

O n e s s

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

Vol. 10 No. 1 Spring 2006

A CANDLE-LIGHTING RITUAL

By Rev. Koyo Kubose

There are many rituals involving candles. Perhaps the earliest one for most of us is making a wish and blowing out our birthday candles. There are a wide range of ways candles are used at churches, temples and in our homes. A lot could be said about the function and symbolism of candles, but in this article I want to describe a simple ritual I started doing a few years ago.

I inherited my parents home altar and it is situated in the living room of my house. Whenever I light an altar candle, I stare intently at the flame for a second or two, and am very aware of the flame's brightness. Let me tell you the story behind my candle-lighting ritual.

In June of 2000, I went on a family trip to California. After attending our son Tate's graduation upon receiving his Ph.D. from UCLA, we drove toward Mammoth Lake, which is just SE of Yosemite National Park, to meet up with other relatives. In the car were Tate, my wife Adrienne, her sister Eimi Okano, Eimi's husband Yuji, and me. We were in the Okano's new Honda Odyssey van heading north on Highway 395.

We stopped to visit Manzanar, which is one of the "relocation" camps that Japanese-Americans were interned in during World War II. Manzanar is designated as a historical site, but is located, as most camps were, in a desolated area. The vegetation is sparse and the landscape is what you might imagine since Manzanar is just west of Death Valley. With majestic mountains

off in the distance, there is a stark beauty to the area. Yet, because of the history of Manzanar, I couldn't help but have a sad, lonely feeling as I looked around.

Reading, or hearing about the internment experience is one thing, but physically visiting an actual site was a moving experience for me, as I imagined the lives of the people uprooted from their homes and interned here at Manzanar, uncertain what the future held for them. I was a six-month old infant when my family was interned in a camp in Wyoming, so I have no memories of that time. The internment was not a personal reality for me until visiting Manzanar gave me a glimpse of what my parents and many others must have felt and experienced.

A dirt road winds around within the Manzanar site, with markers designating spots where barracks, administration office, mess hall, and other buildings had been located. There also was a small cemetery area with a few crude headstones scattered around. I remember one headstone was of a baby who had died. We were the only ones visiting the site, except for an American Indian woman who said she came quite often since she lived in a nearby Indian reservation. She said that because of her people's history, she had empathy with the internment experience and how it was for the people at Manzanar.

Manzanar is located on Highway 395, between the towns of Lone Pine and Independence, about eight miles

from each town. I had various thoughts or associations about the names of these two towns. Although it is said that no man is an island, I think any individual has his "lone pine" moments pondering the many different meanings of "independence." After visiting Manzanar, we drove to Lone Pine for dinner. Hanging on the walls of the restaurant were photographs of movie stars and scenes of Westerns made in the 40's and 50's. Apparently, this area was a popular location for shooting Westerns. The movie "Gunga Din" was also shot here, although that Kipling story took place in India. Finishing dinner, Yuji and I started squabbling over the check—each of us trying to pay. Tate smiled and said he

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THE BACKSIDE OF A SUNRISE

BY Rev. Koyo S. Kubose

Depending where you live, it is not always easy to view a sunrise over the horizon. In many places, there are mountains or trees, not to mention tall buildings, that obscure one's view. I imagine those who live on the East Coast can see a good sunrise over the Atlantic Ocean. I consider myself fortunate to be able to see sunrises over Lake Michigan. Of course, those on the West Coast can see beautiful sunsets over the Pacific Ocean.

I want to tell you about an experience I had viewing a sunrise in the mountains. This was during the family retreat we had last summer in Dunsmuir, California. This retreat was in honor of the late Rev. Gyomay Kubose's Centennial Birthday. The sunrise is important to me because my father's Dharma Name, Gyomay, means "bright dawn." "Koyo," the Dharma Name he gave me, means "to face the sun." So, seeing a sunrise has spiritual meaning for me. As I found out, seeing the "backside" of a sunrise, also had spiritual meaning. Let me explain what I experienced.

One morning during our family retreat, a small group of us got up early to go view the sunrise. As my brother later describes the scene:

Imagine you are standing in a valley with mountains to the east and the west. The western mountains are higher than the eastern mountains. It is prior to sunrise. As the eastern sky starts to lighten with the impending sunrise (i.e., "your" sunrise since the sun has already risen east of the eastern mountain!) you note there is a shadow high on the east slope of the western mountain cast by the mountaintop of the eastern mountain. You are in the shadow of the eastern mountain so you do not see a distinct outline of your own shadow. As the eastern sky becomes brighter, the shadow of the eastern mountaintop projected on the eastern slope of the western mountain becomes more distinct and moves down its slope. At the moment of "your" sunrise over the eastern mountaintop, its shadow on the eastern slope of the western mountain becomes sharply defined and very quickly (instantaneously to you) zooms down past you towards the base of the eastern mountain; in addition, now you can see your own sharp distinct shadow since the sun is now "up"!

My brother titled his description, "Sunrise Shadows." This is the "backside" or shadows caused by the sun. How interesting that before the sunrise, I have no shadow. When the bright flash of light from the sunrise hits me, my sudden shadow is the longest it can be (due to the angle of the sun). This can be seen in the picture we took of our shadows right after the sunrise.

My spiritual interpretation of these facts is that when we are ignorant (in the dark), we do not know ourselves. We do not know our dark side (our shadow). Being ignorant of ourselves, we do not truly see or accept our human "defilements" such as greed, anger, etc. Instead, we are ruled by our ego and pride, and tend to become arrogant and narcissistic. Wisdom (light) enables one to see oneself as one is, warts and all. Truly understanding oneself means that one can also understand others. Thus, there is no attachment to views of superiority or inferiority. There is no necessity for relative judgments of one's value as a human being.

In the bright light of wisdom, we can see that we all have long shadows. Isn't this the essence of the Shin Buddhist teachings? What is emphasized in Shin Buddhism is to realize that one is basically flawed; that is, full of "bonno" or all the ego-based qualities like greed, anger, etc. The goal in Shin Buddhism is not to seek an enlightenment that removes such qualities through one's own ego power; in fact, it states that this is impossible. So, don't mislead yourself that you can achieve enlightenment through meditation, practicing good deeds, etc. Although it often does seem that one has to exhaust oneself in such efforts before the futility of such efforts is realized.

To truly see yourself as you are, requires the constant hard work of honest self introspection. The fruit of such hard work is the realization that in the Buddha's shining world, you are accepted just as you are. In that moment, all your "bits of rubble are transformed into gold." This is the way that you can live a life of true humility and deep gratitude.

See **Sunrise** on page 3



Sunrise continued from page 2

In applying the above to a spiritual interpretation of the sun and shadows, we could continue by saying that as the sun rises and shines down on oneself, one's shadow gets shorter and shorter. When the sun is directly overhead, one has no shadow anymore. This is to say that after one's initial realization of one's long shadow, one then continues to receive the bright light of wisdom and compassion. When the light is shining down fully on oneself, then one's shadow is completely absorbed into oneself and no longer is cast as an external shadow outside oneself.

I suppose those of you with active imaginations might continue with the metaphor, and begin to interpret what it might mean when after being directly overhead, the sun moves westward and our shadow starts to appear on the other side of us. But you know what? Rather than over-do this intellectual exercise, why don't you go see a sunrise? Or a sunset will do! Be calm in the moment and see what you experience.

American Buddhist Services

The Heartland Sangha holds 11 A.M. Saturday services at Lake Street Church, 607 Lake Street, Evanston (use courtyard entrance on Chicago Avenue). For more information, please call Heartland Sangha at 773-545-9972. Rev. Koyo Kubose's upcoming Dharma Talk titles are:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Apr 1 | Toilet Stories
The Dharma of Grossness |
| Apr 15 | Flower Power
Flowers as teachers. |
| May 6 | The Laughing Mother
The spiritual value of humor |
| May 20 | Making History Day
What is your personal legacy? |
| Jun 3 | NO SERVICE due to participation in the International Buddhist Festival to be held at the Buddha Dharma Meditation Center, 8910 S. Kingery Hwy, Willowbrook, IL 60527. |
| Jun 17 | The Tipping Point
How little things can have big effects |

From November thru April, there is sitting meditation led by R. Zenyo Brandon from 9:30 to 10:30 before the 11 A.M. service. May thru October is the season for individual and group retreats at the Bright Dawn Home Spread in Plymouth, Wisconsin. Founder and caretaker is R. Zenyo Brandon, disciple of the Venerable Gyomay M. Kubose. For brochure and more information: 773-583-5794; www.awakenedone.org.

Candle-lighting continued from page 1

had already taken care of it. He added, "Happy Father's Day" since it was Father's Day weekend. Then we found a local motel to stay in for the night. I remember our room was called the "John Wayne Suite."

We decided to get up early and see the sunrise. It is difficult to see the sun come up over the horizon in mountainous terrain. In addition, by the time the sun comes up over the mountain tops, the area has been already quite bright for awhile. I wasn't too excited since I knew the sunrise wouldn't be as dramatic as others I had seen. I got impatient waiting, so I started jogging eastward down a road. Finally the sun came up over the mountain tops. Being already quite high in the sky, the sun was a bright spot of light that I could not look at directly for very long. Whenever I see any sunrise, I think of "Bright Dawn" which is the meaning of my late father's Buddhist name "Gyomay." I also think of the Buddhist name my father gave me when I was born, "Koyo" which means "to face the sun." Anyway, for some reason, I decided that I would make seeing this particular sunrise, a special moment.

I realized that the sun basically was a fire; what I was seeing was a bright flame. This flame was the same in essence as any other flame, even the flame of a small candle. I consciously retained my visual memory of the sun's bright flame so I would be able to recall it clearly at any time later. I decided that whenever I lit a candle in the future, I would take an extra moment to stare at the center of the candle flame and remember what I experienced when seeing the sun's brightness. In this way I am able to capture a moment in time of seeing the sunrise as I was running eastward along a stretch of road outside the town of Lone Pine.

This is the way I am able to re-experience a significant past moment through a candle-lighting ritual. You are welcome to add this kind of candle-lighting ritual to your spiritual "tool bag" or better yet, create/discover a personal candle-lighting ritual related to your own life experiences. The purpose of sharing my story is as an example of how others might integrate their own experiences into a meaningful personal ritual. I hope you will make the ordinary act of lighting a candle into a significant mindfulness practice.



Oneness Newsletter Spring 2006

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The purpose of the Kubose Dharma Legacy 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.

A VOICE OF REASON

By Nakia Geder

(edited excerpts from an email sent to us)

What we are witnessing is what happens when humanity, at large, caters to its ego. The wars declared by our leaders are the result of the unrestrained ego in all its glory. The efforts of our leaders, political and religious, are all geared towards training the ego of the masses to fit into some ideal that suits their purposes of control.

Popular religions have taught for centuries that God is separate from the earth and humanity. The masses are taught that we are a creation that has turned away from God and as a result are left to our own devices. The only way back into God's Grace is by following whatever the religion in question mandates. Religions use the fact that misery is of our own making to degrade, guilt, and shame us into submission; insisting that there is no connection to the One because of it. The submission of the masses to this brainwashing is because of that innate connection. We feel guilty and shamed because we know we aren't living up to our potential. We know there's more and that we are a part of it. Unfortunately, that knowledge isn't understanding.

Understanding is only achieved through Awareness. Awareness, requires critical thinking and observational skills; our political leaders see to it that we don't get any training in these areas. We are trained to be mindless automatons that make ourselves slaves to the god Money, so that we may one day achieve the life we want. This training has worked beautifully due to the obfuscation, or outright destruction, of alternatives. The brainwashing by religion further serves to obscure Truth, thus making it easier for us to be led by our desires/ego.

People are easier to control when they are led by their desires. All one has to do is offer to give people what they want. Whether or not one actually supplies what was offered doesn't seem to matter. There is always something new to take negative attention away from a failure to deliver. The masses have a knack for easily being sidetracked by things like people's sex lives, the latest gadgets, the blame game, and of course everybody's favorite, "My religion is right and yours is crap!" All of these pursuits strengthen the ego, they enforce the idea that we are individuals separate from the rest of Existence. That is not Actuality, it is the reality that we've been programmed to consent to.

Is it so difficult to conceive that Existence itself is the Divine and that Existence is all there is? We tend not to see this because we have Free Will. We can choose to either, Pay Attention and Co-Create Existence Consciously or we can focus on our own desires and feel that the world is against us. This isn't something that has to be believed or taken on faith, it's something to DO. No one can tell anyone else the Truth

there is no such thing. Truth has to be experienced from one's own perspective. It can only be experienced from a state of Awareness, in other words, we have to Pay Attention to what we are doing.

We can no longer ignore the atrocities being committed by our leaders, and we know they cannot be trusted to act on our behalf. Acknowledge the power religion claims you don't have, take back your minds and use them both to pull humanity out of its downward spiral. Great things will happen when the masses realize their own potential and work together.

Reader Replies

We are benefiting from your Oneness newsletter—unique, interesting topics and ideas—also practical and funny... Thank you!

P.S. Enjoyed the photograph of your dog in the last issue. Is he disciplined not to bow wow when the temple bell is rung during services? You know how humans are hard to train to be silent. How interesting your dog's life must be. We can learn from anything and everything. Reader in Hilo, Hawaii

I have loved your Oneness newsletter now for years. I would make copies for my friends so they could read them and they always liked that. Please add the enclosed list of names to your newsletter mailing list. I've been wanting to do this for years. Sorry there's so many. Eleven years ago, a counselor in Kenosha, Wisconsin gave me the book Everyday Suchness and I have kept it—re-read it over and over. Now it is time for me to have even more. I think I've waited long enough. Thanks for the years of lessons, growth, and changes. They have helped me so much, and still do. P.H. (Wisconsin)

When I read Rev. Kubose's articles, I find that I get a lot more out of them when I read them out loud to myself than when I just read them silently. Actually saying the words and hearing the words makes for more impact. Thought I'd share this. R.H. (Chicago)

I forward you this email from Daily Om. I thought this was a good item, possibly for your newsletter. In Gassho, C.A. (New Orleans)

Anatomy of a Flower

(Reprinted from DailyOm. Inspirational thoughts for a happy, healthy & fulfilling day. Register for free at www.dailyom.com)

As with all living things, a flower's intention is procreation. All the various parts of a flower work together toward this purpose, and each plays an essential role in the process. The vivid, delicate petals attract pollinators (birds and bees) who aid in the transfer of pollen. The center is the source and

(Go to **Flower** on page 5)

THE ODDNESS OF *EVERYTHING*

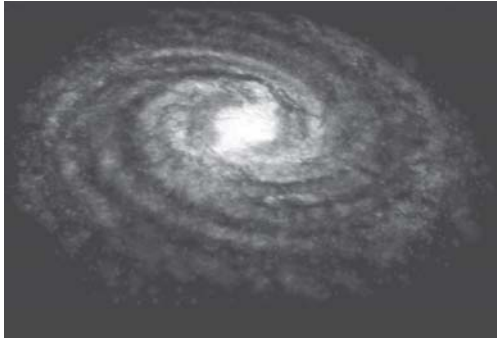
By George F. Will

(A reader sent us this article from Newsweek, May 23, 2005. Here are edited excerpts.)

According to Bill Bryson, author of the delightful “A Short History of Nearly Everything,” everyone now alive contains some Shakespeare. That is, some of the physical stuff he was made of. And Julius Caesar’s stuff, and Genghis Khan’s and Charlemagne’s. And Charlemagne’s cook’s. There are trillions of trillions of atoms in each of us, so lots—probably billions—of atoms have been recycled in each of us from Beethoven. In that sense we all are, as Bryson says, reincarnations.

It took two parents to produce each of us, and four people to produce our parents. If we look back eight generations, to Lincoln’s day, Bryson says that more than 250 people contributed to the creation of each of us. Look back to Shakespeare’s day, and we are directly descended from 16,384 ancestors. Look back 64 generations, to the era of the Roman Empire, and we have a thousand trillion ancestors.

But wait. A thousand trillion people is thousands of times more than the number of human beings who have ever lived. So everyone is the product of a lot of incest—but incest at what Bryson calls “a genetically discreet remove.” This extended family—humanity—inhabits the little planet Earth. This is a strange thought or fact, but what is important is this: The more we appreciate the complexity and improbability of everyday things—including ourselves—the more we can understand the role that accidents, contingencies and luck have played in bringing the human story to its current chapter. And the more we understand the vast and mysterious indeterminacy



of things, the more suited we will be to participate in writing the next chapter.

This is so because the greatest threat to civility—and ultimately to civilization—is an excess of certitude. The world is much menaced just now by people who think that the world and their duties in it are clear and simple. They are certain that they know what—who—created the universe and what

this creator wants them to do to make our little speck in the universe perfect, even if extreme measures—even violence—are required.

America is currently awash in an unpleasant surplus of clanging, clashing certitudes. That is why there is a rhetorical bitterness absurdly disproportionate to our real differences. It has been well said that the spirit of liberty is the spirit of not being too sure that you are right. One way to immunize ourselves against misplaced certitude is to contemplate—even to savor—the unfathomable strangeness of everything, including ourselves.

(**Flower** continued from page 4)

inspiration for the visually stunning petals and the petals, in turn, attract what the flower needs to create seeds and multiply.

When you have an opportunity to serve something larger than your individual self, you are like a petal on a flower, offering your particular brand of beauty and charisma in the service of a centralizing force. This centralizing force might be a person with a higher vision, a community with a common goal, or a spiritual path. Contemplate the ways in which you are a petal on a flower in your life. Who or what is at the center? What core values are you serving?

Consider also any situations in which you are the center of the flower, offering the nourishing seeds of an idea or quality that others are willing to gather around and perpetuate. It takes confidence and vision to be the nucleus. It also takes humility to empower the “petals” around you helping to feed your vision and enabling it to grow beyond you.

Like the parts of a flower, we are all here working together to create and be creative. Whether we are the center or the petal, it helps to be conscious of the seeds we are sowing in the world, as this is how we create the future.

In essence, we are all petals radiating outward from the unified source of energy that is life. Our time on this earthly plane is finite and fragile, and yet we branch out from our invisible source vibrantly and powerfully, attracting energy and making fertile connections that contribute to the continuation of life itself.

MY PAIN GOES ON

(I gave a talk at Thresholds (a counseling center) and picked up their newsletter which contained short articles written by their clients. Here is one that I especially liked:)

In my life is pain, from my mom’s hands through my life til now. I fight back by showing her I am better than her by not hitting back. No matter how much pain I was in, I did not care because pain served as a my friend, it always told me I was alive. Every time she beat me, I always knew I won. I won because I lived and she did not scar my heart or soul. I would look in a mirror with scars and pain and I never gave up on myself. Friends told me that no matter what happened that justice would one day come to heal the pain and suffering. Scars last forever on the outside, but who you are is on the inside. No matter what happens through abuse, don’t ever think the abuser owns you. You own yourself. L.B. (Chicago)

NEW ON-LINE SANGHA STORE

In addition to books, we offer the following items:

1. **Calligraphy** by the late Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose of Japanese Buddhist sayings. An exact color reproduction is mounted on a 4" X 19" brocade holder for wall display; comes with explanatory translation sheet and teaching commentary. \$30.00.
Two sayings available:
"Ichi Go Ichi E" translation: "One Lifetime; One Meeting"
"Nichi Nichi Kore Ko Jitsu" translation: "Every Day is a Good Day"
2. **Oneness T-shirts** available in four colors: black, royal blue, forest green, and charcoal grey; four sizes: S, M, L, XL; black also available in 2XL and 3XL. "Oneness" printed in white script (1 1/2" X 3") over left chest area. \$15.00
3. **Mindfulness Bell Set:** brass bell (2 3/4" diameter), support cushion, and wooden striker. \$32.95
4. **Dharma Wheel Jewelry:** pin, tie clip, or tie-tack, \$25.00; mood-stone necklace or tie clip, \$40.00; 10 k. gold pendant, \$90.00; cross ball-point pen, \$20.00; letter opener, \$5.00
5. **Home Altar Items.** Brass Altar Set: vase, candle holder, incense burner \$40.00 or items also sold separately; ceramic incense burners (from \$15 - \$25)
6. **Wooden Dharma Wheel** (12" diameter) for wall display. \$40.00

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We can also take credit card orders by telephone, 847-677-8211. Satisfaction guaranteed!

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Upon their Wedding

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Shirely Titlow and Margaret Fujimoto
Loved Ones
George Inouye
Virgina Tsukimi Yamada
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YES YES Your Everyday Spirituality YES YES		
MAR	Theme: Calmness Purpose: To calm oneself or others when stressed or talking too loud Method: "Calm-Down Gassho:" Start with palm up, waist high; raise hand up a few inches (inhaling), turn palm down, and slowly lower hand (exhaling); repeat. This is very effective in calming down while driving. Of course, do it using only one hand!	
APR	Theme: Slowing Down Purpose: To do daily activities more mindfully Method: "Computer-Mouse Gassho:" Whenever you feel impatient using your computer, use the mouse with your non-dominant hand. (Courtesy of C.D., Portland, OR)	
MAY	Theme: Wide Perspective Purpose: To appreciate spirituality in nature Method: "Circular Gaze:" When observing nature (e.g. landscape, trees, sky), move your eyes in a wide circle, starting from bottom and moving clockwise. Consider your eyes a "brush" that is painting a large "Zen" circle. Breathe deeply; smile.	

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: Oneness Newsletter, Kubose Dharma Legacy, 8334 Harding, Skokie, IL 60076.

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