



o n e n e s s



TO BE OR NOT TO BE

By Rev.Koyo Kubose

Most of us are familiar with Shakespeare’s famous quote. I never gave it much thought until I came across commentary by Albert Camus, a French existential philosopher. Camus said that Shakespeare got it right with his line, “To be or not to be; that is the question.” In other words, is life worth living or not? More specifically, is my life worth living or should I just commit suicide? Camus states that this question is the most basic philosophical question worth pondering; all else is just verbal word play.

I have been in contact with a student of the Dharma whose article is included in this issue. He had asked me for permission to submit an article regarding the topic of engaged Buddhism. He wanted to admonish serious students of the Dharma to go beyond “using” the Dharma for one’s own comfort or ego needs. With my approval, he wrote and submitted an article; since it was untitled, I have titled the article, “A Jizo Bodhisattva.”

Some background comments about the personal experiences behind this article are necessary to fully appreciate where it is coming from. On second thought, I decided to expand the context to include other persons I knew who had struggled with the existential

question of “To be or not to be.” This is a rather serious topic since the first four individuals I will comment on, all went on to commit suicide. I will then end with background comments to introduce the “Jizo Bodhisavatta” article in this issue.

The first person I want to comment on was a continuing education student in a psychology class I was teaching. She sat in the front row of seats and was a very out-going person. In the middle of the semester I noticed that she was no longer coming to class. I was informed that she had committed suicide. She had had gastric bypass surgery for a weight problem and in a despondent moment took an over dose of pills. She changed her mind and called 911 but it was too late. Since she had been such an out-going person in my psychology class, other students missed her. As I explained her absence to the class, I made a point we should not forget, there are real-life parallels to topics that we cover in class; I then dedicated the rest of the semester to her memory.

The next three persons I came to know because of their interest in Buddhism when I was a Buddhist minister living in the Chicago area. One man was a strong, physically active person who I worked with doing projects around the temple

but then lost contact with, until I got a call that he had shot himself in the emergency parking lot of a local hospital. The second person was an attractive young woman with a vibrant personality but who had to take medication for her bipolar condition. She described her depression episodes as like a dark cloud that just enveloped her. She went missing and later her body was found in Lake Michigan. The third person came from a dysfunctional family but he himself was a quiet, gentle person. After years of emotional struggle, he hung himself in his apartment. For a while he was on life support in a hospital and it was impactful to see the rope marks on his throat. Whenever I remember these people, I deeply feel the reality of life’s difficulties.

The author of a submitted article for this newsletter issue requested to be kept anonymous; let me call him “Stan.” I would like to give some background that will provide

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context for his article. Stan had been a very serious student of Soto Zen; he even went to Japan to train at a major monastery. Later he was part of my father's meditation group in Chicago. It was some years after my father retired from active ministry, that I was asked to officiate the wedding of Stan's son at a local Unitarian Church. A few years after that, one day I got a call from the son that his father had tried to commit suicide. Stan had recovered and was now physically fine but requested that his son call me. Although Stan did not have any kind of Dharma practice in recent years, he wanted to reconnect with the Dharma. It was arranged for Stan to come for weekly visits at my home. Each visit began with Stan prostrating himself in front of me. Although I protested that I was not that kind of teacher, he continued this "old-school" expression of respect. He chose not to say much during his visits, but he listened intently as I rambled about various Dharma teachings.

He had mentioned that among his everyday routine, he enjoyed having a drink. Although he said he did not have a drinking problem and did not drink to the extent that he became impaired, I suggested that he stop drinking. At his next visit, he said, "Sensei, last week what you said was the hardest blow of the keisaku stick I've ever received." The keisaku stick refers to the wooden stick used in the Zen tradition. Stan went on to say that after the last visit he went home, had a lot of drinks, then said to himself, "He's right! I will quit drinking!"

Stan had an affinity for helping the down-trodden and needy, especially children. He expressed his desire of working to help children in need after he retired. As a symbol of this desire, he searched for and found a small Jizo statue that he could carry around with him. In the Japanese culture, Jizo is a Bodhisavatta who looks over and protects children and travelers. On rural roadsides in Japan, it is quite common to see Jizo statues.

Stan, who became a licensed certified pediatric parapsychic, traveled with such organizations as Doctors Without Borders to give aid to victims of natural disasters and warfare. Over the past decade, I have been receiving email correspondence from Stan from remote parts of the world. He was in Nepal, giving aid after their earthquake. Quite often Stan

wrote late at night, exhausted physically and mentally after a long day. He would write, "Sensei, there is so much suffering. Send your students; we need help!" I tried to explain that the lay study program of our Bright Dawn Center did not involve traditional teacher-student relationships where a teacher assumes responsibility over others' spiritual life.

He asked my permission if he could write an article for this newsletter with an appeal, or perhaps an admonition, to all serious students of the Dharma to do something with their spiritual growth and insights. About a month after my approval to do so, I received an email in which Stan said he had just about completed his article when the recent bombing in Syria caused a horrendous humanitarian crisis. We have all seen the now iconic photograph of a wounded child sitting in a chair waiting to be helped.

Stan wrote, "I looked at the babble I had written and realized it was the finger rather than the moon." As he was leaving for Syria, he explained, "So, I provide only this since I cannot do other than what I must do... I cannot sit here and simply cry at the atrocity; I am an old man with few years left so why not give them to those children?" The article he provided is as follows:

"Years, many years ago, my teacher opened my eyes to all the Bodhisattvas around me, whether I liked them or not. My teacher also gave me the option of the Dharma or the bottle.

Like so many of the masters he belittles his role in Dharma Transmission which makes him a true teacher who, whether he likes it or not, transmitted the Dharma.

Dogen Zenji: "To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things." or, some words to that effect. I'm still working on that but I find that I forget myself when I am enveloped and tending to the suffering of others. In their suffering I find no time for myself nor the Dharma quest for the Grail.

I think, maybe, tending to a child with the pains of war, the self-quest diminishes its importance. You know, what I mean? There is no more time for me, me, me the illusion of the self-solipsism. I guess what I am trying to convey is that using the Dharma to prolong self-



NEW

Bright Dawn Center proudly announce books written by our Lay Ministers. Check them out on page 5.

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delusion is self-reinforcing which I had so long blindly embraced.

We each come to the Dharma with differing motivations, in the end are the same motivations still running the Dharma race in our lives? If the Dharma makes you feel special the historical Buddha expounded in contemporary slang, you've stepped off the path and crushed the butterfly. Or, the oft quoted story of two monks: the senior hefts the gal on his back and crosses the stream and sits her down. Later, the younger upbraids the senior to be met with the retort "Are you still carrying her?"

So, are we still carrying ourselves on our backs? Did Issan Dorsey know the way better? If there seems to be an upbraid by me about you, believe me, I am only relating my own burden, perhaps, to be an assistance to you. Even, today, into the theater I carry the small Jizo. So, good we in the Sangha and those much more wise than us outside the Sangha I wish you, with a somewhat paraphrasing of the Irish blessing (after all, we all know the Compassionate Sutra):

*May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind always be at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
and rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May the Dharma be the ship that we cross over. (sic)*



911 DHARMA

By Dharma Dan



Wild fires all around. Prepare to evacuate! What to take? Here at the Bright Dawn Center we have received several fire evacuation alerts this past summer.

Fortunately we later received an "all clear" notice and did not have to actually evacuate the premises. However, these warnings do make the reality and danger of fires impactful to us.

I am reminded of a Dharma Talk given by Rev. Koyo about the seriousness of fire sirens that we hear, and how this can be related to a life teaching. Suppose you are relaxing and watching TV in your living room. You hear the siren of an emergency vehicle but do not get excited because sirens are common in your area of the city. Suppose the sound of the siren approaches, rather than fading away. This registers and you think maybe something has happened in your neighborhood; yet, you are not concerned enough to stop watching TV. Then, suppose you hear the vehicle's siren come down the street you live on. Now you cock your head and pay attention... an emergency right on your own street! THEN, suppose the emergency vehicle stops right in front of your house—with lights flashing and siren wailing? What's going on?! Is MY house on fire?! You jump up and go to the window and then with a pounding heart, open the front door to investigate.

The moral here is we should pay attention to life's Dharma teachings with utmost seriousness. It may be overly dramatic to say it could be a matter of life and death but you know, tomorrow is not guaranteed to anyone. Please appreciate every single day, and every precious moment. There are only two things one need remember in life: "Always be sincere and don't forget to laugh."



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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

BUDDHISM AND POLITICS

By William Toyo Holland

What brought this Dharma Glimpse about is my waking each morning and finding myself in turbulent and unpredictable times. Since it's an election year, there seems to be no way to avoid politics having to read, listen and watch it on a daily basis in this election year. The presidential election scenario is very disturbing, and what is also alarming is the character and intentions of this presidential election.

I would describe myself as an Engaged Buddhist. The concept of Engaged Buddhism, it seems to me, is predicated on the idea of embracing a responsibility we all have to help each other.

For many of us, the effect of Buddhism is to heighten our awareness of the need to infuse our public policy choices with mindfulness and compassion. This is the path we have set out on as Buddhists. It is a task that begins at home, within ourselves and our minds.

What is our role as Buddhists? Buddhism and politics goes back a long way in history. According to an article by Justin Rowan: "In its earliest phases in Japan's history, Buddhism established itself as a political entity which grew to rival the aristocracy and landowners as a unilateral force to be reckoned with.

I became interested in Buddhism not only as a way of life, but because the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path really spoke to me and I think this plays an important role in our political judgement.

As a Buddhist I believe that moral behavior flows naturally from mastering one's ego and desires, and cultivating loving kindness and compassion.

The teaching of Buddhism expressed in the Four Noble Truths is that the stress and unhappiness of life is caused by our desires and ego-clinging and I would think that the path for letting go of desire and ego is the Eightfold Path: ethical conduct through speech, action and livelihood, along with mental discipline. It is up to us to determine how to apply these principles to our lives. This is by far not easy and I'm sure many of us fall short, including myself.

There is an inherent problem of trying to intermingle religion with politics. The basis of religion is morality, purity and faith, while for politics it is power. When religion is used to pander to political whims, it has to forego its high moral ideals.

No political system can safeguard the happiness

and prosperity of its community (Sangha). No political system, no matter how ideal it may appear to be, can bring about peace and happiness as long as the people in the system are dominated by greed, hatred and delusion.

I find it very interesting that more than 2500 years ago, the Buddha suggested rules for good government. In the Jataka known as the Dasa Raja Dharma, the ten rules were:

- be liberal and avoid selfishness
- maintain a high moral character
- be prepared to sacrifice one's own pleasure for the well-being of subjects
- be honest and maintain absolute integrity
- be kind and gentle
- lead a simple life for the subjects to emulate
- be free from hatred of any kind
- exercise non-violence
- practice patience
- respect public opinion so as to promote peace and harmony.

And regarding the behavior of rulers, He advised:

A good ruler should act impartially and should not be biased and discriminate between a particular group of subjects against another.

- A good ruler should not harbor any form of hatred against any of his subjects.
- A good ruler should show no fear whatsoever in the enforcement of the law, if it is justifiable.
- A good ruler must process a clear understanding of the law to be enforced. It should not be enforced just because the ruler has the authority to enforce the law. It must be done in a reasonable manner and with common sense.

Maybe this should be tweeted to our presidential candidates.

However this being said does not mean that a Buddhist cannot or should not get involved in the political process, which is a social reality. Getting involved in the daily living activities of one's community is Power Sangha. Democracy begins with you and me.

To vote is not only a right but a full responsibility as well. It is civic involvement that demands serious thoughts into every single element of the process. Being a part of a democracy takes mindfulness and awareness of one's immediate surroundings and prescribes engaging in action.

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A vision process takes time and takes the entire Buddhist Sangha and community to make it happen. It's rarely for immediate gratification. Involvement and diligence reap success! Loving kindness and compassion is contagious. It is this proactive and engaged Buddhist life that makes our country truly great.

There is no doubt, that Buddhism has an enormous capacity to assist humanity meet the political challenges of today through its non-dogmatic approach, its belief in science, its understanding of inter-relationships, its commitment to a life based on the middle way involving morality, meditation and wisdom, its support of equality and its belief in peace and dialogue between people and their religions.

When the Buddha addressed his disciples at Deer Park, they were told to go out and proclaim the Dharma that is excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle and excellent in the end. He also said something that really struck home with me: "Although there are beings who will understand the Dharma, there are beings with a little dust in their eyes who will be lost through not hearing the Dharma." We can all see that we have a lot of politicians with a little dust in their eyes, who could benefit from hearing the Dharma. I believe we'd all be pleased to see our policymakers become more acquainted with Buddhists principles and practices.

I, for one, one would like to see Dharma practice proliferate as widely as possible and I'd be willing to take my chances with the political outcome.

There are a couple of events that have taken place: The first was the United States House of Representatives sit-in led by Rep. John Lewis, (whom I happened to march with in Selma, during the civil rights movement in the 60's.) who was quoted as saying while literally sitting on the floor of the House: "We have been too quiet for too long." Also joining in was Rep. Hank Johnson who is one of only two Buddhists to serve in the United States Congress. The other is Hawaii's Mazie Hirono, who was raised in the Jodo Shin Tradition. Along with being the first Buddhist in the Senate, she's the first Asian-American female Senator, and the first to have been born in Japan. Also Democrat Tulsi Gabbard, who is the only Hindu ever to be elected to Congress, chose to join the sit-in.

The other event worth mentioning is: The Dalai Lama addressed the State Legislature in Sacramento on

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GLIMPSES OF DHARMA: Teachings from Everyday Life by Sayo Shenpän. Collection of Dharma Talks and teachings from everyday life by the author. Sharing Dharma in a manner everyone can relate to, awakening the reader to a life filled with everyday spiritual teachings. 97 pages. \$5.00, plus shipping/handling.



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June 22. One of the messages delivered by the Dalai Lama: "We may sometimes feel that we can't do much as individuals, but humanity is made up of individuals; we can make a difference. As individuals we can influence our own families. Our families can influence our communities and our communities can influence our nations."

So what does all this mean? We need to follow our path. Be aware of what is happening. Be engaged. Oneness. All of us together can make this world a safer and more compassionate place to live. We are all born with Buddha Nature and we can make it happen!

We live in a time of great confusion and pain. The answer is really simple. I matter, my actions matter, my spiritual path matters. By putting all this together it profoundly affects everyone around me. It made me realize that I needed to focus more on empathy and compassion. It all begins with a cause. Your causes create the effects that shape your future and the future of others.

Yes, you are enough. Yes, you matter. Yes, you should keep going.



TREKKING ON

Dear Sensei,
Yesterday was Star Trek's 50th anniversary! Fifty years of Trekking! The show has been considered a "trailblazer" and the inspiration for so many works of science fiction and even today's technology. This got me thinking about us as Bright Dawn Trailblazers! How we will continue

the voyage and inspire a new generation of seekers! Boldly going beyond the final frontier! It's very exciting!!

Our favorite time of the year is quickly arriving! Soon it will be pumpkin time and apple spices!! We keep going, always following the YO lineage, the bright light of the Sun! May ALL beings awaken the mind of Oneness!

Triple S, Los Angeles

READER WISDOM

I was thinking about the Dharma talk you gave at your brother Don's celebration of life; specifically, the two "I's", interdependence and impermanence, the foundation of our religion. Just a thought, the two eyes allow you to see (C) and the C stands for Compassion. Compassion is our pathway to enlightenment.

RI (CA)

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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

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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.

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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, a 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.

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 ART OF TAKING ACTION by Gregg Krech. Draws on Eastern philosophy, Buddhism, Japanese psychology, Zen, and martial arts to offer an approach to ACTION that goes beyond productivity and time management. 216 pages.

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OCT	Theme: Fire Purpose: Remembering a powerful tool... under control Method: "Fire-Awareness Gassho:" Don't take for granted how you use fire and heat; including such things as stove and heater pilot lights, car spark plugs, camp fires, gas stoves, etc.
NOV	Theme: Water Purpose: Affirming a most important resource Method: "Water-Appreciation Gassho:" Count how many times you use water daily. Don't forget in your car radiator, house A/C, toilet flushing, washing vegetables, etc.

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