

Sep; 2005

Third Issue



Monthly News letter of The Triple Gem Of The North

Weekly Meditation

Monday Evening

Meditation;

7.00 Pm to 8.30 PM

At

Unitarian Universality Fellowship

937 Charles Ave.,

Mankato, MN 56001

Call Tricia@ 507-524 -3245

Friday Evening

Meditation;

6.00 PM to 7.30 pM

Sutra Studies;

7.30 PM to 8.00 PM

At

Heartwood Mindfulness
Center

3706 E 34th St,

Minneapolis

Call Ray@ 612-760-3996

Saturday Morning

Meditation;

8.00 AM to 10.00 AM

At

Recreation Center

Chanhassen, MN

Call Rich@ 952-270-2164

My Newfound Silver Of Peacefulness

In March of 2004, as my mother lay dying at a hospital in Boston, I practiced meditation for the first time; only it was not for me, but for her. Although my mother was slipping in and out of consciousness, I was able to help her by guiding her mind to focus on positive images of her childhood, and how well she has lived her life. I also attempted to guide her to bring images of peacefulness to her mind, so that anxious thoughts dissolve. I believe that this helped her be more comfortable, and to pass on with a positive and calm mind.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead teaches "Phowa" which is a variety of practices to help the dying prepare for death. Since my mother's passing, I read sections of the book, reflected on how it also helped me in understanding that impermanence (or change) occurs in every moment of the day, and that aversion to death is not helpful. We all die, and we will all witness death. Accept it and the pain will lessen.

As time passed and grief subsided, the book that was so helpful sat on my nightstand with barely a glance. Why had I stopped reading it? If it had such a positive impact, why had I walked away from it? Then one day in June of this year, it occurred to me. I could not just read about meditation, and use it occasionally to help others. I had to experience it. The time had come to stop intellectualizing and to start internalizing. That weekend, as good fortune would have it, the Star Tribune ran an article on Bhante Sathi's work, noting that he lives in Chanhassen, as do I. Someone had rung the dinner bell. I found my place.

At my house, my family has furniture, clothes, two cars in the garage, 120 cable channels, countless electronic gadgets, and toys for the kids a million items of "stuff." Near by I am occupied with malls, movie houses, and restaurants. I have a full time job and a family that needs attention. Why add meditation to all this? Why do I want to sit and meditate at 6AM when there is very little in the modern world that encourages or sets an example for the benefits of meditating? Why are there some who embrace meditation right away, and some, if not most, who want nothing to do with it? In other words, if I cannot press to play, or heat it in the microwave for 45 seconds, then why bother?

To my amazement, meditation has brought me many immediate benefits. First and foremost I am more patient, especially in stressful situations. Countless times I have been stuck behind a painfully slow driver on a busy street. I am late for an appointment, and if I do not get to my meeting on time, I will make a bad first impression with this important person and it will be this "brake lovers" fault. Anger and frustration build up inside me. When I finally get some passing room, I see that the driver is a mom with two kids sitting in the back seat and the car is a "junker" held together by the dirt that coats it. Perhaps she is struggling to make ends meet and needs to take her kids everywhere because she cannot afford day care. With meditation, these compassionate thoughts have started to arise before I become anxious or impatient.

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All the same inside “Aren’t we”

Someone recently asked me why I felt it so important to help others. Good question, I thought, with so many answers. I could quickly list a hundred philosophical reasons why I think it is important to help people who need help---because I am blessed, because it creates peace, because the world is my home and all inhabitants are my neighbors, because it takes a village to do everything, because it might have been me and my children. I went to Sri Lanka last February willing to do whatever would be helpful, but thinking all I really had to contribute was professional counseling experience with children. Once there, I saw parents loving and caring for their children extraordinarily well in unimaginable circumstances, their children doing remarkably well. I soon learned my well-honed professional skills were not what was most needed. The urgent need was for safe and permanent housing. Riding mile after mile after mile through devastated vil-



lages, walking through refugee camp after refugee camp, I saw families living in conditions unimaginable to me. I looked in the eyes of so many children and mothers, all graciously welcoming us into their camps. Babies reached out to me, grandmothers touched my arm and called me “daughter” simply because I showed up. And though they had no more than the clothes on their back, only a donated tent with a dirt floor in which to sleep, food and water only when it would arrive by a truck of some kind, I was amazed that not one person asked me for things. In fact in one camp we were even served tea. The only request made of me came from mothers who would lay their hands

on my arm as I prepared to depart each camp: “Please do not forget.” They asked for nothing more. It was left to me to decide what to do and that has not been easy. In fact, coming back to my life has been painful at times because I have questioned what I believe, what I say, how I live, what I value. This personal struggle has also been an enormous gift. I have given much of my time and some of my money to the effort in Sri Lanka. What I have received in lessons and in clarity of vision in my life is hard to put into words. And all that is not even to mention the joy of receiving news when one more family, and then one more family has a house in which to live safely.

Though by American economic standards I would not be considered wealthy, I have more, much more, than enough. I do not feel guilty for what I have earned or been given and I am not one who thinks economic wealth is an inherently evil condition. I do think however that it is important to share with others. To share is one of the earliest lessons we receive as children sharing our possessions, sharing our meals and stories, our love; and we learn that it feels good to share. Sharing makes us richer in every way --- true giving does not result in the giver having less. Just watch the deeply satisfied smile on a young child’s face the first time she voluntarily shares her snack with her friend. Her smile is a reflection of how full her heart is even when she cannot put words to her feelings. As adults, when we model the sharing of what we have--however modest that might be-- we are teaching the next generation to share and helping them discover the joys and benefits of sharing. By sharing we also make the world a gentler place, a more peaceful place, sharing what we have with those in less fortunate circumstances.



The recipients of our generosity learn that somewhere there is someone who cares about them, even if we do not know each other personally. Kindness begets kindness. The Dalai Lama once said when speaking of lovingkindness, “Perhaps it is best to put the emphasis on kindness.” The bible says to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” I try to imagine how I could possibly bear the distress of trying to keep my young children safe and fed in a dirt floor tent after losing every possession and perhaps loved ones, too. I can hardly imagine it without holding my breath. When I try to imagine it, I remember the day my friend Janaka, in Sri Lanka, so wisely said to me “We are really all the same inside, aren’t we?” He is so right. We are the same inside and we live on the same earth and belong to each other. What if we were the ones living in tents? What if it were our children? I would need help. I hope someone would help me. So, I must help.

And finally, as always, I learn the most from children, especially my children. Unbeknownst to me, after my journey to Sri Lanka, my wise young daughter wrote to Triple Gem telling of her own story of living in SE Asia, about what she learned and kindnesses shown her. She also made a generous donation from her very modest salary. She understands far more about her relationship to the world than I thought she is 29 years my junior. Here are her words that I share because they speak so beautifully: “I have learned what it means to be rich, truly wealthy and I have learned that the only richness I want is in my heart and in the simplicity with which I choose to live my life-- and know that having that choice to make is the ultimate privilege.”

— Rita Bostick —

Not in the sky
Nor in the Mid-ocean
Nor in a mountain cave
Is found that place on earth
Where abiding, one may escape from
Evil disaster, suffering and Death.

--Dhammapada--

(Sliver of peacefulness.....)

With my newfound sliver of peacefulness, I find myself swearing less than before. What I cannot control in life, I will accept. In addition, frustration is an impermanent feeling; it ducks in and out like the sun on a partly cloudy day. It always passes and the sun returns, only to see it disappear moments later. As meditation helps me realize this, the desire to swear lessens. Less inner anger, less potty mouth.

Don't get me wrong, I still feel and express anger and frustration.

However, now I am focusing on my reaction and asking myself, is it helping me to get angry at the horrible tragedies reported on CNN? Should I not entertain such emotions, since I cannot stop the images from happening? However, I can decide to lower my blood pressure and slow my heart rate, and turn my darkening mood around. I can choose to turn the TV off, focus on peaceful thoughts, and project it to others around me. This is my first lesson on how a more peaceful world cannot start until a more peaceful inner world is established.

My mind is becoming a cluttered room that is having a spring-cleaning. I've opened windows to let in the fresh air; closets are rearranged, so I can find things I thought I lost years ago. Old clothes and assorted junk are sent to the dump, relieving me of the burden of having too much clutter. Suddenly, I room seems more livable. I can find the clothes I want when I want them. I feel lighter, more aware, and less burdened.

May you all be happy and well.

— Richard Price —

Voice Of Wisdom

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Up Coming events;

Evening Meditation Retreat

When: Saturday October 8

Where: 240 Mountain way ,Chanhassen, MN

Time: 6.30 PM to 9.30 PM

Hosted by Bhante Sathi and Richard Price at Richard's home. Bhante will guide us through meditation, a discussion on the "Five Precepts", and a tea and social break. All are welcome! Call Richard for info, directions, and

RSVP. 952-270-2164.

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 Poule, Chanhassen , St peter and Mankato. Your tax-deductible contribution will assist in our endeavor to serve the community through weekly meditation classes, daylong 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.

Teaching the Ultimate.....

In early times in Japan, bamboo and paper lanterns were used with candles inside. A blind man, visiting a friend one night, was offered a lantern to carry home with him.

"I do not need a lantern," he said. "Darkness or light is all the same to me."

"I know you do not need a lantern to find your way," his friend replied, "but if you don't have one, someone else may run into you. So you must take it."

The blind man started off with the lantern and before he had walked very far someone ran squarely in to him. "Look out where you are going!" he exclaimed to the stranger. "Can't you see the lantern?"

"Your candle has burned out, brother," replied the stranger.

