



# Three Jewels

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## Links to Buddhist Websites

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[Ten Directions Zen Community](#)  
[Woodstock Zen Group](#)  
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## Living and Meditation

~ Venerable Sujatha Peradeniye

Meditation is ease of living. It is being in the world, not away from the world. Some believe that meditation is a form of hypnosis. Some even speak of entering a trance state when meditating. They even speak of hallucinations like “out of body movements.” They do not realize that original Buddhist meditation is not hypnosis at all, even though some forms of meditation could be termed so. Original Buddhist meditation is a method of relaxing the body and calming the mind by freeing the mind of emotional disturbances. Even this is not the end, according to the Buddha. Tranquility of mind is only a means to an end. Tranquility of mind only prepares the mind for systematic healthy introspection.

This healthy objective introspection leads to an insight into the workings of the mind, resulting in the freedom from the illusion of existence. Our normal life of “existence of a self in the world” is a dream, according to the Buddha. When one awakens from this dream of existence, one begins to realize that one’s existence and all one’s activities are based on an illusion. It is then that one’s consciousness is transformed. For, in this transformed consciousness there are no “entities” that exist. This transformed state of consciousness is not a hypnotic trance but a fully conscious state where one is aware of everything and much more. One becomes aware not only of objects in the world, but also even of the process of awareness. When this happens, one realizes that all one is aware of, or sees and touches, is not as real as one thought, because it is all made up in the mind. This results in liberation from all emotional involvements with the world, and all selfishness and unhappiness. This is the end of all suffering and evil, including death. For, if we do not exist, how can we die? This liberation, however, does not mean a disinterest in the world. On the contrary, it results in a real selfless interest in the welfare of all beings. This is because we can become really interested in the welfare of others only when we are free from all selfishness, which accompanies all emotions. Our selfishness comes from the selfish emotions, and all emotions are self-centered. The ultimate purpose of true Buddhist meditation is to awaken from the dream of existence. This is why the Buddha, said, “the undoing of existence is Nirvana.”

In the modern Western world, meditation is fast becoming very popular. There are several types of meditation practiced: Hindu meditation, Christian or Jewish meditation, yoga-based meditation, and Buddhist meditation. All these meditation practices are mixed up with cultural rituals and dogmatic beliefs, and are often practiced with a limited understanding of what meditation is all about.

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Dr. Benson, who wrote about “the relaxation response,” says: in “most common meditation methods, attention is focused on just one thing. The person who is meditating stops thinking about anything else.”

It is definitely not the method taught by the Buddha. Meditation, according to the Buddha, is not concentration but purification of the mind. It is purification first from emotional thoughts, and then from the illusions and delusions of the mind. This is done through a process of selective thinking, and not through concentration.

Most of those who practice the meditation of breathing, take it to be an exercise in concentration. Hindus do it as Pranayama (Breathing) while Buddhists do it as Anapana sati, but they are not the same. Anapana Sati is not an exercise in concentration, though some, through ignorance, do it that way. Meditators very often misunderstand it. Anapana Sati is simply a method of relaxing the body and calming the mind by learning to relax the breathing. When our breath is relaxed, our body becomes relaxed, and the mind calms down. Only then can true meditation begin. When the body is relaxed and the mind is calm, then the mind becomes ready to realize the true nature of our experience. This leads to insight into the realities of life. The aim of Buddhist meditation is not to experience the reality of the “Self,” but to realize the unreality of the “self” or “soul.” Most meditation practitioners think that watching and observing the breath is the way to our true identity, but true meditation goes beyond that.

The well-known teacher of Buddhism, Bhante M. Punnaji explains this in his book, *Awaking Meditation*. “Sometimes meditators are not sure whether the awareness of body, sensations, moods and thoughts are to be practiced separately or all together. My understanding is that the practice of awareness is of the reaction of the body to sensory stimulation. This reaction is observed first as a physical movement or a tension in the body. Then as awareness deepens, it is observed as a sensation. The next level is to be observed as an emotion and lastly as a thought.”

Again in his book, *Buddhism as Psychotherapy*, Bhante M. Punnaji says: “Buddhism also recognizes that affective mental processes or emotional excitements are rooted in cognitive mental processes, such as the formation of concepts or interpretation of experiences.” According to how you interpret the situation, you become emotionally excited or become calm and relaxed. These interpretations that produce excitement are always associated with a *self-concept* or *self-image*. If we carry bad self-images habitually, we become habitually unhappy individuals. By practicing good thoughts we begin to eliminate these bad self-images and cultivate images of calm.

The calm mind is able to observe the subjective experience objectively and this brings us to the next step, which is the harmonious awareness. In the harmonious awareness, one becomes aware of the subjective experience objectively, and by the constant practice of this awareness, one begins to depersonalize the subjective experience. This way the personality perspective is gradually removed, followed by further gradual removal of all thoughts of *I* and *mine*. This gradual depersonalizing process calms the mind further and leads to the experiencing of progressively deeper levels of tranquility and happiness, leading to the perfection of mental health with the complete eradication of the experience of “self” within and the rooting out of thirst, and the disappearance of all anxiety for good.

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## Blue Lotus Buddhist Temple Calendar of Events

Sunday, January 28, 2007

Sutra Discussion

Saturday, February 10, 2007

Valentine's Day Meditation

Sunday, February 25, 2007

Sutra Discussion

Sunday, March 4, 2007

Youth Retreat

Saturday, March 10, 2007

Taste of Sri Lanka

Sunday, March 18, 2007

Beginners' Retreat

Sunday, March 25, 2007

Sutra Discussion

Sunday, April 22, 2007

Vipassana Day Retreat

Sunday, April 29, 2007

Beginners' Retreat

Sutra Discussion

Saturday, May 12, 2007

Visakha

(Buddha Day Celebration)

This ultimate state of mental health is rarely attained in modern Buddhist practice, but this is the final goal of the Buddhist, which was taught by the Buddha more than 25 centuries ago.

When we examine all the different forms of meditation in the world today, one thing becomes quite clear: basically all types of meditation that practice concentration on an object are not true techniques of meditation, but are techniques of hypnosis. Proper meditation should not aim at temporarily escaping from the problems of life by getting into a blissful, hypnotic trance. *It should aim at gaining insight into our problems in order to solve them and bring happiness into our everyday lives.*

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The following poem was contributed by Sangha member David Hunter.

give space  
silent deep  
not sleep  
but to listen  
and feel the sky  
and in between  
flickering time  
cicadas' rhyme  
paradiddle fiddle  
beneath your Eye  
chattering doesn't matter  
detachment flatters  
willing participants  
in a romantic dance  
of delicate dervishes  
spinning their maps  
to somewhere  
or nowhere  
in the ashtray of desire

