

THREE JEWELS

The newsletter of the Blue Lotus Buddhist Temple



BLESSINGS FOR
2013
AND A LOOK BACK AT
BLUE LOTUS IN
2012

ALSO INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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THREE JEWELS

Final Quarter 2012



FROM THE EDITOR



ANNOUNCEMENTS



NEWS



ARTICLES



FROM OUR SANGHA



ART

Send us your thoughts, announcements, articles & art!

Deadline for the upcoming issue is March 15, 2013.

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It's January as I write this, a day after my birthday and about a month later than I had hoped to be writing my column introducing this *Three Jewels* issue covering the final quarter of 2012. What I realize as I wrap up the issue before sending it on to our designer, Bibi, is that there is so much going on at Blue Lotus that I could just keep working on this issue with no end in sight.

Every time I think I'm done, I am reminded of another event or a project or a fundraiser or a class or a sutta or a poem or a cartoon that would be just right to include. And so I just have to stop somewhere. There are people who haven't been recognized and pictures that didn't make the cut, and some regular features that aren't here this quarter.

You'll notice we don't have an update from the Board or a Treasurer's report. We are in the process now of putting a new accounting system into place and it hasn't been presented to the Board yet, so we will wait for that until next quarter. And there isn't a message from Bhante Sujatha in this issue. He's been on the road a great deal of this quarter and busy when he's at home, so I wanted to give him a little break.

So much is happening at Blue Lotus these days. I hope you will dive into the pool and choose what makes you well, happy and peaceful. Of course, I recommend the meditation groups and sutta study and the chanting class. I'm rather biased. But there are also wonderful yoga classes, and tai chi and qigong. Special yoga workshops are being announced almost weekly and more are in the works. There is a Yoga for Runners workshop coming in February, led by Juanita Monaghan, and I know many of you preparing for marathons will want to be there. There are

also wonderful crystal bowl experiences to be had and gong meditation to immerse yourself in, and these are so kind to a tired, overworked and stressed body and mind.

We begin a monthly Drumming Circle on January 19, at 7:00 p.m., hosted by Blue Lotus and Drumming for Peace founder Michael Suess. It will meet on the third Saturday evening of each month. What fun that will be, and what a perfect way to release stress and tension and support peace at the same time! Join us for this ongoing group any time you can.

Please plan to come for a very special teaching opportunity and art exhibit when Tulku Jamyang Gyatso visits us Sunday, Jan. 27, and again on Monday, Jan. 28. Tulku Jamyang will also visit the Lake Geneva meditation group on Tuesday, Jan. 29, as the guest of Tod Nielsen. Tod, the Blue Lotus office manager, is a friend of Tulku Jamyang's family. As part of the Tulku's visit, Tod has prepared an art exhibit of Tibetan paintings and religious artifacts and ornamentation. There will also be a Tibetan altar as part of the exhibit. This is the Tulku's only Midwestern visit before he continues on to California to visit his brother.

You see, I just can't stop. My heart overflows with this delicious problem—too much is going on at Blue Lotus!! We are becoming what we set our intentions to be: a community and spiritual gathering place where everyone can feel welcome and can find something they need and a taste of peace and happiness. It is happening now, and we can all add to it and benefit from it.

May you be well, happy and peaceful. And may your next birthday be as wonderful as mine was this year, reminding you of how you are loved and energizing you to continue in your path to be of benefit to all sentient beings. ●

Have a reaction to something you read in this issue? Have a question, comment, or concern? Send your letters to vimalajf@gmail.com to be printed in the next issue.

PLEASE NOTE When submitting pictures, be sure to send the biggest versions you have. Images off the internet will print fuzzy. Look at the file size on your computer. If the picture file is under 1MB in size it probably isn't suitable for the newsletter!

Special Visit by Tulku Jamyang Gyatso



Tulku Jamyang was born into a Buddhist family in the Himalayan region in 1977. At two, he was recognized as a reincarnated lama by Venerable Diphuk Rinpoche and confirmed by the great Tibetan masters His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His Holiness Penor Rinpoche, and His Holiness Achub Rinpoche.

Tulku Jamyang studied the philosophy of Buddhism in India and received advanced meditation training in Tibet. Returning from Tibet, he continued with short meditation retreats in Nepal and Kalimpong, India. He also taught Buddhist philosophy at Shree Selwa Jyangchup Choling Monastery in Nepal.

He believes in being a strong practitioner and, in addition to his practice, he tries to share the messages of Buddhism through various platforms such as seminars and one-on-one lessons. He helps people realize their inner spiritual qualities and the establishment of morality in society. He also teaches simple meditation techniques and yoga to help people find inner peace, happiness, and a healthy lifestyle. ●

Tulku Jamyang's Events at Blue Lotus Temple

3:00 p.m., Sunday, January 27

Tulku Jamyang will give a 90-minute talk on Tibetan Buddhism, including a short Visualization Meditation and a discussion of his book, *No Time for Complex Buddhism*. Please bring your questions (including, "What is a Tulku?")

7:00 p.m., Monday, January 28

Tulku Jamyang will give the Dhamma Talk following the 7:00 guided meditation.

An exhibit of Tibetan Art in the Dhamma Hall will coincide with the Tulku's visit:

Friday, January 25, Noon–5 p.m.

Saturday, January 26, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. (closed during 10 a.m. meditation session)

Sunday, January 27, 2–6 p.m.

Monday, January 28, 6–9 p.m. (closed during 7 p.m. meditation session)

7:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 29

Holy Communion Episcopal Church

320 Broad St., Lake Geneva, WI 53147

Wisconsin Blue Lotus Meditation Group

Welcome to the World!



John Daniel Stanley

Born December 23, 2012, at 1:48 PM  Froedtert Hospital in Waukesha, Wisconsin
7 pounds 1 ounce • 18.11 inches long

Johnny has a single-ventricle heart defect (half a working heart). It will require surgery at some point, but he did not need an initial surgery like so many babies do. We are very blessed to have avoided that! We spent about a week in the neonatal intensive care unit to make sure everything was okay.

Pamela and Johnny are both home and doing very well. You wouldn't know there was anything wrong with his heart to look at him. He's eating very well, gaining weight, and seems very happy and content. ●

Editor's note: John and Pamela Stanley were among the earliest members of Blue Lotus and dear friends of Bhante Sujatha's for many years. Many of us know them well, and you probably remember that John was the first editor of Three Jewels. Their daughter Keira was the "first baby" of Blue Lotus and she is now welcoming her baby brother, Johnny, into the family. We want to welcome Johnny into the world and into a wonderful, loving family.

Events at Blue Lotus Temple September–December 2012

New Year's Blessing Chanting

On December 1, 2012, we experienced the chanting of twelve Buddhist monks from around the country. The evocative tones of Pali chants invoke blessings for the year to come and speak to our inner selves. This year, for the first time, we also shared in the purification ceremony of Bathing the Buddha. Each person who participated in dipping ladles of rose infused water over the head of the Buddha image found their own meaning in the calming, symbolic gesture.

Bhante Sumana was again in charge of creating the beautiful gazebo where the monastics sat to chant. Along the outer paper walls, chants and wishes for peace were written, and blessings written by community members were affixed as well, dedicated to friends and loved ones.

Once again, we are all so thankful for the visiting monks who chanted, our Zen brothers and sisters, and our growing community of practitioners. May your year be blessed. ●

May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes.

May all sentient beings be free of suffering and its causes.

May all sentient beings not be separated from sorrowless bliss.

May all sentient beings abide in equanimity, free of bias, attachment, and anger.



Buddha Kids' Holiday Party and Bodhimas Tree Decorating

On Saturday, November 17, we had a special Holiday Party for all the Buddha Kids and former Buddha Youth, along with their friends and family. Teachers Kristen and Kaitlen planned the craft-making party and a delicious lunch that fed all the children and their families and even more Temple friends who joined in the festivities.

The kids made all of the ornaments and decorations for our Blue Lotus Temple Bodhimas Tree in the social room next to our Dhamma Hall! Being generous to us adults, they let us all share in the coloring and painting as well, so it was a joyous time for everyone who even stuck their head in the door to watch our creative, delightful kids. (see more pictures on page 19)

To make it all even more wonderful, the families who attended and others who joined in all made donations towards another baby incubator for Bhante Sujatha's hospital project in Sri Lanka. ●



Silent Night Meditation



Photo by Jorian Lewke, with permission of the artist

Dharma Flower Zen and Blue Lotus Temple joined together for a silent candlelight meditation on Friday, December 21. It has been several years since the last joint silent meditation with these two close groups, but everyone who attended hopes it will be a renewed connection with more of these evenings together.

From 7 to 11 p.m., silent meditation in the candlelit Dhamma Hall was held, with people quietly entering or leaving as the evening progressed. Every 20 minutes Zen teacher Harold Rail would sing a Tibetan bowl, signaling a break. During these breaks, people were invited to come up and either read a meaningful selection or sing or perform in some small way. Or there was silence during the break. The evening flowed luminously, silently, peacefully. A holy night. ●

Silent Meditation Retreat at Anderson Gardens



The Summer retreat group

Sunday, October 7, at the 14 acre group of Japanese gardens located in Rockford, Illinois, Bhante Sumana led another silent retreat. The morning was spent in silence mindfully observing our surroundings. The fall colors were vivid, and seeing the change in the seasons, comparing it to our last retreat during summer's close, was part of the enchantment of the location. Each retreatant chose their own path and we ended the morning with chanting and blessings as one group. ●

Moonlight Meditation

On Sept. 30, there was a full-moon meditation at Soul Shine Farm in Bull Valley, Illinois. Soul Shine Farm is the home of Tyler, Dee and Jorian Lewke and they were the hosts for the evening meditation and campfire discussions. As cars arrived at the property, and everyone walked to an open meadow for a talk by Bhante Sujatha and meditation, the pathway was lined with candles illuminating the way. After walking meditation, the large group sat around a campfire as the evening grew colder and the sun made its farewells. There was a sharing of questions and answers and peaceful, companionable silence, all soothing to mind and body.

Thanks to the Lewke family for creating this lovely space for a unique meditation experience. ●



An Introduction to Meditation Practice, Friday evening, November 2



Led by Bhante Sujatha, this popular meditation workshop is excellent for all beginners and longtime meditation practitioners who want to have their specific questions answered and who also want to learn more about techniques and meditation styles. This was the first intro to meditation evening Bhante has had at the temple and it was an inspiring gathering. Bhante has scheduled three more Friday evening introductory workshops in 2013, all set for 6:30-8:30 p.m.: March 15, May 24, and Sept. 6. Make a date! ●

Love in Action Two-Day Retreat, September 29–30

Presented by Bhante Sujatha and Nancy May, this meditation and yoga retreat was the first 2 day retreat at the new Blue Lotus Temple. The teachers told their students, “failure is impossible. The outcome is always success in gaining spiritual progress *one step at a time.*” The two days consisted of meditation, studying suttas, a gentle yoga practice, and looking within to raise awareness of love and compassion. Meals and breaks provided an opportunity to get to know one another and share noble friendship. ●



Vipassana One-Day Retreat, November 25

Presented by Bhante Sujatha and assisted by Bhante Sumana and Bhikkhuni Vimala, this day was truly an experience of finding tranquility through inner observation. Once again, talks, discussions and meditation combined with fellowship to create a day of mindfulness and intention. ●



Gift Shop Features Local and Sri Lankan Artisans



Joan Beck is the volunteer manager of the bookstore and gift shop on the main level of the Blue Lotus Temple and Meditation Center.

On the upper level of the building, at the rear of the Social Room, is an inviting bookstore and gift shop that has become quite an “item” itself. With a very good collection of books that are recommended reading for anyone interested in Buddhism, and beautiful handmade items, the shop draws interest from everyone who comes into the new space.

A generous donation of display cases and hours of volunteer labor have created an appealing, light space that showcases the items being sold. Local craftspeople and artisans have placed their pieces in the shop, and all donate a portion of their sales back to the temple. At special social events, artisans are able to come and meet their customers, making a personal connection. There are also handcrafted pieces from Sri Lanka and fabric mats, cushions and batiques made by womens’ collectives.

A longtime friend of Bhante Sujatha’s, and one of his first Blue Lotus students, Joan Beck is the volunteer manager of the bookstore and gift shop. Joan recently retired and agreed to take on this major project, so please meet her when you are visiting the temple and see what new items she has on display or what books have just arrived. Her calm and knowledgeable presence is felt by everyone she meets. ●

Harper College Students Visit Blue Lotus

Professor William Pankey brought 16 of his students from Harper College to a Blue Lotus Saturday meditation service in October. While here, each student had a Blue Lotus “sponsor” who talked with them and guided them through their experience that day. Dr. Pankey sent five of the students’ responses about their visit, and their stories and the photos from the day say it all.

Thank you, Harper students, for visiting us and sharing your perceptions. You are always welcome here. And thank you, Dr. Pankey, for this beautiful experience.



Kate Syzdek

On Saturday, October 20, I was given the chance to go to the Blue Lotus Buddhist Temple in Woodstock. I was given this chance because I am in Mr. Pankey’s “Religions of the World” class and I participate in the Buddhist Interest Group. I was excited and interested to go because of the meditation, since I have had some experience from the interest group.

As soon as we got there we were greeted by a female monk who was happily expecting us. She provided a warm welcoming and brought Bhante in the room. Bhante’s first impression was even more of a welcoming greeting than the first monk. He seemed so

happy and continuously shared a smile towards the group.

The service we joined was an interesting experience. The service as a whole ended up being shorter than I thought and uniquely different from any other religious service I have been to. It started with meditation, which was normal for me because of the interest group, but longer than I’m used to. Throughout the meditation, I felt there was a different sense of comfort added because of how much spirit every person in the room had brought to it. I appreciated what Bhante did for our group in order to show his appreciation of us coming. I also feel that Bhante provides a great place for people to clear their thoughts and detach themselves

from the world and bring themselves to their own minds.

What inspired me most was what the people of the temple had to say about their practice and the teachings of Bhante. They told us how meditation benefited their lives and the changes they have made in general.

Overall, I enjoyed my first Buddhist temple experience and would love to visit again. Bhante was the most welcoming and cheerful person I have met, and his smile made me enlightened to just love myself and the people around me. I don't think Buddhism is a life choice for me but I was definitely intrigued by their values and I know I would be more than welcomed into the religion.

Christina Park

Quite honestly, the Blue Lotus Buddhist Temple was one of the most welcoming and encouraging places I have ever been to. From when I walked into the building to when I walked back to the bus, it was a positive environment.

Growing up, I was raised in a Christian home, but as I got older I began to explore other religions and questioned a lot of my beliefs. I've always believed that no matter what religion one chooses, acceptance is something that should be a priority; acceptance of other cultures, backgrounds, economic status, etc. As I reflected on my Christian upbringing, it was difficult not to be critical of how Christians sometimes treat one another and people of other faiths. As Gandhi said, "I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."

My family is Korean. Last summer I had the opportunity to go to Korea and pay respects to my family. A large majority of the country are practicing Buddhists. While there, I had the chance to visit a Buddhist temple in Southern Korea. Almost immediately, I felt tranquility as I walked around the temples. I definitely had a similar feeling upon my visit to the Blue Lotus temple. While there, it seemed like the temple, as a whole, was one big family. There was an aura of selflessness and a "what's mine is yours" mentality.

Towards the end of the trip, the woman who had welcomed me into the temple pulled me aside and asked me to sit in front of Bhante. I wasn't really sure what to expect because I wasn't a Buddhist. The woman explained how it's tradition for members to sit in front of the monk to receive a blessing. She told me that she wanted to give her blessing to me. Bhante said a little prayer and tied a yellow bracelet on my wrist (a symbol for the impermanence of this world).



I was so encouraged by this gesture. Here I was, a girl that this woman had never met before, and as a welcoming gift she decided to give me her blessing. I am so glad I had the opportunity to visit the temple. It was something that I never would've done on my own. It brought what we learn in the classroom to a realistic perspective. Though I'm not quite sure whether or not I'll be visiting the temple again anytime soon, I can say that my first experience there was a positive one.

Ivan Martinez

You might assume that trying a new religion would be neglecting your own, or you might feel nervous because of the new experience. Going on this field trip I was actually kind of nervous; I already knew what to expect from what we learned in class, however I was still kind of shy and nervous going inside the temple.

The drive there was great because it gave me a chance to relax and prepare myself for this new experience. As we drove I thought we were just going to observe people from a distance practicing the religion, but actually I was to become part of it.

When we walked in I was really surprised how nice everyone was. Here was a group of students from Harper College walking into a Buddhist temple, many of us for the first time, and I was just surprised at the acceptance from everyone. After just a few minutes of being there I felt like home. Right away we were offered hospitality and were introduced to everything that was happening (including yoga class held before the meditation).

My shyness and nervousness were gone; I felt welcome and acknowledged by everyone. I think about my religion (Catholic). When I walk into a church, I never get welcomed that way; no one ever tells me that they are happy to see me. Yes, I get greeted with a smile, but that's about it. The fact that we had to take our

shoes off, I thought was a sign of respect to the temple, and a homelike feeling, which I really liked. I observed my surroundings as I walked in, and everyone was talking to each other, having a great time.

The Buddhist priest was really nice. He had a humongous smile on his face when he saw us, and we could tell he was very happy we were there. The meditation was great. It gave me a chance to relax, let go of my body, and clear my mind.

I also liked how we were all individually introduced to a sponsor. That was something that I was not expecting, but once again I felt welcomed and greeted with joy. Later on, every sponsor in the room said something about the religion and why they enjoyed it. This was good because we get to hear from the actual people why they practice this religion.

What I found the most interesting were the windows with Jesus on them. The Buddhist priest said, "Why would I take them down, if they are both brothers," which I agreed with. I also loved how he said people can go to his temple and practice meditation, then go back to their own religion. He said you can leave whenever you want to, that if you want to do it for a week or so, and then leave, that was fine, and that you will always be welcomed back. That was my favorite part: him showing that the doors to his temple will always be open, and that he did not require anyone to change who they are in order to be part of it.

Overall this was a great experience for me. At first I was intimidated, but minutes later I felt like I was at home. I think that this is a great temple to go to and meditate. It was a very enjoyable fieldtrip.

Sakina Bano

As we entered the building with the golden Buddha outside, I could practically feel the communion and hospitality. We went downstairs and the Buddhist Nun gave us a small tour. Bhante Sujatha came down to greet us, too, and seemed very pleased to see us.

After that we went upstairs to take our shoes off to go in the Dhamma Hall. It was a big hall decorated with colourful and cultural ornaments and in the front sat a huge, white statue of the Buddha. We all settled down on the chairs behind the cushions.

One by one people started coming in and sitting down. It was very quiet in there. Then at 10 o'clock Bhante Sujatha and the Nun came and sat facing everyone, in front of the Buddha's statue. We started with meditation. I found it very hard to relax as much as the Bhante was directing us to. However, I have never done it before so it was a different experience.

After what felt like 20 minutes, Bhante and the rest started

chanting the prayers in the books that had been handed out to all of us. It basically wished us wellness, happiness and peacefulness. When we were done, Bhante called upon 16 sponsors of the centre to give each one of us a bracelet, embrace us and later tell us something about their experience.

We sat with Bhante for a while, and before leaving we got to pick out any books and CDs we liked from the book sale to take home. It was a very different, interesting and enlightening experience for me, and although I don't plan on going again, I am glad I went at least once.

That was my favorite part: him showing that the doors to his temple will always be open, and that he did not require anyone to change who they are in order to be part of it.

Scott Greenberg

Going to the Blue Lotus Temple was quite an interesting learning experience, to say the least. As someone who has been doing religious studies almost all my life and also participated in different religious groups of my own Jewish faith, as well as groups of all three Abrahamic faiths, I have never really learned much about the Buddhist faith. So when this opportunity was given, I was mildly curious about what this temple would be like. It really changed my opinion of what Buddhism is and how it plays a role in its followers' everyday lives.

First off was the meditation session. It was quite enlightening. For the first half of it I really could not just focus on nothing. My mind kept wandering from topic to topic. Still, about halfway through the session I was able to stop the thinking and I started to feel at peace.

The next thing I noticed there was the fact that these people were also Christians as well as any other faith that could have all been there. As talked about in class, people in places like China are known to have more than one religion because they all kind of work together. I would have never thought that someone who has such beliefs as an Abrahamic faith could also include the teaching of an Eastern faith so easily and openly. I always thought it was one or the other, but the members of the temple were able to do it just fine.

In conclusion, it was a fantastic experience where I learned something I never knew, and I had a great time blasting some awesome CDs on the drive home. ●

Coming up in 2013

Taste of Sri Lanka, March 30

This dinner and auction has become our biggest fundraising event of the year, but we've outgrown our space in the temple and it's being moved to the Dole Mansion in Crystal Lake! We can now sell more tickets and have more space. We'll have a more efficient auction and an elegant setting, but the wonderful food will be the same and the fun will just be funner. Tickets are on sale now.

Vesakha Day (Buddha Day Celebration), May 11

Join us May 11 for this festive ceremony ending with our famous Procession, led by drummers and a statue of the Buddha, as everyone joyfully circles the square of Woodstock and winds back to the temple for refreshments and meeting new and old friends.

Sri Lanka honors Bhante Sujatha, July 13

On July 13 in Sri Lanka, Bhante Sujatha Receives the title of Chief Sangha Patron in North America. This highest honor is going to Bhante due to his work in the U.S. creating Blue Lotus, as well as for the humanitarian work he is doing in Sri Lanka with the support of his students in Blue Lotus and around the world.

Bhante Sujatha will go to Sri Lanka for part of the summer and Bhante Sumana will go before him to work on the organization of the ceremony and the other humanitarian projects Bhante wants to complete to recognize this honor being given him.

There will also be community members going to Sri Lanka for the celebrations and to tour the country. At least two different groups will be traveling under Bhante's guidance. Anyone interested can contact the temple office.

Fall Brings a Burst of Color and Activities

After a long, record-hot summer, enjoyed by all true Midwesterners, the fall season introduced Blue Lotus to a dizzying schedule of new activities. Many of the events were retreats and longer meditation opportunities, but we also brought other groups to our building as we began to host activities introducing new faces and new experiences.

One of the goals of having our own temple building has always been to create a community center reaching out beyond our own sangha and serving the spiritual needs of many others as well. The same way the Unitarian Church community welcomed us into their space, we wanted to welcome others. This fall we expanded those opportunities and it's been a great success. We've made new friends, more people have discovered what Blue Lotus has to offer, and we have utilized the space we are blessed with and created abundance in the process. ●

What We've Been Doing

We've continued and expanded some of our offerings. The gong meditations with Mark Placzkowski have continued, and will be monthly in 2013. In the cold winter months, it's nice to have the Social Room with heated floors for everyone's comfort. We're also going to be offering Crystal Bowl meditations more regularly.

On Thanksgiving weekend, we had a full house for Preston Klik's "Native American Flute Concert." It was a peaceful, graceful multimedia experience that suited our space well. Hopefully, we will welcome Preston back in the new year for another new experience.

With our own kitchen, we were able to host a Sri Lankan Cooking Class and Dinner right in the building. Sri Lankan "chef" Samnathi donated her time and talent and magical secret (to most of us) ingredients to make this class fun, lively and delicious. Even though we haven't started any remodeling yet on our lower level, everyone enjoyed the class, the company and the cooking! Lydia Schmidt and Bhante Sumana were dedicated assistants. Thanks to you both, along with Samnathi.

The Rock River Valley Blood Center continued to team up with Blue Lotus for blood drives at the building. With our own space, the Blood Center team could use a room in the lower level to sign in donors, and have drinks and a hot stew for anyone who participated and may have given up their lunch break to donate. It was a wonderful gift from the Blood Center team to keep the donors' blood sugar levels going strong! ●



Ongoing Mindful Health and Fitness Classes

With the gift of our own space, we've also expanded our ongoing yoga classes taught by Jason and Deidre. And we've continued with Tai Chi and Qigong class series. ●

The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Anguttara Nikaya

Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi

Review by Tod Nielsen

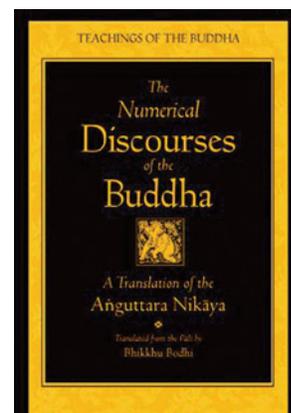
All serious students of the Dhamma can rejoice—Bhikkhu Bodhi has completed his translation of this monumental work (1,925 pages)! It is now available to all who wish to delve into its fascinating pages.

We all know that the salient points in the Dhamma are recorded in lists and lists of lists. The Anguttara Nikaya is arranged in a peculiar—but practical manner. The collection starts with a sub-collection of Suttas that have only one subject. The next sub-collection contains Suttas that have two subjects. The pattern repeats up to Suttas with 11 subjects.

The reader who hopes to read through the Suttas in a methodical manner will be disappointed, as the only connection between the Suttas is the number of points each addresses. In fact, the Suttas that start the collection are—by the nature of its organization—very short.

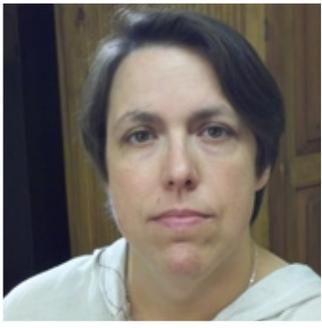
Bhikkhu Bodhi has kindly compiled a “Thematic Guide” that remedies the situation. This detailed guide is very useful for those making a detailed study of the Dhamma. The tome also contains guides to abbreviations and to Pali pronunciation, a lengthy and detailed Introduction, appendices, detailed notes, extensive and detailed indices, and a bibliography.

Once again, thank you, Bhikkhu Bodhi, for this massive work. The wisdom and compassion of the World Honored One shine from every page into our very hearts and minds. ●



Expectations

by Rose Huegen



It's the holiday season! Once again desire makes itself known as an instrument of suffering in a very subtle way. The season is filled with the hustle and bustle of people out shopping for gifts to give one another, expecting gifts in return. At no other time of the year are we so focused on

other people than between November and December, trying to make sure we haven't forgotten anyone on our lists. Focusing on others is a good thing, right?

When I think of Christmas Time I am filled with confusion, stress and even depression as I watch people caught up in the material world. What are we truly celebrating? I can't seem to convince myself that it is the birth of Jesus, who stands for values and principles that are in conflict with people's actions. I think of all the sales (especially Black Friday) and how people become selfish and rude to others in their hurry to get "the perfect gift" as cheaply as possible. Yet what else can they do when there is the expectation placed upon them to give gifts. If you buy something for Aunt Sally, you had better make sure you get something for Uncle Joe or else he might feel left out. And this is just one of the expectations placed upon you by others.

You are expected to show up for work on time, dressed appropriately and pleasant mannered. You are expected to obey traffic laws, pay your taxes and provide for your children and

others in your family. You are expected to follow the guidelines of the society you live in, get good grades in school and eat your vegetables. You are expected to pay your bills, respect your neighbors and obey your elders. Somewhere along the line though, we have blurred the line and allowed those expectations to cloud our vision so that we don't see things as they really are.

Expectation are often a rigid framework that pre-supposes how things should be according to our perception of them. These assumptions lead to disappointment and frustration (more suffering) and close our minds to the reality of our existence. For example, how many of us have expectations of people saying 'excuse me' when threading between seats at a theater or 'thank you' when you hold the door open for them? When they don't, it becomes disappointment in how people are not as courteous as they once were. Yet who is to say what courtesy is, or why it is important to say those few words?

We organize our lives into neat little compartments and get upset when things don't live up to our perceptions and desires. Anger, at its most basic level, is this disconnect between what we think should be, and what is reality around us. That person cut ME off. That person shouldn't be wearing tight clothing. That person has no sense of financial responsibility. All these labels, expectations and perceptions can lead to a very unhappy existence. Even the statements about Christmas above are proof that it happens to all of us. There is no real way to escape these snap judgments, yet we can alter how we react to them and raise our awareness so we recognize that we are judging in the first place. ●

Who Decides Which Life Has Greater Value?

by David Schmidt



The recent tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School has been first and foremost on most minds since the day in December it happened. And certainly this is a day that will live in infamy for most Americans. While there is no question that this was a most

horrific atrocity, it has also been a time of increased awareness for me. An awareness of our connectedness, as well as a lack of clear understanding as it is explained in the Buddha's teachings of "[sati-sampajañña](#)."

Please understand that I could in no way tell you how it feels to lose a child, much less losing one in this type of circumstance. It is truly incomprehensible for me. But I do see that for most of us, the passion that erupted from this event may have clouded our deeper understanding about this life. Not simply in the First Noble Truth, that there is suffering, but that death has likely come to visit each of us many times before. In a practical sense, it has touched each of us with the loss of parents, children and other loved ones many times already. And in the Buddhist sense, the [Assu Sutta](#) teaches us:

"Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a father...the death of a brother...the death of a sister...the death of a son...the death of a daughter... loss with regard to relatives...loss with regard to wealth...loss with regard to disease. The tears you have shed over loss with regard to disease while transmigrating and wandering this long, long time—crying and weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—are greater than the water in the four great oceans.

"Why is that? From an inconstruable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating and wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—

enough to become disenchanted with all fabricated things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released."

With this in mind, I fully understand that not all of us believe in rebirth, and I personally have no direct knowledge that would support it. But I do know that death is a part of life, and there is no escape from that truth. And I do not see where there is more or less value in any one life over another. Because someone is a prominent figure or is someone whom I have a personal relationship with does not make any difference. All life and death are of equal value and deserving of my loving-kindness, goodwill, and compassion. And I believe there is a skillful empathy that can be developed and cultivated through mindful awareness and understanding of this. One which is neither attached nor detached, but filled with a deep heart and mind connection that



is filled with unconditional love and understanding.

My intention here is only to offer the opportunity for each of us to become more open to the precious life, suffering, and death that we all share. Whether it be a starving child in Africa, a freezing homeless person in Russia, or your next-door neighbor who is battling cancer. We are only separated by the delusions that we create based around the concept of self. The self that thinks how "I" feel and how "I" am personally affected. There is a much bigger World out there, and we are all so very much a part of it all.

May you be well, happy and peaceful. ●

Remindfulness

by Jim Kail



It is a paradox that meditation and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) have much in common. This is due to the fact that while they are both so different (one being beneficial and the other damaging), they operate on the same basis. Both work by storing data in our long term memory, which is accessed automatically at a later

date to alter our attitudes, feelings, and behavior.

It is well known that we remember events longer and more clearly if the event is accompanied by strong emotion. We clearly remember our first kiss no matter how long ago it was. Our memories of where we were and how we felt on first hearing about President Kennedy's assassination or 9-11 are forever etched in our minds.

PTSD is caused by this. An individual is exposed to extreme stimuli causing extreme emotions. The most common example is a soldier during war where the stimuli is gunfire and the emotion terror. In a short period of time, data is etched into the soldier's memory—the feelings, sounds, and images associated with that terrible moment. PTSD is debilitating because months or years later, a trigger (car backfiring) can automatically cause those memories to be accessed and reappear along with the extreme emotion (terror). These intense negative emotions impact behavior negatively, and the victim cannot function normally.

Meditation works the same way, but this time with positive, beneficial results. During meditation, we imprint selected, positive data into our long term memory, but we do not use strong emotion as a catalyst. Instead, we use repetition. This takes longer and requires patience, but it is just as effective. When we meditate, feelings and thoughts are repeated over and over, day after day, until they are cemented into our long term memory (see E. Kandel's book, *In Search of Memory*, for how biochemistry embeds memory in our neurons).

This data that we memorize are thoughts of Lovingkindness, Calmness, Acceptance, Impermanence, Self-Observation and Mindfulness. They are all associated together in our memory along with our awareness of the breath. As with PTSD, this saved data can automatically surface in our daily lives. While driving our cars, for example, we might be cut off by another driver. By putting our attention on our breath (a trigger) all of the associated feelings and ideas from meditation bubble up. But this time, unlike PTSD, the results are highly beneficial. The stressful event releases our stored meditation memories resulting in calmness, mindfulness, benevolence and acceptance.

The close relationship of meditation and memory might be used to improve our practice. The meditation can be divided into two memorizing sessions. The first part is dedicated to memorizing the calmness of breath-watching along with mindfulness and self awareness. The second session is dedicated to "thinking" about Buddhist ideas (data) over and over: Lovingkindness, Impermanence, Acceptance, etc. This instills more wholesome data into the neurons.

Besides repetition, what else helps long term memorization? Psychologists have found that shorter periods of practice, with rests in between, is more effective than long, extended periods. Our school teachers were correct when they said that marathon cramming sessions the night before exams may be successful in the short term, but for long term retention, shorter periods of studying every day is required. A few meditation retreats a year cannot replace the long term benefits of daily meditation.

I was driving with my wife, Linda, on the Kennedy Expressway last fall and the following exchange took place:

Me: (whistling absentmindedly)

Linda: "I wish you'd stop that."

Me: "What?"

Linda: "That tune. Do you know what you're whistling?"

Me: "I'm not sure. Wasn't really paying attention."

Linda: "Turkey in the Straw."

Me: "Oh. Jeez. Sorry."

I apologized immediately because I knew why my wife was somewhat irritated. All summer long the neighborhood ice cream truck tormented us by playing "Turkey in the Straw" over and over. This shows the great power of repetition. It caused an automatic, undesired behavior (whistling "Turkey in the Straw").

So let's take advantage of this powerful technique and add data to our brains that is desired and beneficial. Beginning meditators are often discouraged because nothing seems to be happening during the meditation and afterwards. Nothing is further from the truth! Even though it seems like nothing is happening, your brain is putting useful data into your long term memory for future use off the cushion. Once this positive data is embedded, it will be automatically accessed in daily life to change your attitude and feelings. These new attitudes and feelings then allow us to deal with the situations that life throws at us with more mental skill, less suffering, and more happiness.

Practice, practice, practice. ●

Talking in Bed

by Phillip Larkin

Talking in bed ought to be easiest,
Lying together there goes back so far,
An emblem of two people being honest.
Yet more and more times passes silently.
Outside, the wind's incomplete unrest
Builds and disperses clouds in the sky,
and dark towns heap up on the horizon.
None of this cares for us. Nothing shows why
At this unique distance from isolation
It becomes still more difficult to find
Words at once true and kind,
Or not untrue and not unkind.

