Voice of the Amida Order and Friends of the Amida Order: Pureland Buddhism
Absolute Grace, Total Engagement £2.50/€4.25/US$5.00
Issue 31 Spring 2014

RUNNING TIDE

Painting by Orgonbayar Ershuu: Wikimedia Commons

Issue 31: Dharmic Heroes

RUNNING TIDE

Running Tide offers a voice for faith and practice, as well as critical, existential and socially engaged enquiry within the broad framework of Pureland Buddhism.

We publish short articles, poetry, pictures, interviews, comment and Buddhist resource materials.

Opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Amida Order, Amida Trust, or other associated organisations.

Running Tide is distributed by:

Amida Trust
Sukhavati
21 Sussex Way
London
N7 6RT

Correspondence and contributions
Submissions for consideration should be sent to the Editor at: runningtide@amidatrust.com

Amida Order & School
The Amida Order and Amida School are a religious order and communion, respectively, following the Pureland tradition, established under the auspices of the Amida Trust.
In this periodical the letters OAB after a name indicate membership of the Order of Amida Buddha and the letters MAS indicate membership of the Amida School. The Amida School is also referred to as Amida- shu. All Order members are also School members.

Amida Trust
A religious charity established in UK, registration number 1060589, for the furtherance of Buddhism. The Trust sponsors a wide range of Buddhist activities. The Amida Trust is a member of the Network of Buddhist Organisations in the UK, the European Buddhist Union, as well as the World Buddhist University, and has mutual affiliation with the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

This issue of Running Tide was inspired by a talk Richard Ollier gave about Takagi Kenmyo at our local group in Birmingham. I was intrigued by his life-story and began to wonder about other Buddhist heroes.

I asked Dharmavidya to write about his experiences with his Zen teacher, Reverend Master Jiyu Kennett, and hope you are as fascinated by the article as I am. Wendy Shinyo Haylett writes about Reverend Gyomay Kubose, who was a patron of the Amida Trust until his death in 2000, and his son Revered Koyo Kubose. I was very interested to learn about their work in spreading the Dharma in the United States. Ananda Paul Norman writes about the well-known Pureland author Dr. Alfred Bloom. It was a great pleasure to receive an e-mail from Dr. Bloom giving us permission to use his photograph with the article. Finally, Anne Jones writes about a trip to The West Bank inspired by one of her personal Dharmic Heroes and Amida Order Member Richard Meyers, who sadly passed away last year.

Thank you to all of those who have contributed, given permission for us to use their images, or helped in any other way to make this issue possible.

Namo Amida Bu

—Adrian Thompson

REVEREND MASTER JIYU KENNETT
Dharmavidya David Brazier

With permission from Shasta Abbey

I met Reverend Master Jiyu Kennett for the first time in Gloucestershire at a practice venue that no longer exists called the Tathata Centre. Roshi, as I knew her, was recently returned from Japan.

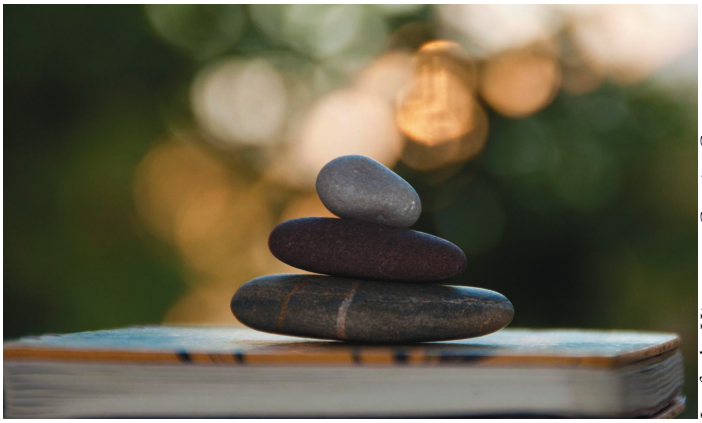
Roshi was English, born in Hastings and had been educated as a church organist. She became interested in Buddhism in her youth and joined the London Buddhist Society (LBS) and was there when Zen Master Keido Koho Chisan visited.

Koho Chisan was, at the time, the head of Sojiji Temple, one of the two most important Soto Zen training temples in Japan. He was on a world tour and was considered sufficiently important to have had an audience with President Eisenhower in the USA. In addition to spreading Japanese goodwill he also had in mind to find a Western disciple. A number of people at the LBS hoped to be chosen, but to their surprise he chose Peggy Kennett. He arranged for her to travel to Malaysia to be ordained and then to go on to Japan. The temple in which she was ordained practised Rinzai Zen and Pureland Buddhism. Years later, some American priests, disciples of Roshi, travelled to Malaysia to visit the temple and were amazed to find themselves not, as they had expected, doing quantities of intensive zazen, but, rather, chanting nembutsu and walking in serpentine processions as part of elaborate ceremonial while children chattered and all the hubbub of ordinary life carried on around.

Roshi went on to Japan and had a very difficult time there. It was not long after the second world war and many of the monks had previously been soldiers. They were not keen on having a westerner in the temple, and a woman at that. According to the temple rules it was open to both sexes but in reality only men lived there. A consequence of adversity can be that training is intense. She applied herself with great vigour but often came up against frustration and oblique persecution. Eventually it proved too much and she

packed her bag. She was on her way to the railway station when the thought "You could be wrong," loomed up in her mind in a powerful way. She went back. Over the next few days a kensho experience—a true awakening of faith—unfolded.

"How did you cope with such harsh treatment?" we asked her.
"I met a few genuine saints - that was good enough for me," she would say.



Josefe aka Hipnosapo: Creative Commons

In that first retreat at the Tathata Centre were gathered together a number of people who had been corresponding with her during the latter part of her time in Japan. One of these was a potter from Cornwall called Bill Pickard. He was, as one might say, ripe for Roshi's teaching and had a major kensho experience during the retreat. This created the most amazing atmosphere. Things we had only read of in books were happening before our eyes. I was still relatively new to Buddhist practice. I had been doing samatha meditation for a couple of years and had received teachings from the Tibetan master Chogyam Trungpa for about one year. I had attended lectures by a variety of different visiting teachers in Cambridge, including some very good and famous ones. Now it was as if I had decided to venture into a deeper area of the swimming pool.

Normally in the course of learning Zen, one does some practice with a local group, then goes to the temple for a weekend introductory retreat and then gradually progresses to more challenging retreats. One's first five or seven day sesshin is a big milestone. However, these were pioneering times. Here I was on my first real taster of Zen on a fourteen day sesshin with a teacher

in the full flush of energy direct from Japan. I think most, perhaps all, the people who attended that event had their lives substantially changed. One day we went to Tewkesbury Cathedral and did walking meditation in the cloisters there. While in the church I had a profound awakening to the deeper meaning of the story of the Garden of Eden that echoed spiritual experiences I had had as a child. The fact that in a mere week Roshi could awaken such experience in me impressed me deeply and I became her disciple.

Armando Maynez: Creative Commons

Roshi travelled on to America. She had contacts there through people she had met while still in Japan. Japan was under American occupation and marines would come to the temple for Zen retreats. Roshi acted as interpreter and assistant teacher to Koho Chisan.

When she got to America it felt to her that there was a much more open and fertile opportunity to spread the Dharma there than there was in England. Some of the people at the London Buddhist Society still resented the fact that she had been preferred over them and she found Britain more conservative and cautious than America. She started a temple in the San Francisco Bay area. Soon it moved to Berkeley and then they bought a disused motel in the Shasta area at the extreme north of California and converted it into a training temple.

There were a number of us in the UK who were now attached to her and it was difficult being so distant. I wanted to go to America but there were visa problems and my then wife did not want to go. Roshi asked one of her

English disciples, Mark Strathearn, to find her a property in the UK to be a base for training British disciples. He and I went to look at a farmhouse on the Northumberland moors that was, at that time, a hippy commune. It was a substantial house in a rather run down state. Mark raised the money and bought it. He was ordained as Houn Daiji. Throssel Hole farm became Throssel Hole Priory and Daiji became prior. Roshi liked medieval Christian terminology. Later it was to become Throssel Hole Abbey.

My wife and I moved to a house close by, over the hill at Doves Pool near Allenheads. It was a bleak spot, about 300 metres above sea level. There was deep snow in winter. Through the seasons the hillside changed colour in spectacular fashion with the progression of wild vegetation. The area was inhabited by many more sheep than humans.

While Roshi built up a following in California and established Shasta Abbey there, a smaller group of us was struggling to establish the full rigour of Zen training in our moorland home. We meditated. We held Zen ceremonial services every morning and evening. Daiji gave regular teachings. Living outside the monastery I could not attend everything. I was employed at that time as a social worker in Hexham about thirty minutes drive to the north.

All seemed to go well and we had a strong sense of participating in something revolutionary and marvellous, a privileged few. Roshi visited at two or three year intervals. Otherwise we were in contact with her by letter, phone and newsletter. Her writings in a small circular called "New From the Tiger's Lair" were eagerly awaited and consumed avidly. They were often startling in their profundity and originality.

Roshi had a truly and fully religious vision. To her, Buddhism was not a secular philosophy or a form of rationalism, nor even merely a spirituality. She would not have it watered down in the least degree. It was religion. It was about "Cleaning up one's karmic jangles," and attempting to live a life of such immaculacy that the blessings of the Buddhas would fall naturally into one's life. It was devotional, rigorous, and grounded in faith.

Every day we read Dogen's *Fukanzazengi*, "Instructions for Zazen," and other important Zen texts such as *Sandokai* and *The Most Excellent Mirror*

Samadhi. These teachings seemed full of paradoxes, yet spoke of a transmission of mind-heart directly from teacher to disciple such that the essence of Shakyamuni lived in our midst.

In Zen the notion of the koan is important. Roshi often said, "The highest koans are the precepts." The attempt to live the moral life in a world such as this one was what made "The koans appear naturally in daily life." In due course Roshi recommended the reading of Kaizan's commentary on the precepts as a daily practice. She gave many lectures about how the precepts have a simple, moral meaning on the surface, but a much deeper spiritual significance underneath. Thus, the first precept in the version we read, went "Do not kill. No life can be cut off. The life of Buddha is increasing. Do not kill Buddha."

This set the precepts up not just as morality, but as a doorway to more profound religious understanding. We were not just commanded to be good. We were asked to find the life of Buddha that is ever increasing, and not to kill it in ourselves or others. The life of Buddha is our true refuge, the foundation of faith and understanding. If one could refrain from killing Buddha in all the little acts of daily life then goodness would take care of itself.

"It is not a matter of striving for enlightenment," she would say, "Enlightenment is a by-product. Look into your self. When I hear somebody say that they need to do something about themselves, that's when I get happy."

Roshi generated the idea that a "first kensho" equates with "entering the stream", but there are further kenshos available after that. In her schema, the first kensho is a major experience, a breaking through of Dharma into one's life. The second kensho is less intense but consists of many small religious experiences that open a variety of doors to insight. Then the third and final kensho is again a major experience, bringing certainty and a vision that transcends death. These ideas are not found elsewhere in the Buddhist literature and I think it is reasonable to take them as a good account of her own experience rather than a schema for all practitioners. In my own experience, mystical experiences can certainly occur at intervals through life and be of varying intensity, but it might not be wise to expect them to conform to the same pattern for all practitioners.

After I had been involved with the monastery for about a decade, there was a major crisis. Daiji made a visit to America and came back disenchanted. He felt that what was happening at Shasta was a form of religious hysteria. He disrobed and left Throssel. Now, by that time, most of the British following of what was by now called the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives were really disciples of Daiji rather than of Roshi directly. There was, in consequence, a great falling away. I remained loyal and was asked to take over the running of Throssel until another monk from America could be sent to relieve me. I was ordained and took on the job. It was a hard winter and I had a number of adventures during this time, including one that was life threatening. The outcome was that I experienced a major kensho experience myself. Roshi was delighted.

With permission from Shasta Abbey

The American monk eventually arrived. The initial joy was, however, short-lived. A rash of new problems sprung up—more than I have space for here—and in due course I left the monastery and moved to another part of the country. By this time, Roshi was sick and did not visit the UK again. I did not see her again until some years later when I was finally able to make a visit to North America. She was still the same ebullient figure, full of the confidence of her faith. She died not long after and on my next visit to the USA I was able to visit her grave at Shasta Abbey.

Kennett Roshi was out of kilter with her times. The contemporary Western view of Buddhism as a way of life or a system for generating insight outside of the frame of religion was not her way. For her Buddhism was a full-blooded religion, really not even just *a* religion, but the heart meaning of all religion. This is the core of the transmission that I received from her and I am deeply grateful for it. ■

You can read more about Revered Master Jiyu Kennett's experiences in Japan in the book *Wild White Goose*.

RUNNING AGAINST THE WIND: A MAGICAL MISERY TOUR OVER THE WEST BANK

Anne Jones

Dedicated to the memory of my friend Richard Meyers, who sadly died on 13th October 2013. His warm heart and quiet devotion to his ecology project were an inspiration for me. Richard's work, and that of others in the London Sangha led me to find out more about Human Rights on the West Bank.

Photograph by Anne Jones

Heat, heart, horror—three words summing up two weeks on the fabled Judaean hills during August 2013 on a camp run by The Israeli Committee against House Demolitions. Peace with justice is their goal. Thirty of us gathered to re-shape the ruins of the home that had belonged to Saleem and Arabiya Shawarmreh: demolished for the sixth time last November 2012. It was a pile of rubble, broken concrete and twisted support beams reaching skywards like skeletons.

Two weeks of mixed experiences lightened by effortless hospitality, camaraderie, a day on the inviting beaches of Tel Aviv, and a celebration evening with traditional Palestinian dancers.

Saleem and Arabiya's home is one of 28,000 demolished on the West Bank since 1967 (63,000 if you include homes in Israeli proper). But bald figures do little to convey the emotional reality; a house equals a family equals security and a sense of place. Reducing a family home with bulldozers to a

pile of rubble at two in the morning reverses this equation into the opposite—shock, trauma, disorientation. Consequences for the children can only be imagined: dispersal to live with relatives, disrupted schooling and loss of friendship networks, are but a few.

Houses are demolished for reasons loosely connected with "lack of permit". An application for a permit costs over $5000, and more are rejected than granted. Of 10 000 applications last year only 18 were granted. The first time this home was demolished was because it was classed as "illegal." Saleem had waited patiently for over three years through deferred rulings as their young family grew. On that occasion the youngest of their children then aged six was so distressed that he ran away and hid in the hills until he was found hiding behind some rocks. Now, twenty years on, he still has psychological problems. The second time was because papers "did not have the correct signatures." When Saleem asked the authorities to clarify the signatures in order to amend the documents, he was told the papers were lost. His appeals to the High Courts were constantly postponed, so he continued to build, on land that had always been in his family. For other families, reasons for demolition include, the land being required for military or archaeological purposes. A site near Jaffa has the remains of houses demolished 'to make way for agriculture', yet two years later there is no sign of other development. Clearly there are other agendas underlying the demolitions, but those Palestinians who still hold land understandably wish to hold on to land that was theirs prior to 1967 or 1948.

Each morning I quietly meditated as the gentle sunrise dappled the hills pink then purple finally revealing their characteristic yellow ochre rocky terrain. That cool air intensified rapidly, heat becoming fiercer, drier, relentlessly sapping our energies after breakfast as we cleared the rubble, passing buckets along, chain-gang style, until forcing us to take a long break from lunchtime until late afternoon.

Plans for the ugly heap of rubble were divided between retaining it in situ, symbolizing a monument to the oppressive Israeli Occupation, or clearing some to create a beautiful space to display art work alongside a photograph exhibition of the family and history of the demolitions. Aesthetics won the day (prompted by Saleem and his foreman Riyadh). Clearing revealed the

outlines of a family home, with a beautiful tiled floor, and into the spaces were placed the promised exhibition, large weather-proofed photographs of the bulldozers, the family, and each rebuilding.

One of the first things I uncovered was a bottle of washing up liquid, almost full, a poignant reminder of family life suddenly halted by bulldozers. Then the flattened branches of the grapevine were hauled up, its snaking offshoots re-arranged, the dusty purple grapes glowing in the rays of the setting sun. Standing symbolically once again, it opened the way into the reclaimed orchard—glittering orange pomegranates, dark figs and greening olives.

A partially remade wall enabled Riyadh to create a mosaic from colourful broken tiles, stating "Remembering 28,000 Palestinian homes demolished by Israel." On the other side we made a mural, depicting those ancient hills witnessing today's history: a shattered home, a little boy running into them in terror and cheery stick people building this memorial and venue.

Heart was poured too by Arabiya, welcoming us into her bare home, cooking and scouring pans three times daily, helped by a rota of us women. We quietly accepted local customs and though this exclusivity rankled at first, it somehow lent a comforting easiness amongst us.

Photograph by Anne Jones

Proud mother and exacting cook, Arabiya patiently corrected my clumsy vegetable chopping, (differing size slices of tomato according to their accompanying role-thick or thin, or tiny lovingly diced). Every meal was laid

upon huge platters before being carried out for everyone to enjoy, falafel, cucumbers, olives, eggs, yoghurt, jam, halva, eggs, sliced meats, pittas. At lunch-time frequently she prepared a traditional stew (lamb or vegetarian) which Saleem proudly served while smiling Riyadh added rice or couscous.

Photograph courtesy of Anne Jones

But within this routine of camaraderie and bounty, came awareness of the chilling reality of everyday life for Palestinians. Such as, the visit to the Atta Jaber family whose extensive acreage, on which they depend, has been farmed for generations, now regularly trespassed by settlers from a nearby new town.

In July, when the settlers trespassed with their children, they began cutting down some of the old established olive trees. Mr Jaber angrily told them this was against the law, and the retort came "The Torah is our law."

In Hebron stories of harassment toward families so severe that miscarriages and stress related ill health have been caused, like artist Niseen's family who have refused to move away from the home their family has lived in for generations. Elsewhere Hebron is a ghost town because the former trading area has been divided by a checkpoint through which Palestinian residents have to pass to reach their homes. While we were waved through holding our passports, a young mother with two small children waited patiently as her bag of vegetables was rummaged through by a disdainful young man in army uniform. However, no tourist can ignore the memorial to the outrages caused by the second Intifada in that town. The adaptation of the Old Testament warnings of retribution, "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth makes the world blind and starving" came to mind.

Further south, in the Negev, a local teacher, Khalil Amour, explained attempts to persuade the Bedouin to move elsewhere—for example by restricting water and even attempting to forbid the use of solar power. He is now studying international law in order to strengthen his position on behalf of

the community while the Israeli Air Force makes clear its imminent intentions to expand across the desert all around Beersheba.

At Military Court Watch the lawyer Gerard Horton told us about the unevenness of the judiciary in relation to children suspected of throwing stones at Israeli targets such as police vehicles. Palestinian boys are dealt with in the Military Courts since the "offences" take place in occupied territory. Arrested in the middle of the night, not informed of their rights to a lawyer, and with no responsible adult present, these children plead guilty rather than wait for months on end, in prison, for a trial, because a "guilty" plea ensures less time in prison. Suspects who are children of Israeli citizens (mostly settlers) are treated in accordance with Israeli law, thereby guaranteeing a fair trial with likelihood of the case being dropped. As a life long worker with troubled children in a wide variety of settings I know the psychological trauma the imprisoned children will suffer as a consequence at this disproportionate reaction to a minor offence.

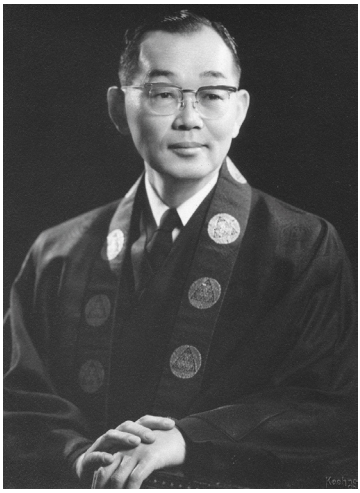
Undeniably there was a magic in those Judaean hills, with groves of pomegranates with their symbolism in mythology, ancient olive groves, and in the fathomless hospitality, and the search to create something beautiful out of rubble. But there was for me a misery in witnessing the cruelty of a people being starved of human rights in a slow manner that must sap their very spirit eventually. Popular thinking suggests that "religion has nothing to do with it" yet all around me were constant reminders of the three main religions, Christian, Judaism and Islam, and I wondered where was their revered God, who each interprets in terms of gentleness, forgiveness and justice. The invocation of The Torah as Law conveys a great deal about the current direction of the State of Israel, indicating that religion is a powerful factor in policy making. While I support the need for Israel to exist, I have seen a country with rights for some, and not for Palestinians, land being desecrated, children being brutalized.

What can one do? On returning I emailed an organization in Israel that runs a programme for youngsters in prisons. A gentle reply told me that simply offering support and spreading information is helpful.

It's a beginning. ■

BUDDHISM WITH ATTITUDE: KEEPING IT *REAL* AND *ALIVE*

Wendy Shinyo Haylett



Rev. Gyomay Kubose: courtesy of Wendy Haylett

Rev. Koyo Kubose and his father, Rev. Gyomay Kubose, continued the mission started by Honen and Shinran—bringing the Dharma to everyone in their everyday lives. Rev. Gyomay Kubose's lifework was dedicated to promoting Buddhism in America, so that the Dharma could be part of the lives of those in a Western culture, where Buddhism was not native.

Rev. Gyomay Kubose lived his life energized by this calling. He founded the Buddhist Temple of Chicago in 1944 and worked as its head minister until retiring at the age of 86. He was recognized as a true pioneer in the westernisation of Buddhism and received multiple awards, including the prestigious religious award from the Bukkyo Denso Kyoki (Society for the Promotion of Buddhism) for his international missionary work. He was active in Japanese culture and the arts, and in his local community, including the Boy Scouts of American, the City of Chicago, and the Japanese American Service Community.

Born in San Francisco on 21st June 1905, Masao Kubose was the son of Japanese immigrants. When he was three he was sent to live with his father's family in Japan, following his parents' divorce. He returned to the United States when he was 17. Although he was raised in a Buddhist family, he was not interested in religion until he met Rev. Taigan Hata of the Oakland Buddhist Church.

Rev. Hata was a student of Rev. Haya Akegarasu, whom he met in Japan. Rev. Akegarasu had a profound influence on Rev. Hata, giving him an entirely new understanding of Buddhism that coloured his teachings at the Oakland Church and caused an uproar with the Board. The Board accused Rev. Hata of being a person with wrong views, or "Iyanjin."

At the same time, Masao Kubose was getting more actively involved in the church and Buddhism, organizing a popular young people's group and becoming the President of the local chapter of the Young Buddhist Association of Northern California. Rev. Hata was ultimately dismissed from the church, and he started a new group called Kyudosha Mission (Seeker of the Way), which was supported by Masao. Masao Kubose was critical of the current state of Buddhist churches and teachings in America and resigned from the Buddhist Churches of America, even though he had been quite active.

In 1929, the then 24 year-old Masao was asked to serve as Rev. Akegarasu's personal secretary during Akegarasu's tour of the United States. After that tour, he was invited by Rev. Akegarasu to study at his temple in Japan. Kubose travelled to Japan in 1936 with his new wife, Minnie. Masao and Minnie lived at Rev. Akegarasu's temple, where Masao was given the Dharma name, "Gyomei", meaning "Bright Dawn." He later changed the spelling to "Gyomay" to make it easier for Americans to pronounce.

Photographs courtesy of Wendy Haylett

Rev. Gyomay with Rev. Akegarasu 1929

Rev. Gyomay Kubose's ordination in 1936

With the tension of the pending war building in Japan, they and other Americans were advised to leave for the United States. They lived with Minnie's parents in California with their two sons, Don and Sunnan, until April 1942, when they were ordered to an internment camp, along with 120,000 other Japanese Americans.

They remained at the camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming for two years, when Rev. Gyomay Kubose relocated to Chicago, where he established the Buddhist Temple of Chicago. In 1966, Rev. Kubose flew to Japan for three more years of studies in Buddhism at Otani University. Before heading back home, he travelled extensively, visiting historical Buddhist sites in India and attending Buddhist Conferences in Malaysia and Europe.

At the Temple of Chicago, Rev. Kubose wore street clothes and added only a ceremonial belt, robe and prayer beads as required by specific rituals. His simple attitude and mild manners often belied his knowledge and experiences, and his great calling to spread the teachings and help others.

The key to those teachings is best illustrated by what he wrote in his booklet, *American Buddhism: A New Direction*, first presented in 1965 at the Eastern Young Buddhists League Conference:

> Regardless of its intrinsic value, the only real value of Buddhism for the individual is determined by how one understands and lives it. . . . There is a living Buddhism and a dead Buddhism. Dead Buddhism is the mere knowledge of Buddhism. Living Buddhism is that which is understood by the whole body, not just the head or heart, and is lived by the person.

This philosophy, living, and teaching style is like a lineage imprint, from Honen, to Shinran Shonin, and down through the Higashi Honganji sect, producing many influential thinkers, including Bright Dawn transmission lineage teachers, Rev. Manshi Kiyozawa and Rev. Haya Akegarasu. Rev. Akegarasu, a student of Rev. Kiyozawa, was the successor to Kiyozawa's revival movement and he advocated his teachings throughout Japan.

When asked what key teaching of Rev. Akegarasu most influenced Rev. Gyomay Kubose, Rev. Koyo Kubose said it was non-dualism. He said that The Way of Oneness that his father emphasized stressed the non-dualistic teachings, especially as contrasted to the traditional Jodo Shinshu environment. As Rev. Koyo Kubose explains, Amida is often viewed in a dualistic way, but when Rev. Gyomay Kubose spoke of Amida, he would use the non-dual term "universal life" as a synonym. Rev. Koyo Kubose said his

father's koan was "just live life." When he autographed his books, he would write "Naturalness," "Suchness" or "Oneness."

Rev. and Mrs. Arthur Takemoto wrote in a tribute to Rev. Gyomay Kubose, in the book, *Remembering Sensei*:

> Sensei was an innovator. . . It took a great deal of gumption and fortitude in trying to open the eyes of the then Japanese American public to a broader scope of understanding of Jodo Shinshu in America. Going beyond a closed and narrow, medieval concept of Jodo Shinshu, he ventured to bring Jodo Shinshu as it should be practiced and understood which Shinran Shonin himself advocated in the Kyo Gyo Shinsho—that he wanted to clarify the teaching of Honen at the same time follow the Dharma as taught by Buddha Shakyamuni.

Asked if Rev. Koyo Kubose practiced the Nembutsu, he replied that his sense of Nembutsu is "to think about the Buddha" and that "nem" is the core of mindfulness. He emphasized that when something becomes a ritual, it becomes commonplace and essentially dead, robbing the personal impact from people.

When asked what sutra or sutras most influenced Rev. Gyomay Kubose, Rev. Koyo said his father's favourite sutra was the Tan Butsu Ge, and he himself was most influenced by The Heart of the Great Wisdom Paramita Sutra. But, he added that he "wonders about the notion of sutras themselves" regarding their form and chanting. Most are rooted in history and then become central to a particular denomination.

When Rev. Gyomay Kubose was 92, his son, Rev. Koyo Kubose realized what a tragedy it would be, if after a lifetime dedicated to promoting Buddhism in America, his father's great contributions would be lost. And with that, the Kubose Dharma Legacy was established in 1998 to ensure the continuity of Rev. Kubose's lifework. At the same time, Rev. Gyomay Kubose transmitted his spiritual authority to his son, Rev. Koyo Sunnan Kubose.

The Kubose Dharma Legacy became the Bright Dawn Institute for American

Photographs courtesy of Wendy Haylett

Transmission to Rev. Koyo Sunnan Kubose

Buddhism in 2008, then the Bright Dawn Center of Oneness Buddhism in 2011. It supports a broad range of organizational and publication projects, under the spiritual direction of Rev. Koyo Kubose and leadership of the Board of Directors. It manages reprinting of Rev. Gyomay Kubose's books, publishing and distributing its free quarterly newsletter, Oneness, and more, including current planning for a future Dharma centre in Coarsegold, California.

When it comes to The Bright Dawn Center of Oneness Buddhism, Rev. Koyo mentions that since we're just starting our own legacy and tradition, our niche sutras will be the writings of Rev. Gyomay Kubose and the main goal of Bright Dawn is to keep our central "sutras" in Rev. Gyomay Kubose's writings available, keep his actual voice alive in the Dial the Dharma talks, and support the core Lay Ministry program to spread the teachings.

Rev. Koyo believes the Lay Ministry program is core to Bright Dawn's mission and he has been surprised at how it has evolved into natural Sanghas developing among each class and among the Lay Ministers as a whole. The sense of togetherness and sharing of the Lay Ministers individual spiritual journeys, in a "mutual polishing" atmosphere, is something he thinks offers the most value and is a demonstration of what living Buddhism is all

about. It is very much a "real life" approach, not an intellectual approach to Buddhism.

The Lay Ministry program was established in 2006, and since that time it has trained and induced 28 Lay Ministers, with six more to be inducted in the summer of 2014. Currently, there are three Lay Minister candidates participating in the program that began in 2013 and they will be inducted in 2016.

The Lay Ministry Program offers an important alternative to the type of religious training that prepares someone to function in traditional professional ministerial role and tries to meet the needs of today's increasingly secular world. The program endorses the concept of lay spiritual teachers, instead of a sharply defined dichotomy between lay and clergy, encouraging lay people to provide religious teachings and practices rather than just be passive consumers or receivers.

Currently, it is a three year program consisting of three phases, introducing the Way of Oneness during a four month period, 15 months of coursework about Buddhism, and a 12 month practicum of formulating individual action plans with the goal of developing a continually evolving daily practice and being able to see the Dharma teachings in all aspects of one's life. The program concludes with participants attending a Lay Ministry Induction Ceremony at the Bright Dawn Center in Coarsegold, California.

Inducted Lay Ministers are active in their local communities, establishing independent Sanghas, contributing to other Buddhist and religious groups as guest speakers and Dharma teachers, working in prison ministries, functioning as Lay Ministry training program facilitators and co-facilitators, hosting or presenting Dharma Glimpses on Bright Dawn's Live Dharma Sunday BlogTalk radio show on Sunday mornings, and serving as spiritual resources and friends to a wider community through Bright Dawn Sangha Ning site discussion groups and forums.■

More information about the Dharma teachings of Rev. Gyomay and Rev. Koyo Kubose can be found on www.brightdawn.org and on the Ning site brightdawnsangha.ning.com

TAKAGI KENMYO: A LIGHT IN A DARK NIGHT

Richard Ollier

> Namu Amida Butsu. . . shines like a light in a dark night, protecting us with absolute equality. (Takagi Kenmyo)

Masahiko Futami: Creative Commons

"With absolute equality"—these words were to become of supreme importance to Takagi Kenmyo, who was born in 1864 in Japan's Aichi Prefecture. He led an uneventful life as a Shin priest until he was posted, in 1897, to the Josenji Temple in Wakayama Prefecture. Here, his life changed dramatically as he was moved to engage directly with the extreme problems of deprivation and prejudice experienced by members of this temple. Many of his congregation lived in hisabetsu buraku (socially discriminated communities) and were persecuted because they worked in trades associated with the slaughtering of animals, such as tanning. While Takagi did not condone the manner in which these people gained their livelihood, he strongly believed that they should on no account be excluded from temple life because of it. He believed in absolute spiritual equality, and that nothing anyone does ever shuts them off from Amida's light. He never shied away from the very real challenges that refusing to divide people into "good" and "evil" can involve in practice, but stood alongside, in compassion, people whose actions must have appalled him.

J. Kunst: Creative Commons

Indeed, the strong concern for equality, which grew in him during his ministry, fuelled his belief that we should never judge others, because judgement is only possible in a context where there is an imbalance of power. Such judgement is a form of abuse because it exploits power differentials.

This insight fed into all his work as a priest. For example, he campaigned vigorously for the abolition of state prostitution. For him, nothing quite demonstrated the abuse of power resulting from inequality like the socially accepted trafficking of young girls into the chain of state-run brothels frequented by senior army officers and civil servants.

In 1910, an event occurred which was to have profound, and ultimately fatal, consequences for Takagi: the so-called "High Treason Incident." Workers in a Japanese lumber mill were arrested and accused of plotting to assassinate the Emperor. In fact, the plot had been fabricated by the government in order to discredit the socialists and anarchists who were gaining influence in Japan at this time.

As he knew many of these social activists, Takagi was accused of involvement with the "plot", put on trial, and sentenced to death. Twelve of his co-defendants were executed, but Takagi had his sentence reduced to life-imprisonment. On the very day his sentence commenced, he was stripped of his ordination as a Buddhist priest and excommunicated.

On June 24th 1914, just as war clouds were starting to darken the sky on the other side of the world, Takagi hanged himself in prison.

His story does not quite end there, however. In 1996, Higashi Honganji in Kyoto (the headquarters of Takagi's Shin order) finally acknowledged that a

great injustice had been done, and Takagi was posthumously reinstated as a fully ordained Shin Buddhist priest.

Why is he something of a hero to me? His overriding concern for equality, as well as his natural modesty, would certainly have meant he would have rejected such a description; and there is definitely about him none of that scent of egoism often pervasive around "martyrs."

I warm to him because he died alone, abandoned and unappreciated and I find this almost unbearably sad. Of course, many of the social problems he wrestled with resonate with us a century later: prejudice, trafficking and abuse of the vulnerable. He opposed wars of foreign adventurism too—in his case, the Russo-Japanese War—and this can strike a chord with us.

But I am fond of him for a reason which both goes beyond and underpins these others. He asserted the value of "spiritual" values over "materialistic" ones, however well-intentioned the latter may be. He disliked political labels, seeing them as divisive. He was, as he explained in his article "My Socialism", a socialist of sorts, but not of an overtly "political" kind. For him, it was supremely the Nembutsu itself which was the great leveller, the practice which would deliver everyone equally, regardless of wealth, social position or political affiliation, to the Land of Bliss. He was not one of those who would storm the Bastille or the Winter Palace. For him, it was spiritual practice which would bring people together and literally change the world, bringing about the advent of a Pure Land. People who chant together, stay together. Start with a single congregation, and work outwards, he seems to say. We may feel a twinge of scepticism, and draw back a little from a vision which may seem at first a little timid but which in fact possesses sheer, breathtaking radicalism and audacity. It is a vision which emerged from the intensity and lived reality of Takagi's experience, and this, his enduring legacy, deserves our gratitude.

I, for one, shall try to remember him from time to time this year, the centenary of his death. ■

You can read more about Takagi Kenmyo in
Living in Amida's Universal Vow.

IPPEN IN THE KANTO

Jason Ranek

I remember I was in Sagami province, speaking
to a group of farmers on the veranda of Jizōdō temple.
They had accepted fuda, and I was telling them
of the joy of casting off heart and mind
and letting the Name be their very self,
when suddenly, from a sky of violet clouds,
clusters of lilacs and cherry blossoms began to fall like rain.
The Jishu were stunned. I was stunned.

The farmers ran from the veranda
and began to frantically collect the blossoms,
filling the hems of their kimonos.
I tried to summon them back to hear my sermon,
but in vain. They were ecstatic, some saying
that Kan'non had visited, others that Jizō was present.
But all believed that the sacred flowers of the Pure Land
would bless their homes and fields.

When their garments could hold no more, they left,
abandoning their torn and trampled fuda in the dirt
where they had vied with one another
for this bloom or that. Ta'amidabutsu said
it was shameful, but I said we should not judge
the farmers or the flowers. Perhaps
they were not ready to accept the Nembutsu;
perhaps they needed faith in Kan'non or Jizō
more than the Name. Besides, what can be done about it?
It was the Buddha's work, not my own.

As we departed, several of the Jishu began
to collect the flowers, but I admonished them,
saying, "Is not the six-petaled blossom
given by Amida-san enough for you?"
Ko'amidabutsu asked, "But aren't these flowers a sign
of Amida's blessing on your mission?" I replied,
"As miraculous a sign as these flowers are,
in the end, they are still a matter of karma
in the three realms. There is not one blossom
that will keep its freshness or fragrance
for more than a couple days. I wonder if those farmers
can discern well the Buddha's teaching in that?
As for you, Ko'a, what else might you be missing
if you go chasing after signs and wonders?"

The Jishu put down the flowers they had gathered
and we departed in silence. After a few minutes,
Ko'amidabutsu began to chant, and soon
the whole company was joyfully intoning the Name.
My heart swelled with gratitude, and the myriad flowers
that lay in the grass or had lodged in the trees
became ordinary for the first time.

Photograph by Jeff Kubina: Creative Commons

DR ALFRED BLOOM: AMIDA'S UNLIKELY MISSIONARY TO THE WEST

Ananda Paul Norman

With permission from Dr. Alfred Bloom

Alan Watts, Philip Kapleau, Bhikku Bodhi, Sharon Salzberg, and Pema Chodron, are names well known to Western Buddhists. Each has played an important role in making ethnic forms of Buddhism accessible to westerners. Sadly, Dr. Alfred Bloom, who has been writing and teaching about Jodo Shinshu for over 50 years, is missing from the above list. For the majority of the second half of the 20th century, Dr. Bloom was the only non-ethnically Japanese person writing about Pureland Buddhism. Without his persistent efforts, the riches of Pureland Buddhism would still be hidden behind the staunchly conservative Jodo Shinshu tradition.

By birth, Dr. Bloom appears and unlikely missionary of Pureland Buddhism. He was born into a Jewish Family. His mother converted to Christianity and though unclear, it seems that his father remained within the Jewish faith. In referring to his upbringing, Dr. Bloom says that he was raised in a mixed religious household in which religion was often the topic of conversation.

Nevertheless, as a teen, Dr. Bloom was a Christian fundamentalist who resolved to become a missionary. Little did the young Bloom realize the type of missionary work that lay ahead. However, religious vocation would have to wait. It was the time of the Second World War. Dr. Bloom enlisted in the Army, at age eighteen. He studied Japanese and then joined the U.S. occupation forces in Japan. It was at this time, while preaching to a mixed audience as part of a youth Christian organization, that Dr. Bloom first encounters Amida. After his talk the translator tells him that the Christian idea of Grace "is like Amida." It was a paradigm shattering statement. Until then the young Bloom had thought that Christianity was unique in its message of saving grace.

Discharged from the army, Dr. Bloom enrolled in a Baptist college where he obtained his undergraduate degree in theology. Afterwards he entered a seminary where he completed his divinity studies in Christian Theology and ordained as a Christian minister. However, something was changing within the young Bloom. He was moving away from his fundamentalist approach to the Bible, and beginning to look for answers outside of Christianity. He entered the relatively liberal Harvard Divinity School to pursue his Doctoral Studies. It was the late 50s and early 60s, a time of much social upheaval with the cold war, civil rights, and the beginnings of yet another war. In this context Dr. Bloom recounts that he truly began to doubt that God acts in history.

Journal articles written by Dr. Bloom at this time show that he was already studying classical Buddhism. He was still approaching Buddhism from outside, as a Christian, but his ideas were radical enough that at least one well-known religious journal, the Journal of Bible and Religion, introduced his article with a short disclaimer, stating that they do not necessarily agree with the author on all points.

In 1957, while still a doctoral student, he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and returned to Japan to study the writings of Shinran Shonin. At some point in his studies, he comes across the Tannisho. This text seems to mark a significant landmark in Dr. Bloom's religious formation:

> Above all, reading the Tannisho, among other Shinshu texts, deeply impressed me with the realism, spirituality, and perspective of universal compassion that is revealed in those writings. Shinran's teaching reflects a deeply personal, non-authoritarian, critical approach to religious faith that found resonance in my thinking.

Returning from Japan Dr. Bloom finds his way to Hawaii and the University of Hawaii where he was offered an associate professorship in the religion department. While teaching at the University, he was able to connect with the Jodo Shinshu temple and its congregation. Like many converts, Dr. Bloom must have struggled with the faith of his childhood. No matter the doubts, turning away from Christianity must have been difficult. I imagine

that it was also difficult, as a non-Japanese outsider, to find a place in the Jodo Shinshu tradition. However, in 1974, Dr. Bloom had obviously found a religious home and resolved his inner struggles. In his words, he "became a disciple of Shinran Shonin."

Dackel828: Creative Commons

It had been almost 15 years since he arrived in Hawaii and nine years after the publication of his book entitled, *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace*. This wonderful and succinct book is one of the most lucid texts on Pureland Buddhism in the Jodo Shinshu tradition. Dr. Bloom leads us to an understanding of Shinran's radical understanding of Amida's saving grace, through a brief history of the development of Pureland thought through the seven Pureland patriarchs. He outlines key elements of Shinran's Nembutsu. Most significantly, Dr. Bloom uses the term "Theology of Light". Introducing the controversial idea that the term "theology," usually used only for theistic religions, might be applicable to Buddhism.

> Through Shinran's frequent reference to the Light of Amida Buddha we could describe his theology as a theology of Light. For according to him it is in the embrace of Light that passion-ridden beings are granted the status of salvation realized in the awakening of faith.

He then goes on to introduce the reader to the idea of Universal Salvation:

> . . . Shinran's concept of salvation through the embrace within Amida Buddha's Light represents a significant change in emphasis from the traditional Pure Land doctrine based on his insight into the nature of absolute Other Power. According to previous Pure Land doctrine, the Light of Amida Buddha shone only on those who recite the name.

Universal salvation must have been a challenging idea for someone like Dr. Bloom. Raised in a fundamentalist Christian religious tradition, he would have understood salvation as only available for the select few true believers of the faith. All others, those of wrong belief, would suffer God's harsh judgment and spend eternity in the suffering of hell.

Dr. Bloom began his tenure as Dean of the Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) in Berkley California in 1986. Still a Full Professor at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu, he was "on loan" to IBS. The Institute was in the process of developing a graduate level program of Shin Buddhist Studies and a seminary for the training of Buddhist ministers, particularly in the Jodo Shinshu Tradition. It was believed that Dr. Bloom could help them develop this program.

IBS was also part of the prestigious Graduate Theological Union. The Graduate Theological Union hosts a number of seminaries from various religious traditions. As part of the IBS faculty, Dr. Bloom's duties included active engagement in Buddhist-Christian dialogue, for which he was well suited. Interestingly, Dr. Bloom himself was not ordained as a Jodo Shinshu Priest until 1990 at the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji in Kyoto, Japan.

Dr. Bloom's commentary on the most ubiquitous of Jodo Shinshu texts, the Shoshinge, was published in 1986. This short text, composed by Shinran, is chanted by ordained Jodo Shinshu priests daily. Traditionally the Shoshinge was almost always recited, in its entirety and in Japanese, as part of the regular weekly services of the Hongwanjis in the United States. However, due to the continual decline in Japanese-speaking congregants, one now only hears the text recited on special occasions.

Dr. Bloom uses the translation created by Rev. T. Nagatani and Hawaii based writer Ruth Tabrah. Their translation is modern, fluid, and quite accessible to English speaking audiences. Once again Dr. Bloom, using his clear and simple prose, follows and expands on the text in such a way as to deepen our understanding of Shinran's thought and its radical implications. Below are a few samples from his discussion of the Seven Great Teachers:

> Our faith is not simply the faith or belief of a limited human being, but is itself the reflection of the intention of ultimate reality. It is absolute in itself. This is the basis of the firm religious conviction that our lives manifest the true and the real. This is the source of meaning for our existence.

Older and walking with a cane now, Dr. Bloom continues to write and teach. His enthusiasm for Jodo Shinshu has not flagged in these many years. He recently published *The Essential Shinran, A Buddhist Path of True Entrusting.* For those who are interested in the writings of Shinran, but find the two volumes of The Collected Works of Shinran a bit overwhelming, this book distills some of Shinran's central ideas. In this book, Dr. Bloom remains in the background, allowing his teacher, Shinran, to speak directly to us. It reveals Shinran Shonin at his literary best. Not a book to be read in one sitting. It is a book to contemplate over the course of many years and through many reads.

Dr. Bloom remains involved in dialogue about the future of the Hongwanjis. As always, he manages to broach this delicate subject with respect and gratitude for the faith tradition in which he has found a home. ■

M. Hoefner: Wikimedia Commons

Visit **Amida Academy** for online courses in Buddhist ministry, Buddhist psychology and our Introduction to Pureland Buddhism course: http://courses.zentherapyinternational.com

For Amida events around the world check out the web-page of your local centre or visit our online networking site, **Friends of Amida Order**: http://amidatrust.ning.com

UNITED KINGDOM

Amida London hosts regular day retreats and other events. As well as a Dharma centre it is also the home of **The Institute for Zen Therapy**

Sukhavati
21 Sussex Way London N7 6RT

Telephone: 0207 263 2183
info@amidatrust.com
www.amidalondon.org.uk
http://www.instituteforzentherapy.com

Amida Newcastle has regular weekly meetings in Gosforth.

sujatin@gmail.com
http://lotusinthemud.typepad.com/amida_newcastle/

Amida Malvern have weekly & monthly meetings in Malvern.

Telephone: 01684 572 444
kaspalita@amidatrust.com
www.malvernsangha.co.uk

Amida Birmingham has monthly meetings.

Adrian_Thompson@Europe.com
Telephone: 07527 480974
www.facebook.com/BirminghamSangha

REST OF EUROPE

Amida Belgium has regular meetings, and events for Buddhist practice and Buddhist psychology.

http://www.namoamidabu.be

Amida Israel meets on the 3rd Sunday each month, 20:30–22:30 for practice & sharing.

ymatri@gmail.com

NORTH AMERICA

Amida USA is a non-profit church based in Hawai'i created to further the spread and practice of Amida-shu Pureland Buddhism.

http://www.amidausa.org/

Amida Mosaic (Ontario, Canada) is a community of spiritual friends. Amida Mosaic Sangha activities are held in London Ontario under the leadership of Prajnatara T. Bryant, a Gankonin with the Amida Order.

amidamosaic@gmail.com
http://amidamosaic.com

Amitabha in Sukhavati Paradise, Tibetan, circa 1700; Wikimedia Commons

The original and sacred vows
Are the unique and essential path
To enter the Pure Land.
Therefore, with body, speech and mind,
We are devoted to the teachings
That all may attain the state of bliss.