



CLEAR MIND



The Newsletter of Madison Vipassana, Inc. Madison, WI

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Just as we choose what foods are healthful and beneficial to life, so too we can choose which emotions we let germinate in our hearts according to whether they reap positive or negative mind states.

His Holiness,
The Dalai Lama,
May 4, 2007,
Madison, WI

Sharon Salzberg Non-Residential Retreat, August 3-5

We welcome Sharon Salzberg to Madison to lead a non-residential retreat. The retreat schedule will be as follows:

Friday, August 3, 7-9 pm

Saturday, August 4, 9:30am-4:30 pm

Sunday, August 5, 9:30 am-3:30 pm

There will be tea available throughout the day and a catered lunch on Saturday and Sunday. The retreat will be held at the Lussier Family Heritage Center, 3101 Lake Farm Road in Madison, WI.

Sharon was here several years ago to give a public talk, but this is the first time she's led a retreat here. The topic for the retreat will be on the practice and cultivation of *metta*, lovingkindness. See the article by Sharon on *metta* later in this newsletter. The registration form



for the retreat is an insert in this newsletter or available on our website at www.vipassana.net

This retreat will be suitable for beginning or experienced meditators. The cost of the retreat, \$85, pays for the facilities and vegetarian meals. It is traditional for retreatants to also offer *dana*, generosity, to the teacher to express gratitude and appreciation for sharing the teachings. (See article on page 4.) There will be an opportunity to offer *dana* to Sharon at the end of the retreat.

To register complete the form on the insert and mail it as instructed on the form. To discuss special needs or registration contact Julie at juliehome@tds.net We have limited scholarship funds available. Please contact John at 221-1632 for details about the scholarship fund and to discuss your situation. We expect this retreat to fill quickly so we encourage you to register early!

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Sharon Salzberg Public Lecture, August 2

Sharon Salzberg will be presenting a public talk on Thursday, August 2, at 7 pm at the First Congregational Church, 1609 University Avenue, Madison, WI.

In keeping with the tradition established by the Buddha, this talk is offered on a *dana* basis. (See article on page 4 regarding the practice and meaning of *dana*.)

The talk is entitled "Meditation: Tools for Awakening Courage, Faith and Compassion." The evening will focus on the practical tools that help us go beyond our constricting habitual patterns, such as fear and denial. Awakening the inner capacities we all have, meditation allows us to transform our worldview from one of isolation and confusion to one of connec-

tion, clarity and compassion. Especially in times of uncertainty, meditation opens us to a power of faith and courage based on seeing things just as they are. Suitable for those interested in meditation as well as new or experienced meditators, the program will consist of guided meditations, a talk, and time for questions and answers.

Maintaining Continuity on Retreat — by Lori Creswell

A non-residential retreat can be an opportunity to deliberately practice integrating meditation into all facets of our lives.

Unlike a residential retreat which is designed to offer a quiet and distraction-free environment, a non-residential retreat requires more interaction with the world. At the very least, most of us who attend the Sharon Salzberg retreat will have to drive home on the beltline. This can be a jarring experience after a day of

quiet meditation. In addition, we may go home to families, to telephone messages, to email, to bills, or to yard or housework. It is wise to do some deliberate planning to help make the time away from the retreat center supportive of the effort and energy you will put forth while at the retreat.

To the extent possible, you may wish to arrange to not return phone calls or emails until after the retreat is over. Let your friends and co-workers know you will be unavailable, or ask someone to screen your messages for things that really can't wait.

Try to use your time at home to maintain the quiet mindfulness and concentration you have developed during the day. Doing housework mindfully or going for a quiet walk could be supportive—or you may choose to ask your family or housemates to allow you to maintain “noble silence” or to interact with you as little as possible.

To the extent there are interactions you choose to have or tasks you want to take care of, do so as mindfully as possible. Move a little slower than usual. Notice how you feel before,

during, and after talking, driving, etc. If possible, take time for another meditation sitting sometime in the evening before bed.

Whatever comes up during your time away from the retreat center, look at it as an opportunity to practice being mindful while interacting with the world. Plan as best you can and then let go into a friendly acceptance of whatever is.

Places to Stay While Attending the Sharon Salzberg Retreat:

1. Camping-Lake Farm Park (next door to the retreat center). Call Dane County Parks at 608-246-3896. (At a prior retreat one yogi found this a very pleasant and quiet place to stay.)
2. Super 8 Motel, 1602 W. Beltline Hwy (Todd Drive exit). Call 608-258-8882 for reservations.
3. Days Inn, 4402 E. Broadway (Stoughton Rd. exit). Call 608-223-1800 for reservations.
4. Sheraton Madison Hotel, 706 John Nolen Drive. Call 608-251-1189 for reservations.

Impermanence to Reflect Upon & Note on Your Calendar!

Changes to note regarding both the Sunday and Tuesday night sittings!

The Sunday night sitting has now changed in both location and time for the next year. We are now meeting on Sunday evenings from 7pm until 9pm, in the West Living Room, within the First Unitarian Society main building. Enter the door at the far end of the main building. Watch for others going to the sitting and you'll easily find your way.

The west living room is somewhat smaller than our previous space, but has the same wonderful feel with lots of windows and interesting angles. We may experiment with seating arrangements as needed to make sure no meditator is left without a cozy spot of their own. As Jan Sheppard noted, this room is a return of sorts to the roots of our sangha. We met in this room for many years in the late 1990s when the group was relatively new.

There may be a few rare Sunday evenings when we will need to find an alternate location within the church such as the back of the auditorium.

Because the location may change due to scheduling conflicts or construction, we highly recommend that you sign up to receive emails from our listserv if you haven't already. We will also note any location changes on our website, www.vipassana.net. In addition, notices will be posted when necessary by the entrance to the West Living Room directing you to our alternate location.

Congratulations to the members of the First Unitarian Society for deciding together how to accommodate their growth, raising the resources and making their much needed expansion happen! Our gratitude to First Unitarian Society for continuing to allow us to meet at the Church even while space is so severely limited for their own purposes.

Note, too, that the regular Tuesday evening meditation will change location just for the month of June 2007 (while Jan Sheppard is on a month-long retreat). On June 5th, 12th, 19th, and 26th, the group will meet at Dale Heights Presbyterian Church, 5501 University Avenue, at the regular time of 6:30-8:15pm. The Tuesday night group met at Dale Heights Church for the first three years of its existence, so it too is having a 'return to roots' location for a brief period. In July, the group will return to the regular meeting locale at 9638 Shadow Ridge Trail. Thanks for Nick Niederlander, Larry Peterson, and Thia Triggs for leading the Tuesday group while Jan is away on retreat.



Opening the Heart — by Sharon Salzberg

Lovingkindness meditation gives you a new way to connect with everyone - even the difficult people in your life.

Rachel, who is one of my meditation students, surprised me with her enthusiastic greeting. "I've fallen in love with my dry cleaner!" she said. I'd last seen her six months earlier at a retreat I'd taught on the power of lovingkindness, or metta, a Buddhist term for boundless friendship toward oneself and others. Noticing how puzzled I looked at her sudden confession, she laughed. "No, I haven't fallen in love with him romantically. My dry cleaner was the person I chose to focus on at the lovingkindness retreat." I had instructed the participants to focus on someone they didn't have strong feelings about, someone they normally might hardly notice, and to direct wishes for well-being toward that person. "Now every day when I meditate, I hold this man in my heart and consciously wish him well," Rachel said. "I find that I'm eager to go into the store to see him. I really care about him."

Rachel hadn't deepened her relationship with this man because she owed him something, or felt obliged by a favor he'd done. She didn't know the particulars of his life, his challenges or his sorrows. Rachel came to care genuinely for the dry cleaner simply because she'd begun including him in the attentiveness of her heart. By doing so, she awakened to the humanity of someone who'd barely registered before.

The practice of lovingkindness meditation brings to life our innate capacity for connecting to ourselves and others. The lovingkindness we cultivate breaks through the habit of indifference or judgment that keeps us feeling sepa-

rate from others. A capacity for friendship and kindness exists within each of us, without exception. No matter what pain we might have gone through in our lives, that capacity is never destroyed. It may be - and often is - obscured, but it's there.

The key to uncovering this potential is paying attention in a positive way. So often we don't have the time or the patience to take an interest in people; instead we look around them or right through them. Being attentive to someone opens the door to discovering who she or he actually is. Like Rachel, we find that the people we relate to at work, at school, while doing errands no longer seem so much like strangers. Something happens to our world, and we don't feel so alone.

The practice of lovingkindness meditation is simple and pragmatic. You can try it this way: Sit comfortably and close your eyes. You are going to recite silently certain phrases that express your heart's intention to connect more deeply with yourself and others. Some examples are "May I be happy" or "May you be peaceful" or "May you find contentment." Say the words without anticipating any particular response. If you try to force a warm, cuddly feeling, it could be totally false. Just see what emerges from this particular way of paying attention.

We begin with ourselves because truly caring for ourselves is the foundation for being able to care for others. Repeat silently, over and over, "May I be happy. May I be safe. May I be peaceful. May I live with ease." It's fine to use any phrase or phrases that are significant to you.

After a few minutes, begin silently offering the phrases to someone

you respect and love, a benefactor or good friend. "May you be happy. May you be safe. May you live with ease." Following that, choose someone you feel fairly neutral toward, as Rachel did with her dry cleaner.

Then make a bold shift and call to mind people you don't get along with, those you have hurt, those who have hurt you. This might call up an immediate surge of resentment or annoyance. Rather than giving up, go back to offering lovingkindness to yourself in the face of your own anger, impatience and distress. Over time our anger begins to subside as we care for ourselves and again practice opening our attention to those from whom we're estranged. This part of the meditation can be hard, but it's the place where we deeply contact our innate capacity for lovingkindness. Venturing beyond our preconceived limitations, we see how much love we have within.

Finally, offer the phrases to everyone, without exception and without distinction: "May all beings be happy. May all beings be safe. May all beings live with ease." The care and kinship Rachel felt toward her dry cleaner, we feel toward everyone. As the Japanese poet Issa said, "Under the cherry blossoms' shade, there are no strangers."

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Sharon Salzberg

"A capacity for friendship and kindness exists within each of us, without exception. No matter what pain we might have gone through in our lives, ..."



This newsletter is published periodically to inform our meditation community of activities and events of interest. This newsletter and other information is also published on our website at: <http://www.vipassana.net>

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The Meaning of Dana—Generosity — by Ven. Thubten Chodron

<http://www.sravastiabbey.org/danameaning.html>

Dana is a Sanskrit and Pali word that means "generosity" or "giving." It refers specifically to taking delight in giving—that is, getting in touch with the natural generosity and wish to share inside of us. The mind of generosity is a joyful mind; it does not suffer from regret or a feeling of poverty. Rather, the act of giving itself is pleasurable and seeing others' using our offering is an extra bonus.

... In accordance with the Buddhist tradition, Dharma teachings should be given free of charge, thus making them available to anyone who wishes. Making it known at the end of Dharma teachings that dana will be happily received is not a clever way of charging for teachings while looking like we're not. The donations people give should be a gift freely and joyfully given. Dana is not given out of obligation or in order to avoid looking cheap. It is an

expression of our love and compassion for all beings and of our eagerness to put the Buddha's teachings into practice. It shows that we want the teachers and practitioners who benefit us to have the four requisites of life—food, shelter, clothing, and medicines. We want these people to have what they need—which nowadays includes computers and email! —so that they can continue to share the Dharma with us and all others.

As the Buddha taught, generosity is an essential part of our practice. The first of the six far-reaching attitudes of the bodhisattvas, generosity frees us from attachment and miserliness. It also directly benefits others. Thus, in the Buddhist tradition, practitioners happily support Buddhist abbeys, temples, centers, teachers, monastics, practitioners, and activities that benefit the society.

... Some people may wonder, "I am a lay practitioner. Why should I support monastics (or lay teachers) when they can work to support themselves?"

... Having access to Buddhist monasteries, centers, teachers, and teachings depends on our having created the causes. As students, it is important for us personally to create these causes, not to expect others to work or supply the material resources. We must create the karma in order to experience the results we wish. Whenever we offer our time, energy and financial help in ways that enable others to receive teachings and practice, we create the cause to receive teachings and to practice ourselves. This cause brings results quickly—there are monasteries and Dharma centers for us to visit now—and in the future, by creating the karma cause to meet the Dharma again.