



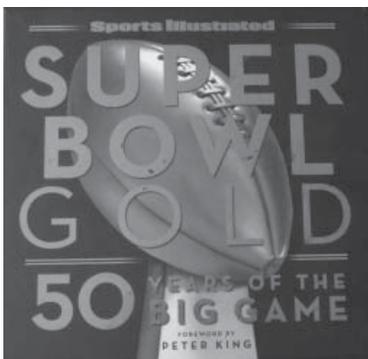
o n e n e s s



GOLD DISCOVERED!

by Rev. Koyo Kubose

I have decided to make “Gold” the guiding theme of my spiritual journey during 2016. Let me describe the various aspects of my “Gold” theme. In February, sporting fans around the world celebrated the 50th Super Bowl. Sports Illustrated put out a special book commemorating this Golden Anniversary of the Super Bowl.



A friend showed me an American Eagle coin, newly minted in 2016, that he had bought as an investment. The coin’s denomination says \$50 but the coin contains one ounce of gold which is currently valued at about \$1,000 an ounce. My imagination told me that any “golden” teachings I received during my “Gold” theme of 2016 would be a good investment for my future spiritual growth.

During our annual Super Bowl get-together, the usual bunch of guys played Hold ‘Em Poker. One of them pulled out fifty one-dollar coins that he had bought at his local

bank. The coins were of the U. S. Presidential Series; one entire roll of coins was of Thomas Jefferson. I recalled that Jefferson organized the Lewis and Clark Expedition. I am a student of the history of our country’s westward expansion. I admire the pioneering spirit and courage of those who went forth into unknown territory. This is a nice metaphor for individual spiritual growth, especially since in Shin Buddhism, the Pure Land is located to the west.

Buddhism in the United States is in its early stages and will surely grow in new pioneering ways. I feel the Bright Dawn Center’s Lay Ministry Program is an innovative approach and that our graduates may go forth to blaze new trails in American Buddhism. This is why our lay ministry resource/support group is named Trailblazers. On our website, one of the lay ministers hung an image of a cowboy hat on the tip of the leaf of our Bright Dawn logo... I love it!



I also have to smile at our annual ritual which started after an officer installation ceremony, when one of them joked that the outgoing officers had to sing “Happy Trails.” It turns out that the lyrics in the second stanza has a nice teaching: “Some trails are happy ones, others are blue; it’s the way you ride the trail that counts!”

The discovery of gold in California is an important part of our country’s history. Highway 49 goes through the heart of the Gold Rush area. BTW: Too bad the 49ers football team wasn’t playing in this year’s Super Bowl. Our Bright Dawn Center is located near the town of Coarsegold which got its name from the discovery of gold nuggets, which is better than fine gold dust. The Coarsegold Chamber of Commerce has a newsletter called the “Nugget.”

I have nice memories of conversations with Adrienne’s mother who lived with us when she was in her 90’s. Every now and then she would ask, “Where is this?” When told it was “Coarsegold,” she always got

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excited and would say, “Is there gold around here?” We would tell her maybe and that she should keep her eyes open. From inside the house, she often looked out a window to view the many trees, rocks and boulders that covered our five-acre property. One of her questions was, “You have a lot of land; do you grow anything?” With her declining short-term memory, she would forget that she asked this question and a few minutes later, would repeat the question. I got tired of telling her about my vegetable garden, so one time I thought I’d be funny and as I pointed out the window, said that I grew rocks. Without missing a beat, she replied, “Very good; you don’t have to fertilize them!” What a solid gold answer! This conversation is one of my treasured memory nuggets.

In our two-year lay ministry program, students write weekly reports on assigned readings. They are encouraged to find a “nugget” teaching of personal relevance that they can share with others in their weekly class discussions. One student, excited by the impact of a particular teaching, exclaimed, “This is more than a nugget; it is a solid gold bar!” Sometimes I tell our students that we are teaching them to be expert “gemologists,” where their trained eye can recognize precious gems even when they look like common rocks and pebbles.

In the Buddhist literature, there is a phrase, “bits of rubble turn into gold.” The eminent Shin Buddhist scholar, Taitetsu Unno, used this phrase in the title of one of his books on Shin Buddhism. He points out that one of the basic tenants in Buddhism is that no aspect of human experience is ever wasted or forgotten because all can be transformed into a source of vibrant life, full of wisdom and compassion. This is implied in the classical statement that summarizes the Buddhist path where “delusion is transformed into enlightenment.” This teaching is boldly stated in Mahayana Buddhism as “Samsara is Nirvana.” Unno mentions that the metaphor of “bits of rubble turn into gold” is from an eighth-century Chinese Pure Land teacher, and the phrase is quoted in the writing of Shinran Shonin.

I am reminded of the story of King Midas who was granted his wish that everything he touched turn into gold. King Midas’ gift turns into a cautionary tale about the consequences of greed; e.g. he cannot

eat anything since his food turns to gold; he hugs his daughter and she turns into gold. Yet, the phrase “Midas Touch” is commonly used to describe a person who through skill and/or luck is successful in most of his endeavors. I’d like to extend the “Midas Touch” to the Buddhist life where a person can find Dharma teachings in any aspect of life, even in the midst of difficulty and suffering. Perhaps the teaching of Right Understanding in the Buddha’s Eightfold Noble Path can be considered the equivalent of the “Midas Touch.”

On a personal note, 2016 has special significance for Adrienne and me as we got married in 1966. On our honeymoon we visited Death Valley. The reason I mention this is because of an article “Super Bloom” that appeared in March 6’s Fresno Bee newspaper. The word “gold” was mentioned in the first sentence, referring to a rare “Super Bloom” of eye-catching wildflower aptly named “Desert Gold.” A stunning “carpet of gold” covered acres of an area called Badwater Basin. Marriage is tough enough without going on a honeymoon to a place called Death Valley, which is the hottest and driest place in North America. Yet, “gold” can be discovered there. As difficult as it may be, I will endeavor to bloom and grow spiritually in rare ways, and thus fulfill my gold theme during 2016. As stated in the article: “Every spring, some wildflowers bloom before it gets scorching hot, but the abundance of flowers this year is extremely unusual. Death Valley’s average annual rainfall is two inches and sometimes, it gets no rain at all. This season, the park saw very rare storms that brought more than three inches of rain in some parts. That was enough to trigger the growth of millions of wildflower seeds that have been dormant, awaiting significant rainfall. No one knows how long seeds can wait for rain, but some flowers blossomed that had never been seen in the park- indicating their seeds had been dormant for many years.”

I have rambled enough. You have seen a glimpse of the assorted potpourri of associations I have around the “gold” theme. After all, 2016 is also an Olympics year; I am going for Gold! This year, I want to pave my spiritual path with gold. And you know what? All of you are my Fort Knox. My greatest treasures come from the relationships with my fellow travelers on the Gold Brick Road of the Dharma!



EVERY DAY IS A GOOD DAY.

By Linda Shoyo

I had an experience about a month ago which showed me in a very concrete way that when I am in the present moment, in the NOW moment, nothing is happening and I am in a state of just beingness -- It is very peaceful.

However, if I'm not peaceful, what is the problem?

Is something or someone out there disturbing my peace of mind? Is it the hot humid weather we get in the Midwest taking away my ability to have a good day? Does an argument with a loved one ruin my day? Can anything in my life ruin my decision to have a good day?

I'm learning that nothing can ruin my decision to have a good day except my thoughts. Here are several examples of this.

My husband has been sober for more than 25 years. He recently spent 10 days in Italy and enjoyed tasting their wines and aperitifs. When he came home, we went out to a Greek restaurant for dinner and he ordered a beer. I started to panic, although I didn't say anything to him. But the thoughts in my mind were saying a lot. The thoughts were trying to scare me and make me believe that now my husband was going to turn into an alcoholic again; what would I do if that happened; I don't want to live with an alcoholic; the voices in my mind went on and on.

In reality, nothing was really happening except the loud thoughts in my mind were robbing me of the peace and joy I had been experiencing at the restaurant with my family.

The fact is: My family and I were having dinner; we were all drinking a beer; I wasn't upset with

anyone else drinking a beer; only with my husband based on a past history. The disturbance was caused by my thoughts that were bringing the past into the present moment.

Another example that comes up demonstrating how our thoughts and beliefs cause all our disturbances is when I imagine a situation that hasn't even happened yet. For example, when I'm planning a visit with family and the visit hasn't even happened but I remember that in the past when we would get together, we would always argue about some stupid thing. All of a sudden I found myself having imaginary conversations in my mind about how I would defend myself if I was judged or criticized. I found I was getting angry just thinking about the possibility and yet nothing was going on in the moment; it was all being played out in my mind.

So what I have been learning is that no circumstance or person can rob me of my peace; nothing outside my mind can really hurt me or upset me in any way. It's only my thoughts about something from the past or an imagined future that can disturb my peace.

Now when I find myself getting riled up; fearful, worried or anxious; I start asking myself; Linda, right now, what is happening and then I start to laugh because I realize nothing is happening except my "stinking" thinking and my Fantasies.

In the NOW, I can be at peace in every moment. It's a decision I could make. Every moment can be a peaceful one; every day is a good day.



Oneness Newsletter Spring 2016

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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

KNOCK ON WOOD

By Dharma Dan



Now that spring has sprung, I see Rev. Koyo working outside more and more. I can't help noticing that he is so out of shape that he has to take frequent breaks.

A side benefit of going at a slow pace is that when he sits down to rest, he looks around and is more reflective of the nature around him. He smiles a lot and I know he is so appreciative of the beautiful wooded property that surrounds his retirement life. When visitors mention the beautiful physical setting, he comments on the many aspects of his life that make him realize how fortunate he is. This is often followed by him saying, "Knock on wood." I think his use of that phrase is not so much a wish for continued good fortune but is the recognition that we should not take anything for granted because life is such that we just don't know what is around the corner.

Colloquial phrases and sayings like "knock on wood" pepper our conversations and add flavor to our speech. I googled "knock on wood" and learned some of its history. The phrase "knock on wood" originated from the idea that trees had "spirits" residing within them and that these spirits could give assistance to whoever knocked on wood to wake the spirits up. Primitive people had many animistic rituals related to the hope of having a good harvest. From ancient times, the Japanese people "worshipped" nature. In their native belief system of Shinto, things in nature, like mountains, rivers, and trees each had their own "kami" or deity. In other cultures, there is a mythology linking deities to nature. For example, lightning is seen as bolts thrown by Zeus, and thunder is his angry shout. Poseidon is the god of the sea and Helios the god of the sun. Although modern people may feel they are above any kind of nature mysticism in the form of neo-paganism or polytheism, there is still a very pervasive tendency for humans to anthropomorphize and project their own reality and human qualities out onto the external world. This is not necessarily a bad thing.

It may sound strange to say it but I think that modern human beings seem to forget that they are part of nature. People living in the Age of Agriculture had a much more intimate relationship with the natural world than came to be the case with the onset of the Industrial

Revolution. Modern people have to make a concerted effort to experience nature; that is, by visiting National parks, taking up gardening, engaging in outdoor sports, etc. Without such activities, it is easy to lose touch with the natural order of things and perhaps become alienated from natural laws. When people lose harmony with nature, they usually become so self-centered that they feel the world should conform to their own wishes and desires. Living with such an attitude can only lead to suffering for both people and the natural world they live in. How can this be countered? One simple way is to start experiencing the natural world, including inanimate objects, as "beings" that can be communicated with, empathized with, and form a friendship with. In other words, what is needed is a throw-back to former ways of relating to nature but with a modern touch or interpretation.

I once saw a young lady in a park standing next to a tree. One arm was stretched out and her hand was covering a knot on the side of the tree. She just stood like that for a long time. A knot on a tree is a spot where a branch has been removed. A tree knot is essentially a scar. Many breast cancer survivors would guess that this young lady had or was going to have breast surgery... and was empathizing with the tree... or was receiving reassurance and comfort from her solidarity with the tree. This account could be called a modern application of "knock on wood." I advocate talking to trees. When you water a tree, say to it, "Ahh... that must feel good!"

Trees are silent and do not talk; yet, they have a lot to teach if there is just a little bit of awareness. Our Bright Dawn Center property is covered with many large boulders. It is amazing how many of these boulders have a small tree growing from a slight crack right in the middle of the boulder. A tree grows wherever it finds itself. A tree does not compare and complain that it is not in a better spot to grow. A tree does not feel sorry for itself and think, "If only..."

As a graphic for this article, I was going to use a picture of one of the many small trees growing in a crack in the middle of a boulder. However, I decided to use the "end-product" of one of these trees... to show what happens when a tree keeps growing... and splits a boulder in half. What power! Tree beats stone! We may have shown and written about this tree before but there is an update. In the past, we've called this tree as the "Power Pine." We considered this tree to represent

Knock on Wood continues on page 5



the power of resilience and persistence. This teaching still remains but the name of the tree has changed. Here's what happened: We had a tree-service person come to do some work. Although we didn't call attention to our Power Pine, he noticed it as we were walking by it. This blue-collar worker got excited

and as he dramatically pointed at the pine, he yelled, "That's bad ass!" From then on, we changed the name from "Power Pine" to "Bad-Ass Pine." If anyone wants some inspiration to "Keep Going," come visit this "Bad-Ass Pine" and Knock on Wood!

You don't have to go to a church to be religious. Just go outside and realize the sacred depths of nature. I once saw a bumper sticker, "God is Nature." It did not say God is in nature or expresses itself through nature. No, God is Nature. Within a Christian context, the poet Joyce Kilmer praises trees. A Dharma friend, Kiyo Manley-Loftus, shared a poem she wrote about trees. She wrote the poem over thirty years ago before she was a practicing Buddhist. She wrote the poem as a valentine to evergreens trees outside her window. She re-titled her poem and sent it to us recently. This is Dharma Dan signing off with her poem:

TREE BUDDHAS

*Tree friends – teachers – mentors
Swaying, slowly swaying trunks
Gracefully nodding branches soft with needles
Balancing – no effort – balancing
Not trying – just being – allowing
No resistance, but a natural grounding
Equally a friend to gravity – to air
A friend to sunlight, to darkness
Knowing the stars, the planets,
the eternal cycles
Trees firmly rooted without clinging
I am your disciple.*



SPRING EQUINOX TELEPHONE SERVICE

Theme: Growth & Renewal

Just when you thought the dreariness of winter was going to be a constant reality... Oh, how wonderful the warmth of spring feels! Isn't it nice to wake up in the morning and look out the window to see how bright the sky is?! This is nature's dramatic entrance! Embrace it! Welcome it! Smile! Shout! Dance! Go outside and intimately whisper to Mother Nature your joyful thanks for not forgetting her eternal cycle. Every spring we realize that the true Buddhist color is green. Your spiritual body is a big fat bud, breaking at the seams of your hard ego shell. Celebrate by joining our Spring Equinox Telephone Service on Thursday, March 17, 2016 at 6 PM Pacific; 9 PM Eastern. Dial 1-504-353-1009; then access code 5805842#. All callers will be on mute to eliminate distractions. Call in a few minutes early and use the wait time to do some mindful breathing. At the end of the call, don't forget to do a gratitude bow.



SENRYU/HAIKU

by William Seiyo Shehan

*Are you not happy
Happiness is everywhere
Why are you waiting*

*The Buddha teaches
Do your own exploration
No blind acceptance*

*Manifestation
Everything needed is there
Look deeply/perceive*

*See the beggar
Learn the lesson he teaches
Buddha in us all*

*Generic Buddha?
One size does not fit all
Personal journey*



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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, 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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Change Service Requested



YES YES Your Everyday Spirituality YES YES

MAR	Theme: Phototropism (turning toward the light) Purpose: Acknowledging new spiritual growth Method: "Sky/Sun-Gassho:" Starting in traditional Gassho position (palms together in front of heart), raise hands and arms high over your head and spread arms out to the sides. This movement is like a plant opening to the bright dawn. Likewise, may your inner spiritual life open up to receive the warm light of the Dharma teachings.
APR	Theme: Consolidation Purpose: To maximize what is received Method: "Gathering-In Gassho:" Starting from the above position of arms spread widely, slowly bring arms/hands back to a traditional Gassho; consider this arm movement a gathering-in of the universe's spiritual energy into the core of your being.
MAY	Theme: Keep Going Purpose: Deeper and deeper... Method: "Settling-In Gassho:" Staying in the above Gassho position, relax your shoulders, and very slowly bow your head. With a long exhale, push your belly out and imagine your spiritual center of gravity as solid and heavy in your lower abdomen. This completes your three-part Spring Gassho from March through May. Go forth, bud out, flower!

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