

BLUE LOTUS



BUDDHIST TEMPLE



THREE JEWELS 2009

Winter Edition

January 2009

Next Blue Lotus Trip to Sri Lanka with Bhante Sujatha

A few years ago, a group of Blue Lotus Temple members went to Sri Lanka with Bhante Sujatha. Now, Bhante is planning another tour to Sri Lanka during the first week of June 2009.

This is a wonderful opportunity. The trip will be 15 days and during this visit you will see many of the popular Buddhist historical sites created by the 2,500-year-old Singhalese culture.

Woodstock Meditation Practice Resumes for 2009

We will resume on Saturday, January 3, 2009. Yoga begins at 8:45 am and meditation practice begins at 10:00 am at the Unitarian Church in Woodstock.

Forget Concentrating on the Breath: Try a Two-Year-Old

John Stanley (Siddhartha--Wish Fulfilled)

When Bhante Sujatha asked me to write an article about how our family practice keeps our mind peaceful and helps us as a family, I thought to myself, Peaceful? I'm raising a two-year-old. My mind is anything but peaceful!

I'd like to write that my wife, Pamela, and I take time to meditate each day--that we're using this meditative wisdom to remain peaceful and happy while our daughter, Keira, demands junk food, bosses us around, screams when she can't watch television all day, and reverts from almost being potty trained to going in her pants again. No, this article will not be about me imparting my wisdom to you--believe me, I need all the help I

You will be whisked away to the mountains where you can experience the cool morning fog hovering over the tea plantations, or maybe you will experience the elephants roaming freely in the lush countryside. We will visit *The Temple of the Tooth*, a very historical ornamental Buddhist temple, which houses the Buddha's tooth relic. We will also see the Bodhi Tree, which was grown from a clipping of the original Bodhi tree, under which the Buddha gained enlightenment.

If you are interested in this trip, please contact Bhante Sujatha for more information.

Sujatha70@gmail.com

815-444-8915

Help wanted

I have been Treasurer of the Blue Lotus Buddhist Temple for the past five years and I welcome the opportunity to help out the temple any way I can. But, I need some help.

I'm in the process of buying a copy of Quickbooks or Peachtree accounting software for non-profits to keep the books and I need some assistance in setting up the program. Also, I need a

can get.

First, I wanted to see what the Buddha said, if anything, about raising children. After a short Google search, I found a reference to the *Sigalovada Sutta* (The Layperson's Code of Discipline). In this teaching, Buddha gives the following advice to a young layperson:

In five ways, young householder, the parents thus ministered to as the East by their children, show their compassion:

- (i) they restrain them from evil,
- (ii) they encourage them to do good,
- (iii) they train them for a profession,
- (iv) they arrange a suitable marriage,
- (v) at the proper time they hand over their inheritance to them.

Obviously, the first two about morality are the most applicable to raising a toddler, and it is this reminder about morality that is most helpful to me as a parent. As parents already know, we have to be very mindful of everything we do and say because our children are watching and learning, whether we realize it or not. But more than that, having a child makes me want to be a better person, a more moral person, to set a good example for my daughter as she gets older. For example, I really try to practice the path of right speech, realizing that children acquire language from their parents, as well as their anger and prejudices. Conversely, they can learn happiness and compassion if given the proper role models. I've also thought about what it means to truly refrain from stealing, and though I don't shoplift, I had a very large collection of copied DVDs that I had made on my computer. It was hard to throw them away, but I didn't want to explain to Keira one day that it's wrong to steal while trying to defend my stolen movies.

Then there's mindfulness. There is nothing like a toddler hanging all over you to keep you in the present moment. As a stay-at-home Dad who is home all day, there are plenty of times when I want some escape to read a book, work on the computer, or just clean the house. My mind constantly wants to go adrift, sometimes dwelling on the past or stressing about the future, but Keira pulls me right back to the present. And it's true: when I try to escape from the present, I usually end up miserable with a screaming child who demands attention. When I can stay in that moment and include her in cooking, cleaning, reading, or crafts, we are both happier and fulfilled.

Traditional meditation as a parent? Well, I try, but it is definitely

CPA to be able to occasionally go over the books and to offer advice when needed. I have priced some services and they can be expensive for our budget.

If there is anyone in any of our sanghas who is a CPA (or who knows one) or someone who could help me set up the program, please contact the temple. You can also email me at breddy@mw.sisna.com

Thank you.

Bill Reddy
(Samahita--Calm Mind)

Hermitage Retreat

The weekend I spent at *Embracing Simplicity Hermitage* (North Carolina) was my first meditation retreat. I am relatively new to meditation. The retreat had a significant impact on my spiritual journey. Not only was I able to develop greater concentration and awareness, but I was also motivated and inspired by the clear teachings of Bhante Sujatha, as well as by all of the kind folks that participated over the weekend. After leaving the retreat, I felt a deep sense of peace that carried over into my everyday life. I hope to be able to cultivate this glimmer of insight so that I

not something we can do as a family right now. But meditation is more than sitting on a cushion; it's being aware of our thoughts and actions as if we were an outside observer. It is analyzing why we react the way we do, and it is hopefully a method we can use to *think before we act*.

All parents have had reactions with children that they wish they could take back. My wife and I both lose our patience from time to time and feel guilty about it later. But when I have those days when I can be truly mindful (and I wish I could have more than I do), Keira's screaming and two-year-old behaviors do not faze me in the same way. I am able to stay calm, smile, and find out the actual problem without losing my patience or temper. Oh, that I could maintain that every day!

Despite what probably reads like complaining, I have to say that having a child is wonderful, even a two-year-old. I wouldn't trade it for the world, and there are so many special moments that make all of the headaches worth it. So, now that I've gathered my thoughts by writing this article, I realize that, even though we can't attend silent meditation as a family right now, I can use my daily experience of raising a toddler to practice the precepts, the eight-fold path, and insight meditation (the walking, cooking, cleaning, potty-training variety).

Mindfulness Practice Four-Hour Meditation Retreat

MEDITATION · GENTLE YOGA · MINDFULNESS
PRACTICE · SPIRITUAL INQUIRY · DISCUSSION

As we go about our daily life, we tend to get caught up in the business of routine tasks, forgetting to see things as they really are. Over time, we become preoccupied and little experiences in life bring our minds and hearts down. We don't take the time to slow down our inner thoughts to live in the present moment. For this reason it is truly invaluable to set aside sacred time for reflection and meditation. This meditation retreat will provide you with that quiet time for inner reflection and an opening of the psyche.

Please join us for four hours of inner peace.

Retreat Leader:
Bhante Sujatha

am better able to benefit all other living beings.

Matt (South Carolina)
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**A Mind Made from Little  
Peaces**

Date and Time:  
**February 14th 1:00pm to 5:00pm**

Retreat Location:  
**Center for Spiritual Evolution**  
A Religious Science Community  
204 Spring St., Cary, Illinois 60013

Schedule:  
1:00 pm: Gathering  
1:15 pm: Introduction and loving-kindness practice  
2:00 pm: Sitting practice (breathing and walking meditation)  
3:00 pm: Tea and snack plus discussion: "Daily practice"  
4:30 to 5:00 pm: Sitting practice  
Sharing love, kindness, and closeness

For information call 847-516-1950  
[www.newthoughtmchenry.org](http://www.newthoughtmchenry.org)

Retreat Registration Instructions: Pre-registration for this retreat is required. Due to space limitations, all registrations must be received by February 11, 2009.

**Pricing \$45: Includes Snack and Tea**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  Male  Female

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Mail registration and check to:  
Center for Spiritual Evolution  
204 Spring St.  
Cary, Illinois 60013

Observing the Problems in Our Lives  
By Ajahn Jagaro

Peace is a natural mind-state in every one of us. Peace has been there since the day we were born and it is going to be there till the day we die. It is our greatest gift; so why do we think we have no peace of mind? Experiencing peace is like looking at our hands. Usually, we see only the fingers, not the spaces in between. In a similar manner, when we look at the mind, we are aware of the active states, such as our running thoughts and the one-thousand-and-one feelings that are associated with them, but we tend to overlook the intervals of peace between them. If one were to be unhappy or sad every minute of the twenty-four-hour day, what would happen to us? I guess we would all be in the mad house!

--Thynn Thynn,  
*Living Meditation, Living Insight*

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## Walking on Water

Three monks decided to practise meditation together, so they sat by the side of a lake and closed their eyes in concentration.

Then suddenly, the first one stood up and said, "I forgot my mat." He stepped miraculously onto the water in front of him and walked across the lake to their hut on

As lay people living an ordinary lay life with all the commitments, involvements and responsibilities that are normally involved in lay living, it's difficult to devote much time to really develop meditation. So I think for many Western people, Buddhism seems to create a bit of a dilemma because of the way Buddhism is taught in the West. You come here and the teachings that we give are quite high aspects of Buddhist teaching, quite refined aspects, pointing always to meditation, pointing always to the development of awareness in order for insight, a deeper understanding, to arise--a penetration into the way things really are rather than the way they appear to be.

I think for many Westerners, it's very difficult to apply that teaching within the normal daily life they're living. Many Westerners who are now becoming interested in Buddhism and trying to practice the teachings of the Buddha, really trying to really follow them, feel somehow a bit of conflict there.

It's difficult to live your ordinary daily life with its ordinary responsibilities, commitments, social involvements, and still want to develop this degree of refinement of the Buddhist path. And it's a dilemma because it's difficult to do. If one's life is very much involved with socializing, very much involved with family, very much involved with commitments, and responsibilities, then of course one has to compromise one's time, one's energy, and one's interests. You can't devote that much time to the practice of making yourself calm, clearing the mind, and developing a refined sort of introspection. And so that teaching which is so refined sometimes seems a bit out of a reach for you.

The Buddha's teaching is still very applicable, very useful, and very relevant even if one can't meditate every day. Even if one can't spend hours meditating, one can still appreciate the Buddha's teachings and apply a lot of that teaching. A lot of the teaching has to do with ordinary daily living, knowing how to make the best use of this life as an ordinary person. Being born as a human being in Buddhism is considered a great blessing and privilege because human beings can free themselves from mechanical, habitual existence patterns. A human being can reflect on the results of living and can choose which direction to go. But one must make that choice; one must take that opportunity to make the choice. That is, one must take an interest in one's life, reflecting on it.

So many people want to escape from themselves and they do all sorts of things to escape from themselves because it's difficult and there are problems. So when I said that human beings have the opportunity to reflect on their lives, this is what

the other side.

When he returned, the second monk stood up and said, "I forgot to put my other underwear out to dry." He too walked calmly across the water and returned the same way.

The third monk watched the first two carefully in what he decided must be the test of his own abilities. "Is your learning so superior to mine? I too can match any feat you two can perform," he declared loudly and rushed to the water's edge to walk across it, where he promptly fell into the deep water.

Undeterred, the monk climbed out of the water and tried again, only to sink back into the water. Yet again, he climbed out and yet again he tried, each time sinking into the water. This went on for some time as the other two monks watched.

After a while, the second monk turned to the first and said, "Do you think we should tell him where the stones are?"

I mean. Observing our lives. Observing the problems in our lives.

## Is Mind the Forerunner of all Things?

by Mike Fronczak (Sanatha--Refuge)

"Mano Pubungama Dhamma" says the first line of the Dhammapada: "Mind is the foreunner of all things." But what does this mean. Let's look at each word starting with the easy ones: is, the, of. We can obviously disregard these article words as they simply indicate the predicate and subject, but the word "all" however is worth our attention here. "All" in support of "things": "all things" means all that is known and unknown. Any fathomable thing that is in this universe and perhaps beyond that was the scope of the Buddha's statement.

It is difficult to imagine this concept at times because we begin considering what we do not know. For example, this morning I did not know what a Catholic nun's garb was called. But, after a conversation with a friend, I learned that the clothes a Catholic nun wears is called a "habit." Now, I have to consider that this garb, and its name, existed before I knew it, and had some type of effect in my life (for example, when the person asked me "have you ever heard of a habit?"). Therefore, the Buddha's concept of "all things" (known or unknown, to myself, you or anyone, beyond the scope of time, space, dimension, realm, etc.) was teaching us the nature and meaning of existence in his first words.

Now let's consider the word "forerunner." Obviously this is a translation from the Pali text, but "forerunner" should be defined here as "that which precedes." So this leads us to our connection: "that which is proceeded (all things) and that which is preceded (Mind)." The logic of the statement is of the causal type "if/then" as in if there is mind, then there exists all things.

So what then is meant by the first term "Mind." Here we have to support our "if/then" statement in the negation: "if there is no mind, then there exists no things."

The Buddha is showing that mind is the tool, or object which perceives. Mind is the source of our existence and interaction with concepts such as known or unknown.

Meditation Course for Beginners

Sunday, January 25th, 2009

1:00 pm to 2:30 pm

Hosted by Yoga Seva  
60F West Terra Cotta Ave.  
Crystal Lake, IL60014 (near 7-Eleven)

Online at [www.yogaseva.com](http://www.yogaseva.com)  
For sign up call (815) 444-8915 or Email  
[mail@bluelotustemple.org](mailto:mail@bluelotustemple.org)  
Registration is required in advance; space is limited.

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### Our Next Book Discussion Group at Borders

Thursday, January 8th, will be the forth meeting of the Blue Lotus Temple Buddhist Discussion Group. We are reading Dr. Walpola Rahula's book, *What the Buddha Taught*. At the meetings, members read aloud and ask questions answered by Bhante Sujatha, who provides clear and helpful explanations.

January 8th, 2009 at 7pm  
Borders Books  
6000 Northwest Hwy  
Crystal Lake, IL

As before, newcomers will be welcomed as well as established members.

Please contact *Courtenay Wilson* with questions and comments, at  
[chinacourt@sbcglobal.net](mailto:chinacourt@sbcglobal.net) or 815.479.0377.

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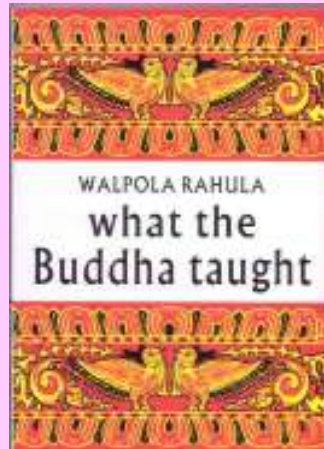
### TASTE OF SRI LANKA

The fifth annual Taste of Sri Lanka will be held on Saturday **March 7, 2009 at 5:00 p.m. at the Congregational Unitarian Church, 221 Dean Street, Woodstock, Illinois**. The evening is a cultural and festive event filled with a variety of entertainment and a large assortment of traditional Sri Lankan dishes. The food will be cooked by native Sri Lankans, including Sri Lankan monks. The meal includes both dinner and dessert dishes as well as beverages. This year's entertainment will include traditional Sri Lankan music, and much more.

The cost for the evening is \$25 and seating is limited to just eighty people. To reserve tickets, please call 815-444-8915. The event is a fundraiser for the Blue Lotus Buddhist Temple; all proceeds will go to the Temple. Replete with diverse food and entertainment, this is a fun-filled evening offering one of the most unique cultural experiences in McHenry County. For more information please call

815-444-8915 or email  
[mail@bluelotustemple.org](mailto:mail@bluelotustemple.org)

# What the Buddha Taught



Glen Ebey (Sati--Mindfulness)

Buddhism is, without a doubt, a religion that is quite foreign to most Americans. Mention that you are a Buddhist to a friend or acquaintance and quite likely images of monks with shaved heads wearing maroon colored robes who sit for hours chanting or meditating come to mind. Apart from these stereotypical images, little is known by people in general about basic Buddhist beliefs. On numerous occasions, I have been asked, "What do Buddhist believe?"

In response to this question I usually give a brief explanation of the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Noble Path, and the purpose of meditation. If the person is interested in learning more, I will suggest they read *What the Buddha Taught* by the Venerable Walpola Rahula. This book provides an excellent introduction to Buddhist teachings and is written in clear, easy-to-understand terms ideally suited to Westerners.

*What the Buddha Taught* is organized into eight chapters plus an appendix. The first five chapters deal with the Buddha's life, the basic Buddhist philosophy of experiencing the truth rather than merely believing, and the Four Noble Truths. Chapter six addresses the doctrine of no-soul (Anatta), chapter seven explains meditation, and chapter eight deals with Buddhist beliefs and practices in modern, daily life. The final appendix section contains selected Buddhist texts including the Universal Love Sutta and selections from the Dhammapada, two of my favorites.

Aside from its utility as a basic primer on the principles of Buddhism, I find *What the Buddha Taught* to be a valuable book for everyday reading. The selected texts are both inspiring and a constant reminder to maintain mindfulness and proper moral conduct. And of course, no matter how many times I read the chapter on no-soul, it continues to be a challenge for me.

Of all the books I own on Buddhism, this book is my favorite. It sits on the front seat of my car and is my constant companion. So, if you haven't read it yet, I highly recommend you get a copy. Better yet, get a few extra copies to pass out to friends who may have questions about Buddhism.

As a final note, a Buddhist book study group that meets every other Thursday at the Borders Bookstore on Northwest Highway in Crystal Lake is currently discussing *What the Buddha Taught*. If you're interested, the next meeting is Thursday, January 8 at 7:00pm [see



the section above in this newsletter].

## Words of the Buddha, Right After His Enlightenment



Through countless births in the cycle of existence  
I have run, not finding  
although seeking the builder of this house;  
and again and again I faced the suffering of new birth.  
Oh housebuilder! Now you are seen.

You shall not build a house again for me.  
All your beams are broken,  
the ridgepole is shattered.  
The mind has become freed from conditioning:  
the end of craving has been reached.

Buddha (from the Dhammapada)

Dear Bhante Sujatha,

On November 1st at 1:00am, I was at a gala opening party. Half-hazy memories of pulsating music, extravagant food, tattooed fire blowers, and throngs of costumed revelers around the pool of a giant pyramid mixed with a champagne-induced headache. Six hours later, at 7:00 am, I found myself driving towards your Boulder City meditation retreat. Crisp skies and wide rock landscapes stretched before my eyes as if a visual premonition to the day.

And when I got there, you were small, friendly and diminutive, standing at the entrance in your crimson robes and "yes I know" smile.

Why do we go looking for religion? What are we searching for when we search within ourselves?

How is this tiny monk, fugitive from his own homeland, going to teach me not to be afraid of myself? How is someone so removed from my chosen culture going to understand my spiritual needs? How is his presence going to keep me from falling asleep while I sit still for the next two days? Actually, I will be honest that I only signed up for one day and not two because I wanted to be able to leave without embarrassing anyone if I didn't like it.

And thank goodness I only signed up for one. Because after a full day of mindful sitting, mindful walking, mindful eating, and mindful sutra talk, I needed more than the 8 hours of

mindful sleep you had on your schedule!

And the next morning I woke up in my own bed alone and there was no change. Same walls, same windows, same bedspread, same door. But for my brain, it was like the Boulder City vista had stretched out in my mind, beyond my ears and infused the rest of my reality. I could see the texture on the same walls. I could smell the stale air trapped by the same window. I could hear the soft movement of the same bedspread and was aware of the world outside the same door.

It just happens and you must accept it. For to struggle in understanding the cause is to remake the knot you just undid.

So now I am mindful-powered! When I breathe now, thoughts still bubble up and I do get involved. But if they slip through my grasp I am happy for it. Playful in the catch and release, mindful of their loss. I can feel the warmth of the earth, the weight of my body and the bending of the grass and the eyes of the birds watching me all in the same footstep.

But something happened to me that I did not expect. At work I suddenly found myself becoming very assertive--nearly aggressive to others in meetings and emails. Is this a typical side-effect of Buddhism? Maybe it was what you said to me about it being acceptable to want but needing to set my limits. I now realize that yes, I had set them, but was and not enforcing them with the excuse of a mellow disposition--and therefore allowing those things to hurt me. And as I let myself be abused, I was making a bad example for my loved ones.

So now, as Thich Nhat Hanh says, I endeavor to "put my hands in the earth" and deal not with the suffering itself but the poisonous roots that are its cause. When I feel something is wrong, I realize it faster and act. I trust my instinct and have confidence in my senses.

Thank you for that amazing day in Boulder City, and for helping me on the path to discovering myself even more. And as I do so I hope to be the wind that carries your teachings to grow mindfulness and caring in the community--so that all may share in the joy of being happy, peaceful, and free.

Much love,

Jessica Lo  
Las Vegas

### **About Our Last Weekend Retreat**

**Nancy Schwab (Sumana--Beautiful Mind)**

On October 3, 4, and 5 a Fall retreat was held at the Theosophical Society in Wheaton, IL.

Eighteen people attended this retreat that was organized by Bhante Sujatha, Greg Rajskey and Ben Furman.

Activities included

- Qigong practice by Ben Furman
- Yoga on Saturday led by Greg Rajscky and on Sunday by Diana Schuster
- Many opportunities to meditate both inside and outside
- Dhamma talk by Bhante Sujatha: *Awareness is Not Enough*
- Dhamma talk by John Cianciosi: *Whatever Comes to Mind*
- Dhamma talk by Bhikkhuni Vimala: *Buddhism and the Feminine Aspect*
- Sutra Study led by Greg Rajscky: *The Development of the Faculties*
- A great lunch on Saturday at a nearby Indian restaurant
- Personal meditation times with Bhante Sujatha
- On Sunday we observed a day of silence with a group discussion at the end of the day

This three-day retreat, once again, left its participants with a feeling of well being and centeredness that could carry over into each one's personal life.

I thoroughly enjoyed the retreat and found many lasting benefits in spending this time away from my everyday routine to study and focus on mindfulness. I recommend this to anyone who would like to experience a peaceful, loving weekend with others who are seeking an enlightened path.

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