

CLEAR MIND



The Newsletter of Madison Vipassana, Inc. Madison, WI

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“Your practice is like raising a duck. Your duty is to feed it and give it water. If it grows fast or slow is the duck’s business, not yours. Let it go and just do your own work. Your business is to practice. If it’s fast or slow, just know it, don’t try to force it. This kind of practice has a good foundation.”

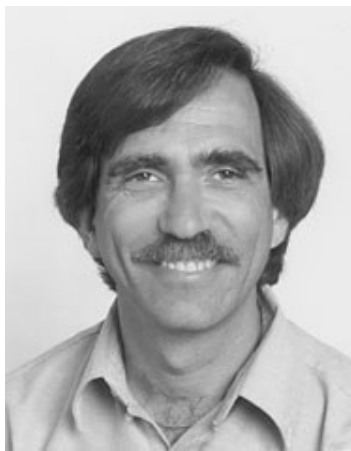
Venerable Ajahn Chah

From: [A Tree In a Forest: A Collection of Ajahn Chah’s Similes.](#)

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James Baraz Residential Retreat, October 8-11, 2009



This residential retreat will be suitable for both beginning and experienced meditators. Participants will practice mindfulness techniques while sitting, walking, eating, and moving about throughout the day. Clear and simple instructions will be presented throughout the retreat and a longer discourse will be presented each evening. The retreat will be held in silence except for question and answer periods. Sitting meditation periods of 45 minutes will alternate with periods of walking meditation throughout each day.

We are thrilled to welcome back James Baraz to lead a residential retreat at the Pine Lake Center in Westfield, WI. We have been very fortunate to have James lead retreats every few years and he is an experienced and knowledgeable teacher who is known for teachings on awakening joy. He has been teaching meditation since

1978 and the offering an Awakening Joy course since 2003. He leads retreats, workshops and classes in the U.S. and abroad and is a founding teacher of Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California. James is co-author with Shoshana Alexander of *Awakening Joy* due in 2010 (Bantam) which is based on the course. In addition, he is on the International Advisory Board of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. He lives with his wife in the Bay Area, has two sons and three grandchildren.

The cost for the retreat is \$255 which covers a double room and vegetarian meals, teacher transportation, and other retreat expenses. Some single rooms are available for \$385. To inquire about options for families and retreatants with children, contact Cindy at 608-220-4015. Childcare will not be provided.

In keeping with Theravada Buddhist tradition, and the Buddha’s exhortation that the teachings be freely available to all, the teacher is not paid for teaching during the retreat; however, a donation (dana) to the teacher from those in attendance is encouraged.

To register, complete the registration form and mail it as instructed on the form. The registration form for the retreat is an insert in this newsletter or available at www.vipassana.net/

retreats. To discuss special needs or other registration questions, contact juliemeyer@tds.net. To offer a ride or to request a ride, contact Beth at 608-239-9790 or bracette@gmail.com. We have some scholarship funds available. Please contact Laura at 608-238-7376 or lberger@tds.net for details about the scholarship fund and to discuss your situation.

We encourage early registration if you want to be certain of obtaining a spot.

MIMG Welcomes James Baraz on Sunday, October 11

Join Madison Insight Meditation Group (MIMG) at our regular weekly meditation on Sunday, October 11, at 6 pm at the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive. James Baraz will be present and offer the Dhamma Talk that evening.

If you can attend his retreat, this gives you another chance learn from him. If you aren’t able to attend the retreat, this is a chance to benefit from his teaching.

Volunteers Wanted: An Opportunity for Dana

Madison Insight Meditation Group and Madison Vipassana, Inc. exist because of the generosity of our participants. Volunteers organize the retreats, serve on our Boards, facilitate the weekly sittings, and all of the other events we offer. The newsletter, webpages, e-lists, and other communication activities are also all done by volunteer effort.

Periodically, these numerous jobs turn over. Right now we are looking for a volunteers to bring the cushions and another to bring the audio library to the Sunday

night sitting, and for someone to be our Newsletter editor. We have a number of other tasks as well, so if you are interested in being of help to the group we could talk over what jobs might be best based upon your skills and interests.

The person in 'charge' of the cushions or the audio library should plan to attend the Sunday night sitting most weeks, but does not need to promise to attend every week.

The newsletter editor produces this newsletter three times a year. Right now it is

produced in Microsoft Publisher, but the editor can use whatever software program he or she wishes as long as it can be easily printed for the US mail version, and converted to PDF for the web version.

If you are interested in either of these jobs, or others, please contact Jan Sheppard, at Janice.sheppard@yahoo.com to talk about your interest and how you might contribute to our organization. Thanks very much!

Creating Benefit

From: *The Ways of the Peaceful*. By Luang Por Liem Thitadhammo

On April 25th, 2006, during his visit to Buddha Bodhivana Monastery in Melbourne, Australia, Luang Por Liem was asked for advice on how to practice while working. Extracts from his answer follow:

Venerable Ajahn Buddhadasa gave some good advice on the topic of work: "We need to work with no feelings of *upadana* or grasping." When I work I am not worried about anything or think much at all. I just keep doing the work, only in order to do something that is in some way of use to the community. That's all. I don't think about whether there is a lot to do or not—that only causes one to worry. I also don't do things expecting that the outcome will last very long—I just consider that the things we build should be good enough to provide some shelter from the heat and cold. Still, I try to do a good job. I guess it doesn't make a difference for the stability of things whether the work was done properly or not. If one works without being worried about things or with not much of a critical mind, one can really do these things properly.

With working, it is just like with travelling: if we don't care about reaching the destination particularly quickly, the distance won't seem

far. But if we want to arrive quicker than usual, our aim will be far away. These things depend on our desires.

When we work, we can pay attention to the different bodily postures and movements we make and observe them. If we keep awareness of our body, the stress that comes from the power of desire won't weigh on us. Whether we are sitting, standing, walking or lying down there won't be anything (heavy). We can see everything as a matter of changing one's bodily posture, work included.

When we work we sometimes experience strong feelings that we usually don't have to face. But focusing on emptiness while working or seeing work as merely a change of posture can turn the experience into something good. In the case of office work or writing, there is also not much of a problem, unless we worry a lot. Then things can become difficulty. If we don't think anything about the things we do, they become something absolutely normal.

When I was still in the age where one is very strong, while living with Luang Pu Chah, sometimes he would ask us to sew

robes for the new candidates that wished to practice and train under the *Dhamma-Vinaya* temporarily. One year it was 40 or 50 sets of triple robes. To sew as much as that, (in the old days the robes were hand-sewn. One used needles and not machines or the tools we have today). One has to start with it every morning. If one does the work harboring negative feelings about it in one's mind, one will have to experience feelings of irritation and anger and eventually start complaining. I was able to do the job feeling good. If on one particular day I would finish only a certain amount, I would be alright with just that, continue next day, and just keep on doing the work. I didn't have any feelings about it. When it was time to stop, I stopped. Luang Pu Chah said to do just the amount we could handle. And when the night came, I would spend it quietly keeping up my meditation. So this is also a kind of work. One has to work with a willingness to help and an attitude of sacrifice in one's mind. It's for the good that one sacrifices.

Our Greatest Protection

From *Awakening Joy*. By James Baraz and Shoshana Alexander
to be released, January 2010 (Bantam)

The intention in our minds at the moment of any action determines whether we are planting seeds of future happiness or future suffering. If we want the seeds we plant to produce huge beautiful blossoms, our intention for greater well-being must be motivated by a big beautiful desire. So don't hold back. Let your intention be about fulfilling your highest potential, or letting your actions come from love, or bringing more happiness into the world.

I came to understand the power of that kind of motivation through something the Dalai Lama said at that 1994 meeting in Dharamsala. He sat before us, beaming ease and joy and compassion, yet he had in his life faced a number of life-threatening situations, and he had listened to thousands of fellow Tibetans pour out the stories of abuse and torture they had undergone when their homeland was invaded. One participant asked him how he had managed not to be overwhelmed when faced with so much tragedy and suffering. He answered: "My sincere motivation is my protection." Later when I asked him how it is possible to remain calm and balanced in threatening situations, he gave the same answer: "My sincere motivation is my protection."

I'd heard him use that phrase before, but the meaning of it sank in this time. Aligning our intention with the goodness of our heart keeps us from getting swept up in fear, confusion or negativity. When our intention to be happy is based on our highest values, we can rely upon it to lead us in the right direction. Even when we are caught up in the challenges of life, we know we can choose to be kind or to act with compassion. This in itself opens us up to well-being and contentment.

A verse in the *Dhammapada*, a collection of sayings of the Buddha, sums up this promise:

*Speak or act with an impure [confused]
mind
And trouble will follow you*

*As the wheel follows the ox that draws
the cart.
Speak or act with a pure [clear] mind
And happiness will follow you
As your shadow, unshakable.*

There are many levels of pleasure and happiness, but the joy I am talking about here is what the Buddha called "the gladness connected with the wholesome." This gladness arises naturally from the goodness that is within every one of us. We know the warm and uplifting feeling we have when we are kind or generous. Contrast this with the unpleasant feeling that accompanies something hurtful or insensitive—telling a lie, putting someone down, putting ourselves down. There is a direct connection between true happiness and thinking and acting with a clear mind and kind heart. If you want to be truly happy, causing harm to others won't get you there. The more you are motivated by kindness, and the desire to act from the goodness of your heart, the greater the possibility of awakening joy.

Noticing when you're acting with mixed motivations can help you sort out which one you want to cultivate. For instance, you may feel motivated to do a kind act for a friend because you know it will make both of you feel good. However, you may also have a slight hope that perhaps that friend will do you a favor back. If you become aware of that kind of mixed motive, instead of dwelling on the less noble intention, turn your attention to that more wholesome impulse. We might have 90% pure motivation to help and 10% ego-based hope for acknowledgment. If we focus on the 10%, we might get down on ourselves for being phony and end up dismissing the value of the 90%. The real magic is that even if we initially have only 10% selfless motivation, the more we stay connected to that, the more it grows.

Madison Vipassana, Inc.

Upcoming Events

**Details at: www.vipassana.net
Retreats:**

James Baraz, October 8-11, 2009
Pine Lake Center, Westfield, WI
Myoshin Kelly and Patricia Genoud,
March 20-26, 2010, St. Anthony Center,
Marathon, WI

Sharon Saltzberg, non-residential
Summer 2010, dates to be determined
Ginny Morgan, October 2010, Pine
Lake Center, Westfield, WI

Classes:

Training the Mind: The Skill of Meditation. Introductory Meditation class, Saturdays, 9-11 am, September 19 - October 10, 2009.

Clearing the Path. Deepening meditation practice through understanding the teachings of the Buddha. Series of 4 classes, Saturdays 9-11 am, November-December 2009, exact dates to be announced.

Regular Activities of MIMG

Sunday Weekly Meditation

6-8 pm, 900 University Bay Drive, Madison
2nd Sunday each month: 6-8 pm, Introduction to Meditation
1st, 3rd, 5th Sunday each month: 45 minute meditation followed by talk and discussion.
2nd, 4th Sunday each month:
45 minute sitting meditation,
20 minute walking meditation,
45 minute sitting meditation

Tuesday Weekly Meditation

6:30-8:15 pm, 9638 Shadow Ridge Trail, Middleton.
45 minute meditation followed by Dhamma discussion. Led by Janice Sheppard.

Email list:

To subscribe, sign up at our homepage at www.vipassana.net or send an empty message to mimg-suscribe@yahoogroups.com
For details on any of these activities, email uppekha@yahoo.com

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The Newsletter of Madison
Vipassana, Inc., Madison, WI

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>

Jan Sheppard: Editor, layout & design
Cathy Loeb: Proofreader, duplicating and distribution

Peter Kaufman: Mailing list

To be added to the mailing list, contact Jan at uppekha@yahoo.com

To receive the newsletter electronically, join our listserv by sending a message with no subject or content to:

mimg-subscribe@yahoogroups.com



Madison Vipassana, Inc.
9638 Shadow Ridge Trail
Middleton, WI 53562-5604

Hard Times: Spiritual Opportunity

A series of 5 interfaith events

This fall, Wisdom Well Interfaith Spirituality Center (<http://www.wisdomswell.org>) will offer a series of interfaith panels on how spirituality can assist us in difficult times. The dates and topics are:

Wednesday, September 16, 7-9 pm

Hard Times: What Spiritual Traditions Offer

Wednesday, September 30, 7-9 pm

Sacred Texts: Help in Hard Times

Saturday, October 17, 10-2 pm, with lunch

A Day Away and Aware

Wednesday, October 28, 7-9 pm

What Are You Doing With Your Greed?

Wednesday, November 11, 7-9 pm

Hard Times: Opportunities Ahead

The sessions are independent and you are invited to attend one or all. All sessions will be held at the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive, Madison, WI. A donation of \$5/per session is suggested. Everyone Welcome. Free childcare and parking available.

Registration required only for October 17 event. To Register for October 17, or for details on any of the events, contact Maureen at 257-1259 or mowisdom@wisdomswell.org

This series is not an offering of Madison Vipassana, Inc. or the Madison Insight Meditation Group.