



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2017

4-6 Cress Street
Toowoomba Qld 4350
www.toowoombabuddhistcentre.org
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/toowoomba>

Dear Friends,

In February each year we commemorate the Buddha's final passing, his *Parinirvana*, his physical death at 80 years, over 2,500 years ago. With the exception, perhaps, of some shelter at rest houses, particularly during the monsoon season, the Buddha lived most of his life outdoors. He walked the roads of India for 45 years, teaching the Dharma to people from all walks of life, from beggars to kings. One can imagine the toll this would have taken upon his body, the sickness and pain he must have endured. Late in his life, he spoke of his body as being like an old cart held together by straps, and that he only knew [bodily] comfort, when he withdrew his attention from outward signs, by the cessation of certain feelings and 'signless concentration of the mind'¹. What can we learn from the Buddha's example and teachings?

As conditioned beings, we are subject to sickness old age and death. We are impermanent and insubstantial. We are in a process of 'dying' and rebirth all the time, with new conditions constantly coming in to play. When we really see the truth of this – just a flow of experience not identified as relating to a self, as being 'I/me/mine' - there is a spiritual death, a letting go. This brings a 'state of great freedom and relaxation because there's no holding onto anything'² – not to body, views, or a sense of a fixed self, in control, at the centre of the universe. To help us to let go of this self-identification, we can practise 'unhooking'. For example, we may have a thought, "I am afraid of a painful death". We first 'unhook' from 'a painful death', the object, and then are left with "I am afraid". Then letting go of the sense of 'I/me/mine', the subject, there's just "This feeling of fear". Lastly we let go of any labels about the feeling, in this case 'fear', and 'do our best to experience the pure feeling in our body'³. A warning: when first attempting this practice, it may be best to bring to mind a less challenging situation than fear of a painful death. One could try annoyance with someone, starting with "I am feeling annoyed with them". [Viryaja]

1. *Mahaparinibbhana Sutta, Sutta 16, Digha Nikaya* 2. *Vessantara: in a retreat at Adhithana, 2016.* 3. *ibid.*

FEBRUARY 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 2 nd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; 'Encounters with Enlightenment' [K]
Thu 9 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; 'Encounters with Enlightenment' [R]
Thu 16 th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	PARINIRVANA DAY [see above; actual date is 15 th] [V]
Thu 23 rd	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; 'Encounters with Enlightenment' [R]
Tue 28 th	Women's Dharma Study/Meditation:	Maitripala will be joining the regular sessions

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*

***FRIENDS NIGHTS, on Thursdays, 7-9pm, are open to everyone, whether a beginner or more experienced, a regular or a first time visitor.** They are an opportunity for people to come together to meditate, engage in Buddhist practices, learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, but most importantly to engage in these activities, in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program always includes meditation and a social aspect; each month one or two devotional practices take place and other evenings have a Dharma study/activity component. There is no charge but a donation is very much appreciated.

*This month, we shall celebrate **Parinirvana Day**, the Buddha's final passing, with reflection, readings and devotion. Dharma study/discussion will focus on 'Encounters with Enlightenment' - stories from the Buddha's life – by Saddhaloka. The program for the following 3 months will include:

March: Maitripala [*Buddhas in My Pocket* pilgrimage] is visiting; the *Udana* – Inspired Utterances of the Buddha

April: '50 Years of Triratna' celebration; Peter Barden on 'Suffering' [*duhkha*]

May: Buddha Day; the Heart Sutra

'THE TRUE INDIVIDUAL'

A weekend retreat led by MAITRIPALA, from March 3rd to 5th, 2017

“In order to understand what the Sangha really means, we must first understand what it means to be an individual and one aspect of Sangharakshita's definition of the individual is someone who is prepared to grow and change; someone who is willing to let go of any fixed idea of themselves. A true individual, in Sangharakshita's view, is someone who commits themselves wholeheartedly to the process of individual development”

In this retreat we will look at some of the qualities involved in becoming a True Individual and reflect on which qualities we would like to develop further. **MAITRIPALA** is a Triratna Buddhist Order member currently engaged in a year-long pilgrimage [see her website - www.buddhasinmypocket.com for more information]. In March, 2017, she will spend about a week in Toowoomba before the conclusion of the pilgrimage in April. As part of her Toowoomba activities, she will offer this weekend retreat.

The retreat is now fully booked but if you are interested and would like to be on a waiting list, please contact Viryaja at vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or ph. 46344303 or text 0404299573.

Venue: Le Grezze, Highfields. **Cost:** \$150 full; \$130 part time; \$100 concessional.

MAITRIPALA'S VISIT from Feb. 27th, including a 'Metta Makeover' Day in Brisbane March 11th:

While in Toowoomba and in addition to offering the weekend retreat, as above, Maitripala will be joining two women's Dharma study and meditation sessions on Feb 28th and March 7th, and a Friends Night on March 2nd. If anyone would like some individual time with her, please let us know. If you are familiar with the *metta bhavana* practice, you may be interested in the **Metta Makeover Day**, 10am to 4pm at the Bardon Counselling Centre, Brisbane. This will be a day of reflection, discussion and practice, a day to boost our confidence in our *metta* practice. It may be possible to share transport from Toowoomba. More information in the March Newsletter.

NEW COURSES IN 2017

* **8-week, evening courses**, (7-9pm): '*Traditional Buddhist Meditation and Mindfulness*' starts on Monday 20th Feb. '*Introducing Buddhism*' starts on Tuesday 21st Feb. Contact Roger on 4564 9636, if interested.

* **4-week daytime course**, (Saturdays 10am-12): '*Let's Meditate*' starts Feb. 4th. Cost: \$80 full; \$60 concession. Contact Viryaja at vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org or ph. 4634 4303, if interested.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH: [from the *Sutta Nipata*]

“Look upon the world as empty. This is the way to overcome death. Cease thinking of yourself as an entity that really exists. If you look on the world in this way, you will never be seen by the king of death.”

