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# OZENESS

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

Vol. 4 No. 3 Fall 2000

## ZEN AND NEMBUTSU

Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose

Since Buddhism was first introduced and began to be practiced in America, Zen has been more adopted by native Caucasian Americans. This is due both to the nature of Zen, and to its excellent presentation. Shin Buddhism did not spread as much as Zen among the Caucasian people because of the language barrier of Shin Buddhist teachers. Furthermore, Shin Buddhism was presented in terms of Christianity by borrowing Christian concepts and words. Christian terminology such as faith, prayer, salvation, worship, Lord, etc., were used. In this way Shin came to be greatly misunderstood by non-Japanese American people.

Religiously, Shin Buddhism is of the devotional type, whereas Zen Buddhism is a more intellectual and disciplinary way. These differences are to be found in the natures of people. If we look at American culture and at its major religion, Christianity, we see that Christianity is more of the devotional type. And since Shin was presented using borrowed Christian terminology, it is only natural that the Americans generally were not interested in Shin. It seemed almost identical to the major American religion already on the scene, and at a time when many Americans were looking outside their familiar religions for a new spiritual viewpoint. Shin is basically much different from Christianity.

Zen Buddhism appeals more to contemporary Americans because the Zen approach attracts the intellect, although Zen is not intellectuality, Zen points to the true nature of life. From this ground, Zen speaks to the intellectual American. American culture is very much based on individualism, but this individual or self is mostly ego self. Such an ego-centered culture has created many problems individually and collectively. Through the nature of its teaching, Zen addresses itself to this aspect of our culture. Zen teaches this fact: the Buddha said that the five skandhas (five senses) are illusion, and that we must look to the true self. Many of us in America are beginning to recognize that the over development of materialism, the overemphasis on ego success, has brought about mental alienation and social problems. The underlying dualism and the basic dichotomy of American culture must be overcome. How? By each individual within his or her own life. Zen in particular, Buddhism in general, points to a new perspective in life. The Zen approach is very simple and direct.

Shin Buddhism, in its essence, is no different from Zen—but because of its Christian-like presentation, it has tended to be rejected by those Americans who have come in contact with it. At the date of this writing (1976), there are very few non-

Japanese Americans who recognize “Shin Shu” as referring to Buddhism. But I would like to propose that the future American Buddhism will be Zen in nature and Nembutsu in spirit.

Both Zen and Nembutsu were taught by Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. Neither developed in India, both were well developed in China. Because the Chinese were practical, down-to-earth people as well as great philosophers, Buddhism became a way of living in China rather than a system of metaphysical speculation.

Zen was brought to China by Bodhidharma who came from India about 520 A.D. He attracted many Chinese people, including the emperor, and Zen developed as a school. Bodhidharma is looked upon as the founder of Zen, called Chan in China. However, not until Hui-nen, the sixth patriarch in China, did Zen really become itself. He breathed life into Zen and created the true Zen spirit that we know today. Through the Tang and Sung dynasties Zen flourished and became the foundation of Chinese culture.

Eisai, the founder of Rinzai Zen and Dogen, the founder of Soto Zen, went to China in the twelfth century, studied and practiced and brought back Zen to Japan. Zen also became the foundation of Japanese culture during the Kamakura period.

(continued on page three)

# HAWAII CONFERENCE REPORT

By Koyo Kubose

Some of this report was written at 35,000 feet somewhere over the Pacific Ocean. Gathering 2000: A Conference on the Future of Shin Buddhism in America was held on August 18-20 in Waikoloa, Hawaii. I joined a panel of guest speakers: Rev. Dr. Alfred Bloom, Rev. Dr. Kenneth Tanaka, and Rev. Dr. Taitetsu Unno. All of these eminent Ph.D. scholars are ordained Shin Buddhist ministers and have authored numerous books. In my opening remarks I jokingly said that I felt like a pair of brown shoes at a black tuxedo affair. Yet I unabashedly see myself as a “popularizer” of the Dharma. Being neither a scholar nor a person of deep religious piety, I could only “talk story” and share the joy of living a Dharma-intoxicated life. My laid-back playful style resonated with the warm, open Aloha spirit. I was inspired by the down-to-earth spirituality of the followers of the Dharma in Hawaii. In fact, instead of a pair of brown shoes. I felt like a comfortable pair of zori’s!

The first session of the conference dealt with “Defining Shin Buddhism in an American Context.” The other guest speakers and I sat at a raised table in front of the 200 participants. After our individual presentations, we answered questions from the audience and there were several lively discussions. One of the discussions was on the meaning of naturalness. It was pointed out that although self (ego) power is not emphasized in Shin Buddhism, this is not to negate the importance of self effort. “Come as you are” can still mean to do things with 100% effort.

Another discussion began on the idea of a separate, defiled self. This led to an examination of such dualities as good-bad, self-other, etc. Human problems result from rigid attachment to one aspect of a duality. The dualistic opposites are only conceptual labels used to describe reality. Labels can be useful but they should not be confused with actual reality. Reality itself is a dynamic interaction. What is labeled as say, positive or negative, is constantly changing. For example, a celebrity achieves his long sought after stardom but finds he’s living a miserable, stressed-out lifestyle. Another example is of a person who suffers a tragic injury but later because of his disability his life unfolds in a new fulfilling direction.

Rather than get stuck in either side of a dualism, I recommended that one should “live in the hyphen.” As the discussion progressed, it was mentioned that one should not get stuck in the hyphen either! Indeed, in Buddhism there is no final answer or conclusion. Life is

a journey, not a destination. Life is a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved. Whatever insight we may have, we still need to keep going, keep growing. As an example of going beyond the “hyphen” I suggested a “slash” as in success/failure, win/lose, etc.

As a panel, we guest speakers bantered back and forth among ourselves and enjoyed a good chemistry together. To illustrate this, after I had talked about dualities such as win-lose, Unno Sensei asked me what happens when I argue with my wife. Do I win or do I lose? I answered, “Well, sometimes when you lose, you win; and when you win, you lose!” We all had a great laugh.

The second day of the conference was an all-day session on “Expressions of Shin Buddhism in America.” After a short morning service, each speaker gave a presentation. Then we all had lunch and a guided tour of the lava/sand beach area. The conference was held at the Waikoloa Resort Hotel right on the ocean. Our meals were eaten on a large patio, which was sheltered yet open to the ocean. Nature offers us many teachings. The blue sky of Hawaii is special to me. It is an expression of Dharmakaya (“the formless Buddha body”) and symbolizes the absolute reality that is infinite and timeless. The gentle Dharma breeze on my face reminds me that I am always right here, now.

The afternoon consisted of the participants being divided into four “break-out” groups. Each group engaged in discussions with the guest speakers who rotated among all the groups. Good discussions were generated— including one resulting from going on a guided visualization hot-balloon trip to “see” the landscape of Buddhism in the future.

After a meal of saimin noodles piled high with all kinds of “goodies,” buses took participants to join a local temple’s Bon dance. I might mention that Hawaiian sunsets cannot be described but have to be experienced. I did so... while eating “poki” and drinking local “Kona brew.” This was definitely a spiritual experience because it is always a joy to relate the Dharma to whatever I am experiencing. For example, I learned that the red/orange sunset colors were enhanced by tiny particles of volcanic ash (called “vog” instead of “fog”). On the big island, lava rock is prominently visible. Excavating land for development requires special equipment because lava rock is harder than the usual dirt or earth as on the mainland. I asked how deep the lava layer was. Silly question. The Hawaiian islands were formed by volcanic action. The rock goes to the center of the earth! I immediately saw this as a metaphor for one’s self. What one expresses (i.e. what is on the surface and seen by

**The purpose of the Kubose Dharma Legacy is to offer a non-sectarian, non-dualistic approach, the Way of Oneness, to further individual spiritual growth in everyday life for people of all backgrounds.**

others) should come from the core of one's being. This is sincerity and naturalness; there is no pretense or hiding behind titles or social roles.

On Sunday morning, the last session was on the "Future of Shin Buddhism in America." Group summaries from the previous day's discussions were reported by the facilitators, and each speaker gave his final presentation. It was consistently mentioned that in one way or another, individual spirituality is at the core of the future of Shin Buddhism. Individual spirituality is deepened by and expressed through some kind of daily practice or ritual. One good way to acquire a daily habit is to associate it with an established daily activity. This is why many spiritual traditions have grace or some kind of mindfulness practice associated with eating. No one forgets to eat! In a similar vein, I introduced "Toilet Gassho." Sitting on the toilet is a great place and time for quiet reflection. In addition to expressing gratitude for food, we should also be grateful that our bodily plumbing is working. Elimination of one's bodily waste products is a crucial and necessary life process. We should also flush away or let go of the messy waste products from our daily living; e.g., regrets, resentments, self pity. Indeed, messiness is a part of the Oneness of life.

Laughter was liberally sprinkled throughout the conference. Studying the Dharma does not have to be an overly serious endeavor. Humor can enhance one's spiritual life. To demonstrate that life should be lived with relish, the guest panelists, led by Ken Tanaka Sensei, put on a skit about a Buddhist monk ordering a hot dog. The monk says, "Make me one with everything." After paying with a \$20 bill and inquiring why he didn't receive any change, he was told by the vendor, "All change must come from within." The skit ended with a recitation of "Namu Hot Dog Buddha."

The Gathering 2000 Conference was a great success due to the hard work of co-chairs Rev. Kevin Kuniyuki and Kenneth Fujimoto, M.C./project planner Whitney Waite, the group facilitators, and the many others who chaired the various necessary committees. Mahalo!

## Zen and Nembutsu (continued from page one)

It influenced many aspects of Japanese culture: Tea Ceremony, Flower Arrangement, Calligraphy, Sumi-e Painting, the martial arts, the ceramic arts, literature and the spirit of Bushido, the Samurai. But Zen, for all its impact, appealed more to intellectuals and leaders.

Nembutsu also developed in Chinese culture as the Jodo, or Pure Land, School. Jodo developed in China alongside Zen. There were great Nembutsu reciters such as Donran, Doshaku and Zendo, and a great group called Byakuren Sha, or the White Lotus Society, arose. Just as Zen went to Japan, so did Nembutsu where it developed greatly. It became the very fiber of Japanese spiritual life. It was Genshin, then Honen and Shinran who popularized Nembutsu. Especially Honen and Shinran made Nembutsu a real way of life, in much the way that Eisai and Dogen made Zen an integral part of Japanese life and culture.

It is often said that Zen is the Jiriki (self power) Way and Nembutsu is the Tariki (Other Power) Way. However, the Jiriki of Zen is not the small self Jiriki. Zen Jiriki is the True Self. Nembutsu Tariki is not some other power, but *the* Other Power, or the True Self. In essence, the Jiriki of Zen and the Tariki of Nembutsu are one and the same.

It seems there is no Nembutsu without the spirit of Zen meditation, nor is there Zen without thinking of the Buddha, which is Nembutsu. As Zen grows, and becomes popular among the American people, it will be only natural, in my mind, that Nembutsu will be practiced.

The qualities of Buddha are wisdom and compassion. This wisdom and compassion seem to be two, but it is really one. Both are aspects of the Buddha. Wherever Buddhism is, there is wisdom and compassion. Zen and Nembutsu are somewhat like this wisdom and compassion; they are complimentary parts of Oneness. It is my firm belief that in the Buddhism of America in the future both Zen and the spirit of Nembutsu will flourish as American Buddhism.

(Kubose, G. *American Buddhism*; Dharma House; pp. 27-29.)

## Oneness Newsletter Fall 2000

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Dharma Glimpses - Poems - Reader Replies

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# Dharma Glimpses

We asked our niece, Kristine, in California to write an article for the Oneness Newsletter. She wrote a nice article on balance and symmetry. Her article reminded me of the Buddhist teaching of “The Middle Way,” which advocates avoiding extremes. It’s neat how in her article Kristine applies this kind of teaching to both her work as a physical therapist and to life in general. The title of her article is:

## Symmetry for a Sound Mind

Everyday I go to work and treat patients who are experiencing some kind of ache or pain. It may be from a back injury, car accident or pain from surgery. My method of treatment is different for each and every patient because every person is different. No two biceps tendinitis’ are the same – people are of different sizes, do different jobs, have different stresses. However, one of the common goals for each patient is to create balance and symmetry of the body. They are vital components to being healthy and pain free. When one side of the body is weaker than the other, or tighter than the other, or when one range of motion is less than the other a sort of torsional force is imposed on the body and this causes pain.

How do we create symmetry that has been lost? We try to create an optimal healing environment for the body. We do so by applying ice or heat, or we try to decrease muscle tone with various techniques or manipulating joints. Then we teach our patients proper posturing (body language), exercises and stretches that they can do at home to maintain symmetry.

Isn’t life about creating symmetry and balance? As they say, “Too much of anything is not good.” Too much candy or soda leads to tooth decay or potentially to high blood pressure and heart disease. Too much money can lead to unhappiness or broken relationships. Too much alcohol leads to disruption of work, family and friends. Too many cigarettes smoked leads to lung cancer and emphysema. Too much TV turns your brain into jello (as my dad used to say). On the other end of the spectrum, not enough

exercise can lead to obesity, eating too few fruits and vegetables can lead to health problems, not enough rain leads to drought.

My job as a physical therapist is to teach and educate my patients on how to take control over their pains and dysfunction and to prevent future injuries with proper posturing, exercises and stretches. With this, hopefully, symmetry and balance will come and pain will dissipate. My job as a person is to teach, educate and learn from others how to keep life in balance with “posturing, or body language, exercise and stretches.” Taking these concepts a step beyond their literal meaning, we can apply this to our everyday lives. With our “body language” we are constantly communicating with others. A simple hug, smile or giving your seat up on the train for a senior can have profound effects, positive ones. They are needed to counter negative ones such as a scornful look, giving someone the eagle for cutting you off in traffic or not saying “thank you” when someone gives you a gift. As for “exercising” and being active, we need to keep our minds active so that we do not become ignorant. We need to continue to read, watch and listen so that we can make good decisions and judgements. We need to be active in our children’s lives. When we become inactive, we see prejudice surface; we may not be able to make sound decisions (about buying a house or saving for retirement) or our children may stray away. “Stretching” can be applied in our lives as being flexible. It is important to have goals and structure but within that we need to be open minded, take things as they come and accept that certain things are as they are. If we live our lives like a train time table we will certainly have stress.

By striving for balance in our lives, we can hopefully be pain free and at peace with ourselves. So, be sure to have good posture, exercise and stretch!

Kristine Perry (CA)

*Some people say there is  
Some people say no  
That, too, will pass away*

D.A.K.

# Reader Replies

Just a short comment on reading your last newsletter. There is no question that Rev. Gyomay Kubose felt indebted to his teacher, Rev. Haya Akegarasu. Yet, I don't think Rev. Akegarasu was a deep thinker; his thought and teachings did not revolutionize Buddhism as did the approach of his teacher, Rev. Manshi Kiyozawa. Rev. Kubose was closer to a Rev. Kiyozawa in being an independent thinker with philosophical depth. To me, it's clear that although Rev. Kubose may have been inspired by Rev. Akegarasu's dynamic spirit, he was not an Akegarasu follower in a slavish sense. I think Rev. Kubose developed a line of thought completely independent of Rev. Akegarasu. W.S.Y. (Kyoto, Japan)

I have incorporated one of your recommended Gassho practices in my daily life. I start each day with the following resolution:

May all beings be happy and well.  
May no harm or difficulties come to them.  
May they live in peace and harmony.  
Namu Amida Butsu

I consider it a resolution as I am not only wishing for these things; I resolve to contribute to the well-being of all people I will associate with during the day. Particularly mindful of not doing harm; promoting harmony; expressing gratitude. An inconspicuous practice but deeply personal. I feel or taste the embrace and grace of Amida Buddha. A.G. (Honolulu, Hawaii)

## JUST FOR FUN:

Always remember you're unique, just like everyone else.

If you lend someone \$20 and never see that person again, it was probably worth it.

Timing has an awful lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance.

Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you criticize them, you're a mile away and you have their shoes.

If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.

From K. F. (Fremont, California)

## AMERICAN BUDDHIST SERVICES

The Heartland Sangha holds services on the first and third Saturdays of every month at the Lake Street Church in Evanston. Service starts at 11:00 am, with optional meditation sitting beginning at 9:30 am. (Call Heartland Sangha at 773-545-9972 for details.)

As a regular speaker, Rev. Koyo Kubose's coming Dharma Talk titles are:

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Sept. 16 | O-Higan/TiSarana Renewal   |
| Oct. 7   | What is Suchness?  |
| Oct. 21  | No Service.<br>Autumn Retreat being held in Wisconsin (see notice below) |
| Nov. 4   | Buddhist Politics  |
| Nov. 18  | Spirituality is Gratitude  |
| Dec. 2   | Bodhi Day: How Ignorant I Am!  |

## AUTUMN RETREAT

A fall retreat will be held at the Plymouth Institute on the week-end of October 20-22 (Friday afternoon through Sunday afternoon). Located 40 minutes north of Milwaukee, the Institute has beautiful, scenic grounds next to the Kettle Moraine State Park. Accommodations include a nicely rehabbed 100-year old farm house with seven bedrooms and other options for more sleeping space.

The retreat theme is "let go and grow." Spiritual growth is not so much a matter of getting something but is more a matter of getting rid of things we're saddled with. So, the emphasis is not on finding something (e.g., an insight, realization, or teaching), but the emphasis is on letting go of regrets and resentments, and on emptying oneself of habitual ways of complaining and blaming. The stress of modern life tends to unbalance us, make us see the negative side of things, and to get down on life. To re-balance ourselves is easier said than done, but a retreat is a good opportunity to re-focus and re-center ourselves. Along with the availability of hiking trails to commune with nature, silent meditation sitting sessions, and yoga stretching and breathing, Koyo Kubose Sensei will lead a Saturday morning session on "let go and grow."

For more information or to register, call Richard Brandon at 773-583-5794 or Cynthia Brooke at 773-545-9972. Costs are reasonable but exact charge will depend on the number of participants. All meals will be included.

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\* Inadvertently omitted from the last issue. Our apologies.

## HELP SAVE A TREE!

Our mailing list has welcomed new additions from many sources and referrals. We are happy to continue sending our newsletter to all interested persons. However, we have no way of knowing whether some of you may prefer not to receive the newsletter. So, if we haven't heard from you in the last few years, please indicate your preference below and send to: Oneness Newsletter, Kubose Dharma Legacy, 8334 Harding, Skokie, IL 60076.

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**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.** This continues the approach of "Everyday Suchness" and speaks directly to the ordinary layperson. The 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, 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.

**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.

## 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. This book can help Jodo-Shinshu Buddhists understand their own religious tradition and also help in communicating it to others. 270 pages.

**RIVER OF FIRE, RIVER OF WATER** by Taitetsu Unno. Introduces the Pure Land tradition of Shin Buddhism using personal anecdotes, stories, and poetry. The Pure Land practice is harmonious with daily life, making it easily adaptable for seekers today. With spiritual insight and unparalleled scholarship, this book is an important step forward for Buddhism in America. 244 pages.

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**ZEN THERAPY** by David Brazier. "A potent source of inspiration for anyone interested in the therapeutic potential of Buddhism...offers readers in the West a fresh perspective on Buddhist psychology and demonstrates how Zen Buddhist techniques are integrated into psychotherapy... and with the help of vivid case studies, clearly demonstrates how a Buddhist approach can provide a practical path to personal growth." 280 pages.

**THE MONK WHO DARED** by Ruth M. Tabrah. A historical novel of Shinran, the founder of Jodo-Shinshu Buddhism. Set in 13th century, this story covers the drama and crucial inner changes of Shinran's life. 329 pages.

# Kubose Dharma Legacy

## Oneness Newsletter

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|--|---|
| SEPT   | <p><b>Theme:</b> Non-duality<br/><b>Purpose:</b> To balance perspective in decision-making by focusing on the hyphen between dualistic opposites as in good-bad, true-false, self-other. The hyphen is like a pause or gap where aspects of both sides can be considered.<br/><b>Method:</b> “Hyphen Gassho:” With hands in the traditional Gassho position of palm facing palm, make a “dynamic” gap between the palms; bow to this gap.</p>                                 |
| OCT  | <p><b>Theme:</b> Interdependency within dichotomies<br/><b>Purpose:</b> To realize that opposites interact with each other and are not completely separate from one another; e.g., success/failure, win/lose, yin/yang.<br/><b>Method:</b> “Slash Gassho:” With hands to the right of your forehead in the traditional Gassho position, move both arms in a diagonal movement down across the front of your body.</p>   |
| NOV  | <p><b>Theme:</b> Symbol of Buddhism<br/><b>Purpose:</b> To foster identification with Buddhism and to evoke feelings of religiosity.<br/><b>Method:</b> “Dharma Wheel Gassho:” Starting from the traditional Gassho position, drop one hand down; with the other hand trace a circle in the air, make two diagonal lines (an “X”), followed by a horizontal and vertical line within the circle; finish by bringing the dropped hand up to the beginning Gassho position.</p> |