

January 2006

Issue No: 7

Voice Of Wisdom



## Monthly News letter of *The Triple Gem Of The North*

Weekly Meditation

**Monday Evening**

6.30 PM to 8.00 PM

At

Unitarian Universality Fellowship

937 Charles Ave.,

Mankato, MN 56001

Call Tricia@ 507-524 - 3245

**Friday Evening**

6.00 PM to 6.40 PM

Buddhist Studies

6.40 PM to 8.00 PM

At

Heartwood Mindfulness Center

3706 E 34th St,

Minneapolis

Call Ray@ 612-760-3996

**Saturday Morning**

10.00 AM to 12.00 AM

At

Chanhassen Library  
Lewis Room

7711 Kerber Drive  
Chanhassen, MN

Call Ralph@ 952-934-9727



### **Buddha's 2550th Birthday Celebration in Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka, the country where Buddhist monks originally preserved the Buddha's teachings in the Pali language, will play host in 2006 to the world's largest celebration of the Buddha's 2550<sup>th</sup> "jayanthi" or birthday.

The celebration promises to equal in size the international gathering in Sri Lanka in 1956 to mark the Buddha's 2500<sup>th</sup> year of birth. This year, as in 1956, Buddhist teachers and leaders from around the globe and from many different cultures will converge on Sri Lanka to honor Buddhism's founder with ceremonies, special events, and speeches.

Buddhist scholars and authors, and the heads of state of Buddhist countries, will give talks on topics including:

- 1) Explanation of different Buddhist sects
- 2) The last fifty years in Buddhism
- 3) The development and the problems of the present Buddhist community
- 4) Buddhist explanation of economy
- 5) Buddhist view of politics
- 6) Buddhist view of religion
- 7) Present condition of Bhikuni sasana (Buddhist Nuns)
- 8) Meditation

In 1956, Buddhism scholars and translators unveiled a new translation of Buddha's teachings – the "Tripitaka" or "three baskets" of teachings – into several languages. This year, an updated version including translations into several more languages will be presented to the world.

Coordinated by Sri Lanka's Ministry of Religious Affairs, the celebration will be held on May 15-18. The ceremonies and talks will be held in Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital, and Anaradhapura, the country's first capital city and major religious center for 2,500 years.

— Edited by Doug McGill—

(Please send to Triple Gem articles and your opinions on any of the above topics to our email address. We will forward them to the Buddha Jananthi community)

**H**umankind strives to become more powerful, to dominate their world in his quest to be a superman. What is more powerful, the body or the mind? We use our brain to invent tools and machinery to conquer our world and be more powerful. How is this newfound power being used? For some it is the ability to destroy the world. On another level, we can ask why have we created all this technology and has it grown bigger than what man can handle?

It is the human's intention and his mind creates this destruction. Without the mind component, technology alone would not be able to do anything. Therefore, the mind is more powerful.

One of the most powerful sides of the mind is curiosity. We are naturally curious beings. People are always discovering new things as a result. That is very powerful. Would it not be helpful to redirect this power to understand ourselves better and to help others do the same? When a magician performs his act, you might be intrigued by his powers of illusion. When you see someone doing something you cannot do, perhaps you might want to learn how to do this also. Centuries ago, meditation was introduced to the world through demonstrations of powerful mental feats, like walking on water or levitating. This was done to gather attention. Although curious and fascinating, this is not the true value of meditation. It is better to understand what kind of qualities we have to develop and fears to overcome. The mind is our powerful ally.

**E=mc<sup>2</sup>** We have heard and sometimes experienced strange manifestations of the mind. For example, people who have left their bodies during an operation, and observed themselves in the operating room. an out of body experience. Others have claimed to experience psychic moments such as knowing some event will occur before it actually does, or to experience sensations of Deja vue.

At times, anger, lust or hatred is so powerful it seems to control our thoughts and actions. We allow our emotions to lead us when others provoke. When this happens, it makes us weaker. In mindfulness, we learn that these "Hot" emotions should not control us because they cloud our ability to observe the world around us.

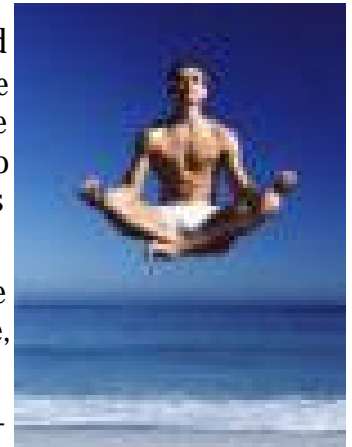
It is important to discipline the mind through meditation, to become more aware when weakness arises and to overcome it. This is more powerful. With that power, we can learn how to develop power within us, to stretch our human limits. The base of power is compassion, loving-kindness, equanimity, and sympathetic joy.

To the perfectly developed mind traveling at the speed of light, walking through fire, sinking in to the earth's crust, mind reading and time travel is not far fetched. Overcoming physical pain and disease is possible.



However, even the less than perfectly developed mind enjoys many benefits such as good mental and physical health, a deeper happiness, relaxation and many more just by practicing mindfulness. Some people overcome diseases such as cancer, chronic pain and the like.

relaxed in ones every day life whatever the conditions are. A well-trained mind is the most powerful element one can ever find.



— Bhante Sathi —

Edited by Richard Price

**Do not be satisfied with hearsay  
or with tradition  
or with legendary lore  
or with what has come down in scriptures  
or with conjecture  
or with logical inference  
or with weighing evidence  
or with liking for a view after pondering over it  
or with someone else's ability  
or with the thought "The monk is our teacher."**

**When you know in yourselves:**

**"These things are wholesome, blameless, commended by the wise, and being adopted and put into effect they lead to welfare and happiness, then you should practice and abide in them,...."**

— The Buddha Kalama Sutta —

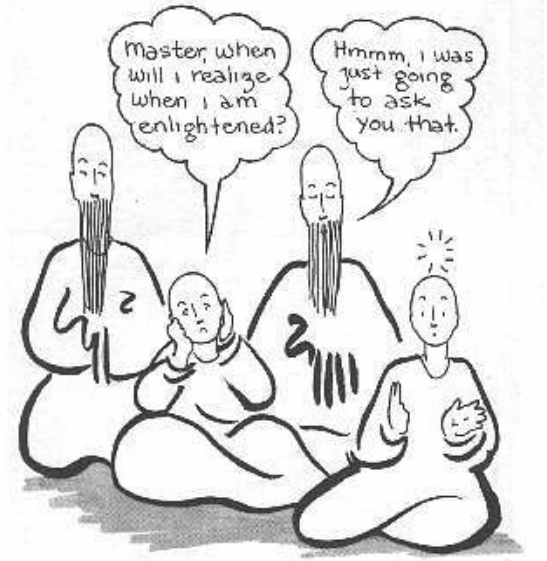
### **The thief and the master**

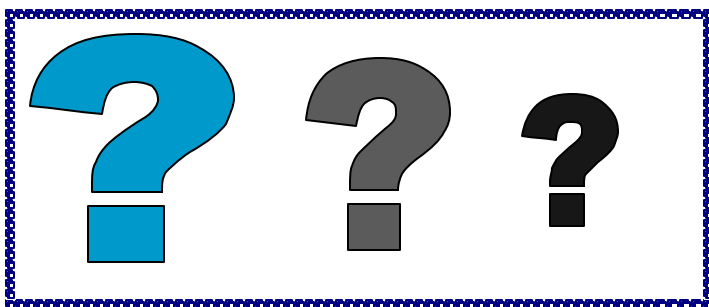
One evening, Zen master Shichiri Kojun was reciting sutras when a thief entered his house with a sharp sword, demanding "money or life". Without any fear, Shichiri said, "Don't disturb me! Help yourself with the money, it's in that drawer". And he resumed his recitation.

The thief was startled by this unexpected reaction, but he proceeded with his business anyway. While he was helping himself with the money, the master stopped and called, "Don't take all of it. Leave some for me to pay my taxes tomorrow". The thief left some money behind and prepared to leave. Just before he left, the master suddenly shouted at him, "You took my money and you didn't even thank me?! That's not polite!". This time, the thief was really shocked at such fearlessness. He thanked the master and ran away. The thief later told his friends that he had never been so frightened in his life.

A few days later, the thief was caught and confessed, among many others, his theft at Shichiri's house. When the master was called as a witness, he said, "No, this man did not steal anything from me. I gave him the money. He even thanked me for it."

The thief was so touched that he decided to repent. Upon his release from prison, he became a disciple of the master and many years later, he attained Enlightenment.





### Tom's Question:

I have spoken to some people about meditation. Their responses suggest to me that they are contemplating what Aristotle would have understood as formal cause. These same people think of this as an enlightening experience, acquisition of all embracing knowledge. I agree to a certain extent, but I would point out that formal cause is only one of Aristotle's Four Causes. You also need efficient, material and final cause to explain or understand objects, events, etc. Do you concur?

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The 'four causes' provide answers to four questions one might ask about something, for example, a man:

'What is it made from?' 'Flesh and so on' (material cause);

'What is its form or essence?' 'A two-legged creature capable of reason (say)', (formal cause);

'What produced it?' 'The father (on Aristotle's biology)' (efficient cause);

'For what purpose?' 'To fulfill the function of a man (roughly meaning 'to live a life in accordance with reason') (final cause). – editor

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### Answer;

First, we need to understand more about what enlightenment really is and what it means to different people. Some people use this word to explain some unexplainable happy experiences and they think that there is no pain of any kind at all in this experience. However, we must understand that this is not permanent.

From a Buddhist point of view, there is little difference. For us enlightenment is a permanent experience. For most people, developing their minds to that point is a long process. Aristotle was an extraordinary philosopher with a deep un-

derstanding of the human mind. In addition, his knowledge was in part handed down from Socrates and Plato.

Aristotle's Four Causes is a philosophical study of something. When we observe an object we use our five aggregates (sight, smell, touch, hear, and feel) to observe and understand a subject. As humans, we can only scrutinize an object with these five aggregates until we come to a conclusion.

### Richard's Question;

**Is Buddhism a religion or a philosophy?**

### Answer;

Let us define religion and philosophy. Religion means believing some thing or some ones view most of the time and believe some thing beyond human capacity. Someone might say, "I don't believe anything" or "I don't have a religion" and I would say that THAT is his religion. Religion has an idea and it explains beyond our human capacity, such as, life after death, or existence before birth. The teaching will grow and mature surrounding these ideas and concepts and will develop a similar thinking pattern around families and societies. The point is to believe in some thing without experiencing it by your self. In Buddha's teaching, there is nothing to believe. So then, it is not a religion. Simply he explains how to develop ones mind and to be happy with out pain and worry.

What is philosophy? Philosophy is an explanation of someone or his or hers view about something. It could change with time and experience. For example, centuries ago people thought the sun revolved around the earth. It was a scientific philosophy but over time and with more study that philosophy changed. Then people believed that the earth revolved around the sun but that it did not move. Now we know that the sun revolves around the galaxy. We know that in science with new experiments theories are proven and broken. That is what happens to a philosophy. Philosophies are correct in certain conditions that can be created or natural.

Buddha's teachings do not belong to any conditions and they are simply directions to find conditions that may lead to understanding of one's mind. That is why even after 2550 years since he died we still cannot prove any mistakes in his teaching. Finally, Buddha's teachings are not a philosophy. It is more and is a way of life.

### **Richard Question: Was Buddha a God?**

No, he is the Awakened One. One day a Brahmin, who is a member of the highest caste in India, came to meet him and to predict the Buddha's future. To his surprise, he could not foresee it. The Brahmin thought, "This man can't be human."

"Are you a God?" asked the Brahmin?

Buddha replied, "No I am not a God."

"Are you a Brahmin?"

"No I am not a Brahmin either."

"Are you an extraordinary being?"

"No I am not."

"Who are you?"

Buddha said, "I am Awakened." I was born as a man, and then I developed my mind. I do not have the weaknesses that humans or gods have. Nothing can control my mind now that I am Awakened and most perfect one among humans and gods.

(God is a humanistic way to define the Perfect One. Sometimes Buddha explained that he became a God or, "Brahma Bhutto")

### **Richard Q: Why do Buddhists believe in Re-birth?**

A: Bhante: Rebirth is not overemphasized in Buddha's teaching. However, in today's world it is mentioned frequently. Mentioning rebirth is comforting to us when we talk about the question of existence.

### **Richard Q: Why is meditation important?**

That is the only way that you can open yourself. It opens doors to personal insight. Buddha explained that one moment of mindfulness is better than one hundred years of good actions.

### **Richard Q: Are Buddhists vegetarians?**

No. Following Buddha's teaching does not require being vegetarian but instead abstain from directly killing all creatures for food. A Buddhist should develop four sublime states, which are compassion, loving kindness, equanimity and sympathetic joy. Developing the mind is the most important part. Eat food to satisfy your hunger.

***In the spirit of Noble Friends, Triple Gem of the North invites you to submit your questions to Bhante at [info@triplegem.org](mailto:info@triplegem.org)***

## **Transient**

**A famous spiritual teacher came to the front door of the King's palace. None of the guards tried to stop him as he entered and made his way to where the King himself was sitting on his throne.**

**"What do you want?" asked the King, immediately recognizing the visitor.**

**"I would like a place to sleep in this inn," replied the teacher.**

**"But this is not an inn," said the King, "It is my palace."**

**"May I ask who owned this palace before you?"**

**"My father. He is dead."**

**"And who owned it before him?"**

**"My grandfather. He too is dead."**

**"And this place where people live for a short time and then move on - did I hear you say That it is NOT an inn?"**

## New Year Celebration- January 2<sup>nd</sup>



The soft glow of the candles on the altar signal a special occasion. Thirty or forty meditators and a couple of onlookers sit on the floor and a few rows back in the chapel pews. Bhante extends a large spool of blessing string into the group and it weaves its way amongst the people as each one passes it to the next. By the time the spool reaches back to Bhante we can see a tangible sign that we are all connected. As Bhante begins chanting blessings ( Ratana Sutra and Metta Sutra) and we listen mindfully I am sometimes aware of the subtle movements of others connected to the string. This reminds me how our actions effect others in subtle ways that we might not always anticipate when we make that action. It is a good reminder of what is important as we make intentions for the New Year.

As we meditate on loving kindness for all beings, we are reminded of the immense suffering in the world. In 2005 humanity dealt with the tsunami in Asia, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and the earthquake in Pakistan, not to mention the poverty and homelessness that came in the aftermath. In Africa, so many people suffer from AIDS and poverty every day. Indigenous peoples in the world are still facing the possibility of losing their land and lifeways. There are also many animals facing suffering in the face of environmental pollution. When we stop to think of this depth of suffering, our own problems may seem small. We may feel very small in the face of these massive events. But there is a common thread that connects us to all these other beings, though we may not always be able to see it. Perhaps even a subtle vibration in that thread can bring hope to someone else along that path of energy in ways that we cannot foresee.

After the ceremony, there was no meditation or formal discussion, yet something valuable occurred. People started talking to each other and enjoying each other's company. Perhaps it was mostly chatting between friends who have known each other for a while, but I like to think some new connections were made too. A small community was visible. Think of all the good that could come out of this community of people, all striving to better themselves, all of us interested in understanding ourselves. Together we create a powerful vibration. May we come together to strengthen this connection, to support each other on our journeys, and to make the valuable teachings of the Buddha available to all who are seeking to do the same.

-- Reported by Melissa Lorentz --

### **A step forward to a new home..... A fundraising committee**

Mankato meditation group recently formed a committee of 8 to raise funds for a meditation center (Buddhist monastery) in Mankato. The committee hopes to organize fund raising event in the coming months.

This Retreat Centre will provide space year-round to practice meditation for people of all levels, all traditions, Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Its sole purpose is to provide a place for meditation practice disregarding one's tradition, faith, and experience.

Hopefully, this will be the southern center in Minnesota. Good Luck!!!

## **MEDITATION RETREAT**

What a wonderful way to begin a New Year! On January 7 Bhante led a 4 hour meditation retreat at the Chanhassen library attended by some 30 participants. The retreat consisted of a series of sitting and walking meditations of less than 30 minutes each. Following each meditation Bhante invited questions about the meditation experience. Bhante also did a teaching on the Buddhist understanding of suffering. This 4 hour process led to deepening exploration of meditation practice for me. I experienced an increasing quieting of my mind as the day progressed, and the energy of the group seemed to deepen my own meditation experience.



Bhante's gentle guidance into meditation helped me to relax my whole body and mind while focusing on my breath. His soft guidance that there is nothing to achieve, nothing to desire seemed to free up my 'striving mind' as I felt my mind opening into a state of freedom from needing anything, from all desire. I found the walking meditation to be easier for me to focus my mind completely, and then however found the subsequent sitting meditation to be even more quiet and peaceful. My heart opened with compassion as Bhante guided us in meditation to think 'May all beings be well, happy and peaceful' as we

remembered family friends and all persons.

When I first began meditating it was with an expectation that I would have some powerful spiritual experience if I practiced long enough, worked hard enough at it, and did it well enough. In the meditations classes with Bhante, I have learned that meditation is simply being present to whatever arises, to not engage the thoughts that arise but to simply observe them without judgment. This has helped me to come to a much greater awareness of reality, to be much more present to life in the present moment rather than endlessly engaged in thoughts of the past or future. It has expanded my consciousness and deepened my compassion for others, to let go of judgment and simply observe with compassion. The unexpected benefit of meditation for me has been to come to experience a deep sense of calm, peace and happiness by simply being present without judgment in meditation to whatever arises; and then to come to realize that all of life is a meditation practice and thus to find this same sense of calmness, peace and happiness in my life when I am open to whatever life presents without judgment. I no longer seek the 'explosive experience' in meditation after having the expanded awareness of life in the present moment. In the process, life is so much more full of aliveness.

I believe meditation has had an unanticipated health benefit in my life. As I have learned to let go of judgment and observe others with compassion more in my life, I find my life is much happier and free of stress. The lessening of anxiety and stress has helped me to feel much younger than my 66 years, and I find my life filled with enthusiasm.



It is difficult to adequately articulate the retreat experience except to say that I feel a deep gratitude for the retreat and for all the participants who added to the energy with their presence, and especially for Bhante's gentle presence, wisdom and guidance. I look forward to the next retreat.

**-Reported by Ralph Pamperin**

### Transmigration and Rebirth

The king asked: "Venerable Nagasena, is it so that one does not transmigrate<sup>1</sup> and one is reborn?"

"Yes, your majesty, one does not transmigrate and one is reborn."

"How, venerable Nagasena, is it that one does not transmigrate and one is reborn? Give me an analogy."

"Just as, your majesty, if someone kindled one lamp from another, is it indeed so, your majesty, that the lamp would transmigrate from the other lamp?"

"Certainly not, venerable sir."

"Indeed just so, your majesty, one does not transmigrate and one is reborn."

"Give me another analogy."

"Do you remember, your majesty, when you were a boy learning some verse from a teacher?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

"Your majesty, did this verse transmigrate from the teacher?"

"Certainly not, venerable sir."

"Indeed just so, your majesty, one does not transmigrate and one is reborn."

"You are clever, venerable Nagasena."

—Milindha Prashnaya—

(The questions of king Miyandad)

### Voice Of Wisdom

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***To add you to our mailing list send your information via E-mail or feel free call us.***

#### **Insight Editors**

Bhante Sathi

Richard Price

Melissa Lorentz

#### **Meditation Retreat**

February 25 th — Chanhassen

Where ; Chanhassen Rec center

Time; 10.00 AM to 2.00 PM

The retreat will consist of a series of 30 minute sitting and walking meditations followed by a brief dharma talk and question and answers . A light snack will be served. All are welcome. This event is free, but tax deductible contributions are appreciated. Please bring a cushion to sit on. To Register: Call Ralph at 952-934-9727 or

Email [rpamperim@msn.com](mailto:rpamperim@msn.com)

**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.