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Voice Of Wisdom

Monthly Newsletter of The Triple Gem Of The North

Pulling Out the Thorn

Often, when there is great pain in the body, or when there is great disturbance in the mind, a skillful meditator can just say 'stop!' They can let go in a moment and stop fighting, stop craving, stop trying to control. But when you experience great pain you may think you are going crazy and fight even more. Ask yourself, what's wrong with being in great pain or being greatly disappointed? The answer is, nothing is wrong. Such things are a natural part of life. They are unavoidable. So, let go of the 'controller'.

When you let go of the controller and stop craving, a strange thing happens. The madness stops and the pain disappears. I had that happen to me with great pain once. Every monastic has to come across this sooner or later. Some just want to run away, but they know they can't. It's a case of wanting to go forward, but you can't go forward, wanting to go backwards, but you can't go backwards, wanting to stay still, but you can't stay still. You don't know what to do! You can't go forward, you can't go back, you can't stay still - this is where you let go. When you do let go, you find out that half of the suffering was the fighting.

The Lord Buddha said there are two thorns that cause suffering in a human being (see SN, 36 6). The first thorn is the thorn of the five senses that is physical suffering. The second thorn is the mental thorn. There's the thorn of having sickness, having pain, and having to hear, see, taste, smell, and touch unpleasant things. Then there is the proliferation that goes around that, which is mental pain. It's very important here to notice the physical pain - seeing what you don't want to see, hearing what you don't want to hear, and doing what you don't want to do. And it's important to recognize there's not much you can do about that.

Let go, just be with the present moment. You will find out that if you can let go of the pain and allow it to be, the whole situation changes. The first time I did this as a monk in Thailand was with a toothache. As soon as I let go the pain disappeared. It was quite a remarkable event in my monastic life to see intense pain suddenly go - just through wisdom power. Ajahn Chah and other great monks, following The Lord Buddha, always taught the Third Noble Truth as a way to end suffering, which is to let go of craving. They kept on saying it again and again, but theory is never as powerful as practice.

If you really let go, the whole problem just caves in - it fades and disappears. This is a beautiful moment of insight. Not insight based on thinking or theory, but insight based on experience. For a moment you let go of suffering because you don't fight. Thus the Second and Third Noble Truths are not just something to be thought about, written about, and theorized about, they are to be practiced, especially the Third Noble Truth about letting go.

- By Ajahn Brahmavamso

A Meaningful Life

Ask yourself if you have done things for you, your family, friends and the future. If you have done something like this--- appreciate it. Be happy you are doing something. If not, find ways to do meaningful things for the world without wasting your time and energy. The one who thinks about this will give meaning to their world.

People who have done something meaningful think about what they can do. Those who have not thought about it think about what they should do.

But, what do you do if you find out later that you have done the wrong thing?

That means that you have covered yourself in ignorance and the thing you did was based on emotions. You didn't know what you were doing. Emotions really cover up our clear thinking. It is better to have wisdom and understanding. With wisdom and understanding it is possible to never make a mistake. If one can be mindful at all times then one can be without mistakes. Our biggest weakness is failing to trust ourselves. If you think about that you will realize your weakness and then you can correct yourself with effort and determination.

When you become mindful you will begin to enjoy yourself and the things you have. You will not be seeking outside entertainment. Most of the time we are not enjoying what we have and that is why we are trying to entertain ourselves. Some people can go out into the woods and enjoy the experience, while others do not enjoy it at all. They would rather stay at home, work on the computer or watch a movie.

You should ask yourself how you are using your time. If you do not train yourself to do useful things now you will see when you get older that you won't know what to do with yourself. You will just be living until you die. Ask yourself whether or not you are doing that. It will help you to understand you and what it means to be meaningful. The one who is meaningful to oneself will be meaningful to the world.

— Bhante Sathi —

A Parable

A man traveling across a field encountered a tiger. He fled, the tiger after him. Coming to a precipice, he caught hold of the root of a wild vine and swung himself down over the edge. The tiger sniffed at him from above. Trembling, the man looked down to where, far below, another tiger was waiting to eat him. Only the vine sustained him.

Two mice, one white and one black, little by little started to gnaw away the vine. The man saw a luscious strawberry near him. Grasping the vine with one hand, he plucked the strawberry with the other. How sweet it tasted!

Weekly Meditation**Mankato — Monday Night**

7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Unitarian Universality Fellowship

937 Charles Ave.

Mankato, MN 56001

Call Tricia 507-524 -3245

St Peter — Tuesday Night

(Next meeting: Sept 11)

7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Gustavus Adolphus College

Linner Lounge

Call Asitha 641-420-7708

Chanhassen -Saturday Morning

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Chanhassen Library

11 Kerber Drive

Chanhassen, MN

Call Ralph@ 952-934-9727

Biweekly Meditation(The next meeting will be in
September.)**Northfield — Thursday Night**

Northfield Buddhist Meditation Center

6:30 pm - 7:45 pm

313 1/2 Division Street, Suite 201

Northfield, MN 55057

Carleton College

8:30pm - 9:30pm

Chapel Lounge

One North College Street

Northfield, MN

All Are WelcomeThe Gift of Insults

There once lived a great warrior. Though quite old, he still was able to defeat any challenger. His reputation extended far and wide throughout the land and many students gathered to study under him.

One day an infamous young warrior arrived at the village. He was determined to be the first man to defeat the great master. Along with his strength, he had an uncanny ability to spot and exploit any weakness in an opponent. He would wait for his opponent to make the first move, thus revealing a weakness, and then would strike with merciless force and lightning speed. No one had ever lasted with him in a match beyond the first move.

Much against the advice of his concerned students, the old master gladly accepted the young warrior's challenge. As the two squared off for battle, the young warrior began to hurl insults at the old master. He threw dirt and spit in his face. For hours he verbally assaulted him with every curse and insult known to mankind. But the old warrior merely stood there motionless and calm. Finally, the young warrior exhausted himself. Knowing he was defeated, he left feeling shamed.

Somewhat disappointed that he did not fight the insolent youth, the students gathered around the old master and questioned him. "How could you endure such an indignity? How did you drive him away?"

"If someone comes to give you a gift and you do not receive it," the master replied, "to whom does the gift belong?"



My Name is Faye...

My name is Faye. I am 24 and was born in England. I was raised around meditation, as my dad is a Buddhist and a single parent. From the age of nine I sat with him at his meditation meetings until I got tired and would take myself off to a corner to sleep. As I got older I would sit and meditate in my room but as teenage hood set in.....

When I was 15 I met a man named Daz. He was 33. We became a couple. Daz was homeless and heavily into drugs. When I turned 16, I went home one day, packed my bag and became homeless with Daz. I said good- bye to my Dad's girlfriend but my Dad was not home so I could not say good -bye to him too. Up until the point I turned 16 I had been spending my weekends on the streets with Daz and taking a lot of drugs, mostly speed and marijuana.

Daz was a very violent man so I spent much of my time as his punching bag when he got upset and angry. I was very young and naïve, so I did not see the abuse I was suffering--- it was just my life.

Daz was very controlling. I was never allowed to make any friends. If I did we would move to a different town. I also realized that doing what he wanted me to do meant that I would suffer less from his violence.

During my time on the streets I made money in various different ways. In the summer I would do hair wrapping. When tourist season was over I would “busk” on the street doing gymnastics, which made me enough money to live on and when it became too cold to do that I would beg for money.

I slept in many different places: shop doorways, parks, graveyards and behind buildings. When I was lucky someone would offer me their floor to sleep on.

In September 1999 Daz and I arrived in a town called Lancaster where we stayed for a while. I even made a few friends; by now I had become a little less compliant although my abuse did not lessen. I was unwilling to put up with it so quietly any more.

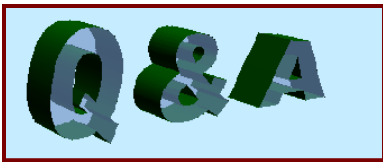
On the day before New Years Eve a visitor come to my door. Daz was in Hospital from an overdose. When he arrived home I asked him to leave and for the first time since I had known him he did something nice for me ---he left.

I then met a man named Karl who I stayed with for two and a half years. He was less violent than Daz and not really into drugs, he only smoked marijuana. I started doing volunteer work for a charity organization and had joined a gym. I had begun to make friends. Then one night Karl threatened me with a knife---so I left.



I shared a house with my landlord for a few months after this. It is at this time that I started to practice meditation and began put my life back together. Meditation has made a huge difference to my life. I am more at peace now than I ever believed I could be.

I have been at the Nilambe Meditation Center in Sri Lanka for six months where I meditate, teach yoga, work, and chant from 5:00 am. to 7:00 p.m. The longest I meditate for is an hour and a half (one day I will be able to sit for longer :-))



Ajita's Question

[Ajita:]

With what is the world shrouded?
Because of what doesn't it shine?
With what is it smeared? Tell me,
What is its great danger & fear?

[The Buddha:]

With ignorance the world is shrouded.
Because of stinginess, heedlessness, it
doesn't shine.
With longing it is smeared.
I tell you: Suffering, stress-it is great dan-
ger & fear.

[Ajita:]

They flow every which way, the streams.
What is their blocking?
What their restraint? Tell me,
with what are they finally stopped?

[The Buddha:]

Whatever streams there are in the world,
their blocking is mindfulness;
mindfulness is their restraint. I tell you:
with discernment they are finally stopped.

[Ajita:]

Discernment & mindfulness,
name & form, dear sir,
Tell me when asked this,
where are they brought to a halt?

[The Buddha:]

This question you have asked, Ajita;
I will answer it for you:
where name & form
are brought to a halt
without trace:
With the cessation of consciousness
they are brought to a halt.

[Ajita:]

Those here who have fathomed the
Dhamma,
those who are learners, those who are run-
of-the-mill:
When you, dear sir, astute, are asked this,
tell me their manner of life.

[The Buddha:]

He should not hanker
for sensual pleasures;
should be clear in mind,
Skilled in all mental qualities.
He, the monk, should live his life
mindfully.

“Maybe”

Once upon a time a peasant had a horse. This horse ran away, so the peasant's neighbors came to console him for his bad luck. He answered: "Maybe".

The day after the horse came back, leading 6 wild horses with it. The neighbors came to congratulate him on such good luck. The peasant said: "Maybe".

The day after, his son tried to saddle and ride on one of the wild horses, but he fell down and broke his leg. Once again the neighbors came to share that misfortune. The peasant said: "Maybe".

The day after, soldiers came to conscript the youth of the village, but the peasant's son was not chosen because of his broken leg. When the neighbors came to congratulate, the peasant said again: "May be".

(Huai Nan Tzu)

Yammakavagga - The Pairs

(verses 1-20)

Mind is the forerunner of (all evil) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with wicked mind, suffering follows one, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox.

Mind is the forerunner of (all good) states. Mind is chief; mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with pure mind, AFFECTION follows one, even as one's shadow that never leaves.

``He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me," in those who harbor such thoughts hatred is not appeased.

``He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me," in those who do not harbor such thoughts hatred is appeased.

Hate is not overcome by hate; by Love (Metta) alone is hate appeased. This is an eternal law.

The others know not that in this quarrel we perish; those of them who realize it, have their quarrels calmed thereby.

Whoever lives contemplating pleasant things, with senses unrestrained, in food immoderate, indolent, inactive, him verily Mara overthrows, as the wind (overthrows) a weak tree.

Whoever lives contemplating ``the Impurities", with senses restrained, in food moderate, full of faith, full of sustained energy, him Mara overthrows not, as the wind (does not overthrow) a rocky mountain.

He who is stained (with defilements) without self-control and truthfulness is not worthy of wearing the yellow robes.

He, who is purged of all stain, is well established in morals and endowed with self-control and truthfulness, is indeed worthy of the yellow robe.

The one, who takes wrong to be right and right to be wrong, and who thinks always of sensual pleasures, cannot be successful in finding the Truth.

The one, who takes right to be right and wrong to be wrong, and who thinks not of sensual pleasures, can be successful in finding the Truth.

Even as rain penetrates an ill-thatched house, so does lust penetrate an undeveloped mind.

Even as rain does not penetrate a well-thatched house, so does lust not penetrate a well-developed mind.

Here he grieves. Hereafter he grieves.
In both states the evildoer grieves.
He grieves, he afflicted, perceiving the impurity of his own deeds.

Here he rejoices, hereafter he rejoices.
In both states the well doer rejoices.
He rejoices, exceedingly rejoices, perceiving the purity of his own deeds.





Pilgrims Unaware

— by Ken and Visakha Kawasaki —

After living and working in Japan for about ten years, still agnostics, we worked our way slowly back to the United States. About six months into our journey, we found ourselves in Sri Lanka. We traveled around the island by train and public bus. We did almost all of our sightseeing on foot. As we walked around Polonnaruwa, we were, at times, unsure where we were and unclear as to where we were going. Since we had no schedule, rambling was great.

Early one morning, we were on a path through the dry jungle with lots of monkeys for company. The path turned and led down a slight hill. When we reached the bottom, we turned around, and the sight took our breath away! The gray rock had been carved into a reclining Buddha almost fifty feet long. We were transfixed by its grandeur. We approached the image and instinctively bowed in respect. Then we climbed onto the rock hill facing the image and sat, unable to take our eyes off the serene, compassionate countenance. Only later did we notice the two other images—one standing and one sitting—carved out of the same living rock. We had never meditated before, but time seemed to stop as we sat reflecting. Although we'd seen other depictions of Parinibbana, it was there at Gal Vihare that we first gained some inkling of Buddha's admonition, "Be lamps unto yourselves!"

Several months later, having traveled around Southern India, we stopped in Sanchi, which guide-books described as a must see. It was the hot season, and the daytime temperatures reached 113 degrees. At the Mahabodhi Rest House, we kept cool with bucket showers and the ceiling fan when the electricity was working. In the morning, we were up before four o'clock, heading out in the dark. Accompanied by a troop of monkeys and some scampering squirrels, we climbed the stone steps up to the Great Stupa, with its magnificent gates and stone railings, carved in the first century, A.D. Referring to the excellent handbook from Archaeological Survey of India, we identified the stories depicted in the carvings, and we photographed them carefully. The dramatic details were fascinating. By ten o'clock, however, the heat and the blinding sun were unbearable, so we retreated to the Rest House, had breakfast, and spent the rest of the day indoors.

The resident Sinhalese monk kindly offered to open the library for us, and we gratefully accepted. We started reading the *Jatakas*, stories of previous lives of the Buddha. These stories provided the key to unlock the meaning of many of the carvings we were scrutinizing at the stupa. It's not too much to say that the *Jatakas* also unlocked our minds, by giving us concrete examples of Buddhist morality and values and some insight into the complex workings of kamma.

Several years later, we undertook a formal pilgrimage to the sacred Buddhist sites in India. The high point was Kushinara, the quiet "wattle and daub" town where Buddha attained final Nibbana. As we entered the temple, we were struck by the same awe we had felt at Gal Vihare. We bowed and meditated in front of the ancient reclining image. The expression of the golden statue was so lifelike that Buddha seemed about to say, "Friends, enough of your weeping! Have I not already told you that all things that are pleasant and delightful are changeable, subject to separation and to becoming other?" Then, he would utter those final words:

"Vayadhamma sankhara. Appamadena sampadetha."

"All conditioned things are subject to decay. Strive on with diligence."

In the Spirit of Noble Friends, Triple Gem of the North invites you to submit your writings and comments to us at info@triplegem.org.

One day Retreat with Bhante Sathi

Saturday, September 29

Chu Phat An Temple

Roseville, MN

8:00 am - 5:00 pm

8:00 am Introduction

8:30 am Buddhist Yoga

9:30 am Guided Meditation

10:30 am Dhamma Talk

11:00 am Sitting Meditation

11:40 Walking Meditation

12:00 pm Lunch

12:45 pm Walking Meditation

1:15 pm Q&A

2:00 pm Sitting Meditation

3:00 pm Tea/ Coffee

3:15 pm Dhamma Talk

4:00 pm Closing Meditation

5:00 End

Registration is required before September 15.

Dhamma Talk on Mindfulness

Saturday, September 29

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Chu Phat An Temple

Roseville, MN

Bhante Punna has a unique explanation on the meaning of mindfulness based on Buddha's core teachings as beyond simple awareness.

Voice Of Wisdom

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To join our mailing list send your information via E-mail or call 612-216-4854.

Tai- Chi

Every Saturday 8:00 pm to 9:00 pm

311 Elm Street , Mankato

You Are Welcome



Mr Jain Zuo is visiting Mankato from China. We are fortunate that he is willing to share his knowledge of Tai Chi with our community. We will meet at the center 5 minutes in advance and walk over to Washington Park for the class.

Triple Gem of the North Is a 501 (C) 3 approved tax-deductible Non- profit organization based in state of Minnesota. We operate in Minneapolis, St Paul, Chanhassen , St Peter and Mankato. Your tax-deductible contribution will assist in our endeavor to serve the community through weekly meditation classes, day long retreats and the assistance in building a permanent retreat center. Triple Gem is also heavily involved in various disaster relief efforts such as Tsunami relief in Sri Lanka, and Hurricane Katrina. This is done in the spirit of the teachings of the Buddha.