

CLEAR MIND



Sharon Salzberg to Lead July Retreat

Madison Vipassana, Inc., is pleased to welcome renowned meditation teacher and author Sharon Salzberg to lead a non-residential weekend retreat July 27-29. The retreat will focus on the practice of lovingkindness.

Sharon Salzberg is cofounder of the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) in Barre, Massachusetts. She began studying meditation in 1971, in Bodh Gaya, India. She has been guiding meditation retreats worldwide since 1974.

Sharon's latest book is the *New York Times* best-selling *Real Happiness: The Power of Meditation: A 28-Day Program*, published by Workman Publishing. Sharon has written many articles for *O* magazine, is a regular contributor to

the *Huffington Post*, and is the author of several other books, including *The Force of Kindness* (2005), *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience* (2002), and *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness* (1995).

Sharon has been a featured speaker and teacher at many events. She served as a panelist with the His Holiness the Dalai Lama and leading scientists at the 2005 Mind and Life *Investigating the Mind* Conference in Washington, DC. She also coordinated the meditation faculty for the 2005 Mind and Life Summer Institute, an intensive five-day meeting to advance research on the intersection of meditation and the cognitive and behavioral sciences. Ad-

ditionally, she was selected to attend the Gethsemani Encounter, a dialogue on spiritual life between Buddhist and Christian leaders that included His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

You can find more information about Sharon, as well as links to her posts, podcasts, and articles, at www.SharonSalzberg.com.

July's nonresidential retreat will be held at the Lussier Family Heritage Center, 3101 Lake Farm Road, Madison, WI. It is suitable for both beginning and experienced meditators. Clear and simple instructions will be presented. The retreat will be held in silence except for dhamma talks and question-and-answer periods. Sitting meditation periods will alternate with periods of walking meditation throughout each day.

The cost for the retreat is \$100, which covers vegetarian meals, teacher transportation, facility charges, and other retreat expenses. In keeping with Theravada Buddhist tradition, there is no charge for the teachings; however, a donation (*dana*) to the teacher is encouraged.

For additional information, or to register, please see the registration form enclosed with this newsletter or visit the Madison Insight Meditation Group online at <http://www.vipassana.net>.



Sharon Salzberg

Tending Your Garden: The Buddha's Five Protections

by Sharon Salzberg

The Buddha spoke about five ways to protect ourselves and our practice. He used the example of a plot of land to symbolize how to relate more skillfully to our bodies and minds. We want to use the land well, to protect it, to treasure it. He said that the first thing we need to do is to fence the land in, to protect it from wild animals. Then we need to water it regularly. We need to loosen the earth around the roots, so that the roots can grip strongly. Then we need to weed the plants, weed the garden so as to remove the inessential factors.

And the last thing we need to do is keep away the insects, which may be very small, almost invisible to the naked eye, but these very tiny creatures may do great harm to the plants in the plot of land. If these efforts, these five things are carried out, then we can enjoy the fruit of our labors, of having this plot of land. In just that same way we fulfill these five in order to enjoy the fruits of our efforts, to live with our bodies and minds as an expression of love, awakening, and compassion, rather than as an expression of grasping, aversion, and ignorance.

The first of these protections is having a very strong commitment to morality, protecting ourselves with a dedication to ethics. This is comparable to fencing in a plot of land to keep wild animals away. We are keeping away what was once translated as the "outra-

geous defilements," the defilements that are so strong that they overcome us, so that we hurt others, hurt ourselves.

If we have a very strong commitment, so that we can trust ourselves and be beacons of trust for others no matter what the circumstance, then we're protected from suffering the consequences of many actions. We can be protected from that pain.

We can also be protected from guilt, which is one of the worst kinds of self-torment. It is quite painful to always be second guessing our actions: "What if they find out I lied? How many more people do I need to deceive to keep the deception going?"

There are two qualities that are talked about in Buddhist teaching. In Pali they're called *hiri* and *ottapab*, which are usually translated as moral shame and moral dread.

What is really meant here is a very beautiful and delicate sense of conscience. It's like an extreme sensitivity where something inside us just pulls back from harming or from hurting. This is a beautiful movement born out of caring deeply for ourselves and others. A sense of conscience isn't the same as being moralistic, or judging ourselves or others: rather, it is developed through the process of having a commitment to care and compassion.

The second protection has to do with listening to the dhamma

(the teachings) or studying the dhamma -- reading books, going to lectures, consulting source material, and trying to understand the theory of the teachings. This is compared to watering our plot of land regularly. Study clarifies the path for us. It helps us know practical methods of meditation practice, put them into action and also understand the larger truth that is manifest through the different techniques, through each moment of experience.

The Buddha said that when there is understanding, along with practice, then one's path becomes very broad. He likened it to the kind of path an elephant makes going through the jungle. Our view of practice is not limited to a certain technique. We understand that what is essential in the end is not mental noting, or moving slowly, or moving our attention through the body from head to feet, but rather it is what these skillful means do, what they bring, why we do them, what they imply.

It's important to understand the protection of this, and the kind of inspiration, faith, and power that come out of understanding what we're doing. In a single moment we can understand we are not just facing a knee pain, or our discouragement and our wishing the sitting would end, but that right in the moment of seeing that knee pain, we're able to explore the teachings of the Buddha. What does it mean to have a pain-

ful experience? What does it mean to hate it, and to fear it? What does it mean to allow it, to be able to experience it fully? Right there, we have a core teaching.

And it is right in that moment that we find bondage or freedom, not this afternoon after lunch when we're feeling better or tomorrow or the next retreat, it's right in that moment. If we can understand that, then we're very powerfully protected because we have the energy to keep going no matter what is happening.

The third protection comes through having the support of spiritual friends, good friends, and being able to explore and discuss the teachings with these good friends. This is likened to loosening the earth around the roots of a plant or tree. In contact with the spiritual community, spiritual friends, or a teacher, we can more readily connect our immediate experience to a larger picture. We're not left alone with our own sense of what we are capable of, or our own lonely interpretation of what is happening.

The fourth protection is concentration. This is likened to weeding a plot of land, protecting it from things that will not be helpful. In terms of the mind, it means protecting ourselves from hindrances, putting in mental effort to get concentrated -- right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. It means developing the power not to be tossed around by our various changing mind states.

With these three qualities taken together -- right effort, concentration, and mindfulness --

hindrances like grasping, anger, sluggishness, restlessness, or doubt cannot find a home, a foothold in the mind, when they arise. These qualities bring mental strength, stability, calmness, and power. We apply our effort to be mindful, to be aware in this very moment, right here and now, and we bring a very wholehearted effort to it. This brings concentration. It is this power of concentration that we use to cut through the world of surface appearances to get to a much deeper reality.

The last protection is a very interesting and subtle one: not allowing ourselves to get attached to any state at all, not even to states of comfort, bliss, calm, equanimity, insight, or any other really pleasant thing that can happen in meditation practice.

To remember non-attachment is to remember what freedom is all about. If we get attached, even to a beautiful state of being, we are caught, and ultimately we will suffer. We work to observe anything that comes our way, experience it while it is here, and be able to let go of it.

What is important is not getting intoxicated with a good feeling or getting intoxicated even with an insight. These take many forms in our practice. We go through times of great release, where there has been physical holding for what feels like forever,

and something opens up and releases. We go through times of catharsis where things that have been bottled up and repressed come to the surface and get freed. We go through times when we experience altered states, where concentration gets very strong, and we feel very far out, and it is all very wonderful.

It's not like we are trying to put these experiences down or scorn them. What we are going through should not be denigrated. We just need to realize that although they may be powerful and important and true, they are not ultimately what the practice is about. The practice

“With non-attachment, we won't give up freedom for just another experience, even a very special experience.”

is about freedom in every moment, which means not holding on, not grasping. We understand that the movement, the growth of the practice, comes from letting go, not from getting and having and acquiring.

This is a great protection because it means that we won't settle for less than what we are capable of, we won't compromise. We won't give up freedom for just another experience, even a very special, extraordinary experience.

With an intention to see more clearly, to be free from habit and conditioning, we have planted a seed, and now we need to use all of these ways to nourish it and protect it. To protect the dharma, the truth, so that we, in turn, can be protected by it.

New Resource: Books by Ashin Tejaniya

by Mike Kehl

Madison Insight Meditation Group has had the privilege of receiving three books by Ashin Tejaniya (Sayadaw U Tejaniya) for free circulation. These are also available in some quantities for use by Kalyana Mitta groups. The teachings in this trilogy are:

- *Don't Look Down on the Defilements – They Will Laugh at You*, a small pocket guide full of insights.
- *Awareness Alone Is Not Enough*, a question-and-answer format with very pointed yet gentle answers.
- *Dhamma Everywhere*, in which the author teaches that awareness comes first, then is followed with wisdom.

Ashin Tejaniya began Buddhist training as a teenager in Burma under the late Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw. Following a business career, he ordained as a monk. He teaches meditation at Shwe Oo Min Dhamma Sukha Forest Meditation Center in Yangon, Burma. More of his wisdom is available at <http://sayadawutejaniya.org/>. Ashin's teachings point toward the path of understanding and how to access a clear and subtle mind by gently honing our awareness. The instruction offers a guide to calming our minds after we have made a place of stillness within ourselves.

The books are a gift of Kamala Masters and Steve Armstrong, founding teachers of Vipassana Metta Foundation. Anyone interested in borrowing the books can contact Barb Lanser at barblanser@gmail.com or 608-279-2043.

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