



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER MAY 2017

4-6 Cress Street

Toowoomba Qld 4350

www.toowoombabuddhistcentre.org

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/toowoomba>

Dear Friends,

Over the last few Friends Nights we seem to have been talking quite a lot about spiritual death and rebirth, which seems appropriate for Easter and the traditional celebrations of the death and resurrection of Christ. In the Triratna Buddhist Order we have a system of meditation that involves: the Stage of Integration, the Stage of Positive Emotion, the Stage of Spiritual Death and, the Stage of Spiritual Rebirth. Before spiritual death and re-birth are the all-important stages of integration and positive emotion.

In modern Western Buddhism we talk of the importance of developing a healthy, happy and sane sense of self before trying to move beyond it. In a way you have to be a self before you can go beyond the self. But most of us are not even a self, instead we are a bundle of selves often in conflict and fighting amongst ourselves. We need to become integrated – one unified self – before we can direct our will effectively toward self-transcendence. This requires, as Dogen says in the quote at the end of the newsletter, studying the self. We need to understand our own nature and conditioning, much of which is pulling us back. This means assimilating aspects of ourselves buried in the unconscious that we are avoiding or repressing or in other ways are cut off from. There is no blame attaching to this coming to terms with our character and conditioning.

Then we need to go beyond the self. Having studied and seen through it we need to renounce the illusion of an independent self. This is the function of the Stage of Spiritual Death and is aided by practices like the Contemplation of the Six Elements. Once we give up or let go of the fixed self-identity this creates space within which the spiritual level of conditionality (*dhamma-niyama*) may function spontaneously through us. In the Stage of Spiritual Rebirth we rest in what unfolds within us when we give up our self-attachment and allows this new supra-personal motive force to operate through us. Practice here may involve visualising the qualities of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

This all may sound a bit remote so it is worth remembering that every time we let go of an old unskillful tendency or character trait or even when we just relinquish our self-referencing for a while and replace it with more skillful, other-oriented activity, we are engaging in spiritual death and rebirth. The system of meditation also involves the Stage of No Practice, which involves the receptive, just sitting practice and is undertaken in parallel with each stage of the system of meditation so as to allow the results to become assimilated. [Roger]

MAY 2017 CALENDAR

(Friends Nights: 7pm - 9pm)

Thu 4th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; the Heart Sutra – a Zen Buddhist commentary [R]
Thu 11th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; <i>celebrating Buddha Day</i> [V]
Thu 18th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT</u>	Meditation; the Heart Sutra – a Triratna Buddhist commentary[V]
Thu 25th	<u>FRIENDS NIGHT:</u>	Meditation; the Heart Sutra – a Tibetan Buddhist commentary[K]

FRIENDS NIGHT PROGRAM*:

So far this year in the study program, we have looked at 'Encounters With Enlightenment', stories from the Pali Canon and at teachings from the 'inspired utterances of the Buddha', the *Udāna*. We have celebrated 50 years of Triratna. The **May** program includes **BUDDHA DAY**, the most important day in the Buddhist calendar, and an exploration of the Heart Sutra, through commentaries from 3 different Buddhist traditions.

June: Peter Barden: 'Suffering in the context of everyday life'; topics from '*Buddhism -tools for living your life*' by Vajragupta. The program for later months is still to be planned.

***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.

"PRESENT WELFARE, FUTURE WELFARE"

Fri. July 7th to Sun. July 9th

A weekend retreat led by DHARMALATA.

The theme for this retreat is from a charming sutta, where a householder approaches the Buddha and says, "Hey, you and your monks have it good. You have this simple life of meditation and friendship but what about we householders? We like our nice clothes, houses and cuddling up in bed with our children. We like nice fragrances and food. What do you have to offer us?" The Buddha gives the householders four clear teachings, which are easy to remember and apply. On this retreat we will get to know these principles and open up ways to enrich and nourish our own householder lives, by applying them.

We are pleased to say we have secured a new, nearby venue for this July retreat, which will be led by **Dharmalata, a Triratna Order Member from Sydney**. The retreat will be similar to previous retreats, but is likely to cost more than before, due to the increased cost of the venue. To secure a place on the retreat, it may also be necessary to pre-pay part or whole of the retreat fee. These details are still to be worked out.

Meanwhile, for more information or to express an interest in attending, please contact Viryaja on 0404299573 [text preferred] or 46344303 or vp@toowoombabuddhistcentre.org

KEEPING THE CENTRE CLEAN AND ATTRACTIVE TO VISIT:

A big 'Thank You' to those three people, who have come forward to offer regular help with the general cleaning. You are already making a big difference! And also thanks to Jan, who is going to supervise the library. Some repair/maintenance jobs are in progress but ongoing help is still needed. Also, if you have a bent for gardening, you may like to 'develop' the plantings already there. If you are in a position to help with any of these, please let us know [Roger, Karen or Viryaja].

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH:

*To study Buddhism
is to study the self
To study the self
is to (see through and) forget the self
To forget the self
is to become one with others (all things).*

[Dogen]

