach and is not about an institutional standard but is a tool for deepening individual spirituality.

We mailed C.K. a TiSarana certificate along with a few past issues of our Oneness newsletter. One of the issues had the article “Dharma Rocks” which described how we have used small stones as a mindfulness tool in various ways. C.K. wrote back telling how she has been using stones as a mindfulness tool but in a different kind of way. Her usage involves the meaning of throwing stones at people. Indeed, casting or throwing stones is an ancient metaphor for judging and blaming other people. The “stones” we throw are usually such things as, words said in anger or impatience, gossip about people, and derogatory name calling.

Words have weight—and have great potential to heal or hurt. To respect the tremendous power of speech, we need to take time to center ourselves before speaking in a reactive manner. A important part of compassion is being aware of how we use words. Such awareness means to deepen our relationship to words so that our speech comes from actually feeling or being what we are saying. This is the way we give our words integrity.

One of our favorite sayings is “Keep Going” and this includes how a teaching expands and can be applied in new ways. This is why we liked how C.K. was using stones. All of us should be inspired by how others are applying teachings in their spiritual journeys. Here is an excerpt from C.K.’s letter to us:

I received your package today in the mail and I'm quite thrilled! The book and articles have quickly found a place in my heart. The first thing that I opened to was the article entitled “Dharma Rocks.” How serendipitous! For a different newsletter, I recently wrote an article which I called “Stones.” Your article and mine had different themes but both talked of utilizing stones. The article I wrote told about how I carry a stone in my pocket to remind myself to maintain

mindfulness and compassion. I liken suffering to stones that we are burdened under the weight of, and how sometimes we try to get rid of our stones by casting them at others. However, thrown stones rather than relieving suffering only multiply and create more suffering.

When stones are thrown at us, if we can avoid throwing stones back and instead, deal with the situation compassionately, this can help others learn to put their stones down. We all carry our own stones and can learn to put them down. The actual stone that I carry helps me in moments that I feel I may be acting judgmentally. I will think to myself, “Okay, Cheryl, where’s your stone? Are you throwing it or are you trying to put it down?” When I feel the bulk of the small stone in my pocket, it becomes a reminder to ask myself, “Where’s your stone?”
C.K. Raleigh, North Carolina.

Editor’s Note: Walking the talk. To learn about C.K.’s Compassion Project, visit her website at www.comfortcompassion.org; and then click on the link “Card Story.”

DRIVE-BY BLESSINGS

By Beverley Manley

Recently I had a chance to extend Metta in a real life situation and found that that is exactly what opens the heart and makes it REAL. I was driving home from a class in the Myers-Briggs Four Spiritualities at my UU Church eighty-two miles away. I pulled in to rest and picnic at Caballo Lake State Park thirty miles from my home in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. However, I was not able to stop and picnic because every campsite was taken. Some families had a little tent for each child, and one family even had a tiny tent for the dog. At some sites there were three generations. Peace and play. Beautiful. So instead of feeling bad that my own plan for picnicking was foiled, I started thinking of a new blessing to wish for each site as I drove by.

“May you renew bonds that need strengthening.” “May you return to daily life refreshed and renewed.” “May you connect to nature and find it to be a source of spiritual food.” “May you breathe deep, and laugh, and let go of anger, anxiety and tension.”

On and on I went. Each “blessing” grew more heart-felt. I felt like hugging those people. Tears filled my eyes. I do not know how drive-by blessings touch those blessed. What I did discover is that all those heart-felt blessings returned to bless me.

Acknowledgements with Gratitude

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Toyoko Hashimoto
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MEMORIAL DONATIONS

Not only is making a memorial donation a way to remember and honor a loved one, but it is a karmic action that fosters awareness of the two main teachings of interdependency and impermanence. Acknowledging one's "roots" also 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 of a worthy organization of one's choice.

LAP-TOP BUDDHA

I saw this Lap-Top Buddha in a store and just had to get it for you. Keep up the good work!

In Gassho, R.T. (Port Ludlow, Washington)

Editor's Note: Thank you! We love the Lap-Top Buddha! We use computers so much now-a-days that it's very appropriate to have the Lap-Top Buddha on top of our computer. It reminds us we can be mindful of the Dharma teachings even in activities involving modern technology. Sometimes when we get frustrated working on the computer, a glance at the Lap-Top Buddha makes us smile. This provides us with a mini-break or refreshing pause that restores our equilibrium so we can resume working in a more relaxed and effective way than before.



“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him to use the Net and he won't bother you for weeks.”

---ZC Speaks

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.

Translations by Rev. Gyomay Kubose

THE FUNDAMENTAL SPIRIT OF BUDDHISM by Haya Akegarasu (Rev. Gyomay Kubose's teacher). Translated by Rev. Kubose, this book gives an idea of Rev. Akegarasu's life (1877-1954) and teachings. 87 pages. (Temporarily out of print)

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.

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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Everyday Suchness		\$12.00	
The Center Within		\$12.00	
The Center Within AudioTapes		\$18.00	
American Buddhism		\$ 5.00	
Tan Butsu Ge		\$ 7.00	
Heart of the Wisdom Sutra		\$ 6.00	
Buddhism: Path of Enlightenment		\$ 5.00	
Buddhist Symbols brochure		\$0.25	
River of Fire, River of Water		\$19.00	
Feelling Buddha		\$15.95	

Shipping - \$2.95 first book and \$0.50 for each additional book

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For questions regarding quantity discounts and shipping, contact Bright Dawn at 847-677-8211 or brightdawn@kubose.com.

Visit our ON-LINE SANGHA STORE at www.brightdawn.org for books and other gift items such as calligraphy by the Venerable Gyomay Kubose of Buddhist sayings mounted on brocade wall holders, mindfulness brass bell sets, ceramic Dharma Wheel incense burners, Oneness T-shirts, wooden Dharma Wheel wall decoration, and Dharma Wheel jewelry such as pendants, pins, and tie tacks.

FREE Spiritual Resource Material is also available at this website such as a free VCR tape loan library of Rev. Koyo Kubose's Dharma talks; a Buddhist Confirmation Ceremony by telephone; Dial-the-Dharma at (847-677-8053) to hear a 1-2 minute taped talk changed daily, available 24/7; plus other helpful resources.



BRIGHT DAWN
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Change Service Requested

YES YES Your Everyday Spirituality YES YES	
JUN	Theme: Accidents in the Kitchen Purpose: What to do when you cut yourself while chopping onions. Method: Gassho to the "Be-Careful Buddha"
JUL	Theme: Patience Purpose: Learn how to slow down when you're in a hurry preparing a meal but you're bleeding all over the onions. Method: Gassho to the "Slow-Down Buddha" and go get a band-aid!
AUG	Theme: Not Taking Things For Granted Purpose: Increase awareness and appreciation since you can only use one hand to wash vegetables because your other hand is bandaged. Method: Do a one-handed Gassho to the "One-Handed Buddha"

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, 8334 Harding, Skokie, IL 60076.

Please add to your mailing list Name: _____

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