

# **The Dewdrop Digest**

## **Connecting Children, Youth and Sangha**

### **Clouds in Water Zen Center**

#### **Sunday, November 26, 2006**

#### **New parenting groups welcome you**

A group of parents of babies and young children has formed. They plan to meet monthly for some combination of mutual support, reading *Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting*, receiving ideas and insights from teachers and senior students who are parents, and more. Email Anne [anne@atowey.com](mailto:anne@atowey.com) for more info.

A similar group for older children is in the works. Email [cp@cloudsinwater.org](mailto:cp@cloudsinwater.org) to help us set the date for the first meeting.

#### **Today's class: Buddha's Enlightenment and Taking Refuge**

This Sunday's class is about learning about Buddha's enlightenment, so that we are ready to celebrate it at home (Dec 1–8) and again in class and with the sangha ceremony on Dec 10. We tell Thich Nhat Hanh's version of how Siddhartha met two children as he was embracing the Middle Way, Svasti (the buffalo herder from the untouchable case, who brought him grass to sit on) and Sujata (the milkmaid, or sometimes told as chief's daughter, who shared rice and milk with him). Then, during the seven days when he sat under the bodhi tree, resolved not to move until he could discern that path to end all suffering, these two children sustained him each day. After he was enlightened, his first teaching, which we call the Tangerine Meditation, was taught to Svasti, Sujata and their friends.

We'll talk about what's interesting and important about how Siddhartha lived his life. What do we admire? What puzzles us, or pushes us away? This leads to pondering why we might take refuge in Buddha. Although we are inspired and upheld by the historical Buddha, refuge-taking is about faith in our own Buddha-nature, in our own basic goodness, and believing that a caring universe completely holds each of us.

#### **Buddha's Enlightenment Story (brief version to aid in your home celebration)**

While Siddhartha sat under the Bodhi tree, two children assisted him, Sujata and Svasti (described above). He was also visited by Mara, the deluder, who tempted him with demons of all sorts – self-doubt, desire for nice things, fear, loneliness, anger. But the earth bore witness basic goodness, and Mara's demons faded away.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> morning, Siddhartha saw the morning star and was enlightened. He awoke to true nature of this loving universe and clearly saw the path to overcome the obstacles to the natural flow of peace, love and compassion that is within all beings.

Just after Siddhartha was enlightened, he met Svasti and Sujata, who were astonished at the change that had come over Buddha. His face and body radiated peace and joy. "It's like, you are a star!" Svasti exclaimed.

"Today is the happiest day of my life because last night I found the Great Way. Please enjoy this happiness too. You are intelligent children and I am sure that you will be able to

understand and practice the things I will share with you. Anyone willing to apply her or his heart and mind can understand and follow the Great Way.”

Together they ate tangerines with awareness, fully experiencing each moment of eating, each quality of the tangerine. They ate each morsel in awareness, and saw how precious and wonderful it was.

### **Ideas for home practice to honor Rohatsu, December 1 to 8**

Daily interactions with Rohatsu scene: By December 1, set up a Rohatsu scene, perhaps under a plant that can be the bodhi tree. Let your children choose (or make) dolls or figures to be Siddhartha, Svasti (the buffalo boy) and Sujata (the milkmaid). Our Siddhartha is sometimes a teddy bear. Each morning, Svasti reverently places fresh “grass” (dried grass, autumn leaf, fabric,) under Siddhartha. Sujata offers fresh milk and rice (or substitutes). You can gassho (bow with clasped hands) before and after this offering. If possible, eat the rice and milk for your breakfast or lunch; if not, offer it respectfully to the compost or the outdoors. On the morning of December 8<sup>th</sup>, look out to “see the morning star”, then celebrate the awakening of Buddha and all being. Eat small tangerines mindfully together, noticing their color, shape, weight, texture, smell and taste silently.

Daily Vow: I will do [fill in the number] acts of kindness or compassion each day.

Read: About Buddha, spiritual heroes, lovingkindness, courage, compassion, awareness. There are many excellent library books including “Prince Siddhartha”, “The Prince Who Ran Away”, and several books for children by Thich Nhat Hanh.

Candles for the Four Divine Abodes: Choose four candles: for lovingkindness (bringing happiness), compassion (relieving suffering), sympathetic joy (celebrating spiritual development of others), equanimity (responding evenly to positive and negative stimuli). For the first week, light the lovingkindness candle during one family meal each day. Tell, read or share stories about lovingkindness. Act with lovingkindness each day. Next week, light the lovingkindness and the compassion candles, and focus on compassion. The third week, start by explaining *sympathetic joy*, perhaps including the honoring of a broad range of personal accomplishments – learning to walk, to bake a cake, to play the guitar – but emphasizing “spiritual” victories such as taking responsibility, being kind, noticing emotions, telling the truth, and sharing. For the 4<sup>th</sup> week, equanimity, your greatest teaching may be how you model gently noticing and responding to your own responses - confessing without judgment when your response was not equanimous, and celebrating when it is. We (Katharine’s family) light the first candle today (four Sundays before Solstice), and so we celebrate the all four candles lit during Solstice week. So for us it includes and extends Rohatsu, and also marks the journey into the darkest, most meditative time of the year, a time when reflecting on our deepest values, dreams and yearnings is natural and powerful. You could choose a more Rohatsu-based timetable by starting on December 1 and spending 2 days on each abode.