



## Journey to Mindfulness: The Autobiography of Bhante G.

*By Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, Jeanne Malmgren*

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Bhante Gunaratana - Bhante G., as he is affectionately called - has long been among the most beloved Buddhist teachers in the West. Ordained at twelve, he would eventually become the first Buddhist chaplain at an American university, the founder of a retreat center and monastery, and a bestselling author. Here, Bhante G. lays bare the often-surprising ups and downs of his seventy-five years, from his boyhood in Sri Lanka to his decades of sharing the insights of the Buddha, telling his story with the "plain-English" approach for which he is so renowned.

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**Journey to Mindfulness: The Autobiography of Bhante G. By Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, Jeanne Malmgren Bibliography**

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

This is a most refreshing book from a Buddhist meditation teacher who lays bare his human failings and admits they are as much a part of his life as his achievements. It is also a fascinating globe- and culture-crossing autobiography of a man born in a small village in Sri Lanka with enough persistence and good kamma (Pali for karma) to see him through many vicissitudes. Author of the bestseller *Mindfulness in Plain English*, Bhante G., as he is affectionately known, repeatedly ran away from monasteries where he lived as a boy monk, stole things as a child, smoked and had traumatic fear-inducing accidents with water. As his story makes clear, his is a very human journey of teaching himself as well as others what the Buddha taught about how to live. That organizations that promote ethical living and spiritual development should also have their share of bickering, envy and bad behavior is an unsurprising part of his story, candidly told without excess rancor or blame. The monk-author is fluent in different cultures as well as languages, and his autobiography contributes to an understanding of the relationship between the American Buddhism of converts and traditional Asian Buddhism, more specifically the Theravada branch of Buddhism as practiced in his native Sri Lanka. This plain-English look back at 75 years of an admixture of adversity, humility and hard-won wisdom tells an engaging story that non-Buddhists can appreciate as well as Buddhists.

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## **Review**

"Spiritual teachers who write autobiographies are not always candid about their more human characteristics, but Bhante G's book is humorous and open. There is no doubt that this is the story of someone who chose to go his own way and live his vision. Like all good teachers, his story can inspire us to live our own." (*The Middle Way*)

"Monks and nuns in the Buddhist tradition are often viewed as people who don't necessarily struggle as intensely with difficult emotions as the rest of us. Bhante G., as he is affectionately called, dispels that perception and reveals the intimate truths of his life with unflinching honesty, humor, and warmth. The author of the highly acclaimed bestseller *Mindfulness in Plain English*, Bhante G never loses sight of the Buddha's teachings throughout a life marked by hardship and despair as well as great achievement and happiness. Time and again, we see that Bhante is undaunted by adversity. His tireless energy and unwavering faith reminds us that we too can embody these very same qualities. ...The scope of this book is wide and rich in detail; Bhante's message is inspiring." (*Insight*)

"Bhante Gunaratana's stature across America as a Buddhist teacher has risen with the popularity of his classic *Mindfulness in Plain English*. While Bhante's narrative doesn't leave out the hard parts, this is still, of course, a success story. And here lies the promise and purpose of *Journey to Mindfulness*: if Bhante G. can do it, so can you." (*Shambhala Sun*)

"A most refreshing book from a Buddhist meditation teacher who lays bare his human failings and admits they are as much a part of his life as his achievements. It is also a fascinating globe- and culture-crossing autobiography of a man born in a small village in Sri Lanka with enough persistence and good kamma (Pali for karma) to see him through many vicissitudes. Author of the bestseller *Mindfulness in Plain English*, Bhante G., as he is affectionately known, repeatedly ran away from monasteries where he lived as a boy monk, stole things as a child, smoked and had traumatic fear-inducing accidents with water. As his story makes clear, his is a very human journey of teaching himself as well as others what the Buddha taught about

how to live. That organizations that promote ethical living and spiritual development should also have their share of bickering, envy, and bad behavior is an unsurprising part of his story, candidly told without excess rancor or blame. The monk-author is fluent in different cultures as well as languages, and his autobiography contributes to an understanding of the relationship between the American Buddhism of converts and traditional Asian Buddhism, more specifically the Theravada branch of Buddhism as practiced in his native Sri Lanka. This plain-English look back at 75 years of an admixture of adversity, humility, and hard-won wisdom tells an engaging story that non-Buddhists can appreciate as well as Buddhists." (*Publishers Weekly*)

"*Journey to Mindfulness* flows like a good Buddhist teaching, rich with anecdotes and detail from Bhante G.'s life. The story has just the right amount of history woven into Bhante's travels and adventures. It is also a very funny book. It seems that even monks can have a great sense of humor." (*St. Petersburg Times*)

"Bhante Gunaratana is a meditation master who lives in each present moment. In *Journey to Mindfulness*, Bhante demonstrates, with warmth, humor, and rare candor, how it is possible to overcome experiences of abuse, rejection, and our own emotional reactivity through the practice of mindfulness. *Journey to Mindfulness* is an exhilarating journey into the mind and heart of someone whose life has been dedicated to living and sharing the Buddha's teaching." (Matt Flickstein, author of *Swallowing the River Ganges*)

"Wow! As a young, beginner Buddhist, I find Bhante G's seventy-five year life as a monk tremendously inspiring. Without sentimentality or excuses, Bhante G candidly and painfully reveals his shadow side--the rebelliousness, anger and uncontrollable emotion as a teenager and young man--and how he overcame his difficulties. All young adults exploring a path in the dharma should read this book! It both breaks down illusions and over-idealism about Buddhism and gives a vision, in a realistic way, of how to attain the highest in our lifetimes. An old, humble monk reflecting on his arrogant youth has invaluable lessons for us young adults just setting forth on the long path." (Sumi Loundon, editor of *Blue Jean Buddha: Voices of Young Buddhists*)

"Like the stories of the wisest and kindest of grandfathers. A joy to read." (Sylvia Boorstein, author of *Pay Attention for Goodness' Sake: Practicing the Perfections of the Heart, The Buddhist Path of Kindness*)

"Fascinating, and comforting in its honesty." (Kate Wheeler, author of *Not Where I Started From*)

"The 75-five-year-old teacher of Buddhist meditation, Bhante Gunaratana, reveals his human failings and shows how they are as much a part of his life as his accomplishments. The author of the bestselling *Mindfulness in Plain English*, he writes with refreshing candor. This plain-spoken book is a mix of humor, wisdom, adversity, and what appears to be genuine humility. As a child, Bhante exhibited bad behaviors, but shows how he taught himself and others what the Buddha taught, and how to live. He is now one of Buddhism's great teachers. An easy and engaging read that you don't have to be Buddhist to appreciate." (*Arkansas Democrat Gazette*)

#### About the Author

Bhante Gunaratana was ordained at the age of twelve as a Buddhist monk in Sri Lanka, earned his PhD in philosophy from The American University, and has led meditation retreats, taught Buddhism, and lectured widely throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia. Bhante Henepola Gunaratana is the president of the Bhavana Society in High View, West Virginia, where he lives.

Jeanne Malmgren, a longtime Buddhist, has been a magazine and newspaper journalist since 1980. Her writing has won awards from the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors, the American Association of Sunday and Feature Editors, and the Society of Professional Journalists. She lives in Greenville, South Carolina.

## **Users Review**

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