



Toowoomba Buddhist Centre

FINAL NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2021

4-6 Cress Street
Toowoomba Qld 4350

www.toowoombabuddhistcentre.org
<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/toowoomba>

Dear Friends

The Management Committee has decided to cease activities at the TBC. This is the last newsletter. In the next few months, a Special General meeting will be held so members can discuss and vote on a resolution to close the Centre.

***If you wish to stay informed of any future Centre activities,
please reply to this newsletter by return email.
We intend to still celebrate festival days and hold retreats.***

We will also have a final closing ritual, where we can celebrate the precious gift of the Three Jewels, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha; the gift that the Centre has offered to so many people over the 23 years of its operation.

This next phase of the Centre signifies the impermanent nature of things. It will be an opportunity for Sangha members to work creatively around new ways to stay in touch and practise the Dharma together.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Toowoomba Buddhist Centre has played an important role in my life for many years as I know it has for others. In 2001, I moved to Toowoomba for a few years. I had worked as a Christmas extra in a Triratna Right Livelihood shop in Glasgow and didn't want to lose a connection with Sangha and didn't want to return to the big city of Sydney. The seeds of friendship and connection with the Centre were planted then and have grown steadily and flowered ever since.

The opportunity for me to step into the position of Chair (President of the Association) presented itself in 2020. My dear friend Viryajā needed to hand over the role and I wanted to support her and the Toowoomba Sangha. I was willing to accept the position of Chair knowing that I had the caring support and friendship of Maree, Karen, Greg and Roger and others at the Centre. I also wanted to be the connection between the Triratna Buddhist Order and the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre. It seemed such a natural thing to do because of my long connection and friendships.

And what a year 2020 was. We learnt about zooming and lock downs and social distancing and COVID testing and much more.

And now in 2021, the management team has come to realize that we don't have Order Members needed to keep the Centre doors open. Closing the TBC is a difficult process and one that I am grateful to be part of, as we talk and reflect through personal and organizational hurdles along the way. Closing is certainly a grieving process. And it's also a precious opportunity to experience lots of gratitude and appreciation. There's been incredible *vīrya*, energy in pursuit of the good, that has held the Centre and enabled activities to offer the Dharma to so many over the years. In 1997 Roger's inspired decision to teach Buddhism and Meditation classes at TAFE was the start of a Sangha forming in Toowoomba. *Vīryajā's* deepening engagement with the Buddha Dharma and Sangha in the context of the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community has held the space here for many who have arrived at the door to meditate and hear the Dharma. Their decisions to share the Dharma have been wonderful, inspiring examples to so many people.

Much appreciation also to the many retreat leaders who have travelled up on to the range to guide and inspire us. Siladasa, in particular has offered his kindness and support over many retreats and many years. Subhuti has long been a guiding influence for Triratna Buddhist Community centres. He has written about the transformative nature of Triratna centres in a booklet called 'The New Society'. He has beautifully and clearly identified that centres need to be unifying through generosity, looking out for opportunities to give. They need to be places where people hear kindly affectionate speech, so people feel liked and cared for. They are where people can express what really matters to them and communicate it to others so that they too, will discover what really matters to them. They should be places where practice is happening: practice not just in the sense of meditation, but practice in the sense of deep communication; practice in the sense of following the precepts; practice in the sense of mindfulness. They should be places in which we can exemplify the spiritual ideals which we uphold. The TBC has been such a place, a means of awakening the Dharma, so that many people have had the opportunity to go to refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. It has also offered friendly communication to our surrounding city and neighbourhood. It has offered a place of quiet and candlelight, beauty and reverence.

Through the years of attending our precious Centre, I have so often witnessed this beauty, kindliness, generosity, exploration of what really matters and depth of practice. Lives have been transforming. As we anticipate the end of an era, we can reflect on the words of Triratna's teacher and founder, Sangharakshita:

'Things being constituted as they are, the objects of enjoyment disintegrate in our very grasp, as ice melts when clasped in a warm hand, and the result is suffering. Happiness can be attained either when existence accords with our desires, or when our desires are in harmony with existence. True, the second alternative is difficult; but the first is impossible. If we cannot gain happiness by refashioning the world, we shall have to find it by reforming ourselves...The root cause (of suffering) is desire. Happiness comes only when we desire and are attached to - nothing.'

Sangharakshita, 'A Survey of Buddhism', 2001, p198, Windhorse Publications, Birmingham.

Heartfelt gratitude to all of you who have given so much for so long.

With much metta, Hridayaja

OUR LAST EDITORIAL

A fundamental aspect of the Buddha's enlightenment experience was a deeply penetrating insight into the fact that everything in existence was governed by the principle of conditionality. He saw that all phenomena and every event arose in dependence upon conditions, and when the conditions changed the event or phenomena changed, and when the conditions ceased the phenomena/event ceased.

Conditions change over time and throughout space and this leads to impermanence on the one hand and insubstantiality on the other. In other words, everything is interconnected over time and space – nothing exists independently of anything else. In Sanskrit this Law is known as *pratītyasamutpāda* (Pali: paṭiccasamuppāda) and is commonly translated as dependent origination or dependent arising.

There is a well-known saying in the Buddhist world: 'The Buddha has explained the origin of those things which proceed from a cause or a condition. *Their cessation too he has explained.* This is the doctrine of the great seeker.' Because everything is impermanent and insubstantial it is structurally incapable of yielding lasting satisfaction. The fact that the conditionality underpinning existence is constantly changing means that the world is inherently unsatisfactory; it is an inescapable component of the human condition. That is not to say that there is no pleasure in the world; from a Buddhist point of view, life involves both pleasure and pain.

However, if we seek happiness by clinging onto the pleasurable aspects of the world and trying to avoid the painful, we are doomed to failure. So, the condition that causes suffering according to the Buddha is our own craving for permanence and solidity in an impermanent and insubstantial world. It is our wanting

things to be different than they are that causes the suffering. In this sense craving is a neurotic form of desire because it is projecting onto the world something that it cannot provide.

The possibility of the cessation of suffering, therefore, lies within the human mind. It comes when we let go off the neurotic craving rather than trying to fulfil it or suppress it - not holding onto it or pushing it away. The path of ethics, meditation and insight helps achieve this. [Roger]

WITH MUCH GRATITUDE:

More than 2,500 years ago, had the Buddha decided not to teach, there would have been no Dharma or Sangha. More than 53 years ago, had Sangharakshita decided not to start a Buddhist movement in a Western context, there would have been no Triratna Buddhist Community. More than 23 years ago, had Roger not decided to teach about Buddhism at Toowoomba TAFE, the coming into existence of the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre may never have happened. So much has flowed from the arising of these significant conditions. Words cannot express the gratitude I have for the Buddha's gift of the Dharma and Sangha and all that has come from these; inadequate to express my gratitude for the significant part that the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre, with the contributions to this sangha by so many people, has played in my life. With the passing of the Centre, may the conditions continue to arise for us all to experience inspiration, the support of friends in the Dharma and a strong connection with the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

With metta, Viryaja.

SEPTEMBER RETREAT

Touching the Earth

Led by Chandramalin

Thursday 23rd to Monday 27th September 2021

at Kelly House, James Byrne Centre, Highfields.

Chandramalin lives on North Stradbroke Island as a Quandamooka traditional owner, Elder and general medical practitioner. He is able to bring together his years of training in Western psychology and medicine with traditional Aboriginal spirituality and Buddhist practice.

Bookings: contact Maree on mareejones59@hotmail.com

APRIL RETREAT REPORT - THE SIX REALMS led by Hridayaja

When I first saw the heading of this retreat, I did an internal cringe. Being confronted by the Six Realms and the reality of our existence (held up to us in the form of a mirror by Mara, the Lord of Death) can be challenging at the best of times, but to be cornered on a retreat about this potentially heavy topic filled me with a quiet dread.

Hridayaja gratefully took us through each realm in a creative, imaginative, compassionate and humorous way. On the first morning we were led by Hridayaja in a Dedication Ceremony and an imaginative ritual creating a mandala around the building and imagining the flames of transformation, the lotus petals of purity and a vajra-wall of determination around us for the duration of the retreat. Holding symbols of fire, lotuses and vajras in our outstretched palms, we circled the building which was reversed as we finished the

retreat. The highlight of the whole retreat for me was when we enacted a scenario where an inhabitant of each realm was interviewed for their perspective of what it was like living in that realm. We each had a part to play. I hadn't laughed so hard in years.

The two days were filled with laughter, creativity and joy. Witnessing the retreatants summing up at the end I realised that something quite profound had happened. Peoples' hearts had opened in unexpected ways and the insights flowed as people expressed how profoundly they had been affected. I personally gained significant insight into the way I have behaved and have moved through life getting nowhere in particular, frustrated by the continuing suffering.

The wisdom needed for those in the hell realm, which I often find myself in, is to start working towards Nirvana right now; there is nothing else left to do. All worldly hope has failed. The balm offered to us who inhabit the Human Realm is the robe and staff of the spiritual aspirant, the seeker. So whatever realm you find yourself in the answer is simple, follow the way of wisdom and truth towards enlightenment.

Thank you to all who attended and made this retreat possible. Thank you Hridayaja for spinning your magic yet again and taking us all on a profound journey through the realms. [Kaja]

BUDDHA DAY REPORT

On the 30th of May 2021 there was a gathering at the Toowoomba Buddhist Centre for Wesak which honours the birth, death and enlightenment of the Buddha. The people who came to this gathering were delighted and joyful to join in the spirit and celebration of one of the important festival days in the Buddhist calendar.

Hridayaja facilitated a program which included a talk by Subhuti, which was rich in content and provided the impetus for small and large group discussion. There was also meditation, and a puja completed the day. The opportunity to socialize and connect over lunch brought much laughter and showed the kitchen talents of our sangha.

It was an occasion for me to reflect on the vitality and importance of the Centre and the Sangha, and the hard work needed to establish such an open and welcoming space. It also highlighted the opportunities afforded by impermanence which requires me to "look outside the square" to continue our spiritual path. May we all be like the Buddha and "strive on" regardless. [Karen]

Useful websites and links to activities offered by Triratna Buddhist Order and Community, including talks and online retreats:

International

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/>

The Triratna Buddhist Order and Community

The essence of Buddhism is timeless and universal. But the forms it takes always adapt according to context. Now that Buddhism is spreading around the globe, the task is to create new traditions relevant to the 21st century. The website includes links to many centres around the world.

<https://adhithana.org/> *It's a kind of home for Triratna, a place of teaching and practice for the Order and Movement internationally, offering retreats, workshops and study seminars, along with its library and archives.*

<https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/>

Free Buddhist Audio is the home of Triratna online service. A selection of talks, interviews, seminars, and question-and-answer sessions from the early 1960s to the present day, including an increasing number in languages other than English.

<https://www.wildmind.org/> Wildmind is an online meditation centre — a place where anyone can learn to meditate or deepen their existing practice.

In Australia

<https://sydneybuddhistcentre.org.au/>

With an online program to support you in these challenging times, connecting you to practising Buddhists in Sydney, including:

<https://sydneybuddhistcentre.org.au/classes-and-courses/saturday-dharma-morning>

Saturdays 9:30am – 11am. The morning takes place in two halves. You are welcome to join us for either or both. In the first half, starting at **9:30am** is a **meditation practice**. The class will split into two groups, a smaller group for those who are new to meditation and another group for those who attend the class regularly. In the beginners group, we will help you to set up in good posture and give a fully led practice. Once you have been coming a while, the main group offers a more lightly led practice. After a short break, at **10:15am** there will be a **talk and discussion** to explore another aspect of Buddhism.

<https://melbournebuddhistcentre.org.au/>

With an online program to support you in these challenging times, connecting you to practising Buddhists in Melbourne.

THOUGHT FOR EVERY MOMENT:

*Impermanence is
what enables us to turn our whole lives toward
the ideal of Enlightenment.'*

Sangharakshita, *Living with Awareness*, p71

