



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2017

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<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/toowoomba>

Dear Friends,

Buddhism has become well known in the West, even fashionable. But as Westerners we often find it difficult to put it into practice. One fundamental reason for this is because it requires us taking responsibility for ourselves – our mental states and the behaviour that follows from them. We simply are not brought up to do this effectively in our culture.

We are not taught to act as a moral agent from within our own minds but, rather, to obey the dictates of some external supreme being or authority. In effect we hand the responsibility for our lives over to this external agent. We are also not provided with the tools or training to take responsibility for our own lives.

In Buddhism it is quite different – the tools and the training are provided. First of all there is training in ethics. Using ethical principles and criterion it is possible to recognise whether your mental states and behaviour are skilful or unskilful, conducive to happiness or unhappiness. To do this effectively you have to be able to observe your own mind and so you are taught meditation and mindfulness.

Even though as humans we have self-awareness, we aren't most of the time all that self-aware, we tend to be in a chronic state of distraction. We have to learn to regain the ability to direct our attention and we learn this with practices like the mindfulness of breathing, which we started in the Meditation course at the centre this week.

With these tools you can observe and therefore manage what is going on in your mind. We learn how to use mindfulness to transform unskilful states into more skilful ones. Because we have this self-awareness, according to the Buddha, there is nothing a man or a woman cannot make of themselves. But to do this we need to train our self-awareness and we have to take responsibility for ourselves. This is hard work, but what's wrong with hard work? Many people find it easier to just believe in some sort of religious dogma derived from some a "so-called" external authority. [Roger]

MARCH 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Fri 3rd - Sun 5th WEEKEND RETREAT 'THE TRUE INDIVIDUAL' - led by Maitripala

Thu 2nd FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Discussion [*Buddhas in My Pocket* pilgrimage] Maitripala

Thu 9th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Study - Extract from the *Udana* [K]

Thu 16th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Study - Extract from the *Udana* [R]

Thu 23rd FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Study - Extract from the *Udana* [K]

Thu 30th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation; Study - Extract from the *Udana* [V]

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, Dharma study/discussion will focus on the *Udana* – Inspired Utterances of the Buddha. The program for the following 2 months will include:

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

May: Buddha Day; the Heart Sutra

FACEBOOK:

We launched our Facebook page this month and would like to thank all the people who have liked it from the Newsletter group and other places. It's been a good start.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

"We need to take heart in the Buddha's message that all the obstacles we experience - whatever they may be – really can be overcome, and that we - whoever we may be - really are capable of overcoming them. Confidence that we can change ourselves, at least by degrees, is the foundation of the whole spiritual life ... there is no limit - absolutely none, according to the Buddha - to what a man or a woman can make of themselves."

(Kamalashila, 1994, *Meditation: the Buddhist Way of Tranquillity and Insight*, Glasgow: Windhorse Publications, p. 9).

