



Weekly Buddhism

Meditation Issue Two

Completing the mega-series on meditation.



The Forty Meditation Themes

Last week, we talked about conceptual, or contemplative, meditation. There are forty meditation themes that have become "classic," and we'll cover those in this issue. There are ten

"recollections," ten "foul objects," ten "kasinas", four "divine abidings", four "formless absorptions," one "resolution into elements," and one "perception of the filthiness of food." Don't worry about memorizing all that. You'll get the picture soon enough.

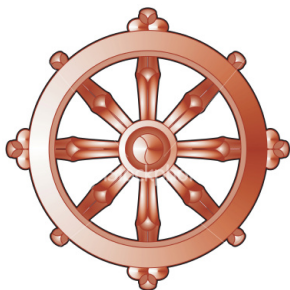
RSS Fixed

I've recently been alerted to a problem with the Daily Buddhism RSS Feed. The podcast was working fine, but the daily posts didn't go into the feed. I don't know how long this has been the case, but I don't think it was a recent goof.

Well, that's fixed now. On the right-hand sidebar of any page at the D.B. site, there are three buttons. The top one is to subscribe with iTunes. If you use iTunes, click that one. If you use some other feedcatcher program for podcasts, then click on the second button, "RSS Podcast." If you'd like to subscribe to the newly-fixed text RSS feed, then click on the third button, "RSS Blog."



A PHILOSOPHER ASKS BUDDHA



A philosopher asked Buddha: `Without words, without the wordless, will you tell me truth?'

The Buddha kept silent.

The philosopher bowed and thanked the Buddha, saying: `With your loving kindness I have cleared away my delusions and entered the true path.'

After the philosopher had gone, Ananda asked the Buddha what he had attained.

The Buddha replied, `A good horse runs even at the shadow of the whip.'



These meditations are to be done thoughtfully and slowly, and you would go about them much like the "meditation on a corpse" that we looked at in the previous issue. You'll soon see that there are many different versions of meditating on corpses. Keep in mind while reading the list that buddhists aren't especially morbid, but death is probably the biggest fear that most of us have, and death, especially in the Buddha's time period was often an ugly business. Contemplation on some of the foulest ideas can lead to fearlessness and peace.



Ten Recollections:

1. Recollection of the virtues of the Buddha.
2. Recollection of the virtues of the Dhamma.
3. Recollection of the virtues of the Sangha.
4. Recollection of one's own moral virtue.
5. Recollection of one's generosity.
6. Recollection of the qualities that lead to rebirth as a heavenly being.
7. Mindfulness immersed in the body.
8. Mindfulness of death.
9. Mindfulness of breathing.
10. Recollection of the virtues of Nirvana -- ultimate pleasure; unexcelled ease, free from birth, aging, illness and death.

Ten Foul Objects:

1. A rotten, bloated corpse, its body all swollen and its features distended out of shape.
2. A livid corpse, with patchy discoloration -- greenish, reddish, yellowish -- from the decomposition of the blood.
3. A festering corpse, oozing lymph and pus from its various orifices.
4. A corpse falling apart, the pieces scattered about, radiating their stench.

5. A corpse that various animals, such as dogs, are gnawing, or that vultures are picking at, or that crows are fighting over, pulling it apart in different directions.
6. Corpses scattered about, i.e., unclaimed bodies that have been thrown together in a pile -- face up, face down, old bones and new scattered all over the place.
7. The corpse of a person violently murdered, slashed and stabbed with various weapons, covered with wounds -- short, long, shallow, deep -- some parts hacked so that they're almost detached.
8. Corpse covered with blood, like the hands of a butcher, all red and raw-smelling.
9. A corpse infested with worms: long worms, short worms, black, green, and yellow worms, squeezed into the ears, eyes, and mouth; squirming and squiggling about, filling the various parts of the body like a net full of fish that has fallen open.

10. A skeleton, some of the joints already separated, others not yet, the bones -- whitish, yellowish, discolored -- scattered near and far all over the place.

The recollections and foul objects are pretty straightforward in their subjects. The other half of the themes are more open-ended and ambiguous. Many of the styles of meditation you hear people discussing fall into the last group. Loving-kindness and compassion meditations, for example, fall under



the Four divine Abidings.

Ten Kasinas:

1. Staring at earth.
2. Staring at water.
3. Staring at fire.
4. Staring at wind.
5. Staring at white.
6. Staring at yellow.
7. Staring at red.
8. Staring at blue (or green).
9. Staring at the space in a hole or an opening.
10. Staring at bright light.

Four Divine Abidings:

1. Benevolence, friendliness, good will, love in the true sense.
2. Compassion, sympathy, pity, aspiring to find a way to be truly helpful.
3. Appreciation for the goodness of



other people and for our own when we are able to help them.

4. Equanimity. When our efforts to be of help fail, we should become neutral -- neither pleased nor upset by whatever it focuses on -- so that it can disregard acts of thinking and evaluating, leaving only oneness and equanimity with regard to all objects and preoccupations.

One resolution into elements:For example, contemplating each part of the body simply in terms of physical properties or elements.

One perception of the filthiness of food: i.e., viewing food as something repugnant and unclean -- with regard to where it comes from, how it's prepared, how it's mixed together when it's chewed, and where it stays in the stomach and intestines.

Four Formless Absorptions:

1. Being absorbed in a sense of boundless emptiness and space.
2. Being absorbed in boundless consciousness, with no form or figure acting as focal point of one's concentration.
3. Focusing exclusively on a fainter or more subtle sense of cognizance that has no limit and in which nothing appears or disappears, to the point where one almost understands it to be Nirvana.
4. Being absorbed in a feeling that occurs in the mind, that isn't awareness exactly, but neither is it non-awareness; i.e., there is awareness, but with no thinking, no focusing of awareness on what it knows.





BOOK REVIEW

Book: The Gift of Loving Kindness

by Mary Brantley and Tesilya Hanauer

New Harbinger Publications, 286 pages, ISBN: 1-57224-562-X

Link: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/157224562X?tag=askdrarca-20>

I've mentioned *loving kindness meditation* here on the *Daily Buddhism* quit often in my postings the past few weeks, and it may still not be clear what it's all about. This book makes it clear as glass. The book is small (6"x6"), and as the title itself suggests, would make an excellent gift for someone interested in taking up a simple form of meditation for perhaps the first time. Although the introduction and explanatory pages mention Buddha a few times, the book is not religious and could be enjoyed by anyone of any faith.

The introductory section explains why the authors wrote the book, how to use the book, and basic instructions for both formal and informal loving kindness meditations. This takes around 44 pages, and is an interesting, fast read. The instructions on the formal meditation are clearly presented, and easy to follow and practice.

The book centers heavily on the ideas of generosity, forgiveness, and compassion. Towards others, of course, but starting with directing those concepts towards yourself. The book explains early on that it's hard to direct loving kindness outwards towards others if your mind is filled with blame or self-hate. Therefore, the book

focuses on directing loving kindness (generosity, compassion, and forgiveness) towards yourself first, and then expanding that mindfulness outward towards others.

The rest of the book is broken into four parts, consisting of exercises that expand or modify these basic instructions in simple, yet useful ways. Part one of the book consists of meditations of loving-kindness towards yourself, part two is about loving-kindness towards difficult emotions, part three covers loving-kindness

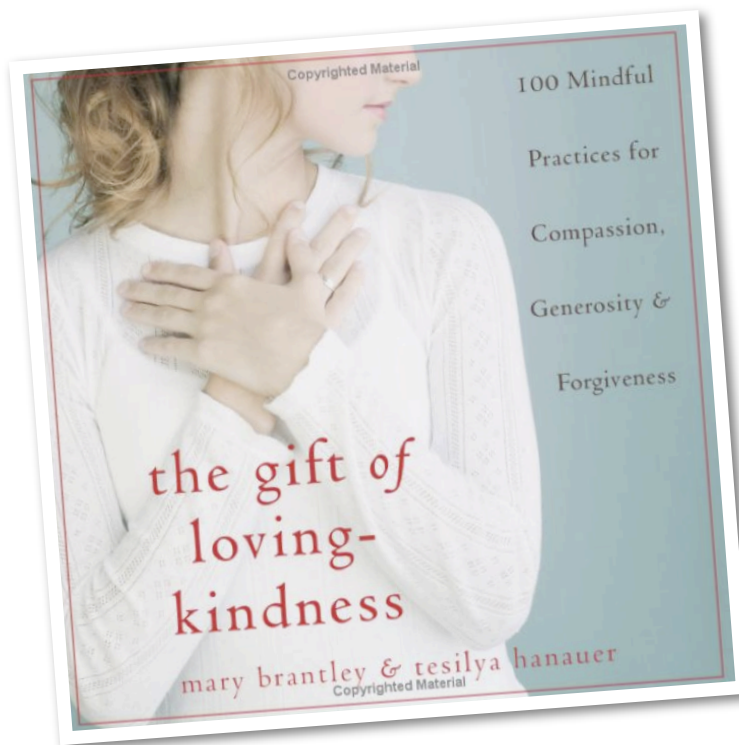
towards others, and finally, part four involves loving-kindness towards the world. On the last few pages are some additional resources for further exploration.

The bulk of the pages are filled with 100 mindful practices that can be attempted in any order. Some are quite good, others are a little weak, but since you can pick and choose the ones that appeal to you, there's plenty to work with. Each exercise is explained clearly and concisely, usually with only two or three paragraphs. Some of the

ideas are a bit saccharine, but with a book on this subject, that's nearly unavoidable.

Buddhism Level: Beginner. All Daily Buddhism readers should be able to understand all parts of this one. It has no jargon and requires no special background. It's even fine for those who may be uncomfortable with Buddhism, yet interested in meditation.

It's easy to do, it's easy to understand. Send yourself a little gift of loving kindness, and you can learn to pass it on to the rest of the world.





TIBET SLASHES TOURISM PRICES AFTER RIOTS

Tibet slashed ticket prices in an effort to boost tourism this winter and offset the impact of the Lhasa riot that took place in March, an official said on Thursday.

This is the first time in history Tibet has reduced admission prices at nearly all its tourist sites, said Wang Songping, vice director of the Tibet tourism bureau.

Reduced prices are effective between Oct. 20 and April 20. Admission fees at most major natural and cultural spots will be reduced by half. The Tashilhunpo and Palkor Monasteries in Xigaze will cut ticket costs by 20 percent.

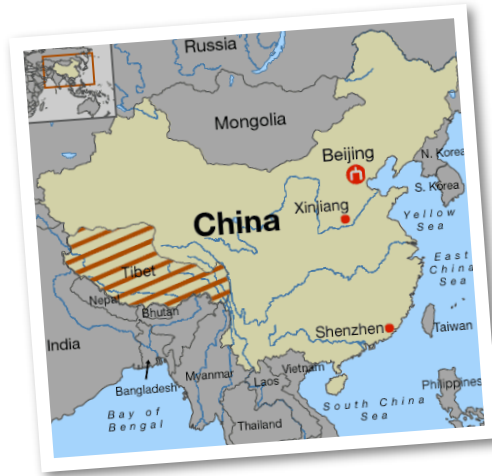
It will still cost 100 yuan (14.7 U.S. dollars) to get in to the

world-famous Potala Palace in Lhasa. Plan to raise the price to 200 yuan next February have been scrapped.

In the first half of the year, 340,000 people visited Tibet. That's down 69 percent from the same period last year.

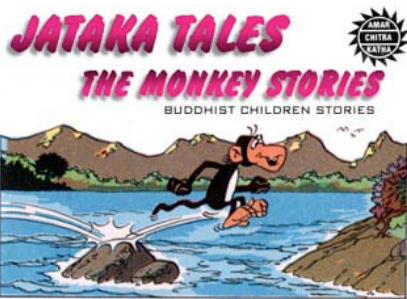
Tourism almost came to a standstill after a riot broke out on March 14. 18 civilians and one policeman were killed, businesses looted and residences, shops and vehicles torched.

Afterwards, mainland tour groups were not allowed in Tibet until April 24. Visitors from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan were let in in May and foreign tour groups could enter the region starting June 25.



Source: Xinhua

INTRODUCING THE JATAKA TALES: BUDDHIST STORIES FOR CHILDREN



By Ellen C. Babbitt

The Jatakas, or Birth-stories, form one of the sacred books of the Buddhists and relate to the adventures of the Buddha in his former existences, the best character in any story being identified with the Master.

These legends were continually introduced into the religious discourses of the Buddhist teachers to illustrate the doctrines of their faith or to magnify the glory and sanctity of the Buddha, somewhat as medieval preachers in Europe used to enliven their sermons by introducing fables

and popular tales to rouse the flagging interest of their hearers.

Sculptured scenes from the Jatakas, found upon the carved railings around the relic shrines of Sanchi and Amaravati and of Bharhut, indicate that the "Birth-stories" were widely known in the third century B.C., and were then considered as part of the sacred history of the religion. At first the tales were probably handed down orally, and it is uncertain when they were put together in systematic form.

While some of the stories are Buddhistic and depend for their point on some custom or idea peculiar to Buddhism, many are age-old fables, the flotsam and jetsam of folk-lore, which have appeared under various guises throughout the centuries, as when they were used by Boccaccio or Poggio, merely as merry tales, or by Chaucer, who unwittingly puts a Jataka story into the mouth of his

pardoners when he tells the tale of "the Rytoures three."

Quaint humor and gentle earnestness distinguish these legends and they teach many wholesome lessons, among them the duty of kindness to animals.

Dr. Felix Adler in his "Moral Instruction of Children," says:

The Jataka Tales contain deep truths, and are calculated to impress lessons of great moral beauty. The tale of the Merchant of Seri, who gave up all that he had in exchange for a golden dish, embodies much the same idea as the parable of the priceless Pearl, in the New Testament. The tale of the Measures of Rice illustrates the importance of a true estimate of values. The tale of the Banyan Deer, which offered its life to save a roe and her young, illustrates self-sacrifice of the noblest sort. The tale of the Sandy Road is one of the finest in the collection.



JATAKA TALES, PART I

THE MONKEY AND THE CROCODILE

PART I

A MONKEY lived in a great tree on a river bank.



In the river there were many Crocodiles. A Crocodile watched the Monkeys for a long time, and one day she said to her son: "My son, get one of those Monkeys for me. I want the heart of a Monkey to eat."

"How am I to catch a Monkey?" asked the little Crocodile. "I do not travel on land, and the Monkey does not go into the water."

"Put your wits to work, and you'll find a way," said the mother.

And the little Crocodile thought and thought.

At last he said to himself: "I know what I'll do. I'll get that Monkey that lives in a big tree on the river bank. He wishes to go across the river to the island where the fruit is so ripe."

So the Crocodile swam to the tree where the Monkey lived. But he was a stupid Crocodile.

"Oh, Monkey," he called, "come with me over to the island where the fruit is so ripe."

"How can I go with you?" asked the Monkey. "I do not swim."

"No--but I do. I will take you over on my back," said the Crocodile.

The Monkey was greedy, and wanted the ripe fruit, so he jumped down on the Crocodile's back.

"Off we go!" said the Crocodile.

"This is a fine ride you are giving me!" said the Monkey.

"Do you think so? Well, how do you like this?" asked the Crocodile, diving.

"Oh, don't!" cried the Monkey, as he went under the water. He was afraid to let go, and he did not know what to do under the water.

When the Crocodile came up, the Monkey sputtered and choked. "Why did you take me under water, Crocodile?" he asked.



"I am going to kill you by keeping you under water," answered the Crocodile. "My mother wants Monkey-heart to eat, and I'm going to take yours to her."

"I wish you had told me you wanted my heart," said the Monkey, "then I might have brought it with me."

"How queer!" said the stupid Crocodile. "Do you mean to say that

you left your heart back there in the tree?"

"That is what I mean," said the Monkey. "If you want my heart, we must go back to the tree and get it. But we are so near the island where the ripe fruit is, please take me there first."

"No, Monkey," said the Crocodile, "I'll take you straight back to your tree. Never mind the ripe fruit. Get your heart and bring it to me at once. Then we'll see about going to the island."

"Very well," said the Monkey.

But no sooner had he jumped onto the bank of the river than--whisk! up he ran into the tree.

From the topmost branches he called down to the Crocodile in the water below:

"My heart is way up here! If you want it, come for it, come for it!"

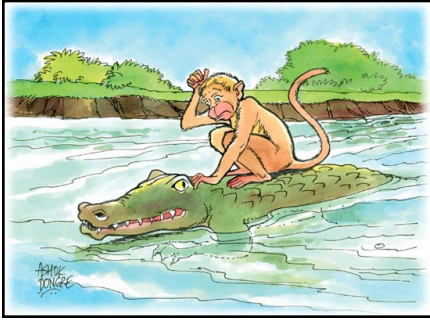
PART II

THE Monkey soon moved away from that tree. He wanted to get away from the Crocodile, so that he might live in peace.

But the Crocodile found him, far down the river, living in another tree.

In the middle of the river was an island covered with fruit-trees.

Half-way between the bank of the river and the island, a large rock rose out of the water. The Monkey could



jump to the rock, and then to the island. The Crocodile watched the Monkey crossing from the bank of the river to the rock, and then to the island.

He thought to himself, "The Monkey will stay on the island all day, and I'll catch him on his way home at night."

The Monkey had a fine feast, while the Crocodile swam about, watching him all day.

Toward night the Crocodile crawled out of the water and lay on the rock, perfectly still.

When it grew dark among the trees, the Monkey started for home. He ran down to the river bank, and there he stopped.

"What is the matter with the rock?" the Monkey thought to himself. "I never saw it so high before. The Crocodile is lying on it!"

But he went to the edge of the water and called: "Hello, Rock!"

No answer.

Then he called again: "Hello, Rock!"

Three times the Monkey called, and then he said: "Why is it, Friend Rock, that you do not answer me to-night?"

"Oh," said the stupid Crocodile to himself, "the rock answers the Monkey at night. I'll have to answer for the rock this time."

So he answered: "Yes, Monkey! What is it?"

The Monkey laughed, and said: "Oh, it's you, Crocodile, is it?"

"Yes," said the Crocodile. "I am waiting here for you. I am going to eat you."

"You have caught me in a trap this time," said the Monkey. "There is no other way for me to go home. Open your mouth wide so I can jump right into it."

Now the Monkey well knew that when Crocodiles open their mouths wide, they shut their eyes.

While the Crocodile lay on the rock with his mouth wide open and his eyes shut, the Monkey jumped.



But not into his mouth! Oh, no! He landed on the top of the Crocodile's head, and then sprang quickly to the bank. Up he whisked into his tree.

When the Crocodile saw the trick the Monkey had played on him, he said: "Monkey, you have great cunning. You know no fear. I'll let you alone after this."

"Thank you, Crocodile, but I shall be on the watch for you just the same," said the Monkey.

Contact

Brian Schell, Editor & Publisher

brian@dailybuddhism.com

Voice Mail Phone

1-937-660-4949

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