

March 2006

Issue No: 9



Insight

Voice Of Wisdom
Monthly News letter of The Triple Gem Of The North

Weekly Meditation

Monday Evening
6.30 PM to 8.00 PM

Unitarian Universality Fellowship

937 Charles Ave.,

Mankato, MN 56001

Call Tricia@ 507-524 -3245

Tuesday Evening

7.00 PM to 8.00 PM

Gustavus Adolphus College

800 West College Avenue

St. Peter MN 56082

Call Raj@ 507- 933 7444

Friday Evening

6.00 PM to 7.30 PM

2716 Seminary Dr

New Brighton, MN 55112

Call Ray@ 612-760-3996

Saturday Morning

10.00 AM to 12.00 PM

Chanhassen Library

7711 Kerber Drive

Chanhassen, MN

Call Ralph@ 952-934-9727

All are Welcome

A Permanent Home for Triple Gem: Making the Dream a Reality

Since his 2004 arrival to the U.S., Bante Sathi has been on a tireless campaign to share the teachings of the Buddha and promote loving kindness wherever he can. Through generous donations to his non-profit agency, Triple Gem of the North, he is able to travel 25,000 miles a year throughout Minnesota, leading meditation retreats and sessions, lecturing, and inspiring many followers. This is his life's work. "Whatever I get from being peaceful and calm, I like to share with people," he explains.

His supporters now are making their long-term goal a reality by establishing a permanent home to Triple Gem of the North. Currently retreats and meditation sessions have been held at hodge podge locations (i.e. colleges, libraries, churches, etc.) where often rent and other fees have to be paid. A center will serve as the home base for Triple Gem and Bante Santi, and will mark the formation of the first Buddhist retreat center in Southern Minnesota. It also will provide relaxed, private accommodation for:

- Regular meditation instruction
- Adult education courses on the Buddha's teachings
- Visiting monks and nuns who wish to cultivate morality, concentration, and wisdom.

Lay people needing private retreat space.

Making this goal a reality means raising \$30,000 which will cover the down payment on a house (to be converted to the center) in Mankato. Your support and generosity will be critical if we are to achieve this.

This is an exciting time for Triple Gem, Bante Santi and his supporters. Ideas for the center and fundraising for it, are welcome. Email ...

— Richard Price —

Direct Your Donation To:

Mankato Meditation Center

PO Box 4236

Mankato, MN 56001

(Payable to TGN)



Your Own Nature

Everyone is trying to avoid suffering. As the heavy current from the river of life pushes us further downstream, we desperately reach for a branch or rock to grab on. We mistakenly believe that control over our lives will bring happiness. We think, "If only I could get rid of this or increase that, I would be happy", or, "If only we had 70 degree weather with no rain everyday of the year. If only we could go outside in the summertime without suffering in swarms of mosquitoes. If only I didn't have to go to work. If only I had enough money. If only I could do what I really want in life." It is rare to find the perfect moment in life. Something always gets in the way of our happiness.

Perhaps that is one explanation for why humans have made many technological developments. Most of these developments are for the purpose of increasing our comfort and pleasure. Cell phones and the Internet provide instant access to our friends and relatives around the globe. No longer do we need to wait more than two seconds to talk to someone (as long as their phone is on.) When severe weather strikes we escape to the safety of our climate controlled homes. We can travel almost anywhere by air, land, or water, without removing ourselves from that comfort.

Despite all our 21st century marvels, we remain even more dissatisfied then ever. Today we face increasing demands on our everyday lives: more goods to acquire, and more energy to consume. These comforts do not bring true relaxation or peace. The purpose of comfort is to leave us numb to reality.

In the natural world, we are constantly confronted by beauty and pain. As we watch plants grow and flower, listen to birds sing and see clouds move across the sky over a still lake, we feel inner peace and tranquility. Everything feels perfect as is. Though sometimes those clouds can brew up a deadly storm or those flowers have thorns or wolves kill deer for food. Yet, there is no question that anything should be different. We know we cannot tell the wolf to become a vegetarian any more than we can ask the clouds to go away.

I suspect there is a reason the Buddha reached enlightenment sitting under a bodhi tree. Every organism on earth is symbiotic with other organisms and dependent on the earth, air, water, and sun. Thus, we do not really exist as separate beings; instead we are constantly exchanging the manifestations of what we call "my" body with the life forms around us. That is why we can see our own nature in another human being, animals, trees, or even the sky. When we are surrounded by our own inventions, we don't have that same symbiotic relationship because we are surrounding ourselves in our own controlled environment of "personal truth", without the ability to see the world as it really is. When we step out of that shell, we find that there is a dynamic world out there that doesn't revolve around us. We know that a raging storm is not a personal insult, but an expression of the nature of the world. When we open ourselves to these phenomena as expressions of the basic laws of life, and thus ourselves, we find that our everyday interactions are no different from the storm or the thorny rosebush or the squirrel that runs from tree to tree. It simply is. There is no need for escape.

Simply Remembering Peace

Mindfulness is the simplest thing in the world, if only we remember to do it.

That's why we meditate, I think. Not so much to learn how to be mindful, but to get in a lot of practice at simply remembering to do it.

Because otherwise, how easily we forget!

I had a chance to try this the other day at my gym. I had just got off the treadmill where I'd been running for an hour while watching my breath.

When I got back to the locker room, still sweating and panting, I found a pair of tennis shoes and socks that were not mine, planted in front of my locker. Seeing no one around, I gently nudged them aside with my foot.

Suddenly I heard a booming voice. *"You can kick my shoes again if you want!"* I looked up to see the red face of a very angry guy looming over me. He felt I'd disrespected him by thoughtlessly kicking his shoes and socks.

Because I'd been watching my breath for the past hour, I immediately noticed how my mind, in a flash, was flooded with anger. Just like that, *whammo!* I felt flooded with anger, instantaneously and completely.

To be honest, I wasn't able to restrain myself from lashing back.

"Hey, it's just a pair of shoes and socks, man, give me a break!"

"I just did!" he snapped back.

At this point, I firmly resolved not to do or say anything else until I had clearly developed an intention that was unclouded by anger. Once again, because I'd just been meditating while running, I thought: "This is a good opportunity to experiment with mindfulness. So I will consider saying something to him, but only if I can do so while remaining fully mindful."

About a minute later, while the man was zipping up his gym bag and getting ready to go, I knew I could say something to the man without judging either him or me, but rather just share an observation from my mindfulness.

So I gathered my courage and said: "I was just noticing how it seems that I carry around a lot of anger, and that even a small event can trigger it at any time. I wonder if it's our busy and stressful modern life that causes that?"

The man just glanced quickly at me with a very surprised look on his face, picked up his gym bag, and left. But before he did, there was a sharp drop in the level of aggression in the air.

Recently in our sangha we have been practicing the Satipattana Sutta, which counsels "Meditation on State of Mind." That is, just as we watch our breath or body, we observe our state of mind. Is it angry? Peaceful? Scattered?

There is something so liberating in this teaching. It doesn't exalt the mind or teach any notion, such as we have in the West, that the mind is a master operator that, if only we could master it, we'd master our lives. Instead, the Buddha's teaching is just the opposite. It says the mind is just the mind, just like the body is just the body. It's a finite, limited, observable thing.

The beauty part is, whatever it is that mind does or is, it is not us. It is just mind. Therefore, no matter what state our mind is in, the larger "I" remains the same. "There is the mind, and there is that that watches the mind." That larger witness, the watcher, that which is looking, is ever peaceful.

So simply by returning to that larger "I," we return to peace.

True, being mindful is the key. But even before that, we must remember to be mindful.

Being mindful is just returning to the larger "I." What could be simpler?

But remembering – that's something else again. It takes a lot of work in this world of alluring pleasures and frightening pains, to remember.

So that, I think, is why we practice. Simply to remember to be mindful, which means to remember peace.



Q: When one attains Nibbana, which is the perfect state of living through non-attachment, it is said that he or she is liberated from the cycle of life and death. Does that mean Buddhism is anti-life?

A: No. As ordinary human beings, Nibbana is not subject to us. What Buddhism teaches us is how to live in happiness and joy. That is it. It is a state of mind. Nibbana is to attain this as a permanent state. Buddhism is not anti-life; it is anti-suffering. This is the cornerstone of the Buddha's teaching of the Four Noble Truths. 1. Suffering exists. 2. Desire is the cause of suffering. 3. There is a solution to suffering. 4. The teachings of the Buddha are the path to the cessation of suffering.

Q: Last month's newsletter featured a section from the Sutra. The Buddha talks about the "Earth Properties," which are hair, teeth, internal organs and so on. The Buddha then teaches us to reject these properties and accept that they do not define who we are. Can you explain what this means?

A: Matter and name are two parts that combine to make-up who we are. Matter is Properties (discussed in the section of the Sutra) and Name is Mind, which is comprised of feelings, perception, mental states, and consciousness. The earth property signifies solidity. Simply, the Buddha is saying that we are not just this body. We are living in a body, but we are not this body. Through practicing Buddha's teachings, we can find out who we really are.

Q: What is the difference between attachment and taking refuge? Aren't they similar?

A: No, they are different. Attachment is an emotional reflex. Taking refuge is not.

Taking refuge is the acceptance of the three jewels, The Buddha, the Dhamma (his teachings) and the Sangha (the community). To be a Buddhist, one must embrace all three, but not through blind faith, but through developing your understanding through these elements. Therefore, it is not emotional.

Attachment arises with emotion. For example, beyond the obvious practical implications, when we buy a fancy new shirt or a shiny new car, an emotional trigger guides our buying decision. This is especially apparent when we spill coffee on the shirt, or someone dents our car in the parking lot. I hope this explanation helps.

In the Spirit of Noble Friends, Triple Gem of the North invites you to submit your questions to Us at info@triplegem.org

God?

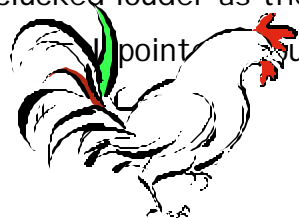
Buddhism is neither theistic nor atheistic. It is a humanistic religion that defines God in a humanistic way. "God," for the Buddhist, is a human concept. It is the human ideal of perfection, which human beings conceive and struggle to realize through the practice of religion. The child sees this "ideal" as the father. When he grows up, he sees it first as a dead ancestor. Later he sees it as the Creator. As his intellect develops, this ideal is seen at first in abstract form as infinity conceived in different ways. Later as the human being evolves further, it is seen for what it is, as the human ideal of perfection. At this stage, union with God is seen as becoming God.

Chickens

In the morning as the sun rose, I would follow the monks through the Thai village, walking some six feet behind them while they begged for food. We moved in silence along the dusty village roads. I carried a bag to hold the donated food, while the monks carried their begging bowls. The dirt roads felt soft and cool under my bare feet. The villagers would bring their sticky rice baskets out to the street. They would lean over, to be lower than the monks, and place a handful or so of rice in each alms bowl. Some would put fruits and bags of vegetables and soy milk in the bowls as well. These donations, along with food brought directly to the monastery each morning, were what the monks ate for their single meal each day.

Every morning, as the monks made their rounds, we would pass a large chicken coop with chickens clucking and scratching about inside it. The wood-and-wire-mesh structure was the size of a small house. Inside it, the chickens' heads bobbed above a white cloud of bodies. Some poked at the wire fence and at the corners where the mesh joined the wood posts. The chickens were jammed into the coop, and the smell was terrible. Each time I walked by, I thought about them getting bigger in order to die.

One morning a lone chicken was outside of the coop. Some-how it had managed to escape through the fencing. It was free! But the chicken was concerned only with how to get back in. It scrambled around the front of the coop, pecking at the fence and posts. It wanted to be with its fellow chickens, even though the conditions were miserable. The chickens inside clucked louder as they watched the free bird peck.



pointed out to one of the monks. He said, "Funny. Like us."

— Jeffrey Sawyer —

Benefit

"A monk endowed with five qualities practices both for his own benefit and for that of others. Which five?"

"There is the case where a monk is himself consummate in virtue and encourages others to be consummate in virtue.

He himself is consummate in concentration and encourages others to be consummate in concentration.

He himself is consummate in discernment and encourages others to be consummate in discernment.

He himself is consummate in release and encourages others to be consummate in release.

He himself is consummate in the knowledge & vision of release and encourages others to be consummate in the knowledge & vision of release.

"Endowed with these five qualities, a monk practices both for his own benefit and for that of others.



An Analysis of the Properties

Last month, we introduced a quote from the Tripitaka, which is the ancient scripture from the words of the Buddha. This is a continuation from that reading taken from the Sutta Pitaka, a central core teaching from the Buddha to his immediate disciples.

This month we finish this reading with the Buddha lecturing to Pukkusati, a traveling monk, while they both share the night in a shed owned by a potter. Here we learn about the second of the six human properties, the liquid property and its role to our true self.

"And what is the liquid property? The liquid property may be either internal or external. What is the internal liquid property? Anything belonging to oneself, that's liquid, watery, & sustained: bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, oil, saliva, mucus, oil-of-the-joints, urine, or anything else internal, within oneself, that's liquid, watery, & sustained: In addition, that should be seen, as it actually is present with right discernment: 'This is not mine, this is not me, and this is not my self.' When one sees it thus as it actually is present with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the liquid property and makes the liquid property fade from the mind.

"And what is the fire property? The fire property may be either internal or external. What is the internal fire property? Anything internal that by which [the body] is warmed, aged, & consumed with fever; and that by which what is eaten, drunk, chewed, & savored gets properly digested; or anything else internal, within oneself, that's fire, fiery, & sustained: This is called the internal fire property. And that should be seen as it actually is present with right discernment: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus as it actually is present with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the fire property and makes the fire property fade from the mind.

"And what is the wind property? The wind property may be either internal or external. What is the internal wind property? Up-going winds, down-going winds, winds in the stomach, winds in the intestines, winds that course through the body, in-and-out breathing, or anything else internal, within oneself, that's wind, windy, & sustained. And that should be seen as it actually is present with right discernment: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus as it actually is present with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the wind property and makes the wind property fade from the mind.

"And what is the space property? The space property may be either internal or external: the holes of the ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the [passage] whereby what is eaten, drunk, consumed, & tasted gets swallowed, and where it collects, and whereby it is excreted from below, or anything else internal, within oneself, that's space, spatial, & sustained. And that should be seen as it actually is present with right discernment: 'This is not mine, this is not me, this is not my self.' When one sees it thus as it actually is present with right discernment, one becomes disenchanted with the space property and makes the space property fade from the mind.

"There remains only consciousness: pure & bright. What does one notice with that consciousness? One notices 'pleasure'... 'pain.'... 'neither pleasure nor pain.' In dependence on a sensory contact that is to be felt as pleasure, there arises a feeling of pleasure. In dependence on a sensory contact that is to be felt as pain... In dependence on a sensory contact that is to be felt as neither pleasure nor pain, there arises a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain.

"There remains only equanimity: pure & bright, pliant, malleable, & luminous. Just as if a skilled goldsmith or goldsmith's apprentice were to prepare a furnace, heat up a crucible, and, taking gold with a pair of tongs, place it in the crucible. He would blow on it time & again, sprinkle water on it time & again, examine it time & again, so that the gold would become refined, well-refined, thoroughly refined, flawless, free from dross, pliant, malleable, & luminous. Then whatever sort of ornament he had in mind — whether a belt, an earring, a necklace, or a gold chain — it would serve his purpose. In the same way, there remains only equanimity: pure & bright, pliant, malleable, & luminous. One discerns that 'If I were to direct equanimity as pure & bright as this toward the dimension of the infinitude of space, I would develop the mind along those lines, and thus this equanimity of mine — thus supported, thus sustained — would last for a long time. One discerns that 'If I were to direct equanimity as pure and bright as this toward the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... the dimension of nothingness... the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, I would develop the mind along those lines, and thus this equanimity of mine — thus supported, thus sustained — would last for a long time.'

"Sensing a feeling of pleasure, or, sensing a feeling of pain, or, sensing a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, one discerns that it is fleeting, not grasped at, not relished. Sensing a feeling of pleasure, one senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of pain, sensing a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, one senses it disjoined from it. When sensing a feeling limited to the body, one discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, one discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to life.' One discerns that 'With the break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is sensed, not being relished, will grow cold right here.'

"Just as an oil lamp burns in dependence on oil & wick; and from the termination of the oil & wick — and from not being provided any other sustenance — it goes out unnourished; even so, when sensing a feeling limited to the body, one discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, one discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to life.' One discerns that 'With the break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is sensed, not being relished, will grow cold right here.'

"Thus a monk so endowed is endowed with the highest determination for discernment, for this — the knowledge of the passing away of all suffering & stress — is the highest noble discernment.

"His release, being founded on truth, does not fluctuate, for whatever is deceptive is false; Unbinding — the unreceptive — is true. Thus a monk so endowed is endowed with the highest determination for truth, for this — Unbinding, the unreceptive — is the highest noble truth.

"Whereas formerly he foolishly had greed, — as well as desire & infatuation — or malice, — as well as ill-will & hatred — or ignorance — as well as delusion & confusion — he has now abandoned them, their root destroyed like an uprooted palm tree, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Whereas formerly he foolishly had malice he has now abandoned them... their root destroyed like an uprooted palm tree, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Thus a monk so endowed is endowed with the highest determination for calm, for this — the calming of passions, aversions, & delusions — is the highest noble calm. 'One should not be negligent of discernment, should guard the truth, be devoted to relinquishment, and train only for calm.' Thus was it said, and in reference to this was it said.

Part 2: A continuation on theDhatu-vibhanga Sutta [MN 140]

— Edited By Richard Price —

Open Meditation Retreat

March 19th — Mankato, MN

Where: Blue Earth Library Auditorium
Mankato, MN

Time: 1.00 PM to 4.30 PM

The retreat will for experience meditates, consist of a series of sitting and walking meditations . 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.

Register: E-mail at retreat.info@gmail.com

Meditation Retreat

March 25 th — Chanhassen, MN

Where: Chanhassen Rec Center
2310 Coulter Blvd

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

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.

Holy Man.....

Word spread across the countryside about the wise Holy Man who lived in a small house atop the mountain. A man from the village decided to make the long and difficult journey to visit him. When he arrived at the house, he saw an old servant inside who greeted him at the door. "I would like to see the wise Holy Man," he said to the servant. The servant smiled and led him inside. As they walked through the house, the man from the village looked eagerly around the house, anticipating his encounter with the Holy Man. Before he knew it, he had been led to the back door and escorted outside. He stopped and turned to the servant, "But I want to see the Holy Man!"

"You already have," said the old man. "Everyone you may meet in life, even if they appear plain and insignificant... see each of them as a wise Holy Man. If you do this, then whatever problem you brought here today will be solved."

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.