



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2021

4-6 Cress Street

Toowoomba Qld 4350

www.toowoombabuddhistcentre.org

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/toowoomba>

Dear Friends,

When we are in the process of learning mindfulness we are often aware only after the event that we have acted unskillfully. Then gradually we learn to be aware, as we act unskillfully; and finally, to be aware, before we act unskillfully. This overlaps with what is known in Buddhism as the Four Exertions or Four Right Efforts. They represent the sixth stage of the Eightfold Path leading to Enlightenment. The first of these is to *prevent* unskillful states of mind that have not yet arisen, and the second is to eradicate unskillful states of mind that have already arisen.

Once you have developed a measure of mindfulness you can often sense unskillful states of mind as they begin to come up or develop. It may start with a particular train of thought and you can anticipate that, as this object (thought) of the mental sense enters your mind, it is going to lead to negative, painful emotions. With mindfulness used in this anticipatory way you can cut it off and prevent it developing into a fully blown emotional storm.

Of course, often it is too late for this, and then we have to move onto the second exertion and *eradicate* the negative state that has already arisen. There are many ways to do this. First you have to acknowledge that you are in a negative, useless (unskillful) mental state. Just being aware of it already starts to change the situation - this is the power of mindfulness. Then you can apply antidotes like considering the consequences of staying caught up in it, cultivating the opposite quality, observing it in a detached way, or simply suppressing it.

Often just making a little effort like this can dispel, or help you let go of, the unskillful state surprisingly quickly. But you have to exert yourself, which is why they are called efforts or exertions. We are not brought up to do this in the west, instead we tend to neurotically obsess over our negative mental states and analyse them, which usually gets us nowhere and often makes the situation worse. The Buddhist approach is more matter-of-fact and down-to-earth, but it does take practice (and perhaps even training); after a while the process becomes relatively easy to do and helps us lighten up about ourselves.

The other two exertions are to *develop* skilful states of mind that have not arisen and to *maintain* them. The best way to do this is considered to be through the regular practice of meditation. At this time of year people often make resolutions for the New Year and we suggest that the formula of the Four Exertions or Right Efforts can be used as a framework for this. What unskillful things do you want to Prevent and Eradicate and what skilful things do you want to Develop and Maintain? [Roger]

FRIENDS NIGHTS* - Thursdays, 7-9pm

Friends Nights 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 such as pujas and to learn more about the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma. Most importantly, they are an opportunity to engage in these activities in friendship with other like-minded people. The evening's program includes meditation and a cuppa and chat followed by some study. Each month usually includes devotional practices with a Dharma study/activity component on other evenings.

Study in March will continue with the Noble Eightfold Path. We are currently looking at '**The Four Right Efforts.**' This is about how we work with our positive and negative mental states. See editorial for more on them. We will finish up study of the Noble Eightfold Path this month.

There are plenty of spots to attend Friends nights so come and join us, you don't need to book in or let us know you are coming.

****There is no charge for Friends Nights, but a donation is very much appreciated, since we rely heavily on people's generosity to keep the Centre operating.***

MARCH 2021 CALENDAR - Friends Nights are from 7 to 9pm

Thu 4th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation and Study – Noble 8 Fold Path

Thu 11th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation and Study – led by Hridayaja

Sat 13th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1pm at the TBC

Thu 18th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation and Study - Finish 8 Fold Path.

Thu 25th FRIENDS NIGHT: Meditation and Puja

UPCOMING RETREAT 6pm Thursday 22nd – 3pm Sunday 25th April 2021

After a long break because of COVID we will finally be able to join together on residential retreat at the James Byrne Centre at Highfields. Padmadakini and Hridayaja will be leading the retreat; the theme is **Looking into the mirror of our minds: Exploring the 6 Realms of The Wheel of Life**

Sangharakshita wrote 'The Wheel of life is a magic mirror, even a crystal ball into which we can gaze.' On this retreat we will delve into the 6 realms of The Wheel of Life. Traditionally these are seen as different worlds into which we are reborn, but each is also an expression of a state of mind, so the 6 realms represent psychological states that we experience here and now, in this life.

Padmadakini and Hridayaja are leading the retreat together. Padmadakini is an experienced Order Member who has actively been supporting the Sydney Sangha in many ways for the last 10 years. She is known for her ability to bring the Dharma to life in a creative and imaginative way. Hridayaja is Chair of our Toowoomba Centre. She loves deepening friendships within the Toowoomba Sangha, welcoming this opportunity to spend time together on retreat.

Bookings are open for this retreat. If you would like to register or have any questions please contact Maree on email mareejones59@hotmail.com

COFFEE TABLE WANTED

If you have a medium sized coffee table at home that you are not using do let us know, as we are after one for the centre.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

'We must first of all become a happy, healthy human being - . . . But this isn't enough . . . because such happiness is usually so conditioned by the circumstances of life . . . true happiness can come about only when we understand, through insight, the true nature of reality. That deeper, more essential happiness is the way to enter into the stream of Enlightenment, and entering that stream is the *long term* aim of Buddhist Meditation.'

Kamalashila, 'Meditation The Buddhist Way of Tranquility and Insight'